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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Kruger's Dream.—III.

A FEW words will be necessary about the man Paul Kruger. Friend and foe alike agree that he is a strong man, gifted with great patience, tenacity, and courage. It would be too much to say that he possesses the higher intellectual endowments, but few men are his match in shrewdness and cunning. The last word has an unpleasant sound, but we do not mean to use it in its worst and lowest meaning. What we wish to convey is that, in our opinion, Paul Kruger is a past-master in the game of politics. He is simply wonderful in shifts and wiles. The way in which he has kept his seat all these years, and got the better of almost everybody who has crossed his path or plans, is really amazing. He seems to have the art of deceiving without exactly telling lies, of making promises which he does not intend to keep in the spirit, and of qualifying every offer with conditions that are by-and-by found to render it valueless. To the impartial student of finesse there is something infinitely engaging in the history of Paul Kruger's dealings with the leaders of the Reform movement amongst the Outlanders, and even with British diplomats. But such a character has its obviously weak side. It is ultimately powerless against an adversary, who is bent upon bringing things to a crisis, and has the strength and determination to face the worst issue.

Let us pause to consider the view of Paul Kruger which is taken by Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was secretary of the Reform movement in Johannesburg, and whose book, *The Transvaal from Within*, as far as its facts and figures go, was none too highly praised by Lord Rosebery. Taking all things into account, it can hardly be said that Mr. Fitzpatrick's picture of the head of the Transvaal is drawn with bitterness, or even with unfriendliness:—

"In the history of South Africa the figure of the grim old President will loom large and striking—picturesque, as the figure of one who by his character and will made and held his people; magnificent, as one who in the face of the blackest fortune never wavered from his aim or faltered in his effort; who, with a courage that seemed, and still seems, fatuous, but which may well be called heroic, stood up against the might of the greatest empire in the world. And, it may be, pathetic, too, as one whose limitations were great, one whose training and associations—whose very successes—had narrowed, and embittered and hardened him; as one who, when the greatness of success was his to take and hold, turned his back on the supreme opportunity, and used his strength and qualities to fight against the spirit of progress, and all that the enlightenment of the age pronounces to be fitting and necessary to good government and a healthy State."

Here is another striking passage from Mr. Fitzpatrick:—
"President Kruger does something more than represent the opinion of the people and execute their policy: he moulds them in the form he wills. By the force of his own strong convictions and prejudices, and of his

indomitable will, he has made the Boers a people whom he regards as the germ of the Afrikaner nation; a people chastened, selected, welded, and strong enough to attract and assimilate all their kindred in South Africa, and then to realise the dream of a Dutch Republic from the Zambesi to Capetown."

This is a great and splendid dream, and we cannot think the worse of President Kruger for cherishing it, however it conflicts with the other dream of a great British empire in South Africa. He is not to be blamed for being a Dutchman and preferring his own race to ours. We may have a right to our own ambitions, but we have no right to dictate his; nor is it conceivably his duty to further our ends at the expense of his own. Both sides have an equal right in the eye of impartial justice. But in the very nature of the case these rival ambitions were bound to end in open hostility.

But is it a fact, the reader may ask, that President Kruger has cherished this dream? Well, we think the facts tend to prove the affirmative. We do not wish to dogmatise upon the subject. We are quite willing to hear our own opinion controverted. All we shall protest against is the partisan spirit which seeks to denounce and suppress free discussion in the interest of ready-made conclusions.

It is a general impression amongst one school of politicians in England that President Kruger's exclusive policy and military preparations date from the Jameson raid—a mad and criminal act, which entailed quite incalculable trouble, bitterness, and eventual bloodshed. But the truth is, as far as we can ascertain it, that President Kruger's policy has been one and the same ever since he was first elected President in 1882. His visit to London, to negotiate the Convention of 1884, was a bold and masterly stroke; although we do not agree with him that this Convention abolished the suzerainty expressed in the Preamble of the Treaty of 1881. It was the Articles that were altered, and the Preamble only; and there was no necessity to repeat the Preamble. Then, with regard to the Franchise, it is not true that the Jameson raid nipped President Kruger's reforming tendencies in the bud. Directly after the Treaty of 1881, in spite of the verbal assurances given to Sir Evelyn Wood, the Franchise was narrowed; it was narrowed again and again, until the Dutch were put in full possession of political power, and the Outlanders, especially the British, were put in the position of political helots; and, by arranging that children born in the Transvaal should take the political status of their parents, the next generation was also cut off from participation in the rights of citizenship. Even when a Municipality was granted to Johannesburg, it was so devised that the Boers, who numbered about one-tenth of the population, held the preponderance of power. One of the two representatives of each ward had to be a burgher; two of the wards were entirely in the hands of the Boers; and the burgomaster was appointed by the Government with a right of veto. President Kruger made many promises with respect to the Franchise, but he never kept them. The Jameson raid which occurred was not the cause of the

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exclusiveness; it was one of the *symptoms* of what the Outlanders regarded as an intolerable condition of things. Look next at the Education question. Even as late as the end of 1896, while the sum spent on Dutch schools was £63,000, the sum spent on Outlander schools was only £650, the conditions being such that no more could be obtained. President Kruger's policy was to keep everything he could for his own race, and when the Boers were inadequate to supply the *personnel* of his government he imported Dutchmen from Holland. We do not believe he ever meant to give the franchise to the Outlanders. To do so would have been to sound the death-knell of absolute Dutch supremacy. It was nothing to him that the Dutch enjoyed equal rights with the English in Cape Colony and Natal. He meant to maintain the Boer oligarchy. No doubt the Jameson raid gave him a fine opportunity in this direction. President Kruger's enemies were all put in the wrong, and had to sing small. The Johannesburg reformers were all muzzled. The right of public meeting was practically suppressed. But the Outlanders' industry contributed more and more funds to the Transvaal exchequer, and the President went on arming his own people to the teeth. There seems no room to doubt that he was preparing for war. A series of military flukes, though he did not see them in that light, had led him to despise the British soldiers and regard them as an easy prey. When he launched his ultimatum at the British government he was ready, and the Orange Free State was ready, and they expected to win by swamping Natal before the British reinforcements could arrive. It was grandiose, but it was fatuous. President Kruger would probably have done much better if he had remained strictly on the defensive. By assuming the aggressive he has played his last big trump, and it seems likely to be taken. If he is beaten, and no other end seems possible, he will have to pay the penalty. What that will be we do not pretend to say. But we venture to hope that the victor in this struggle will not forget justice and mercy; and also that the settlement after the war will secure equality for Dutch and English through the whole of South Africa.

G. W. FOOTE.

Evidence of Secular Progress.

It has long been with us a settled conviction that all mundane progress has been the result of the application of secular agencies to the requirements of mankind. Despite the boast of the Christians that their faith has been prolific in improving the human race, there is no record in history of the Church having done anything of importance for the secular advancement of the general masses. Let Christian exponents note this allegation, and refute it if they can. Until they do so, all their cry about the progressive nature of Christianity is simply "sound and fury, signifying nothing." Perhaps there is no better way of proving our statement, as to the inutility of Christian teachings for the practical duties of daily life, than by contrasting the condition of society when it was under Christian rule with its position in more recent times when public life is conducted upon secular principles. It has been aptly observed that, with our leading reformers, "life has become mundane, secular, rational, non-theological, spent amid the hard, practical conflicts of politics, and aiming at nothing higher than the advancement of justice, of righteousness, and of liberty in the world."

What did Christianity do during the Middle Ages, when she was mistress of the situation and had no counteracting influences; when all shades of "infidelity" were forcibly crushed, and private judgment was an unknown quantity? What was the result of Christian influence then? Physical bondage, intellectual darkness, and moral corruption. These were the fruits of unimpeded Christianity. For a thousand years the Church had absolute sway, without imparting any scientific knowledge, without allowing any mental freedom, and without fostering ethical culture. It encouraged that religious bigotry which so long proved a powerful impediment to the advancement of scientific truth and to the acquisition of general knowledge. In the first place, geology was alleged to be untrue; and every fact demonstrated by the early scientific writers

was regarded as an instance of their insanity, and all fossil wonders disclosed were referred to the limited explanation of the Noachian deluge. Finding that threats and intimidations failed to check the advance of truth, persecution and imprisonment were the weapons used by Christians towards those whose only "crime" consisted in investigating the laws of nature, and in making those laws known to others. For ages science had a hard struggle with the exponents of the Church; but, thanks to the indomitable courage of secular reformers, it has now triumphed, and Christianity is powerless to crush the forces of science as it once did. As Archdeacon Farrar wrote in the *Forum* ten years ago: "No one who is acquainted with the history of science, and has sufficient honesty to accept facts, can possibly deny that scarcely a single truth of capital importance in science has ever been enunciated without having to struggle for life against the fury of theological dogmatists. In every instance the dogmatists have been ignominiously defeated." Here we have evidence of secular progress, for science is the very basis of our philosophy.

