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Kruger's Dream.

ACCORDING to the *Daily News* war correspondent's report of the battle of Eland's Laagte, there was a very curious item amongst the "spoils" taken by the Fifth Lancers. It was a flag with an Orange emblem of the United South Africa, that was to be under Dutch domination. Now this bit of news—though, of course, we do not vouch for its truth—suggests to us the following article, which may interest a great many of our readers, if not all of them, in the present critical state of affairs.

We desire to say, at the outset, that it is far from our intention to join in the passionate struggle of party politics, especially in regard to questions of foreign policy. Experience and reading have shown us that the difference between Liberals and Conservatives, with respect to the government and extension of the British Empire, is mostly fantastic and insincere. The point of view of either party depends chiefly upon whether it is in office or in opposition. Mr. Gladstone, it is true, conceded independence to the Transvaal after our defeat at Majuba Hill; but the same Mr. Gladstone bombarded Alexandria, occupied Egypt, and watered the Soudan desert with the blood of men "rightly struggling to be free."

Had the present trouble in South Africa arisen while the Liberals were in power, it would probably have been dealt with in very much the same fashion. The language of diplomacy might have been somewhat different, there might have been more rather than less verbal hypocrisy, but all this would not have affected the final and substantial result. The fact is, if you will have an empire you must be imperial. We can understand and respect the ideal of those who maintain that England should be self-contained and have no empire at all; we can understand and respect the ideal of those who maintain that the extension of the British Empire is a great factor in the world's civilisation; but we cannot understand or respect the ideal—if it may be called so—of those who want the British Empire maintained, but also want to maintain it without soldiers and fighting; and we simply despise those politicians who are quite prepared to say, for instance, that it is right for us to preserve our hold on India at any cost, but who are always found on the side of every power, big or little, with which we happen to be disputing. We like logic and consistency, and we dislike men who try to take credit for both of two opposite principles.

We also desire to say that we protested, many weeks ago in the *Freethinker*, against the frightful crime of an avoidable war. No doubt a very wise and honest diplomacy on both sides would have prevented the present bloody strife. But as the world goes such diplomacy would be phenomenal. What is talked about is too often not the actual object of concern. Negotiation is too apt to be insincere, moving on the surface of things, and concealing or disguising the real causes of difference. Sometimes it is felt all along to be no more than the preliminaries to a duel, as in the

case of the correspondence between America and Spain over the question of Cuba; and sometimes, when it is not so felt, it sooner or later discloses an irreconcilable antagonism of interest and intention; and then, unless arbitration is resorted to, the almost inevitable result is war. For our part, we are most strongly in favor of arbitration. We believe it is the only means of bringing war to an end. But nations are not yet civilised enough to submit to arbitration, or even to invite it, when their passions are excited, or when the advantages in the struggle are very largely in their favor. Arbitration will have to grow by degrees. It will have to settle small disputes first, larger ones after, and the largest last of all. That will be prior to the millennium. Meanwhile it is no use to say that England is the worst sinner, because she declines arbitration so soon after the Czar's Love Feast. America would not arbitrate over the Philippines affair, France would laugh at arbitration if she saw a chance of getting back Alsace-Lorraine, Germany would not arbitrate her least little quarrel with China, and assuredly Russia would scorn the idea of arbitration if she wished to carve another slice out of the Celestial Empire, or to make a descent upon Persia or Afghanistan. It is useless to blink the truth. The world all round is but superficially civilised. There is a thin veneer of civilisation—rather of manners than of conduct; and beneath it is the solid old bulk of inherited savagery. Those who desire the reign of peace on earth must trust to time, to the spread of liberal ideas, to the growth of commerce and other forms of international communication, to the slow development of culture, and above all (as we think) to the decline of Supernaturalism and its gradual supersession by Science and Humanity.

Many of the Liberals, most of the Radicals, and all the Socialists, devote a large part of their time and energy to denouncing Mr. Chamberlain. This illustrates the personal method of political controversy. Mr. Chamberlain is not Prime Minister, he is not the whole Cabinet. He has not been acting alone. It is monstrous to suppose that he has been allowed to play the game off his own bat. He has certainly been acting in concert with the rest of the Ministry. He is supported by them in both houses of parliament. One would imagine, from the way in which some talk and write, that he held Lord Salisbury and all his other colleagues in the hollow of his hands. This is a sheer absurdity. Mr. Chamberlain's diplomacy is the diplomacy of the Tory Government. We think it, therefore, a waste of time and temper to vivisection the Colonial Secretary. Not that we ever had much admiration for him, even in his Radical days, as an English statesman. Whatever his motives were, and whether it was by design or accident, he did the country a real service in helping to defeat Mr. Gladstone's first crude Home Rule Bill, which combined the disadvantages of nearly every conceivable way of settling the Irish problem. We said so at the time, and we are not aware that we have ever been grateful to Mr. Chamberlain since. But it is nonsense to assert that this is *his* war in South Africa. He is not great enough, to begin with, to make a war on his own account. The war is explained by the situation of affairs, by the history of the past twenty years, by the clash of interests, and by the temper of both parties to the quarrel.

This is a subject which we propose to deal with, not as a party politician, not as a lover of war, not even as a patriot, although we hope we love England as truly and deeply as the rest.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

The Nature and Value of Free- thought.

It is necessary to occasionally remind both Freethinkers and professed Christians of the value of Free thought, with a view of removing the apathy and correcting the errors which obtain in connection with the mental attitude which the term represents. There are, unfortunately, some Freethinkers who, having acquired intellectual liberty for themselves, ignore the theological bondage in which too many of their fellow beings are still to be found. If mental freedom be of any value, those who enjoy its manifold advantages should employ all legitimate means to assist others to share in them. It ought never to be forgotten that, but for the persistent labors of the Freethinkers of the past, many of us would still be the victims of uncontrolled religious intolerance. Moreover, while we owe a debt of gratitude to those who have striven in bygone ages to emancipate the human mind from the power of the Church, we ought not to forget our duty to coming generations. It has been aptly remarked that "wise men live not only for themselves, but also for those who will fill their places when they have passed away." This reflection should inspire all Freethinkers to do their utmost to extend a knowledge of those principles to the force of which they owe their emancipation from the shackles of priestly domination.

It is also desirable to remind our opponents of their misrepresentations of the true meaning of Free thought, which they urge is quite compatible with the teachings of Christianity. It is useless for them to cite St. Paul's advice to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good," while the good is decided, not by the one who undertakes to "prove," but by the New Testament, before any attempt at proving takes place. Where is the freedom in the following statements?—"He that believeth not shall be damned." "He that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." These teachings are the very opposite of Free thought. Besides, the Christian doctrine of rewards and punishments shuts out all freedom. People are not free to make inquiries, if they are told when starting upon their investigations that they must arrive at one particular conclusion; and if they do not, eternal punishment awaits them. The very essence of Christianity is opposed to Free thought, inasmuch as it makes the decisions of one age the standard for all time. Progress is thus retarded and stagnation is encouraged. If in individual and national life conduct is to be regulated by the conclusions arrived at in the first century, where does the freedom to profit by subsequent experience come in? This is a point we should like Christians to deal with. Eighteen hundred years ago a certain belief was promulgated, and a particular kind of action was deemed right. To go in opposition to that belief, or to pursue a different course of action, was considered a sin deserving of the severest reprobation. For so doing men had not only to face social ostracism in this world, but they were threatened with the cruelest torments in some future existence. Such was the treatment inflicted upon Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, in the second, third, and fourth centuries. Such, also, has been the penalty enforced by Christians upon heretics even down to our own time. Fines, imprisonment, and death have been the consequence of exercising the right of Free thought. For ages freedom of thought was crushed by the authorities of the Christian Church, who acted as their Bible taught them. Fortunately, truth, if crushed, will rise again, and it has risen and become sufficiently powerful to shake the very foundations of that Church which did its best to stifle it in its infancy.

By Free thought we understand that mental condition, unfettered by theological restrictions, which enables a person to think according to the evidence at his command. It certainly does not mean a freedom of the mind to act outside of, above, or in opposition to law, but it alleges that all men have an equal right to the convictions at which they have arrived, and to the honest expression of those convictions. There is nothing

incompatible, as some Christians urge, between Free thought and the doctrine called Necessitarianism, when these terms are properly understood. A Necessitarian is not one who possesses no freedom whatever, and by a Freethinker we do not understand a person whose thoughts are not subject to any kind of law, and which may, therefore, spring up spontaneously without any adequate cause to account for their so doing. We are necessitated to do what we do by the force of universal and inevitable law. Our freedom consists not in determining our actions, but rather in conducting ourselves in harmony with the requirements of such actions. It will thus be seen that Free thought does not mean anything so absurd as that a person's thoughts are perfectly and absolutely uncontrolled. In point of fact, so far as we can judge, there is no such freedom as this existing anywhere. Every kind of existence must be bound together by some sort of bond arising out of the law by which the unity of the great whole is preserved. As Tennyson has said:—

For I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened by the process of the suns.

The value of Free thought consists in its recognition of the service of doubt, which is the forerunner of progress. In the ages when theological belief was paramount the human intellect was comparatively stagnant; but when doubt arose the claims of the Church were questioned, the right of dissent was acknowledged, thought was agitated, and the dawn of reason appeared. Then priestcraft received a check to its pretensions, scepticism attacked authority, morality was proclaimed as being independent of theology, the doctrine of finality was largely rejected, and Free thought, although for a time it was more limited than it is now, was an accomplished fact. Free thought was not only the precursor of, it was also an incentive to, progress. It inspired heretics of all ages to endure severe suffering and persecution rather than yield their right to think for themselves. We hear much of Christian martyrs, but the fact is Free thought is the essence of all true martyrdom; it is the vindication of personal thought against traditional belief. When Kepler taught those truths which were opposed to the orthodox notions of the cosmic laws; when Galileo showed the fallacy of the belief in the stability of the earth; when Voltaire exposed the corruptions of the Church; when Paine demonstrated the absurdity of the doctrine of Bible infallibility; and when Dr. Priestley attacked the incongruity of believing that three are one and that one is three, the philosophy of Free thought was in active operation. Even in Greece Socrates vindicated the principle of Free thought when, in spite of the dart of ridicule, the pangs of exile, and the effects of hemlock, he refused to believe in the Athenian gods. In all those heretical movements Free thought proved invaluable, not only at the time, but through all succeeding generations. It was the development of progress, the benefits of which we reap to-day.