Even Jesus manifested no knowledge of science, and therefore he lent his influence to the perpetuation of mental darkness, which was so dense among his followers in the early history of his faith. He ascribed diseases to demoniacal possession, or to causes which he thought could be removed by a simple invocation to heaven. The scientific method of cure found no favor with him. Besides, he failed to impart to his disciples any knowledge whereby disease could be either prevented, mitigated, or cured. It should not be forgotten that the progress of medical science is to be traced through the Arabic physicians, for in the Saracenic universities of Spain were trained most of the doctors of repute before the fourteenth century. Up to that period Christianity had produced but few alleviators of pain. For the eight hundred years during which the Moors held Spain, the condition of that country presented a striking contrast in literature, in medicine, in sanitation, in agriculture, and in manufactures, to the ignorance, the superstition, and the filth which abounded under Christian rule. Secular progress is clearly seen in the fact that to-day medical men, as a rule, do not allow Christianity to interfere with their scientific work. Medical practitioners, who have mastered the facts of their profession, and who can retain a belief in the New Testament theory of curing diseases, must be satisfied with a faculty for reconciling the "sublime and the ridiculous."

It is not, however, in the realms of science alone that secular progress is evident. Advancement is clearly perceptible in other directions of human thought. In the acquirement of practical wisdom and the cultivation of an improved moral sense the present secular age is decidedly progressive. It is a palpable orthodox fallacy to suppose that, so far as the nineteenth century is civilised, we are indebted for that onward movement to Christianity. We once more repeat, and emphasize the statement with all possible force, *that we defy the advocates of Christianity to show that the New Testament contains the factors of modern progress.* And if they cannot do this, what right have they to endeavor to mislead their credulous and uninformed followers by asserting that human progress is the result of adopting the Christian faith? The religion of the Churches originated in delusion, was fostered by ignorance, and has been perpetuated by fraud. This is no reckless allegation upon our part, inasmuch as, if it is denied by any leading and intelligent clergyman or minister, we are prepared to prove our statement in public justice. While we readily admit that all believers are quite justified in holding what opinions seem to them correct, we cannot refrain from showing how groundless, in fact, their theological views are. Shams have flourished too long, and it is the duty of every lover of truth to seek to supplant these deceptions by realities.

Take, for instance, the question of morals. Where, in Christian history, can the names of men be found who can surpass in ethical culture such philosophers of the "Pagan" world as Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Euclid of Megara, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius? The writings of these men transcend anything which has appeared since their day. It is largely to their genius that we are indebted for that purity of thought and

that vital force of ethical teachings which are always essential to the intellectual elevation of a nation. It is not on the perplexities of theological faith, but rather on the light of cultivated reason, that we must depend for the deliverance of mankind from the ignorance of the past, the despotism of the Church, and the machinations of the priesthood. It was not through Christianity, but in consequence of the revival of learning at the Renaissance, that a great impetus and a new momentum were imparted to the human mind. The limits beyond which the Roman Church had for centuries prohibited any advance, without a threat of the axe, the rack, the dungeon, and the stake, were then overstepped by the aspiring and emancipated intellect. Those old landmarks of the limits of former inquiry were very justly despised, as the memorials of barbarian ignorance; and an appeal was made from the dogmas of sacerdotal authority to human nature, human science, and human thought. Intellect again asserted its supremacy, as it did in former times in Greece and Rome. And then commenced a new era. The power of the Church was crippled, superstition was checked, and the potency of reason was recognised.

Then it was that secular progress dawned, and, although in its various stages of advancement it has been retarded by priestly interference, it has gone triumphantly on until to-day, when science, education, and free inquiry have taken the place of faith in the alleged supernatural, contentment in ignorance, and slavish adherence to the traditions of the past. This we regard as evidence of secular progress, which has been achieved in spite of the persistent opposition of a mind-degrading theology.

CHARLES WATTS.

Converting the Jews.

Given an amount of intelligence no higher than can manifest itself in a species of crude cunning, or a state of honest but hopeless ignorance; given, further, a smattering of religious phrases belonging to the lower forms of evangelical Christianity—whether conviction is behind or not matters little—and there is no career under the sun that holds out so much promise to such an individual as that of a missionary. The foreign mission-field is an almost inexhaustible sphere of operating openings to men of enterprise not overburdened with conscience. So long as these latter are of a generally benevolent character, aiming at reducing some of the misery that centuries of Christianity have bequeathed to us, we may, if we are charitable and gullible, put them down to mistaken benevolence. It is when we turn to purely propagandist missions that the nature of the imposture becomes clear; and of this class of missions there is none more open to criticism and censure than "The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews," or, as it has been called, "The Society for turning bad Jews into worse Christians."

One surprising feature I have noticed about missions to Jews is the proportionately large number of retired army officers that support them. The London Society has no less than three out of its five vice-presidents belonging to this class. A man goes to India, serves a few years in the Army, returns home with a ruined liver and the effects of a sunstroke, and at once develops a passionate desire to convert the lost sheep of Israel. I remember one retired Major-General who was in the habit of attending some of my provincial meetings, and who would give me no rest until I accepted an invitation to take tea with him. After repeated refusals, I went. Woe is me! For two mortal hours I suffered martyrdom while my good-natured but cranky host lectured to me on the glories of Israel and its ultimate salvation in Jesus. I never before realised so thoroughly the force of Heine's remark, that "Judaism is not a religion—it is a misfortune."

I have just finished the report of "The London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews" for 1898-9, and I find the account of the last year's work quite in line with the Society's previous performances.

The aggregate income of the Society for the past twelve months was £37,669 4s. 7d., the expenditure £38,439 14s. 11d., leaving a deficit of £770 10s. 4d. to be added to an already standing debt of over ten thousand pounds. The two secretaries of the Society, the Rev. W. Fleming and the Rev. W. T. Gidney, share between them £833 annually, so that these two gentlemen can hardly be said to sacrifice much in laboring for the "Lord's people." In England the Society has 109 stations, and employs 51 agents, voluntary helpers not being reckoned in the report. There is a staggering list of the number of tracts, etc., distributed, the Society evidently treasuring up an exact account of all leaflets given away. In London alone 60 Bibles, 445 parts of Bibles, 417 New Testaments and 1,774 parts, with 7,130 tracts, were distributed, with what result we shall see presently. This branch of the work evidently admits of almost infinite extension.

When we ask what result this distribution of literature bore in the shape of converts, the reply is somewhat discouraging. London, which takes over £3,000, £2,081 of which goes in salaries alone, does not seem to have provided a single convert. Throughout England the Society claims to have made in twelve months twenty-eight converts. Of these twenty-eight, however, twenty turn out to be children—secured by what methods we are left uninformed—so that we may fairly put down the converts for the year at eight. Further, as four of the converts belonged to the "Operative Jewish Converts' Institution," we may not unreasonably assume that poverty had something to do with their conversion. It is, indeed, notorious that Jewish converts usually belong to the needy foreign class. The better-class Jews, better intellectually or socially, are seldom or never touched. One agent, Miss Dora Barry, confesses she has "tried to reach a Jewish family of the better class, but, though I have been again and again, I cannot gain admittance" (p. 23). Miss Barry must be a beginner, or she would be on her guard against speaking the truth in such a dangerous and unmissionary-like manner. And the Rev. S. T. Bachert, another missionary, says: "I have met on several occasions Jews of high intellectual calibre who have forsaken Judaism, not, however, to enter the Christian Church."

No, it is the needy foreigner who is captured, and the *modus operandi* is simple. In a large percentage of cases the convert is one who is well known as a professional "Schnorrer," and who has drained Jewish charitable organizations of all that they feel inclined to give. When further charity is refused it is a common threat that they will go to the mission for help. Their next step is to get placed on the missionary's list as an "inquirer," a title that figures prominently in the reports. All the missionaries tabulate the number of "inquirers" they have, and an "inquirer" may mean anything, from one who asks a question out of pure curiosity to one who is on the point of conversion. Usually these inquirers have a regular weekly allowance, and are, of course, quite willing to keep on "inquiring," at a salary, for an indefinite period. This, however, is not allowed. After he has served the purpose of figuring in the annual report, he must either become converted or leave; and even after conversion, when he has figured in a second annual report, he is got rid of as speedily as possible.