The value of Free thought is further indicated in its pronouncement that uniformity of belief upon speculative questions is impossible, and that correct thought must be the result of evidence. Christianity teaches the very opposite of these well-established facts. It alleges that all must believe in Christ, and that those who do not "shall all likewise perish." Free thought prompts a man to estimate the Bible fairly, and not to judge of its contents upon their merits, and not to receive what is said merely upon its own authority. It applies the eclectic principle to all religions, and counsels the acceptance of whatever good is found therein. It is opposed to priestcraft under any form, and denounces it as the deadly enemy of mankind. To condemn persecution as a crime against freedom, to seek to intimidate, or in any way to inflict punishment, in consequence of the difference of opinion, is, from a Free thought standpoint, the very quintessence of injustice. To either threaten or enforce penalties simply on account of lack of agreement on any given question is to emulate the conduct of the Pope of Rome, and to enforce the despotism of authority. Such actions has always tended to the prostration of genuine thought and to the subjugation of intellectual freedom.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Dying of Religion.

I HAVE a decided weakness for old buildings. There is, to me, something extremely suggestive in the contemplation of ancient structures, as there is in the study of old customs and ideas. One can wander over the ruins of an old castle or family mansion, and live again with the battles and sieges that have raged around the one and the domestic tragedies and joys that have taken place in the other. But if there is one thing that I do *not* like, it is an old building that has been "restored." The charm is destroyed at once. The unpoetic form of the modern builder comes between me and my imaginative flights, and brings back my mind to the prosaic level of contemporary reality. One cannot picture ancestral spirits wandering in a house that has the sounds of workmen's feet still lingering in its rooms; nor can one easily imagine an ancient peer of high degree weaving dark plots and subtle intrigues in a building the plaster of which is scarcely dry, and where builders' accounts seem to take the place that should be sacred to antique tapestry and coats of mail. No, for imagination to work easily one wants antiquity pure and simple, not an antiquity that owes its venerable appearance to the skill of a "Brummagem" mechanic.

In the same vein, I have a considerable interest in, even respect for, those ancient psychological fossils which we dignify by the name of religion. So long as we are content to study them in a purely scientific spirit, they are instructive and interesting enough. We can reinvest them with the life they have now lost, and so live over again the mental existence of our ancestors. But when one finds religious ideas "restored," their deficiencies glossed over, and the whole structure bearing the unmistakable impress of the modern clerical jerry-builder, then I feel towards them pretty much as I do towards an "ancient" castle, where the smell of paint and the damp of undried walls are mutely eloquent evidence of its fraudulent pretensions.

I have been more than ever impressed with this feeling by reading a recent address of the chairman of the Congregational Union, Mr. Arnold Thomas, on "The Value of Religion." There is, of course, nothing startling in a congress of clergymen meeting to discuss that subject. They, above all, are in a position to appreciate the value of religion, and, whatever doubts of clerical sincerity, as a whole, one may entertain, there is hardly only remarkable because of its practical admission that religion, in its legitimate sense, was gradually disappearing from civilised society. Mr. Thomas discovers—rather late in the day—that, whereas religious beliefs nowadays it represents a surely vanishing quantity, and altogether he is compelled to "own to a doubt whether religion counts for a great deal as a practical force in the life of our age."

It certainly required little penetration to discover this much, and the importance of the admission is accentuated by the perception of the fact that the whole tendency of civilisation is dead against the growth of religious ideas. The world is gradually coming to the same conclusion as the late Mr. Justice Stephen, that—

"If human life is in the course of being fully described by science, I do not see what materials there are for any religion, or, indeed, what would be the use of one, or why it is wanted. We can get on very well without one; for, though the view of life which science is opening to us gives us nothing to worship, it gives us an infinite number of things to enjoy.....The world seems a very good world, if it would only last. It is full of pleasant people and curious things, and I think that most men find no great difficulty in turning their minds away from its transient character. Love, friendship, ambition, science, literature, art, politics, and a thousand other matters will go equally well, as far as I can see, whether there is or is not a God or a future state."

That the frame of mind betokened by the above quotation is becoming tolerably common few will dispute. On the Stock Exchange religious belief counts for little; the member of parliament who based his position on a biblical quotation would soon be laughed down; while it is being widely recognised that social problems are far more matters of better methods of production and distribution, sanitation and education,

than of religious opinion. In the present Transvaal trouble there is a notable increase in the money to be spent on ammunition and medical appliances; but there has been no extra outlay on religion. Inventors exercise their brains in perfecting the carrying power of rifles and the killing power of bullets; none trouble about perfecting the religious beliefs of army chaplains or the carrying power of their prayers. Tommy Atkins is, after all, a pretty practical fellow, and he feels much safer behind a Maxim than he does behind a chaplain. The Bible may be the "Shield of Faith," but the sailor would consider it a poor substitute for armor plate.

And this disappearance of religion is all the more discouraging to the believer because of the character of those who reject religious beliefs. Mr. Thomas warned his hearers that "They could not honestly say that these are persons without any firmness of character, or spiritual instincts, or noble aspirations"; on the contrary, "one of the most anxious, one of the most painful [why painful?] problems that some of us had to deal with has been the problem presented by these upright, honorable, lovable persons for whom religion has no significance or charm. We have not known what to make of them, how to interpret them."

Naturally the phenomenon is depressing to the religionist. A *bad* unbeliever he could understand—even love. But a man who contemptuously rejects all religious beliefs, and yet remains a good husband, parent, and citizen, is something that will not fit in with his ideas of the fitness of things. He is depressed, and naturally so. For, when all is said and done, the crowning proof that religion is not essential is that people can be good without it.

Mr. Thomas seeks to dispose of this difficulty by defining religion as "the personal relation of the soul to God," and asking triumphantly, "Cannot that relation exist without the soul itself being conscious of it?" So that, as true religion consists in something of which we know nothing—the soul—being in personal relation to something else—God—of which we also know nothing, and as all who act truthfully and uprightly are in that relation, we are all religious, more or less, without knowing it. Everybody is religious, and, that being the case, there is no more value in one man being so than there is in him having arms and legs. It is an old trick nowadays, and one played often enough by Freethinkers of a certain type. Mr. Thomas is simply "restoring" the old building, defining religion in such a manner as he hopes will please the modern taste. The process, however, is too apparent to deceive anyone who is not blinded by prepossessions or unreasoning sentiment. As a ruin religion is respectable enough; as a "restored" ruin it becomes a laughing stock to all.

Conscious, probably, of having gone a little too far in praising unbelievers, Mr. Thomas hastens to throw in a few qualifying phrases concerning the dwarfing effects on man of an absence of a knowledge of the soul's relation to God. Not only is the nature of man dwarfed, but "morality without religion is only common prudence." Terrible indictment! and specially so when coming from clergymen who probably weigh more carefully the effects of speaking and writing on their worldly position than any other class in the community. But what is morality *with* religion? What is the assumption made by all Christian teaching but that the chief reason for doing good here is that you will be rewarded hereafter? Why does the average Christian insist that Secularism is powerless to make men good? Press him, and you will find the reason is that if this is the only life we shall live, if there are no future rewards and punishments, then there is no earthly reason for behaving oneself. "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Of all forms of interested action Christian morality (?) is the most pronounced and the most obnoxious. It is greed with a thin coating of piety; the lowest kind of self-interest glossed over with a spurious altruism.

Is it not curious, too, that these "upright, honorable, lovable persons" should be so terribly dwarfed by the absence of religion? When will preachers have done with such contemptible platitudes? Imagine a poor, pitiful piece of humanity, such as the average parson, dwelling upon the dwarfing of such characters as Darwin, Mill, or Spencer, because they do not come up to *their* standard or possess their knowledge!

Picture an animated bundle of mouldy superstitions, in a modern dress-suit, pitying the *Origin of Species* or the *Principles of Psychology*! Poor Spencer! If only he could have risen to the sublime heights of a chairmanship of a religious congress, how great might his fame have been! As it is, he will only be known to the world as the author of *The Synthetic Philosophy*. How many of us miss immortality by a hair's breadth?

The *Christian World*, in a leading article dealing with Mr. Thomas's address, asked the question, "Is religion disappearing?" and answered it, of course, in the negative. The article admits that the special objects of religious worship are losing their hold, but we learn to detect new methods of God's working. Indeed, the writer is quite confident "that Christ to-day (is) far more interested in our political developments than in our so-called Church questions.....the discovery of steam-engines and railways is of more value to His kingdom than the councils of Nicæa and Chalcedon." So that even Jesus himself is not free from the all-pervading influence of Evolution. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God.....and all these things shall be added unto you," Jesus is reported to have said over eighteen centuries ago. Now, according to the *Christian World*, his advice is, "Seek ye first the steam-engine and political developments, and the kingdom of God shall follow."

Yet, despite all these attempts to harmonise ancient beliefs with modern knowledge, religion is gradually dying away. And its demise is rendered all the more certain by the fact that it is being brought about by forces of which the majority of people are unconscious. People may resist a syllogistic demonstration of the falsity of their beliefs, but who can remain proof against the insidious forces that, unknown to them, undermine the whole frame of mind upon which religion rests? How many people have remained staunch against the most eloquent plea for a rational Sunday, and then yielded to the seductive influence of a "bike"? How can a man continue to believe in the immorality of unbelief when political circumstances continually bring him into contact with Atheists or Agnostics, who are in every way worthy and admirable men? How can Christians continue to believe in the distinctive excellence of Christianity when the printing-press, cheap books, the study of comparative religions, have all combined to show them the same features in other religions and among other people? And how can they continue to believe in the permanence of their own creed when a glance at the face of history shows it strewn with the bodies of dead gods and the remains of worn-out systems? It is not, after all, the direct attack upon religion that does the greatest damage. This is effected by the steady development of civilisation, which induces a temper of mind, a method of thinking, and a standard of life by which all religions are sooner or later tried and found wanting. C. COHEN.

Chaplains of the Forces.

AMONGST the War Office announcements in a recent *London Gazette* appeared a series of appointments of chaplains to the forces. These appointments were mostly described as of the second or third class. From which we were at liberty to infer that the first-class chaplains were already in the field. Of course, the particular rank or grade of these military men of God is of no consequence to anyone but themselves. The services of the third class are probably just as efficient as those of the first—neither less nor more so.

The only questions of interest that arise are, Why have these clerics gone to the seat of war? What do they suppose they are going to do whilst they are there, and why—remembering the lamentable failure of their prayers at home—should anybody think it worth while to invite them to pray abroad?

By long usage, they are allowed a position on the military staffs for which they draw their pay, and from which they derive a certain amount of prestige. Their claim to inclusion rests mainly on the traditions of belligerent arrangements in times gone by, when both military leaders and their men were deeply imbued with religious principles, or made a great profession of being

so, and when the *casus belli* was often more or less sectarian, and pious fanaticism reigned supreme. Then the men of God had not only an important place, but an immense influence, in camp and field as well as at court. With the progress of time and the development of thought, that state of things has undergone a great and salutary change. Modern warfare is conducted on less holy and less hypocritical lines. The man of God has been gently but firmly pushed more and more to the rear, where he has been kept more and more out of sight, out of mind, and, for his own benefit, out of harm's way. He is not, and never was, exactly an ornament; he is now simply a time-honored, though useless, adjunct to be nonchalantly endured.

Tommy Atkins, in the bulk, has no special liking for him, any more than he has for the chaplain's clerical and non-military *confrères* at home. Enlistment does not make T. A. any holier than he was before. Obviously, when he starts on a campaign, he thinks more of a cheery "send-off" from the Prince of Wales than of all the preliminary blessings of all the parsons put together. His heart responds more readily to the genial and encouraging cheer of the Prince, who is honestly mortal like himself, than to the sanctimonious benedictions of the greatest of the self-elected "mouth-pieces of God." In actual service no more attention is bestowed on the army cleric than he is able to extract by his own efforts to push himself forward. As a rule, he is a man who will *not* be ignored. It is often so with the official who fears his occupation will soon be gone. Usually he secures the ceremonial deference he demands, and that is about all. Taking the whole of the non-combatants of an army corps, and considering who could best be dispensed with on active service, is there any doubt that a commander would immediately, even if reluctantly, resolve to part company with his dear and devoted friends, the men of God? We can be sure that he would not retain them in preference to the surgeons, dressers, ambulance-carriers, and nurses. Even the humble baggage-dragging quadrupeds would be preferred, if a stern choice had to be made.

Suppose we take any one of these army chaplains who have gone out, and trace his recent history. It doesn't matter whether he is first, second, or third class, or mere lumbering "goods." Ever since he was ordained, he has been praying, "Give peace in our time, O Lord," though when there has been a chance of war he may have done his little best to bring a conflict about. He has ostensibly devoted himself to the service of the Prince of Peace, though he associates himself, hand and glove, with men of war. Every Christmas time he has been expected to specially discourse on "Peace and goodwill to all men," though the sermon may be delivered in barracks. For some months prior to the Boers' ultimatum, he, in common with his clerical brethren and the bulk of English Churchmen, were offering special prayers for peace, in obedience to episcopal commands. Such, at any rate, was the public appeal to the Deity, whatever may have been the private desire of professing Church people and other Christians. We know the response that has been made—a marvelous answer to prayer, which should be marked up as an ever-neglected devotional exercise.

Then the army chaplain proceeds to the war that he has been praying might never break out. What is his outfit? Bibles, Prayer-books, hymn-books, and tracts—perhaps some wafers and wine for that solemn piece of nonsense, the Holy Eucharist. A lot of use this pious impedimenta at the seat of war! If there had been any efficacy in it during the last few months, there would have been no war at all. Well, a pretty figure this military man of God cuts on the field, or somewhere safely in the rear. There he is—discredited before he embarked; his precious nostrums that he carries with him already proved to be absolutely of no avail, if the fact they have not afforded some sanction to the very results he is now bound to deplore; his prospects of useful service purely visionary and problematic. He cannot stop the conflict; all that he can hope to do is to alleviate some of its saddest features. And how does he propose to do that? Why, by the aid of this same wonderful Bible, Prayer-book, and hymn-book that he has been using all along with such wonderful results. Say that he cannot achieve impossibilities—that it

there was to be war, there would be war. In that case, one naturally asks where was the use of praying against it? Working and praying for a result are two very different things. The one means reliance on our own efforts; the other an expectation of assistance from a heavenly source. It is the latter that the man of God specially devotes himself to; and in that he and his followers have already signally and disastrously failed. In this connection it is absurd to talk of impossibilities. All things are possible with God. That is why he is appealed to when human resources seem to be exhausted. A rotten reed, indeed, has he proved himself in this great and terrible emergency.

Perhaps it will be said that the army chaplains, as well as other Christian ministers who appealed to the Deity for peace, are no more to be reproached with not having averted the carnage of war by their prayers than are the army surgeons when they fail with their instruments, restoratives, and bandages to save the mortally wounded. But there is a wide difference. Surgical appliances and treatment are tangible and well-tried methods frequently attended by surprisingly successful results. Can the same be said with equal truth and confidence of the use of Bibles, Prayer-books, and hymns? There are, of course, the vouched-for instances of pocket Bibles stopping deadly bullets. These and other comic tales may be told, but there remains the indisputable and overwhelming fact—the Bible and Prayer-book have not stopped the war.

The Lord in his wisdom has determined otherwise, which shows how impertinent his servants must have been to endeavor to dissuade him from that which he had decreed since—perhaps before—the creation of the world. But supposing it had turned out otherwise—supposing there had been peace, who can doubt that that result would have been claimed as an answer to prayer? The jugglery is too transparent. In the one event it is "the unfathomable wisdom of the Almighty God"; in the other, it is "the power of prayer." We are now having a taste of the "unfathomable wisdom."

One is led into these general reflections by the desire to make clear the precise position of our friend, the army chaplain, now serving God and Her Majesty's forces abroad. Does he realize the bearings of events on his calling and the duties he has set out to perform? He has laid himself out to preach and pray for the British forces. Why shouldn't he also pray for the Boer forces, and how is he going to do both? He may, of course, pray that the British will speedily whip the Boers; but that is a fine method of forgiving one's enemy and turning the other cheek to the smiter, and carrying out Christ's doctrine of the non-resistance of evil. What kind of confidence in his praying does he think he can inspire in Tommy Atkins, who has noted the initial failure of the prayers of the Church at home? If God has allowed so many combatants to go to their earthly doom in spite of all appeals, what chance is there that any supplication of any individual will meet with a favorable response, whether offered by Tommy Atkins himself or by the chaplain on his behalf?

But there is "the spiritual consolation to be offered to the wounded and dying." Yes, a cheap kind of succor, to be accepted for what it is worth. Spiritual consolation will not mend a split skull, a shattered leg, a broken arm, or extract a bullet from the chest. The chaplain can do no good in that direction. What can he do? He cannot open the gates of heaven. They don't even seem to know him there. When he went knocking and begging for peace just a little time ago no notice was taken of him. Perhaps it was thought he was a bit of a humbug, and that his appeal was not sincere. Why does he hope for a hearing now? Why should mortals place any reliance on his protestations and promises as to a hereafter, about which he knows no more than other men? The real practical sympathy and succor are afforded by the surgeons and their assistants. If that fails, then there is nothing else to look to, and the dying soldier must resign himself to the fate which is the last sad fortune of war.

Sometimes army chaplains are said to be men of great personal courage and devotion to duty, and that their intrepidity has an inspiring effect. Then let them drop their Bibles and Prayer-books, shoulder a rifle and bayonet, and fight.

FRANCIS NEALE.

South African War Explained.

IN the glorious realms above
God is seated on his throne,
Overflowing with a love
Exclusively his own.

There are angels old and young,
There are saints from every stage;
From the Bishop to the Bung,
From the Princess to the Page.

But he is not satisfied
With such mixed and motley choirs;
Stale hymns, so often tried,
No longer he admires.

Some old saints are rousy grown,
Some have throats that cannot sing;
They'd been hurried to the throne
Through the pressure of a string.

"Go to! Let's have a change
From this raspy-throated crew;
Let's through old Terra range,
And pick up something new.

"There's old Kruger, full of grace,
Leads a godly lot of fools;
There's the pious British race
Mrs. Guelph benignly rules.

"Let us raise a row between
These two Christian sets of folk;
And the outcome will, I've seen,
Be a very pretty joke.

"Pete will have a busy time,
From early dawn till late,
Passing spooks from Afric's clime
Through the famous golden gate.

"Then we'll have a splendid choice
From which to form a choir,
British swaddies in full voice,
Throats and lungs that never tire.

"And such fossils as old Dave,
Moses, Aaron, Abe, and such,
Better mind how they behave
When we're having hymns in Dutch.

"Go to! Let us go down
And stimulate their folly;
It matters not a brown
Who's the victor, Krug. or Solley."

T. CLARK.

Colonel Robert Green Ingersoll.

AN ACROSTIC.

COLD lies thy philanthropic heart, and silent now thy tongue
Once eloquent in Right's defence, or bold denouncing Wrong,
Lampooning old mind-fettering creeds, despite the priestly ban,
Or pleading with forensic skill the cause of some poor man;
No helpless fellow-heretic e'er found a better friend,
Ever and always ready his thought-freedom to defend,
Lest barbarous laws or bigot priests should a brave spirit bend.

Richly endow'd with brilliant wit and fluency of speech,
Of genial disposition, quick to censure or to teach;
Bravely denouncing Error, Wrong, exalting Truth and Right,
Emancipating honest Thought from Ignorance's might;
Religion—"Purity of Heart"—found a staunch friend in thee;
Theology—"Priest-fashioned Faith"—had no worse enemy.