Another plan is for a missionary, in the guise of a brother Jew, to visit a possible convert, sympathise with him upon his poverty and his ignorance of English, and then promise to find him a place where the language will be taught him and work found. He is taken to the "Operative Jewish Converts' Institution," and for the time being set to work for a small sum weekly. But here he cannot remain for more than six months, unless he accepts Jesus. Many leave, a few remain and agree to conversion. During the time of probation all goes well. After being baptised, and ranking in the report as a convert, trouble begins. The object is to get rid of him to make room for newcomers. Ultimately, in spite of an original promise that he would be employed for at least three years, the poor devil is got rid of. What becomes of him after, the society neither knows nor cares. In the majority of cases he simply rejoins a Jewish community where he is not known. Indeed, if the existence of the society depended upon

the production of ten per cent. of the converts it claims to have made during the last ten years, it could not produce them. This is no idle boast, but the expression of an actual fact.

We have not yet finished with the twenty-eight converts—twenty of which are children, be it remembered—that figure in the annual report. Their appearances in the report remind one of a lightning-change artist on the stage of a music-hall. Page seven gives the twenty-eight at one sweep; page eight gives another instalment of a score; page ten gives two instalments of eleven and nine; page twelve impresses the reader with two batches of five and two respectively; and finally page twenty-one lands another instalment of four. By this method twenty-eight converts appear in the report as *sixty-nine*. The latter number is not actually named, but the report is evidently designed so as to produce that impression. Practically all the converts number, as I have said, eight, each one representing the work of six missionaries for twelve months and an expenditure of nearly £5,000.

Apart from conversions, some very wonderful feats are achieved. The Rev. O. J. Ellis, chief of the London Mission, reports the glad tidings of having "held conversations with 420 Jews during the year." The Rev. A. Bernstien has also held "interesting religious conversations." He reports no converts, but drags in two of the irrepressible and omnipresent eight. The Rev. N. Herz, who attends the Mission Hall, Goulston-street, has made no converts, but "one great and blessed result of our united endeavors is, that in no previous year have they given so many copies of the Scriptures away." Highbury seems to be making rapid progress. In 1897 the Rev. Paul Bendix noted the "significant sign that many Jews at present take part in the celebration of Christmas, not religiously, but socially." This year the power of the Gospel has shown itself, and the same individual writes: "It is a fact that some of them have a Christmas-tree." Hallelujah! First Christmas festivities, then a Christmas-tree; soon we may expect to see the Jews of Highbury helping to celebrate the birth of Jesus by getting drunk "alleg samee Clistian," as Bret Harte's Chinaman would say.

Mrs. Guttman is a lady who gets on remarkably well. She visited 2,011 houses, spoke to 3,005 people, gave away 201 Bible portions and 527 tracts besides other books, and her conquests consist of a woman who is reading a book and whose "questions to me are delightful," and an "elderly Jewish gentleman who is always pleased to receive me and to converse on the Messiahship" (p. 20).

There is the same story of progress (?) in the provinces. Mr. G. Priestly, Swansea, plaintively remarks that the attitude of the Jews "towards me is one of supreme contempt" (p. 23). Liverpool makes no converts, but has given away 6,053 Bibles, etc. Miss Werfel, Birmingham, is "thankful that the work of the past year has been most encouraging." Her encouragement consisted, from her report, in having induced a rich Jewess to accept a tract. And, finally, the Rev. E. T. Sherman, Hexham, reporting for Newcastle and district, has no converts, but about twenty Jews came to his house, "some for help, others as pedlars." I think this last is the gem of the report. And these are the wonderful results that are considered worth chronicling, and all that the society has to offer as the result of a year's expenditure and work in Great Britain! Is the game worth the candle? To the two rev. gentlemen who draw £833 annually, or to their subordinates who squeeze a living out of the movement, probably yes. But what of the general public? How long will it take to convert 8,000,000 Jews at the present rate of increase? How much will it cost to convert the 8,000,000 at the present rate of payment? And how much are they worth when they are converted?

Of all Christian missions, that to the Jews has the least justification. Other missions may plead that they are taking to lower races a superior civilisation; that by the introduction of different habits of life these peoples will be benefitted. The Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews can plead no such justification. No one pretends that the Jew is made any better in any of the relations of life by becoming a Christian. Whatever he was before conversion, that he

remains afterwards. The sole object here, from the standpoint of the misguided subscribers, is a religious one; from that of the agents employed, a means of relieving the over-stocked clerical labor market; from neither point of view do the results justify the cost. C. COHEN.

The Country Parson.

WE all know him—that is to say, all of us who have been brought up in the shires, and especially those who continue to have some location in rural districts. The location may mean simply a residence for a few months or a permanent occupation from one year's end to another. In either case, it is sufficient to lead to an acquaintance with the vicar or rector of the parish, and to the formation of a pretty accurate estimate of his character, personal and ecclesiastical. And, as the parsons differ very much in their characteristics, it is natural that the estimates of them should vary, as they do, to a very surprising degree.

Nevertheless, the parsons—good, bad, and indifferent—have certain points of resemblance. They are all, to some extent, tarred with the same brush; and, from the nature of their calling, none are without blemish to the critical eyes and ears of the non-religious or Freethinking parishioner. Of course, the local cleric may return the compliment by imagining, and even hinting at, terrible defects in his Rationalist neighbor, who does not care to submit to his ministrations, or who, if he goes to the parish church on special occasions and allows strong solicitation, listens with disturbing coldness and keenness to the sermon, and perhaps goes home and makes very unkind comments in the family circle. But, after all, a rural parish is a very circumscribed area, and regard to inhabitants, whatever it may be in respect to acres. Therefore it happens that the parson and the Rationalist resident are necessarily brought very much in contact, and, if courtesy from either side becomes reciprocal, some kind of neutral acquaintance sooner or later arises.

Then the parson begins, if he has not done so already, to correct some of the notions that form part of the old, but now largely discarded, traditions of his caste. He probably finds that his Freethinking neighbor is not so much a bad fellow after all. He may even compare him, with mental capability, in character and conduct, with some of his orthodox parishioners, with no particular advantage to the latter. He may engender an earnest desire to bring this lost lamb to the fold. Obviously in this endeavor it is necessary to drop for a time all reference to the great "mysteries" of faith which are such terrible stumbling blocks to doubters and absolute unbelievers. But there is danger—great danger—to the parson who essays this task. It is a subjective, rather than an objective, risk that he is pretty peril being not so much in the resistance he is pretty certain to meet with as in the possible consequences of his own preparation and reflection. In religion, as in law, an advocate with an active and open mind may strive to argue a point so clearly and impartially as to eventually to entertain serious doubts whether, after all, he is right. Often, of course, the effort of advocacy ends in conviction, as the actor identifies himself with his part. But we are here talking of open and candid minds, and not of hireling advocates or mimic representatives. And so we say that when the parson leaves mere "exposition"—by the way, what a blessed good-merit "exposition" is!—and send to many a pulpit that "exposition" is—and launches out into controversy on a wider field than that of mere sectarian squabbles, God in heaven knows where he may eventually land himself. The obturate parishioner may say little or nothing; the controversial parson is pretty sure to find that he himself has said too much. If, of Broad Church tendencies, he may have made so many concessions that he hardly knows whether he has left himself any ground to stand upon, he may find that he has given up for the moment, and for the sake of argument, so many important doctrines and creeds that he is reduced to fighting for the very existence of God!

Supposing he is not brought by his own eagerness or the force of opposition to this stage—initial or final

according to the way in which it is approached—he has probably suffered a great deal, controversially, on the way. He has heard doubts and difficulties expressed—or incidentally they have arisen in his own mind—that the authors of the text-books of his old divinity student days never seem to have dreamt of, and upon which no examining chaplain, when he took orders, ever thought to question him. He may be led, as many a broad-minded cleric before him, to make investigations in certain directions where the novelty and heresy have had an irresistible fascination, and where he has been brought to a sudden stop by considerations of a purely personal and domestic kind. In this way, or in other ways—for many roads lead to Rationalism as well as to Rome—the minds of some, perhaps numerous, country parsons have been disturbed. Who knows the number of ivy-covered vicarages and rectories dotted about rural England, in which behind their placid exteriors there may not be hidden away, as the spiritual skeletons in the cupboard, terrible doubts not only as to Jonah's whale, but Jesus's resurrection? Let the *Church Gazette*, which should be able to form some opinion upon this matter, answer.

Perhaps the larger proportion of country parsons can hardly, by any stretch of imagination, be included in this broad-minded section. The bulk, it is regrettable to say, are mainly distinguished by their arrogant, insolent bigotry; and too frequently by a crass ignorance which at this time of day is simply astounding. There are parishes where a genial parson, by personal example, by sound honest precept, by a common-sense policy in all his preachments and dealings, inevitably and rightly, from a purely personal point of view, commands respect. But how few are the parishes in which this state of things can be said to exist? From time to time we read in the newspapers of instances of extraordinary clerical conduct very often amounting to actual scandal. The accounts usually turn out to be substantially correct, and the explanations of apologists weak and absurd. The Dissenting ministers of the localities can be relied on not to minimise these unpleasant incidents. Perhaps, indeed, they are often contributory to them by way of incitement, always, of course, in a spirit of brotherly Christian love. The country parson, as a rule, hopes and aims to be on good terms with his Dissenting ministerial brethren in Christ; but there is always an uneasiness—an ever-present sense that some unexpected circumstance may lead to a rupture and much reviling.

Sometimes the parson of, say, the parish of Slocum-mud imagines that he is called upon from on high to emerge from rural obscurity, and to challenge, as may be, Herbert Spencer or some great scientist who has pursued his studies with an absolute indifference to and forgetfulness of, Christianity—perhaps the more annoying because it is quite undesigned. The Slocum parson, of course, fails to enviably distinguish himself; possibly remains unnoticed—the saddest fate of all. Very likely we find him a little later venting his indignation, through the parish magazine, on the "infidelity of the age."

Even such aggressive bucolic clerics are to be preferred to the sleepy incumbent, who is quite content with a congregation of half-a-dozen, who reads an unoriginal sermon after snuffling through a dreary service, and who only wakes up when he has walked out of the sacred edifice" and proceeded to inspect his poultry and his pigs.

The proud boast of the Church of England used to be that she placed a gentleman in every parish. The standard, some little time ago, discussed this point, and in answer to some clerical complaints, said that, if some of the clergy were not treated as gentlemen, it was probably because they were not entitled to be regarded as such. It further pointed out, what has been of late acknowledged on all hands, that the candidates for previous orders have been in recent years much below the level of the future of the country parson—say a century or two hence, when the present tendency to cast off theological shackles of whatever kind has had freer and fuller play—well, that opens up so wide a field of consideration that the subject may be fittingly reserved for consideration later on.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Shakespeare and the Bible.

"I am nothing if not critical."—IAGO.

A RIGHT reverend worm-of-the-dust known as Bishop Wordsworth once, in the intervals of professional soul-saving, endeavored to exploit Shakespeare in the interests of the religion of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. It was worthy of the official of that Church which buried Charles Darwin in Westminster Abbey, and consigned the remains of doubting Thomas Huxley to the grave "in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection"! Bishop Wordsworth's attempt to show that Shakespeare received his supply of inspiration from the same August Tap as the anonymous, and sometimes ridiculous, authors of "The Holy Bible" was foredoomed to failure. Comparisons are proverbially odious; but this particular rivalry works out so much to the advantage of the writer, whom an admiring Frenchman called "the divine Williams," that our readers will perhaps pardon us referring to the matter somewhat in detail. The right reverend body-snatcher argues that Shakespeare was an evangelical Christian because, forsooth, he made frequent use of the Bible.

The Atheist Shelley also made use of the Bible; but we have not yet heard that he was a fit person to run a Sunday-school. Shakespeare was a world too wide for any theology. He never fretted and fussed about the salvation of his soul. He was no more a Christian than Lucretius or Omar Khayyam, Montaigne or Rabelais. Let us see how Shakespeare did use the Bible. He puts plenty of Biblical allusion in the mouth of Sir John Falstaff. Listen! "In the state of innocency Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in a state of villainy?" Bardolph's face reminds him of hell-fire and Dives that lived in purple. His face is like the Devil's kitchen, where he does nothing but roast malt-worms. Then, how Sir John ridicules hell-fire: "I think the Devil will not have me damned, lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire." When he dies, trusty Bardolph exclaims: "Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in hell"; and Mistress Quickly replies: "Nay, sure he's not in hell; he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom," substituting, with subtle sarcasm, the legendary English hero for the mythical Jewish one.

Mrs. Page tells Mrs. Ford to dispense with such a trifle as going "to hell for an eternal moment or so," thus prophetically poking fun at Dean Farrar's nonsense concerning the eternity or otherwise of everlasting punishment.

In *Measure for Measure* the Clown burlesques St. Paul's twaddle about the subordination of women:—

"Provost: 'Come hither, sirrah. Can you cut off a man's head?' Pompey: 'If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, he is his wife's head, and I can never cut off a woman's head.'"

Elsewhere Shakespeare warns us in lines of passionate bitterness:—

In religion
What damned error but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text.

King Richard the Second compares himself to the Second Person of the Trinity, and exalts his own misery above that tearful and ill-used person. He has "three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas." So Judas did to Jesus—"he, in twelve, found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none."

In *Henry VI.*, part 2, the Royal Hunchback flippantly says: "For you shall sup with Jesus Christ to-night." In the same play (i. 3) the Duchess of Glo'ster says, with ladylike reserve:—

Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in t'hy face.

In *Twelfth Night*, when Olivia says of her brother, "I know his soul is in heaven, fool," like a dum-dum bullet comes the rude answer: "The more fool you, madonna, to mourn for your brother being in heaven"

Shakespeare, like Professor Huxley, ridicules miracles. In the scene in *Twelfth Night* between Malvolio and the Clown he represents a caricature of the idea that madness is occasioned by demoniacal possession, and is curable by exorcism.

Not contented with mere iconoclasm, Shakespeare explains miracles :—

No natural exhalation in the sky,
No scope of Nature, no distempered 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 explanation loses nothing in force by being put in the mouth of a Cardinal of the Great Lying Church.

Helena says (*All's Well*, i. 3) :—

Our remedies oft in themselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven.

Timon tells us, with caustic spleen, that gold "will knit and break religions."

The dying words of Hamlet, "The rest is silence"; the speech of the Duke in *Measure for Measure* whilst silencing Claudio's imaginary fears of death,

Thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest,
Yet grossly fear'st
Thy death, which is no more,

amply prove Shakespeare's heterodoxy. We might continue in this strain almost indefinitely; but enough has been said to convince the reader that Shakespeare, far from being a Christian, was a Pagan of the highest order.

When we compare Shakespeare's plays and poems with the Bible, the absurdity of supposing that our Greatest Poet drew inspiration from that Oriental medley is apparent. In whatever way we may draw comparisons, Shakespeare stands head and shoulders above the authors of "the source of England's greatness."

The finest attempts at poetry in the Bible, comprising, be it remembered, the works of many minds in many centuries, touch the dead level of insignificance when put side by side with the sky-soaring grandeurs of the Bard of Avon. Shakespeare's magnificent efforts cover the whole gamut of human emotion. But the writers of the Bible knew only the coarser passions. Shakespeare's language was as a quiverful of steel arrows; but these anonymous Jewish and Greek scribes could only pour out floods of lust and anger; could only utter hoarse cries of insensate fear and revenge. Compare the elementary barbarisms of the so-called Sacred Volume with the opulent originality of Shakespeare. Compare *Romeo and Juliet* with the Song which is not Solomon's, *Lear* with Job, and the *Songs and Sonnets* with the Psalms. Reading the works of the greatest Englishman, we enter a new world, ever filled with eternal meanings. We see love-sick Antony and Cleopatra in a garlanded barge lying on a bed of roses; we sympathise with brave Othello, stricken with jealousy, cruel as the grave; we laugh with Falstaff, and sorrow with Lear. It is a world of sorrows and joys; of laughter joyous and terrifying, and tears of happiness and despair. It is the epitome of human endeavor, the mockery of human accomplishment.

Compared with Shakespeare's deathless dreams, the barbaric lyrics of the Bible are merely the invocations of savages. If they had not been associated with an endowed system of religion, they would, centuries ago, have consumed to nothingness in the echoless temple of universal silence.