(Go, insolent Theology, and hide thy worthless head!
Reason's bright heaven-trimm'd lamp its light doth o'er our
pathway shed;
Eternal Truth needs not thy aid to guide her through the
earth;

Ever anon does Genius to some new Truth give birth;
Never didst thou aid Science—nay, thy fiat caused its dearth.)

"Inspired" absurdities thou didst unceasingly attack,
Not men but creeds thou aim'dst to kill! or mercilessly hack!
"Glad tidings of great joy" was thine; but not o' the Chris-
tian brand;

Eternal Hell—a ruthless God—and ready-made Sin to hand,
Religious phrases on the tongue and guile within the heart;
Salvation from—not by—this Faith 'twas thy forte to impart;
Oh yes, thy tongue spoke grander "joys"—the Liberty of
Mind!

Liberty, too, of modest speech, untrammel'd, unconfin'd,
Life's richest boon, sweet Liberty! the birthright of mankind.
H. NEWBERRY.

The President of the Michigan Temperance League was the Rev. H. Tessmer, Lutheran; but, when his congregation at Lawrenceburg, Ind., cut his salary down 100 dollars per annum, he left the pulpit, and opened a saloon in Cincinnati, O., where, he says, he is doing first rate.

Acid Drops.

IN May, 1891, President Kruger was requested to allow his name to be used as a patron of a ball in honor of Queen Victoria's birthday. His reply, through his secretary, F. Eloff, was as follows: "I have been instructed to inform you that His Honor considers a ball as Baal's service, for which reason the Lord ordered Moses to kill all offenders; and as it is, therefore, contrary to His Honor's principles, His Honor cannot consent to the misuse of his name in such connection."

When, in May, 1898, a certain application from the Sheba Gold Mining Company was before the Boer Volksraad, Deputy Taljaard objected to the word "participeeren" (participate) as not being Dutch. "I can't believe," he said, "that the word is Dutch; why have I never come across it in the Bible, if it is?"

In July, 1892, the First Raad discussed the proposal to exterminate the plague of locusts. Mr. Roos contended that locusts were sent by God, as in the days of Pharaoh, and the Transvaal would be loaded with shame if it tried to raise its hand against the Almighty. Other members followed in the same strain, quoting largely from Scripture.

In August, 1895, the First Raad discussed a proposal to prevent the impious practice of firing up into the clouds to bring down rain, in defiance of God Almighty. The Government was ordered to take steps to prevent any repetition of such unholy proceedings.

These few samples will give the reader some notion of the old-fashioned ideas of the Boers. The people are brave and hardy, but backward, and President Kruger, whose piety is half sincere and half politic, has used their prejudices to prevent all reform in the Transvaal. He has thus played into the hands of his enemies, and given them a plausible pretext for destroying the independence of his country. Had he been wise in time, and less familiar with God, he might have averted the present catastrophe.

General Cronje, who took Dr. Jameson prisoner, is a very pious man, who seems to share President Kruger's belief in special providence. It is said that when the shelling was going on at Krugersdorp one of his companions asked him to shift into a safer position. "If God," he replied, "means me to be taken, I shall be shot, wherever I sit; and if he does not, I am as safe here as anywhere else."

Lord Onslow, speaking at Guildford, said that there were good and agreeable men with whom he differed on the London County Council. Even his experience of the Socialists served to remind him of the old saying, that the Devil was not as black as he was painted. The Devil, he had no doubt, would be a charming companion, full of anecdotes of a sporting character.

We have said much the same thing ourselves, and it was accounted "blasphemy." When we were in Chicago we said that we would sooner breakfast with the Devil than with a clergyman, as his conversation would be so much more instructive and entertaining. This was caught up by the newspapers, and one clergyman denounced it as "infamous."

The Presbyterian Church, Carlisle, was filled with a large congregation, and they were singing:—

All praise to thee, my God, this night,
For all the blessings of the light.

Just then the light went out. There had been an accident with the Carlisle electric-light apparatus.

Attention is drawn by the *Daily News* to the fact that "large sums are raised for building and restoring churches in districts where cottages and drainage are a disgrace to Christianity and civilisation." But what is the use of complaining in this manner? While we have priests they will look after their own interests. It is quite natural that they should prefer fine churches to good cottages. The only real remedy is to do without priests altogether, and that can only be done by getting rid of religion.

While a marriage was proceeding in the Church of St. Andrew, Leytonstone, a protest was raised by the Rev. R. A. Kingdon, of St. Augustine's, Stepney, supported by two other priests, on the ground that "the man has a canonical wife living." This means that the first marriage had been legally dissolved by a divorce. The High Church party set themselves up against the law of England. However, the vicar of St. Andrew's went on with the marriage ceremony, and tied the man up again "in the name of God."

We have no sympathy for the "happy pair." They deserve to have a scene at their nuptials for being so silly as to go

to church, instead of confining the ceremony to the Registrar's Office.

The Bishop of Sierra Leone, speaking recently in London, treated his audience—if it *was* a treat—to a number of moral nursery rhymes. The latest he had heard, and wished to repeat, was this:—

Never say die,
Never tell a lie,
Never put your finger in another person's pie.

This evoked loud laughter; whether with the Bishop, or at him, is not recorded.

The Bishop of Stepney, preaching to the medical Guild of St. Luke at St. Paul's Cathedral, observed that "the clergy's reasons for belief in baptism were as scientific as the doctor's belief in vaccination." We quite agree with him. Still, the doctors do see whether vaccination "takes," and repeat the dose if it doesn't, while the clergy do not trouble about the matter. Probably all the Christians who go to hell are cases of baptism that didn't "take."

Sir Thomas Lipton has not "lifted the cup." He spoiled his chance when he took to praying.

Emperor William has just said that all true science is traceable to God. That settles it. Christian Evidence lecturers please note.

Rev. Dr. Cobb, of the Church of England, advocates a better understanding with the Free Churches. "Considering," he says, "the life-and-death struggle that Christianity is called upon to engage in to-day; the struggle with oriental philosophy under the guise of theosophy; with a polished and militant Agnosticism ably advocated by the great thinkers of the day; the crude and inept, but still insidious, hedonistic views of life held by so many; and the growing disbelief in the survival of personal life after death; considering all these, I say it is suicidal that we of the Established Church, and our friends of the great Free Churches, should be engaged in fratricidal strife while the Gaul is thundering at the gate."

Some of the English pilgrims to Rome got fixed up by the floods about ten miles from the Holy City, and were twenty-four hours in a railway carriage without food. If they believed in "Providence," they would take this as an intimation that they had better go home again. It is probable, however, that they all went on to Rome and laid their offerings at the feet of the Holy Father.

An attempt is about to be made to introduce a parliament of religions after the Chicago model at the Paris Exhibition. The eighth or last place in the list is assigned to the Christian religion.

The Limerick Town Council asked the Cork Town Council to join in its prayers that the war might end in another Majuba. At the same time, the papers recorded the fact that "the credit of the infantry side to-day must be accorded to the Dublin Fusiliers." If the Limerick Council do not wish their Hibernian brethren to be massacred, they might, at least, be a little more explicit in their prayers. It isn't fair to God. This indiscriminate and reckless praying must be confining to the most careful Deity.

Teacher—"What is the chief reason for going to church?"
Bright Pupil—"To put threepence in the plate, miss."
Bulletin.

The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge announces that, under the advice of the Chaplain-General, it has despatched a large number of Prayer-books and Hymn-books for the use of the British troops in South Africa. "More publications will be sent by the Society if, in view of the authorities, they can be advantageously used." Yes, by all means send more. They have been very "advantageously used" both at home and abroad for some time past, judging by the present exhibition of Christian love and peace.

Somebody has written to the *Spectator* that, at the precise hour when a state of war began with the Boers, he saw "directly over the sun and high up near the zenith, in clear blue sky, a portion of the arc of a rainbow." Other persons, he says, saw it. No doubt he wishes us to believe it was intended by the Almighty to represent the Union Jack in the ascendant. Some people have even made that suggestion. And this, too, on the verge of the twentieth century! Are we not reminded of Shakespeare's caustic lines?—

No natural exhalation in the sky,
No scape of nature, no distemper'd day,
No common wind, no custom'd event,
But they will pluck away his natural cause,
And call them meteors, prodigies, and signs,
Abortives, presages, and tongues of heaven.

The hardest thing yet said of Kruger is a Board-school boy's description of him as a "wickid heethin." That unkind

you will meet your slayer and Scripture-readers, like this one, in abundance. The present consolation and the heavenly prospect are alike charming. Such are the joys of religion!

"The unhappy position of curates" is the pathetic heading given by a religious paper to the report of the meeting of the Curates' Union, presided at by Canon Scott Holland. Now what do these fledglings, or old birds, who can never learn to fly, really want? They can't expect to fall into a bishop's income immediately. They can't all expect to enjoy, like the Archbishop of Canterbury, £15,000 a year.

Is the position of the unbeneficed relatively so unhappy and so hopeless? Take the majority of professional men beginning their careers. Do not doctors and lawyers have to wait long and patiently, sometimes in genteel penury, for the patients and briefs that, after all, may never come? Considering how little is expected of the men who take orders, compared with the demands made on candidates for admission to other professions, the curates have little cause to grumble, except it may be at the greed of the higher dignitaries of their Church.

Here is a "bitter cry" from Horsted Keynes, where the young rector devotes one whole page (out of a total of two) in his parish magazine to an elaborate proof of his distressful circumstances. He admits that his living furnishes him with £375 a year and a house (and with other items not accounted for). But he has to pay his rates and taxes, and to keep his house in repair and his garden in order, and to remunerate a staff of servants, etc.

"No wonder, poor man," says the *Christian World*, "he finds himself at last with very little income left. One would imagine from this pitiable plea that other people (who commonly have rent to pay) go scot free of rates and taxes and repairs. On the ingenious method of this country clergyman most of us could prove that our income is practically nil. However, with noble resignation he concludes: 'In no sense are we complaining.' We should think not!"

Can Protap Chunder Mozoomdar be called a Christian? That might be a question of the hour, if anything apart from the war could just now command attention. Babu Bipin Chandra Pas, according to Hem Chandra Sarkar, says that that there is really no ground for believing that Mozoomdar is a Christian in anything but name. He has come out as a religious reformer, and in some of his recent addresses and writings he uses expressions which are Christian; but, like Keshub Chunder Sen, he uses them in a sense different from that of the Christian Church.

Though Mozoomdar has spoken of a personal relation with Christ, he has also used the same terms with reference to Buddha and Chatanya, so that, if the Christians can claim him, the Mohammedans might do likewise. 'Tis sad to think of it, but Protap Chunder Mozoomdar must be regarded as outside the pale. There is, it is said, an *abandon* about his language. We are sorry to hear it. He has, perhaps, been following too closely the diction of the Old Testament.

With great surprise, Mrs. Humphry Ward has discovered that Christians do not care to have the foundations of their faith assailed. She says: "A critic tells us, perhaps, that certain portions of the Gospels or Acts are not history, but poetry and legend; that the fourth gospel is the freely composed work of an Ephesian Presbyter of the early second century; that the book of Revelation is a Jewish apocalypse interwoven with Christian additions; that even the Apostles' Creed contains earlier and later deposits and statements of very different authority; and that the Nicene Creed is the production of a Greek philosopher working on the soil of the Gospel—and instantly there is a cry that faith is attacked!"

Naturally enough, too, one would think. If that is not attacking the faith, what is? It is only, of course, a mere sample of possible criticism, but it is damaging enough as far as it goes.

We have read in the inspired Word of God that "Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap." In the face of this solemn prophecy, gathered from the pages of Holy Writ, it does seem inexplicable that a full-blown "Reverend" should announce as the title of a lecture "Damascus the Immortal." The name of the shepherd who is thus misguiding the lambs of Jesus Christ is the Rev. E. Haskett Smith, M.A., F.R.G.S., and he is said to be the editor of Murray's *Handbook to Syria and Palestine*. Students of the *Freethinker* who desire further information are referred to the current syllabus of the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society.

The Rev. A. W. Savory, vicar of Hessle, near Hull, seems to be a very amiable person to entrust with the spiritual instruction of the rising generation. The Sculcoates Board of Guardians found it necessary to write to him the other day

respecting the chastisement of a seven-year-old lad, an inmate of the cottage homes at Hessle, by a teacher at the rev. gent's Church Sunday-school. Weals were found on the child's body and legs. The Rev. Savory writes back defending this treatment, and stating that it was necessitated by the "boy's repeated disobedience and bad behavior" at the Sunday-school.

Then says this tender-hearted, love-inspiring man of God: "The children under my charge and care shall be taught to do right and behave well; and if, in extreme cases, there is nothing for it but to follow the scriptural teaching of 'sparing not the rod,' the rod shall not be spared." Further he adds that the seven-year-old boy deserved "a jolly good caning," and suggests that the complaint of the guardians is evidently meant as a "throw at the Church of England." Poor Church of England, to be saddled with responsibility for the conduct of such an arrogant clerical brute!

The Rev. W. H. Abraham, who is the vicar of St. Augustine's, spoke at the board meeting in condemnation of his brother cleric's letter, which another guardian observed was a very "unsavory" letter indeed. The *Eastern Morning News* has a sub-leader on this instance of clerical brutality, and caustically inquires whether "a jolly good caning" is the most suitable accompaniment to religious teaching and a befitting incident in a Sunday-school.

The *British Weekly* has a peculiar method of mixing up advertisements with its paragraphs, which sometimes gives very amusing results. Thus, at the end of one column last week, we read that "very shortly a new building will be erected in connection with the Baptist

LIMPING LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, who suffer from Corns and Bunions and Enlarged Toe Joints, should use," etc.

Dr. August Lowenstein contributes to the *American Journal of Sociology* an article on crimes committed under the spell of fanatical religious beliefs. It is a shocking record, and the curious fact is that many of the fanatical sects have justified their deeds by very forcible appeals to scriptural and other religious teaching. He commences with the "Convulsionists," a sect existing in Paris in 1760, who were wont to crucify members in imitation of the fate of Jesus. In 1865 adherents of the "Holy Men" slew their sick children, believing them to be victims of demoniacal possession. In 1875 a Hungarian belonging to the "Nazarenes" killed his son as an offering, after the fashion contemplated by Abraham.

In 1870, says Dr. Lowenstein, one of the "Schismatics" at Irkutsk convinced himself by prayer and fasting and much scripture reading that to save his soul he must be crucified, and accordingly he attempted self-crucifixion. In the government of Tamboff, Russia, a peasant, convinced that to save his soul a man must have a sin to repent of, killed a neighbor with an axe in order to satisfy this highly imperative condition. One of the sect called the "Wonderers" killed twenty-five men, women, and children, including his own wife and babes.

Dr. Lowenstein mentions, among other fanatical sects, the Russian "Scourgers," who were in the habit of indulging in human sacrifices, cannibalistic feasts, erotic dances, and other lewd procedures, as a method of keeping the hand of evil from their immortal souls. Also, he refers to the sect which was given to a species of self-mutilation indicated in Matthew xix. 10-12. Altogether, Dr. Lowenstein's article is unpleasant reading, as showing how easily religious belief may turn the balanced minds to suicide and crime.

Joseph Symes's View.

It seems that we are on the very verge of war in South Africa, and we see no reason for changing front and favoring the Boers. We think, for once, that Great Britain is in the right, and wish her all success. We sincerely hope that our rulers in England will keep their weather eye open, and be prepared for any onslaught from a combination amongst the European powers. There are people in Europe with no good blood for Great Britain, who hate and envy her too, and would like to break up her empire. Let us hope that heads of the empire are fully alive to these facts; and let us also hope that no bungling general will be engaged in command in South Africa. A war should never be conducted with all necessary; and then the fight should be conducted with all possible skill, energy, and determination. We have no enmity against the Boers; but the question which is forced upon the British for immediate decision is, Who is to rule in South Africa? If the British cannot rule there, they will soon not be allowed to rule anywhere. The Boers stand alone; their defeat will not injure the world; the defeat of the British would mean world-wide dismay and rain. —*Joseph Symes, in the "Liberator" (Melbourne), September 9.*

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 29, Athenæum Hall, London, W.; 7.30, "The Dream of God."
 November 5, Athenæum Hall; 12, Birmingham; 26, Camberwell.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 29, Glasgow; 30, Renfrew. November 1, Airdie; 2, Motherwell; 3, Carluke; 5, Aberdeen; 6 and 7, Dundee; 12, Liverpool; 19, Camberwell. December 10, Manchester; 11, Bolton; 17, Manchester.—All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your weekly batch of cuttings.

A. J. MARRIOTT.—If you can show us that we ever contracted to agree with all your opinions, we will apologise (at least) for venturing to think independently.

JANE WILLIAMS.—You will probably see this answer, as your father takes the *Freethinker* every week. There has been a great deal about Ingersoll in our columns of late because his death occurred so recently. He was a great and good man. Get your father to let you have some of Ingersoll's lectures to read.

G. BERRY.—Your letter is rather late in arriving, but we are glad to hear of Mr. Cohen's successful lectures at Stockton on October 15. We know there is plenty of scope for Freethought propaganda in that district. Next year will be a much brighter one for our work all over the country.

J. JONES.—Thanks for full address.

L. G. BARTRAM.—Shall have attention.

G. J. WARREN.—We regret to hear of the death of your father, and tender you our sympathy in your bereavement.

JOHN HELM (Port Hope).—Your message has been conveyed to us. Thanks for your good wishes.

G. DAWSON BAKER.—See paragraph. We thank you for your kind letter. You are doing good work for Freethought, and need not distress yourself because you cannot also give it financial support.

W. M.—Thanks.

J. OSCAR.—Sorry to hear of your trouble. Never mind, as far as the Company is concerned. We take the will for the deed.

E. A. COOLINA.—Your order is handed to Mr. Forder, to whom please send direct in future.

X. L.—The book you mention is not of any commercial value. Cicero was a very eloquent speaker and writer; scholars all praise his exquisite Latinity; but he was a very unsatisfying personality, and even of his moral compositions it may be said that there is plenty of fine leafage and little fruit. Substantially, one page of Marcus Aurelius is worth the whole of him.

T. WILMOT.—Your letter was sent on to Mr. Foote, who was away from London. We have only time and space to note that you close your lecturing at Station-road, Camberwell, to-day (October 29) with a lecture by Mr. Pack.

T. PERKINS.—Never mind. We hope your prospects will soon improve. None of us can do the impossible. We are sure you do wish you could take fifty Shares.

W. W. L.—Details of the last moments of the Freethinkers you name are given in Mr. Foote's *Infidel Death-Beds*.

YAPERS RECEIVED.—People's Newspaper—Huddersfield Examiner—Lorch of Reason—Liberator—Newcastle Evening Chronicle—De Vrije Gedachte—The People (New York)—Eastern Morning News—Two Worlds—Truthseeker (New York)—Freidenker—Sale of Man Times—Sydney Bulletin—Crescent—Der Arme Teufel—Presbyterian—Public Opinion.

It being contrary to Post-Office regulations to announce on the wrapper when the subscription expires, subscribers will receive the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

Letters for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 28 Stonecutter-street, London, E.C.

The National Secular Society's office is at No. 377 Strand, London, where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 28 Stonecutter-street by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

The *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS:—Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. Displayed Advertisements:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Special.

READERS of the *Freethinker* must pardon me for worrying them so much—as some may think—about the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. I am not acting simply in my own interest, but in the interest of the Freethought movement, now and in the future. This enterprise, if it thoroughly succeeds, will be of the highest value. It will both develop our propaganda and place it, as far as possible, beyond the accident of anyone's personality. For these reasons I venture to press the matter again and again upon my readers' attention. I want to see the whole 5,000 Shares taken up before Christmas. Up to the present the applications are very gratifying and encouraging. Nearly 400 Shares have been applied for during the past week. But there is still room for fresh subscribers, and I hope they will move in without unnecessary delay.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Oct. 29), taking for his subject "The Dream of God."