MIMNERMUS.

The supposition that the terrors of hell-fire are essential, or even conducive, to good morals is contradicted by the facts of history. In the Dark Ages there was not a man or a woman, from Scotland to Naples, who doubted that sinners were sent to hell. The religion which they had was the same as ours, with this exception—that everyone believed in it. The state of Europe in that pious epoch need not be described.—*Winwood Reade*.

The clerics and their lay allies commonly tell us that, if we refuse to admit that there is good ground for expressing definite convictions about certain topics, the bonds of human society will dissolve, and mankind lapse into savagery. There are several answers to this assertion. One is that the bonds of human society were formed without the aid of their theology; and, in the opinion of not a few competent judges, have been weakened, rather than strengthened, by a good deal of it.—*T. H. Huxley*.

Acid Drops.

THE Bishop of Manchester has issued a form of prayer to be used in his diocese during the war. It is a most ridiculous rigmarole, and we don't suppose the Bishop believes a word of it. He is too intelligent a man to think that the clergy of his congregations will be able, by any words they utter in church or elsewhere, to influence the course of events in South Africa. Of course, he is only doing what is expected of him, and so far he is earning his salary honestly.

Probably the other Bishops are playing the same professional game. We do not blame them, for we understand their position. A man must be far above the average in honesty to quarrel with thousands a year on a mere matter of principle. Still, we should like to have a candid talk under the rose, of course—with one or two of these highly-reverend fathers-in-God. It would be entertaining to hear what they have to say for themselves, and especially what they have to say on behalf of these "prayer" documents which are issuing to the faithful. Perhaps, if they could only be frank with each other, the bishops, the other clergy, and the laymen would all laugh in concert at the farce.

A Plymouth telegram in Monday's paper stated that the Bishop of Truro, dressed in his convocation robes, had spoken to the 2nd Duke of Cornwall's Regiment, before they left for South Africa. His lordship is reported to have said: "I have come to give you a message and gift from God. It is this: 'I will certainly be with thee.' Meanwhile, we will pray for you whenever the churches are open in every village in Cornwall."

Seriously considered, this is sickening; otherwise considered, it is very amusing. The soldiers go out to fight and perhaps to die; while the bishop stays at home, to be living in comfort and prosperity. No doubt he thinks this a fair division of labor. They fight, and he prays, and both have an equal share in the result. But they get a "both" a day, and he gets several pounds; which is not at all a fair division of the cash.

"Truro" tells the soldiers that God is with them. The men of God on the side of the Boers tell them that God is with *them*. We daresay he is as much with one side as he is with the other. So everything depends upon the shooting after all. The divine blessing won't turn aside a bullet, nor ward off a piece of shell. And "Truro" knows that just as well as we do.

After telling the soldiers that God will certainly be with them, the noble "Truro" informs them that they will be prayed for all the time. Does he mean that when God is with them they are in bad hands? Or does he mean that the prayers will be addressed to Old Nick, so as to make sure of the protection of both parties?

The *Christian Age* is not to be discouraged even by the sternest facts. Writing on the war, it says: "Although the course of events has shown that the prayers for peace which were offered up in hundreds of churches were not in accordance with the Divine Providential order of the world, we will still continue to pray for peace." There is something almost sublime in this hopeless perseverance.

"Can I believe in God the Father?" is the title of a series of discourses delivered by an American divine, the Rev. Dr. W. H. Clarke, to the Harvard School of Theology. The title is interrogative, and it seems impolite not to offer a reply. Dr. Clarke and the Harvard students can, of course, believe that they believe in God the Father, if they please. There is nothing to prevent them, except the patent facts of existence, which do not at all point to the government either of a God the Father or God the Son. It is easier to believe, at the present moment, in the existence of General Joubert and Sir Redvers Buller.

The old Bishop of Liverpool, who is to retire shortly, has for many years enjoyed an income of more than £4,000 a year, which will pass on to his lucky successor. On relinquishing the bishopric, however, he will not be obliged to live upon his savings, or upon the charity of his fellow Christians. He is entitled, we understand, to a retiring allowance of £1,400 a year; which is a very nice sum for a man to receive upon while preparing himself to meet his God. With such a yearly income, payable with the utmost certainty and punctuality, and totally unconnected with any sort of duties, even an ex-bishop is likely to postpone his meeting with God for a very lengthy period.

Bishop Ryle is by no means the best paid of our right-reverend prelates. The Bishop of Canterbury's income is £10,000 a year, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's is £15,000. Still, it must be allowed that £80 a week, or above £10 a day, is an astonishing salary for a representative of the "poor carpenter of Nazareth." Jesus Christ had to risk

for money to pay his taxes with. His modern representatives must laugh in their sleeves at his financial simplicity.

Mr. Justice North has completed eighteen years' service on the Bench, and is entitled to a retiring pension of £3,500 a year. He was appointed a judge of the Queen's Bench on November 1, 1881, and was transferred to the Chancery Division on April 12, 1883. The newspapers mention this fact, but do not give the reason of his transference. The last prisoner his lordship ever tried was the editor of the *Freethinker*, and his conduct of the trial was so scandalous that no one was astonished at his immediate removal to the Chancery Division. Mr. Justice North is a bigoted Roman Catholic, and his presiding over the trial of a Freethinker for "blasphemy" was one of the great farces of the nineteenth century.

Nothing could exceed the cold malignity on Mr. Justice North's face when that packed jury's verdict of Guilty gave him the opportunity of passing sentence upon an Atheist. One saw in his countenance the bitter passion which lit the fire of the stake for the martyrs of old. He would have made a splendid Inquisitor. The groans of a heretic would have been sweet music to his ears.

During the time that Mr. Justice North sat as a judge in the Queen's Bench Division he was famous for the number of his judgments which were reversed. One of his judgments has quite recently been appealed against; that, namely, which made the *Times* reporter the owner of Lord Rosebery's speeches.

Clement Scott, Zangwill, the Paschal Lamb, and the Pig. This is the funny combination presented to us in a recent issue of the *St. James's Gazette*. Zangwill, it seems, is terribly annoyed at the criticisms on his dramatised version of *The Children of the Ghetto*, as produced in New York. He loses his temper, and, of course, becomes an easy prey to his enemies. He finds that he is accused of blasphemy, and, instead of treating the charge with absolute indifference, he is weak enough to attempt to defend himself.

He says: "Ever since I lectured on 'The Drama as a Fine Art' I have been told that all the world of insect life, seen squirming in the sun when the old moss-grown stone is rolled over, was waiting for my blood." This, to start with, is stupid egotism. The probability is that, until his play was billed, few folks knew much about him, or cared to inquire; they had heard of his novel—perhaps had read it—and that was all.

Magnanimously, he "refused to believe" that critics were thirsting for his blood. He rather regarded them as "so timid that they fed out of the hands of the managers." But then the great Clement Scott comes on the scene with all his Roman Catholic pietistic prejudices, and delivers himself strongly on Zangwill's play, as we mentioned last week. Now Zangwill has gone for "my dear Scott."

He says: "I am shocked at finding that you were not shocked by *Zara* and *The Rounders*, but that is as nothing to finding that you were shocked by *The Children of the Ghetto*. And why were you shocked? Because of comic allusions to the Messiah, the Paschal Lamb, and the Passover. But really, sir, a man of your intelligence should have known that these words in the Jewish play have none of the associations with which Christianity has invested them. To Jewish thought, the expected Messiah is merely a man, the Paschal Lamb merely a shadowy survival of the ritual offering of the national assembly at Jerusalem on the Passover. Often, on the most sacred fast of the Jewish year—the Day of Atonement—the Freethinkers and the Socialists of the London Ghetto outrage their orthodox neighbors by feasting—and on pig!"

Zangwill's mistake is in condescending to explain, especially to "my dear Scott," who is not likely to be satisfied with anything except he can sniff in it the scent of the hay or the perfume of incense floating over the footlights.

The *Morning Leader* points out that no one seems to have noticed a certain little passage in one of Lord Rosebery's shorter speeches at Bath. He was speaking of Jane Austen's novels, and referred to that "company of well-fed and gentleman-like clergy whom our Bishop would hardly recognise as members of his flock." The *M. L.* imagines Bishop Kennion looking round at the clergy who were present. There is, however, a peculiarity about Lord Rosebery's oratorical wit that, even when looked at in print, its subtlety often requires a second reading.