In spite of the wretched fog, a good audience assembled at the Athenæum Hall last Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa." After the lecture there were some questions, which were followed by discussion. Three speakers took the platform, but did not answer any part of the lecture. They simply delivered their views on the Transvaal question. In each case they were strong pro-Boers, who considered the lecturer a partisan because he did not denounce everything British and praise everything Boerish. They had not the least idea that they were partisans themselves. The last of these three critics, a young man, spoke with a most amusing air of God-Almighty cocksureness, having no conception of the complexity of human affairs or the complexity of human character.

Mr. Foote took the view, broadly, that the real quarrel in South Africa was about Dutch and British ascendancy, and that racial passions and ambitions would never be curbed by religion. Only when reason superseded faith, and humanity superseded theology, would war tend to cease. Meanwhile, the great thing was to spread Freethought. To try to stem the war-fever at present, either amongst Boers or Britishers, was just like howling at the northern blast or making faces at the midday sun. For the rest, it was not true that the fault was all on one side; it was on both sides, and British rapacity was matched by Boer obstinacy and lack of progressive statesmanship.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts lectured three times in Hull to capital audiences. Friends were present from Grimsby, Beverley, and other places within twelve miles. We are pleased to hear that Mr. Watts was in good form, and that on each occasion he was enthusiastically applauded.

To-day, Sunday, October 29, Mr. Watts lectures three times in Glasgow, and during the week he lectures in Renfrew, Airdrie, Motherwell, and Carluke.

Members of the Secular Society, Limited, will please note that the Annual Meeting will take place at the Manchester Hotel, Aldersgate-street, London, E.C., on Wednesday evening, November 15, at 8 o'clock. Mr. Foote, as Chairman of the Board of Directors, will preside and read the Annual Report, which will afterwards, no doubt, be printed with the balance-sheet. Formal notices will be sent to members by post, with proxy forms, which can be filled in so as to give the proxy vote to Mr. Foote, on behalf of the Board. This only applies, of course, to members who cannot attend personally. We may add that the member's signature on a proxy form must be written over a penny stamp and attested by a witness.

Freethinkers who are inclined to leave something in their wills to the Secular Society, Limited—which is, so to speak, the legal fortress of the National Secular Society—may be glad to have a form of bequest for their guidance. The following, as a special clause in a will, has been drawn up by the Society's solicitors: "I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £—, free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy." This is short and simple, and perfectly sufficient.

A Glasgow Freethinker, who has taken Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, in sending his remittance to the Secretary, writes as follows: "I wish to

ask you to convey to Mr. Foote, and all helping in the masterstroke for the cause, my best thanks for their work on behalf of mental freedom. My duty to others compels me to lie low and take the coward's place in the fight; but I hope—and work—for the time when I will be able to stand on my own feet and be a man. If in the near future I am able to take more Shares, and they are not all taken up by others, I will again write you with enclosure." This gentleman is not such a coward as he seems to imagine. Those who are free to fight in the open for Freethought must not give themselves airs of superiority over others, who may be just as brave, but are bound, perhaps by many strong ties, to silence and inaction. If those who are thus unfortunately placed help the cause financially, as they can do without any sort of publicity, they perform what is possible, and that is all which can be expected of the best of us. It is those who do nothing in any form that are a scandal to a movement.

Mrs. Ingersoll, in acknowledging the vote of condolence sent to her by the National Secular Society's Executive, writes as follows to the Secretary: "My Dear Miss Vance,—With sincere gratitude and appreciation my daughters and I acknowledge the receipt of your beautiful and tender letter, and of the resolutions passed at the Executive meeting of the National Secular Society. It is indeed a consolation to know that our overwhelming sorrow is shared by my dear husband's English admirers and comrades in the struggle for intellectual liberty. With assurance of our heartfelt thanks, I am, faithfully yours, EVA A. INGERSOLL."

The National Secular Society's Executive, at its last meeting, on Thursday evening, October 19, resolved to subscribe one guinea towards the Fund which is being raised on behalf of the widow and children of the late Tom McCarthy, and also requested the President (Mr. Foote) to bring the matter before the Freethought party through the *Freethinker*. It will be best to let the contributions of our party go into the Fund together. We, therefore, beg those who intend to subscribe to send their donations to the N.S.S. Treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, 21 Australian-avenue, London, E.C., who will acknowledge them in our columns. The late Tom McCarthy was, we understand, a Freethinker. Anyhow he gave his life to the cause of the people, and his devotion should be recognised in the only way that is now possible. We cheerfully add our own half-guinea to the N.S.S. Executive's subscription.

The Humanitarian League has sent round a press notice to the effect that it will be happy to supply applicants with free copies of Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword*, which shows the terrible cost and suffering caused by war. It is amusing to see Mr. Foote's name dropped out of this notice, even in newspapers like the *Echo*. We suppose it would never do to admit that any good thing could come from the President of the National Secular Society.

Mr. L. K. Washburn is now the sole proprietor, as well as editor, of the *Boston Investigator*, the oldest Freethought paper in America, which will soon be celebrating its seventieth birthday. In the last number before us Mr. Washburn makes a moving appeal for financial support. He says—and we know it to be true—that it is hard to work and pay yourself; and he asks the *Investigator* readers to find him a fund of ten thousand dollars, so that he may keep his fine old flag flying as bravely as ever. We hope he will get it.

Zola spent his enforced leisure in England in finishing his novel entitled *Fécondité* (Fecundity), which we hope to review in an early number of the *Freethinker*. An English version is being prepared, but not by Mr. Vizetelly, who says that "English public opinion—prejudice, hypocrisy, call it what you will"—would not stand a faithful rendering, and he declines to "maim and mangle" the book for the English market.

Helen Gardener, who has been rusticated in Orange county, New York, avers that this is a true tale. We have always believed it:—A Mr. Cole, who lives near here (that is, in Orange county), was a great swearer by habit. Also he was high-tempered. Likewise he had a deficient vocal implement, which was due to his "palate." Hence he talked queerly and resented any fun made of him on this account. He got "converted" in Newburg at a revival. The converts were called on to "bear testimony" at the end of the revival. His turn came, with this result: "Brother Cole, will you now bear testimony for the Lord?" Brother Cole: "I hank (thank) the 'ord (Lord) for wha e's done for me." Voice across room: "Will Brother Cole speak a little louder? We want his testimony to encourage the younger ones who have come to the fold since he found grace." Brother Cole (with voice elevated): "I hank the 'ord for wat he's done for me, and I—!" Another voice, of deacon up front: "Brother Cole, we can't hear you up here. A little louder, please." Brother Cole (on his ear, and suspecting a "guy," voice lifted to a roar): "I said I hank the 'ord for wat he's done for me! Now, damn you, did you hear that?"—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Christian Religion in the Walworth-road.

To the superficial observer, not skilled to penetrate beneath the surface of things, there is probably but one thing in this world more solemn than a funeral, and that is religion. Short of death itself, nothing seems more awful than the Scheme of Salvation. Only think of it!—to Mr. John Smith, Nonconformist and cheesemonger, simply the most stupendous thought that can engage the attention of the watery custard which he is pleased to consider as representing the human mind. For, be it remembered, it is not alone the weal or woe of all living human beings, including Mrs. Smith and "the kids," but also of generations of Smiths yet unborn, that may be involved in the awful issue.

The very perpetuity of the Scheme, in a vanishing world, where all things are passing away even as a dream, seems to impart a quality of awe to the perception of the average believer. Now, to a merely superficial observer, as already remarked, all this seems most solemn and impressive. That, however, only shows how deceptive are appearances, and how foolish it is to look at any question whatsoever with only one eye, as is said to be the habit of dicky-birds. The unfeathered biped, Man (with a big m), should know better. A more philosophic view of the matter would infallibly lead him to another conclusion. So far from religion being a serious affair, it is simply a joke. An expensive and elaborate joke it may be, but nonetheless a joke. You cannot tell what the religious circus is going to be like by looking at the beautiful posters on the walls. In all nations it has been customary from time immemorial to invest religion with an air of gloom. So it was "in the beginning," is now, and must be, even in the Walworth-road.

The mere circumstance of that respectable tradesman, Mr. John Smith, finding Jesus in his fiftieth year is enough to set his friends on the alert. They know that when he goes psalm-smiting his countenance will exhibit the tragic expression of a dying duck in a thunderstorm. His every word, look, and action will contribute to the sentimental anguish of the spectators.

Mr. John Smith, Junior, is compelled to check the tide of his laughter with a sigh. Miss 'Enrietta Smith, his sister, finds that "pa's condition" clouds the gaiety of the delights of sweethearting. Like Banquo's ghost at the feast, the bleary-eyed picture of melancholy imbecility overawes the flow of soul. But if "finding Jesus" is anything but a laughing matter, how much more dreadful are the after-effects. Resplendent in shiny broad-cloth, Mr. John Smith conveys his family to the nearest tin tabernacle. If he has the disease badly, this will become the rule every Sabbath. He is under the spell of religiosity, and as proud of it as a corpse with two tombstones. Master Johnny can hardly contain himself for speechless transport as he finds that his Sunday fishing excursions are no longer to be tolerated. He turns green with envy when he passes the splendid pageant of the greengrocer's boy and the postman's son with rods and bait-cans on their way to the "still waters" of the Surrey Canal.

Miss 'Enrietta, who is neither so blind as a bat nor so deaf as an adder, may easily envy 'Arry and Mary Jane treading the primrose paths of dalliance. What would she not give for the chance of starting the stitching in 'Arry's heart herself? As for Mrs. Smith, she is firmly convinced that all this piety springs from an insane desire of her lord and master to be considered "respectable." In one of her confidential chats over the tea-table with Mrs. Jones, the publican's wife, she expressed her private opinion with a powerful metaphor: "Find Jesus, my dear! I had as lief go to sea in a ship on fire."

But what the deuce does Mr. John Smith gain by this finding of the blessed Savior? The Bible is nearly perfect. He reads it daily, and his verbal knowledge is local to help him. The literature of Israel is too intensely local to help him in his daily life. Sharon and Lebanon, Jerusalem and that ever-blessed Mesopotamia, hardly affect this worthy tradesman as they affected them to whose sense they were actually present. He cannot usefully adapt Semitic thought with sides of bacon, or with the cheerful

occupation of cutting cheese with a wire. He cannot, with any success, apply Oriental ethics to the every-day business life of the Walworth-road. Hence his admiration for the Rev. Mr. MacHellecinders, who instructs him as if the Bible were of yesterday and the facts were modern fifth-edition journalism. Hence the delight of that professional soul-saver and the limitations of poor Mr. Smith.