"I sentence you to attend Sunday-school and church for the next eight Sundays, or go to prison for twenty-one days." The speaker was the mayor of an Ohio town, and the prisoner a lad of thirteen. Of the two forms of punishment, the youthful offender chose the Sunday-school and church attendance, but was told that if he missed one attendance he would

have to undergo three full weeks' imprisonment. This, indeed, is piety on compulsion.

A St. John's Wood gentleman who recently died left by will an antique watch, formerly the property of Francis Gastrell, "who made himself infamous by cutting down, whilst rector of Stratford-on-Avon, the mulberry tree planted by Shakespeare in the rectory garden."

The inflictions to which the poor are subjected in work-houses, infirmaries, and hospitals by preaching and praying zealots constitute no fancied grievance. The subject incidentally came before the Lambeth Poor Law Guardians last week. The chairman said there had been too much amateur preaching in the house; even the wards had been invaded. On one occasion, when he felt compelled to interfere, a man was standing on a chair between two poor creatures who were dying, and was shouting as though he were addressing a meeting of 10,000 people in Trafalgar-square.

Mr. J. E. Turner said he had witnessed a similar scene in the infirmary, where a man was declaiming from a chair only three beds from a dying person. Other members of the Board declared that the house was a kind of happy hunting-ground for anyone who chose to come in and din the ears of the unhappy inmates. The discussion was adjourned.

The Edinburgh Free Library is not to be opened for a few hours on Sundays. So the authorities have decided. They know that the readers of books won't go to kirk, but they think that this is a way of telling them that they ought to. Some day or other, no doubt, the Edinburgh authorities will have to yield to the spirit of progress. May we suggest to them that they might begin with a pious compromise—namely, by opening the Free Library on Sundays, but locking up all the books except those in the theological department?

An engineer called Edouard Silva, living at Rio de Janeiro, is said to be curing all sorts of diseases by simply laying his hands on the sick. We have heard of that sort of thing before. These healers generally cause a great sensation for a time, and then are soon forgotten. Their successes, such as they are, belong to the region of pathology. Excitement and suggestion make up what is often called "faith," which goes a long way with a certain class of patients. But few, if any, permanent cures are effected; the patients, in the end, fall back into their ordinary mental condition, and their malady resumes its former course.

No doubt some of the "miracles of healing" which we read of in the histories of the ages of faith—for instance, in the New Testament—were actual occurrences. But the cases were never followed up to the bitter end. In all probability the "cured" patients relapsed. But they ceased to be interesting when they had once demonstrated the power of the wonder-worker, and no one inquired what became of them afterwards.

The Rev. H. W. Horwill, M.A., in the *Bible Christian Magazine* for November, declares that the Churches of England have, in regard to the war, taken Baal to be their God instead of Jehovah. This is rather an unfortunate statement, observes the *Church Gazette*, for "Jehovah" (or Yahveh) embodies the purely Hebrew conception of godship, not the higher views of Deity held in England and to-day. And it happens that Yahveh was most certainly a God of Hosts, and his commands were pleaded in defence of quite atrocious acts of slaughter."

"The biographical notices of Mr. Grant Allen," says one of the contributors to the *Christian World*, "which have been appearing during the last few days are scarcely pleasant reading for the Christian public. That a man of so keen and cultured intellect, and of character in many respects so estimable, should stand to the last resolutely outside the religious feeling and belief which to many of us are the life of life, should cause some searching of heart. To say that this was a case of religious color-blindness is not enough. If it were mere idiosyncrasy, it would not be so widely shared. What we have yet to be waked up to is a full sense of the difficulties that organised and official Christianity has placed in the way of faith for the scientific mind of to-day."

The writer of "Gossip on Books and Bookies," in the *Sunday Sun*, observes, *apropos* of the cremation of the remains of Mr. Grant Allen, that that form of disposal of the dead seems to be coming rapidly into vogue with literary people. He regards it, however, as a very heartless, soul-chilling method, and says that "the mere witnessing of such a ceremony does more to destroy one's faith in the Hereafter than all the arguments that were ever uttered or penned against Christianity." This is a very slashing kind of statement, but sadly lacking in sense. Cremation simply effects more rapidly the change which, all the same, takes place in the earth by a process very unpleasant to think of.

We see that the Bishop of Manchester has been "consecrating" a new church, St. Cyprian's, at Salford. We understand that this kind of job brings in something like £20 to the "consecrator." In return for that sum he supplies the building with the requisite number of cubic yards of Holy Ghost.

Bishop Moorhouse threw in a sermon as a sort of make-weight. In the course of it he deplored that the present age was growing "so worldly minded," one cause of which he considered to be "the great increase of secular knowledge." His lordship is clearly of opinion, as we are, that the more people know of earth the less they care for heaven, and the less easy it is to frighten them with hell.

The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was one of those who denounced Lord Rosebery in the name of the Nonconformist Conscience. Lord Rosebery kept race-horses; he also won the Derby; and such conduct, on the part of a Liberal prime minister, was simply intolerable. It was the duty of all Nonconformists to rally round that true Christian man and proxy teetotaller, Sir William Harcourt, who soon afterwards lost his seat for Derby and had to take a "safe" seat in the West on the "Celtic fringe."

The ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference now sails on quite another tack. He prophesies that the Liberal defeat at Bow "will be repeated in every part of the kingdom if the Liberal party follows, on this [South African] question, the lead of Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Morley, and the *Daily Chronicle*, instead of supporting Lord Rosebery, Sir Henry Fowler, and the *Daily News*." Evidently the Nonconformist Conscience is capable of many and great changes. But imagine the feelings of poor Sir William Harcourt! It is almost a case of *Et tu Brute!*

The Evangelical Alliance has held a Conference at Bristol, and one of the speakers, a Mr. G. F. Chambers, of Eastbourne, delivered his little mind on the subject of Sabbath desecration. Even battles, he said, ought not to be fought on Sunday. Battles fought on the Lord's Day generally resulted in the defeat of the aggressors. So said this Evangelical Alliancer, who had better read history before he talks again. The Battle of Waterloo was fought on a Sunday. It was on a Sunday that Admiral Dewey smashed the Spanish fleet at Manila. It was on a Sunday that the other Spanish fleet was smashed outside Santiago. These are a few cases, and we could give this Evangelical Alliancer some more. But enough is as good as a feast. Besides, we don't want to devote too much of our space to his special instruction.

Mr. Michaels Joseph, master tailor, 106 Mile-end-road, has had trouble with his workpeople, who have taken to assaulting each other, and thus obtained an introduction to the magistrate. According to Mr. Joseph's evidence, two of the assaulters left work at his place because he employed Christians as well as Jews. Of course, these two workmen belonged to the Jewish persuasion, and their action has at least the charm of novelty. Christians have persecuted Jews long enough, and now the Jews are trying to get their own back. We hope, however, that they will cease following a bad Christian example. One act of persecution does not balance another; it simply doubles the mischief.

Rev. C. Lloyd Engström, secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, lectured last Sunday afternoon at St. Stephen's Institute, St. John's Wood, on "The Failure of Secularism." This reverend gentleman might more appropriately lecture on the failure of the Christian Evidence Society to propagate Christian Evidences. He might also lecture on the failure of the Christian Evidence Society to maintain any sort of standard of decent speech amongst its open-air advocates.

Rev. Dr. Clifford has found a new proof of Christian progress. "The bath," he said on Citizen Sunday, "was no longer thought to be inimical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ." This implies that the bath used to be thought inimical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank Dr. Clifford for the admission.

Writing on sixpenny novels, the *Daily News* notes that "the Sheldon boom" is dead. Our contemporary has even a fling at the Grand Old Man's theology. Mr. Gladstone's *Impregnable Rock* is now published at sixpence, and the *Daily News* says that it "may be called serious, first, because Mr. Gladstone wrote it, and, secondly, because it deals with the Bible. Whether the same epithet might be applied to critical remarks on the Old Testament by any other man who did not know Hebrew is a question hardly worth pursuing."

What the newspapers call a "pathetic" case of poverty is reported at West Ham. A relieving officer found an old couple, Mr. and Mrs. Manning, between seventy and eighty years of age, living in a dreadful state of destitution; and the Rev. Tom Warren, at the Guardians' meeting, stated that he knew for an absolute fact that the old people had

lived for three years on nothing else but dry bread. After paying rent out of their parish relief, they had only three-pence-halfpenny a day left for their subsistence. Well, if this be true, and the Rev. Tom Warren knew it all the time, what was he doing to let it continue so long? Why did he not ask his fellow believers to give the poor old couple a little butter (say) for Christ's sake?

The *Freethinker* question has figured in the West Ham municipal elections. The "Alliance Candidates" in favor of "pure literature"—including the smutty stories of the Bible—issued a special bill for the electors, calling upon them to vote in each ward for the candidate who promised to turn the *Freethinker* out of the Public Library. It is not often that municipal elections turn on such a pivot, and we suppose we ought to thank the bigots for their advertisement.

Councillor Jacobs, replying to the "Alliance Candidates" bill, said that he was a Christian, but still in favor of justice to the *Freethinker*, which he declared to be "in no sense more objectionable or pernicious than some religious papers which are to be found on every minister's table." He asserted that the reactionists were using the *Freethinker* question to injure the party of municipal progress and hinder the work of reform.

The Rev. James Mayo, of Trinity College, Cambridge, seems to be affected in his old age with the prevalent jingo spirit; but he chose a safe victim in the person of a boy, whom he pursued into a shop, beating him there with a stick, and throwing him down and jumping upon his chest. These indulgences in "muscular Christianity" brought the reverend gentleman—or whatever he is—before the magistrates, who fined him 10s., with 11s. 6d. costs. On the whole, it was rather a cheap bit of sport for a person in the Rev. James Mayo's position.

An old Sabbatarian law has just been enforced in Connecticut—a law enacted by the old Puritans, who thought it was a black thing to do anything pleasant on the Lord's Day. A student of Yale University has been sent to prison for kissing a New Haven girl on Sunday. Next time, perhaps, he will wait and kiss her twice on Monday.

A lady suddenly expired while attending a baptismal service in the Congregational Church at Andover.

General Booth at Edinburgh.

I HAD a colossal treat on Monday evening. I went to see and hear General Booth. He is a very striking personality. But the proceedings—oh! Lord.

Up to that point I had never known what fervent prayer was—fervent prayer on the part of a fanatic. The Commissioner appointed to pray seemed to tear it out of his very vitals. But the ringing-in of the converts was the crowning farce. The faithful were commanded to pray that the backsliders come forward, and they did pray, some on bended knees, the others, more strenuous, wallowing on all fours. From time to time, the extent of prayer was gauged by "everybody who is praying for a convert" being commanded to hold up their right hand.

A forest of right hands went up. It was, however, a striking commentary on the futility of prayer that no backslider appeared. Thereupon it was decided to sing them in. Hardly had the first verse been sung when the audience was startled into silence by the blast of a brass whistle blown by the chief bummer. This was that he might announce that "While we were singing these lines the first convert came forward. Thank God for the first convert" (an old wife). Singing was started with renewed vigor, only to be interrupted at every half-verse by the "whirr" of the whistle. And thus on till the converts counted into the thirties.

The General, it might be noted, did not pray. Whether it was *infra dig* for one so near God to be heard supplicating Him I cannot say. His address was mostly drivel, and he has a harsh voice. But there was much entertainment, and when the General comes again may I be there to see. J. D. E.

Theology of the old stamp, so far from encouraging us to love nature, teaches us that it is under a curse. It teaches us to look upon the animal creation with shuddering disgust; upon the whole race of man outside our narrow sect as delivered over to the devil, and upon the laws we have been large as a temporary mechanism in which we have been caught, but from which we are to expect a joyful deliverance. It is science, not theology, which has changed all this: it is the Atheists, Infidels, and Rationalists, as they are kindly called, who have taught us to take fresh interest in our poor fellow denizens of the world, and not to despise them because almighty benevolence could not be expected to admit them to heaven.—Leslie Stephen.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 12, Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street, Birmingham: 11, "Back to Christ"; 3, "The White War in South Africa: A Freethinker's View"; 7, "The Dream of God."
November 26, Camberwell.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 12, Liverpool; 19, Camberwell. December 3, Athenæum Hall, London. 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. SIMONS.—Your envelope was not marked "Lecture Notice," and was, therefore, sent on to Mr. Foote, who was out of town. Hence its non-insertion.

E. E. SIMS.—Too late for last week.

T. WILMOT.—Lecture Notices should be sent in separate envelopes. If the Editor happens to be away, letters addressed to him personally cannot be opened by others. The matter of your letter is attended to.

W. TOWNSEND.—Schopenhauer's masterpiece is expensive, and, to most, hard reading. The volumes of selected essays, translated by Mr. Bailey Saunders, would prove more generally interesting. They are purchasable separately. There are seven volumes in all, at 2s. 6d. each, subject to the usual 25 per cent. discount.

L. MARSHALL.—See "Acid Drops."

G. ENNSON.—Thanks; inserted.

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

M. E. PEGG.—Your postcard bore the postmark of "Manchester, Oct. 31." It reached us on Wednesday, though it may have been delivered late on Tuesday night.

Y. PAGE.—The paper you refer to has not reached us.

H. R. SPARKES.—Thanks. See paragraph.

Miss E. M. VANCE, Secretary of the Secular Society, Limited, asks us to announce that several Notices of the General Meeting, on the 15th inst., have been returned by the Post Office authorities marked "gone away." Members of the Secular Society, Limited, would confer a favor upon her by notifying change of address.

SCOTCH FREETHINKER.—You have our sympathy, though your position seems to us absurd. You cannot expect to find any journal whose whole contents you agree with. Articles in the *Freethinker* are signed. Each writer expresses his own thought, and we have never closed our columns to decent discussion. By the way, you are mistaken in your reference to Ingersoll. He was in favor of the war with Spain; not that he liked war, for he hated it, but because it put a stop to something still worse.

G. GRIZZELL.—Received, and having attention.

X. L.—Byron's letters show, on the contrary, that he was *not* a Christian. He rejected its doctrines and its supernaturalism. A man is not a Christian simply because he admires and accepts some of the moral teaching of Jesus. We know nothing about the other matter.

J. CARTER.—See obituary notice in another column. Thanks for the paper. We did not know the late Mr. W. H. Barker, of Cheltenham, personally, but we had heard of him, and can quite understand the esteem in which you held him.

J. FISHER.—A curious hodge-podge, hardly worth criticism. Pleased to hear you will take further Shares when possible.

J. JONES.—Received with thanks. Formal receipt in due course.

LETTERLEIN, 7 Romford-road, Stratford, E., is the new secretary of the West Ham Branch, to whom all communications should be addressed.

P. J. SIMPSON.—We will look into the matter.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Secular Thought—Literary Guide—Boston Investigator—Freidenker—De Vrije Gedachte—Isle of Man Times—Progressive Thinker—Ethical World—Liberator—Blue Grass Blade—Agnostic Annual—Truthseeker (New York)—Public Opinion—People's Newspaper—Sydney Bulletin—Lucifer—Awakener of India—Gloucestershire Echo—Torch of Reason—Huddersfield Examiner—Zoophilist—Crescent—Two Worlds—Free Society.

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, 12s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

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

TERMS 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.

Sugar Plums.

AFTER the fog came the rain. Sunday was a miserable day in London. Nevertheless, a good audience assembled at the Athenæum to hear Mr. Foote's lecture on "A Search for the Soul." Mr. Harry Brown presided, and the lecture was followed by questions and discussion. All who were present appeared to be having a good time.

Mr. Foote visits Birmingham to-day (Nov. 12), and delivers three lectures in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street. Large audiences are certain, and the local saints who wish to secure seats should make a point of coming in good time.

Mr. Cohen was wrongly announced as the lecturer at the Athenæum Hall this evening (Nov. 12). He occupies the platform on Nov. 19 and 26. Mr. Forder is the lecturer to-night, his subject being "The Gospels as History." We hope the London "saints" will give him a good audience and a hearty greeting.

The General Members' Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, will be held on Wednesday next at the Manchester Hotel, Aldersgate-street, London, E.C. Mr. G. W. Foote, Chairman of the Board of Directors, will preside. The proceedings will commence punctually at eight p.m. A copy of the annual balance-sheet, duly audited by an accountant, has been posted to members. The report will be read by the Chairman, and probably printed afterwards.

Owing to the preoccupation of the stage, so to speak, the Twentieth Century Fund, which it was resolved to raise on a motion at the Birmingham Conference, has had to bide its time. But it has by no means been forgotten. It will take its turn shortly. Meanwhile we may note that £20 is already in the Treasurer's hands for this Fund. It was promptly contributed by Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn, the oldest of the National Secular Society's vice-presidents, and a sturdy Freethinker of the brave old school.