MIMNERMUS.

Practical Romish Morals.

In the Romish sect had ever shown any sign of repentance and a desire for reformation, I should not be so severe upon it. But an infallible body cannot repent or reform; and we are quite justified in believing that confessionals, convents, and priests are as vile now as ever. If not, when, why, and wherefore did they begin to reform? And where is the evidence? If the Romanists have any evidence to offer calculated to show that the priests and nuns are not now unmarried husbands and wives, that infanticide and other species of murder are not perpetrated in those secret places now, let them offer it. If they are silent, and so long as the convents are not open to Government inspection to the fullest extent, we cannot be guilty of doing them an injustice when we assume that they are dens of every vileness now, as formerly.

If space permits, we shall have a word more to say of this below.

THE CONFSSIONAL.

The Council of Trent enjoins an entire confession of all mortal sins, and "all the circumstances which gave a particular complexion to them." Even sins of desire only must be fully confessed. There is nothing possible or conceivable to man, as a male, and when alone, but what the priest must insist upon knowing. There is nothing possible or conceivable to a female, and when alone, but what the priest is bound to worm out of her. There is nothing possible or conceivable between two of the vilest females, or between two of the vilest males, but what the priest must fully know before granting absolution. No, nor is there anything possible between a male and a female, the vilest in the world, but what the priest must probe to the uttermost (see Donovan's translation of *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Dublin, 1829, pp. 270-285).

The Good Confessor, by Martin Marley, D.D., Doway, a fully-authorized work of the "Church," says all sins must be fully explained, such as sodomy, bestiality, incest, whether with a mother or a sister; all the aggravating circumstances are to be confessed (pp. 27, 28, 29). He who forgets a sin is bound to confess it when he remembers it (pp. 32, 37). Accomplices must be named (p. 33). "Simple people must be examined sixteen to seventeen concerning unchaste desires." Young people of every sex (pp. 60, 61). Marley admits that the Confessor runs great risks in this nasty prying into other people's purely private concerns (p. 66). In examining people respecting "Sins of Lust," he says: "Here the Confessor would need the chastity of an angel, that he should not defile himself in TOSSING TO AND FRO with an unclean matter..... There may be danger in pretending to discover the evil, by instructing in evil; and no question is to be asked of the penitent on this point, whereof you believe him ignorant. On the other hand, because the sins which God forbids by this commandment ["Thou shalt not commit adultery"] are shameful, penitents are often bashful to confess them, and the Confessor discreetly pumps (!) them; many will not sufficiently explain themselves on this head, which may be their ruin, if a Confessor makes himself too delicate, and not exact enough in questioning them" (p. 157).

Then follow rules for the Confessor's guidance—rules amply sufficient to turn the most bashful young man in the world into the most disgusting and shameless Paul As that could be imagined. As might have been foreseen, the Confessional, instead of being a remedy for vice and crime, is rather a parent of the very worst kinds, and a frightful parent too. Dr. Marley says: "Let Confessors take notice,

that never more than at present, this doctrine [of penances] ought to be practised; for A CARNAL, SENSUAL, AND EPICUREAN LIFE WAS NEVER SO MUCH IN PRACTICE AMONG CATHOLICS AS AT PRESENT [*i.e.*, in the year A.D. 1743]" (p. 441).

Here we have an open confession that the more Popery, the more carnality and sensuality abound; for Popery had then been in operation for about 1,400 years; and be it noted that it was among Catholics, not Protestants, heretics, and unbelievers, that those sins abounded and prevailed more than ever before. As Martin Marley, D.D., was one of the duly-authorized teachers of even the confessors of the Church, we dare not call in question his verdict upon the moral corruption of that Church. The state of the Church was horrible prior to 1743; he says it was worse then than ever before; and I see no reason why we should not say that it is now (1899) worse than ever. If it is not so, Secular influences must have checked its downward course, or else it must have long since reached the lowest possible depth of wickedness, and can, therefore, grow no worse.

Many Romanists cannot believe, or pretend not to believe, that the priests corrupt or seduce women in the confessional, at or in confession or by means of confession! The records of the Church are plentifully illustrated with cases, cases quite innumerable. It would be a marvellous fact in human history if the priests, bachelor priests, and their female penitents had generally withstood the temptations the Church has so carefully prepared for them. No worse incentives to debauchery can ever be invented or imagined than those offered in the confessional, the nunneries etc. We must perforce conclude that Romish priests and Romish women are very much worse or very much better than other people, if they do not indulge in wholesale debauchery, considering the circumstances. The facts are all against them.

But let us hear what Liguori, their saint, and Moran's special doctor and teacher, has to say upon this question. Whoever will take up Liguori's second volume, pp. 552-539, will find that he devotes almost seventeen pages to a Dissertation on Soliciting Confessors, or those priestly confessors who solicit and entice their female penitents to crime. Is it possible Liguori should have written all that without cause, and if such crime were not committed? Here, again, I am using the very highest authority they can name. Liguori first quotes a bull of Gregory XV., published in 1622, which declares "that all priests, whether secular or regular, ought to be denounced, who shall have tempted persons, whosoever they may be, to shameful actions, whether with themselves or with others, howsoever perpetrated, in the act of sacramental confessions.....even.....if confession does not follow, or without the occasion of confession, in the confessional or in any place whatsoever where confessions may be heard or (which) may be selected for hearing confession, pretending to hear confessions in the same (in order to) solicit or to incite, or shall have had illicit and shameful talk or conversation with them."

This passage of itself shows up in glaring light the actual character of the confessional, and must have been based upon a wide and intimate knowledge of what had been done thereat. In fact, we should regard it as the confession of a past-master in the art of confession, as the priest making a clean breast of it. It is from the bull of a pope, who may well be supposed to know from personal experience the real horrors of the confessional. The passage reveals as actualities what every rational person would expect to be the fruits of auricular confession. The bull was not issued without good reasons, as we shall probably see.

Liguori, having quoted Gregory XV., goes on to discuss and elaborate the several points and provisions of the bull. Here are some of Liguori's points:—Whether he should be denounced who solicits a woman, asking that he may hear her to-morrow. Whether he who, having heard a woman's frailty, afterwards solicits her at home [should be denounced]. Please mark that. What if a confessor should solicit in the confessional, but without simulating confession. Whether a confessor should be denounced who yields to a soliciting woman. Whether soliciting bishops ought to be denounced. [The general feeling of the authorities is against it!] Whether a confessor [should be denounced]

who solicits a woman to induce another woman to sin with him, or induce her to sin with another man.

From this we learn that the confessional has been used for procreation; that is, that the confessors become pimps, and even turn their penitents into pimps. This from an enemy would be denounced by the Papists as the vilest conceivable slander. I take it from their saint, Liguori (*Moral Theology*, vol. ii., p. 527, col. 1]. Nothing worse can be said of any man or of any institution than Liguori, by implication, says of priestly confessors and of the Romish confessional. Many persons have alleged against both the most scandalous immorality and crime that can be conceived; and after what I have quoted from Liguori there can be no reason for doubting the very worst that has been said of the priest in confession. We cannot, for a moment, believe those who would defend the confessors or the confessional, especially after what Liguori has taught respecting lying and false swearing. Truth and conscience must be very different things to a Romanist corrupted by his religious teaching, to what they are to people who regard candor, strict truth, and honor as the highest virtues, and who would scorn to shuffle.

Popish dogmas, Peter's Supremacy, Catholicity, Infallibility, Unchangeability, Transubstantiation, Absolution, Indulgences—these are such manifest and transparent lies that nothing but the most crooked, shuffling, and specious Jesuitry can defend them, even to the satisfaction of the priests' own dupes. All this is frightfully corrupting to morals. But, in addition to all this, the priests have invented and run the most absolutely abominable, corrupting, and degrading institution the world ever knew, Auricular Confession. Nothing else ever plunged human beings to such a depth of degradation, filth, and crime.

—*Liberator*.

JOS. SYMES.

Crime Amongst Church Members.

SOME time since I was told that R. G. Ingersoll had made the statement that "where Infidelity prevails to the greatest extent there is the highest type of civilisation, and that where religion prevails largely there is the least civilisation"; and my informant made the assertion that Ingersoll told what was not true, and that anyone who knew anything about the matter knew that the statement was untrue. Being of an inquiring mind, I took the trouble to examine the compendium of the eleventh census, 1890, from which I find that in the States and Territories, where religion prevails most largely, or at least where there are the most Church communicants, there is the greatest increase in crime, and a greater per cent. of the population are criminals than in other States. Below I give some of the results of my examination of the report:—

New Mexico—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 68.85; prisoners, 1 in every 749; increase in crime, 299.70 per cent.

Utah—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 61.62; prisoners, 1 in 773; increase in crime, 221.89 per cent.

Arizona—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 45.24; prisoners, 1 in 238; increase in crime, 153.05 per cent.

South Carolina—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 44.17; prisoners, 1 in 972; increase in crime, 63.59 per cent.

Rhode Island—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 42.84; prisoners, 1 in 617; increase in crime, 41.45 per cent.

North Carolina—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 42.35; prisoners, 1 in 791; increase in crime, 12.03 per cent.

Massachusetts—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 42.11; prisoners, 1 in 426; increase in crime, 16.46 per cent.

Connecticut—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 42.11; prisoners, 1 in 727; increase in crime, 19.25 per cent.

Minnesota—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 40.91; prisoners, 1 in 1,260; increase in crime, 46.52 per cent.

Now, be it noted that the above States and territories all have from forty to sixty-eight per cent. of Church communicants, and that crime is on the increase. Compare the record with the following: States whose Church members do not exceed in any case thirty-five per cent.

of the population, and where crime is on the decrease—

Wyoming—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 19.28; prisoners, 1 in 820; decrease in crime, 65.75 per cent.

California—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 23.23; prisoners, 1 to 356; decrease in crime, 8.10 per cent.

Nebraska—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 18.36; prisoners, 1 to 1,616; decrease in crime, 25.15 per cent.

Michigan—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 27.20; prisoners, 1 to 971; decrease in crime, 11.90 per cent.

Vermont—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 31.98; prisoners, 1 to 1,662; decrease in crime, 22.42 per cent.

West Virginia—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 24.90; prisoners, 1 to 1,695; decrease in crime, 6.20 per cent.

Ohio—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 31.10; prisoners, 1 to 262; decrease in crime, 0.23 per cent.

Illinois—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 31.43; prisoners, 1 to 972; decrease in crime, 4.63 per cent.

Mississippi—Per cent. of population who are Church communicants, 33.39; prisoners, 1 to 1,095; decrease in crime, 21.16 per cent.

Now, it is obvious to anyone with a grain of sense that where crime is on the decrease there must be a higher type of manhood, a higher degree of civilization, than where crime is on the increase.

I have taken the trouble to add together these percentages of population, and to strike an average by dividing their sum by the number of States in groups. In the first group, from Mexico to Minnesota, inclusive, the professing Christian population forms forty-six per cent. of the whole, and there is one criminal in every 723 of the total population; while in the second group, from Wyoming to Mississippi, inclusive, where the percentage of communicants is but twenty-six, there is only one criminal in 1,169.

That religion is the cause of crime I will not assert, but it has been proven conclusively that religion does not prevent crime. One thing is certain, and that is the religious bodies throughout the world uphold the social and economic system that is the parent of nine-tenths of all the crime and misery in the whole world.

Is it not about time this nation quit paying for chains?
M. E. SHORE.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A Samoan's Logic.

THE untutored savage is sometimes more logical than the most orthodox Puritan in his application of Biblical doctrine or story. A correspondent of the *San Francisco Chronicle* tells the following tale of his experience with one of the South Sea Islanders. He says: "While in command of a guard protecting the United States consulate at Apia, the writer was furnished with a native force of Malietoa warriors whose familiarity with the environment was supposed to recommend them for use as scouts. During the night of one of the first Sundays passed on shore, while my entire force was lying behind the barricades expecting momentarily to be attacked, these gentle and guileless Christians requested permission, through a missionary who was a refugee at the consulate, to sing a few hymns. It is hardly necessary for me to add that they were refused. Imagine my surprise and disgust a few days later to see one of these stripped converts hideously bedaubed with paint and ornaments, naked, carrying through the streets the head of an enemy (who, in this case, was said to be his own cousin) as a trophy of Christian spirit and brotherly love, the aforesaid head having been severed by the then possessor in a skirmish the morning. Expressing somewhat strongly my surprise to the missionary that one of his flock should so quickly have fallen into semi-barbarism, I was told, with an expressive and deprecating shrug of his shoulders, that it was Fat Samak and could not be helped. 'But,' I asked, 'do you not tell them that such an atrocity is unchristianlike and abhorrent to our religion?' 'Oh, yes,' replied Mr. —, 'but they answer by quoting the fifty-first and fifty-fourth verses of the seventeenth chapter of the first book of Samuel, and the gospel according to St. John, and ask, with a devout and truthful and triumphant air, if, as the scripture says, the Pharaoh God's chosen, cut off the head of his enemy, the Pharaoh Goliath, whom he killed in battle, and exhibited it, as Simon Peter, the apostle of Christ, drew his sword and smote off the ear of the high priest's servant, and it was not right why then did God approve?'"

Our Father in Heaven.

"O God, have mercy!" a mother cried
As she humbly knelt at the cradleside;
"O God have mercy, and hear my pray'r,
And take my babe in thy tender care.
The Angel of Death is in the room,
And is calling aloud for my babe to come.
Thou, thou alone, hast power to save!
O God, have mercy! 'tis all I crave!"

A tiny grave 'neath the willow's shade
Telleth the answer the Merciful made.

"O Father in Heaven, protect my boy
From the wiles of folly, from sin's decoy;
From the snares of temptation on life's dark sea,
Guard him, and keep him pure for thee."
So a mother prayed as her darling one—
Went forth to battle the world alone—
Alone, save the blessing his mother gave,
And that prayer to God to keep and save.

A murderer's gibbet, high in air,
Answered the tender mother's prayer.

A father and mother knelt them down
Together before the Eternal One,
And, with trusting hearts, implored that Heaven
Would guard the flower its grace had given—
Would keep their blossoming daughter pure,
And guard her eye from the tempter's lure,
And from every stain would keep her free
As the lilies that bloom in eternity.

A self-slain lost one, seduced, betrayed,
Was the only answer Heaven made.

A beautiful maiden knelt to pray
For the life of a loved one far away—
Away in the fields where life and death
Hang poised in the scales that tip with a breath:
"O Father of Mercies, protect the heart
Of him I love from the foeman's dart,
When the death-bolts ride on the charging field,
Be thou his strength and guide and shield."

A mangled corpse and a soldier's grave
Was the answer the Father of Mercies gave.

The night was dark on the ocean's breast,
And the waves rolled high in wild unrest,
Where a stately bark was dashing on
Toward a breaker's crest, with her rudder gone.
Around the capstan, in wild despair,
The crew had gathered and joined in prayer
To him who only had power to save
And deliver them from a watery grave.

A crash and a gulping wave alone
Was the answer of the Omnipotent One.

At noon of night, in the city's heart,
When slumber reigned over home and mart,
The firefiend burst from his secret place
And wrapped all things in his fierce embrace.
Oh, then how many a frenzied prayer
To heaven for safety rent the air!
For homes! for lives! for loves!—and then
"Amen!"

Homes, friends, and loved ones crisped and charred
Told how heaven the prayers had heard.

From the earliest dawn of nature's birth,
Since sorrow and sin first darken'd earth,
From sun to sun, from pole to pole,
Where'er the waves of Humanity roll,
The breezy robe this planet wears
Has quivered and echoed with countless prayers.
Each hour a million knees are bent,
A million prayers to heaven are sent.
There's not a summer beam but sees
Some humble suppliant on his knees;
There's not a breeze that passes by
But wafts some faithful prayer on high.
The beams smile on, and heaven serene
And the breezes murmur as still they wave,
"When man is powerless, Heaven cannot save."

CHARLES STEVENSON.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of Executive meeting, held at the Society's office, on Thursday, October 19, 1899; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were present:—Messrs. E. Bater, S. Hartmann, C. Watts, W. Heaford, J. Neate, T. Thurlow, E. W. Quay, W. Leat, H. Brown, T. Wilmot, E. E. Sims, and the Secretary (Miss Vance).

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. The London County Council's by-laws, affecting the sale of literature in the parks under their control, were discussed, and the President advised the delegates present to consult their respective branches, and report to the next meeting.

The Secretary was instructed to write to Rochdale concerning the proposed formation of a branch in that town.

An appeal from the committee who are raising a fund for the widow and children of the late Tom McCarthy was read, and it was resolved: "That this Society contributes £1 is. towards the Fund, and asks its President, the editor of the *Freethinker*, to make a statement concerning the appeal in that paper."

The Camberwell delegate reported the recent disturbances in Brockwell Park; other matters of business were dealt with, and the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

The Tom McCarthy Fund.

DOCK WHARF RIVERSIDE AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION.

THE death of Tom McCarthy has left a void in the ranks of labor. Seeing the usefulness of his life, and the readiness with which he gave of his life and labors to the movements jointly working in the interests of humanity, we feel sure that gratitude for his many services will prompt a ready recognition of obligation to the widow and children of the deceased.

A strong committee has been organised to raise a fund on behalf of those left, and your hearty assistance is urgently requested. All amounts collected will be acknowledged in the Press.

We shall be glad to work conjointly with any district committee which may be formed for the purpose of collecting funds.

We do not think it necessary to give biographical details, but feel his work is the best testimony of his worth, and the claim upon our sympathies is for the children who are left without a father, and the mother who is left without a husband.

We trust there will be a prompt response to our appeal, as help quickly rendered is the best.

The names of the members of the committee are as follows:—John Burns, M.P., L.C.C., W. Steadman, M.P., L.C.C., S. Woods, M.P., Ben Cooper, L.C.C., C. Freak, L.C.C., W. Crooks, L.C.C., H. M. Hyndman, Tom Mann, Ben Tillet, J. McDonald, G. Barnes, H. Brill, I. Mitchell, Tom Chambers, Percy Alden, S. Lidgett, J. Sexton, W. Hugh, W. Stevenson, J. Deller, J. Scurr, A. M. Thompson, J. Clayton, B. Alpass, H. Quelch, J. Spargo, W. Thorne, H. Orbell, W. Gorman, T. Davies, A. J. Evans, J. Wignall, H. Seer, W. Harris, C. Bowerman, F. Brien, F. Foster.

BEN TILLET, *Secretary*.

TOM MANN, *Chairman*.

S. WOODS, M.P., *Treasurer*.

Kindly address all communications to Ben Tillet, 425 Mile End-road, London.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

[Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on post-card.]

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Dream of God."

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A Concert.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Sunday."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, John M. Robertson, "Barbaric Survivals in Ethics."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "St. Augustine's 'City of God.'"

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CAMBERWELL (Station-road): 11.30, E. Pack.

S. L. E. S. (Peckham Rye): 11.15, Mr. Newland.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.

WESTMINSTER (Grosvenor Embankment): 11.30, H. Hunter.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): Willie Dyson—11, "The Ethics of Evolution"; 7, "A Defence of Atheism."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton) : 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Monthly Entertainment.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): C. Watts—11.30, "Secular View of Existence"; 2.30, "Emancipation of Thought"; 6.30, "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him."

Huddersfield (No. 5 of Friendly and Trades' Club, Northumberland-street): H. Percy Ward—11, "Man's Reason and God's Revelation"; 3, "Ingersoll and his Gospel"; 6.30, "Shall we Live After we are Dead?"

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Gustav Smith, "Onward we Go."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, L. Small, B.Sc., "What do we Know of God?"

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Dr. Nicolson, "The Evolution of Israel."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Joseph McCabe—3, "The Modern Jew"; 7, "Life in the French Army." Tea at 5.

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