Mr. Joseph Symes's *Liberator* (Melbourne) for September 30 is just to hand. We see that our old friend and colleague reproduces our paragraphs from the *Freethinker* of August 27 about his proposed visit to England. Mr. Symes says that his hopes are not exactly bright, but he adds: "I am sincerely gratified by the kindness Mr. Foote has shown." Well, friend Joseph, it is not so much kindness, after all, as bare justice—though everybody, by the way, does not render justice. You have fought a hard and gallant battle for Freethought at the antipodes; and, as the Freethought flag is one and the same all over the globe, you are entitled to just as much thanks and respect as though you had fought and suffered in England.

Mr. Symes wants three things: an editor for the *Liberator* in his absence, who will work without a salary; a lecturer to occupy the Melbourne Freethought Hall platform; and money for the trip to England. We cannot very well help him with respect to the editor and the lecturer, but we are strongly inclined to help him with respect to the money. We think of asking the English Freethinkers to contribute towards the expenses of Mr. Symes's visit to England, and we shall be very happy to give our own mite to the fund.

We have already stated that Mr. Symes is once more lecturing in the Freethought Hall, which was lost to him and the party for several years owing to the tricks of "trustees." The "trustee" difficulty has been completely overcome in England by the incorporation of the Secular Society, Limited. Halls or other property held by this Society cannot possibly be alienated.

Looking at Mr. Symes's advertisement of his Sunday evening lectures in the Freethought Hall, we notice that he charges 3d., 6d., and 1s. for admission, but adds, "Ladies and clergymen—free." That's just like Joseph.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Charles Watts had two capital audiences in Aberdeen last Sunday. In the evening over six hundred people paid to hear his lecture on Colonel Ingersoll. The applause at both meetings was very enthusiastic, and Mr. Watts expresses his pleasure at the hearty reception accorded him by the Aberdeen friends. The local press gave a favorable report of the gatherings, and said "the meetings were very largely attended." After the evening lecture a Branch of the N. S. S. was started, and several members were enrolled. On Monday and Tuesday last Mr. Watts lectured in Dundee.

To-day, Sunday, November 12, Mr. Watts lectures three times in Liverpool, where we hope he will have good audiences.

The West Ham Branch, which was started in the midst of

the *Freethinker* agitation there, has conducted a very successful open-air propaganda during the summer. These outdoor meetings are now discontinued, but will be resumed next season. Meanwhile, the Branch meets every Thursday evening at 8 in the Rock Room of the Workman's Hall, where friends as well as members will be heartily welcomed by the committee.

A Testimonial Concert for the benefit of Mr. John Fagan, who has for many years worked in the Freethought and other progressive movements, will take place at the Bradlaugh Club on Tuesday evening, November 21, at 8.30. The tickets are sixpence each, and can be obtained from the secretary, Mr. W. Simons, at 36 Newington-green-road, N. We hope this function will be successful, or, at least, that there will be a good sale of tickets.

Those who do not care to buy tickets, and yet wish to contribute towards this testimonial to Mr. Fagan, can send a subscription to Mr. George Wright, the treasurer of the fund, at the Bradlaugh Club.

The *Literary World* says that one of Grant Allen's most recent letters was addressed to Dr. Furneaux Jordan, of Birmingham. In it he stated that certain of the Hilda Wade stories in the *Strand Magazine* were inspired by Dr. Jordan's work on *Character as Seen in Body and Parentage*.

In its leading article on the death of Anna Swanwick, the *Daily News* remarked incidentally that "Euripides was an aggressive Freethinker," and that "Sophocles, like Goethe, treated religion with cold respect," while Aristophanes "laughed at everything and everybody, except Sophocles, patriotism, and peace." The one great "religious" poet amongst the Greeks of that age was Æschylus. Of course, these facts are well known to scholars, but we like to see them stated in a general newspaper like the *Daily News*. It will do the Christian world a lot of good to be told how many of the greatest men have been sceptics and "infidels."

We reproduce on another page an interview with Mrs. Ingersoll on the subject of Divorce. It appeared originally in the *New York Journal*. Mrs. Ingersoll states that her confidence was betrayed by a relative. She agrees with all that her husband said on the subject, but she objects to being put in the attitude of having been interviewed for a public print. However, the "interview" has been published, and we hope we commit no offence by reproducing it. It is just as well, by giving it *in extenso*, to spoil the chance of pious misrepresenters on this side of the Atlantic.

The *New York Truthseeker* announces that a new and complete edition of Ingersoll's works is to be published in twelve volumes. Each volume will be illustrated with photographs. Several volumes of the set will contain entirely new matter. The price of the cloth edition will be eighteen dollars.

We have received a copy of the balance-sheet of the Ridley-road open-air lecture-station, showing a slight balance on the right side. Mr. Davey and Mr. Simons have worked hard and assiduously in connection with this propagandist effort. The Ridley-road station is now well established, Kingsland-green being abandoned as much less suitable.

The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, is not without friends in America. The *New York Truthseeker* wishes "Success to the venture." Dr. E. B. Foote, senior, of New York and Larchmont, subscribes for five fully paid-up Shares. We value his sympathy. He is one of the finest Freethinkers and one of the best men in America.

Obituary.

THE *Gloucestershire Echo* reports the death of Mr. William Henry Barker, of Cheltenham, a well-known local Radical and Freethinker. Mr. Barker was "universally respected and esteemed for his sincerity and integrity," our contemporary says. He went to prison under the Vaccination Laws, and his goods were seized for Church rates. "He took in the Freethought journals and pamphlets for his own and his customers' edification," the *Echo* states, "and many profound debates on theological subjects have taken place in his shop." We desire to add our own expression of sympathy with the bereaved family.

I HAVE to report with deep regret the death of Mrs. Hannah Pottage, aged sixty-four, the beloved wife of Mr. C. J. Pottage, which occurred at Palmer's Green on November 1. The deceased with other members of her family were active members of the N. S. S. in the North-west London Branch, and generous supporters of our movement. The writer conducted the funeral service at Finchley Cemetery in the presence of many relatives and friends.—ROBERT FORDER.

Godism and War.

It is one of the damningly extraordinary things about religion that men always get extra religious when they are embarking on some particularly base enterprise. And the Transvaal war is no exception. I have indicated my opinion before—it is merely my personal opinion—that this war is the most blackguardly thing an English Cabinet has done in this generation; for it is a war motived by greed and carried out, as Olive Schreiner says, "in order that a few international speculators may gain command of the Transvaal gold-fields."

Perhaps the ultimatum of President Kruger was unwise, and it put him technically in the wrong. But history does not judge by technicalities, and one may well ask with Mr. Courtney whether any impartial Englishman who reflects on the matter will say that England, in the same circumstances, would be a shade the wiser? Let me illustrate. One of the war pretences, which, I take it, deceives no one with the least political sagacity, is the franchise. The Government which denies the franchise to aliens in England, which denies it even to thousands of English working men, which maintains a House of Lords as a perpetual barrier against the enfranchised people, the Government which rules India by force without "franchise" at all, and Ireland against the constitutionally-expressed will of four-fifths of her electors—this Government is so enamored, forsooth, with the right of the people to govern that it must needs break a solemn treaty to enforce that reform on a little state and confer on the Englishmen in it the right of citizenship without its responsibilities. For it is obvious, of course, that the adventurous younger sons of English families, or the riff-raff of Europe who found their way to the Rand to "seek their fortunes," do not intend to become permanent residents of the country, and have no real interest in its permanent welfare; they do not want to become burghers of a little Dutch state in South Africa, and, therefore, aliens in their own countries when they return. Why, if the Transvaal forced the Englishmen to become burghers, I make no doubt the finance-gang behind the whole infamy would have made that the grievance and the pretext.

Let me, then, take a parallel. Suppose the extreme Irish-American party in the United States somehow captured the Presidency. Suppose that, under this President, some American officers unofficially organised a raid on Ireland, and that they were stopped by British troops and handed back to the United States; suppose, then, that, after a sham inquiry and a sham punishment, these officers were restored to their rank in the American army; and suppose that the President was observed to be particularly friendly with the ring-leader of them, who, we will say, was soon afterwards decorated with an honorary degree by Yale or Harvard, and generally defended in the American Press. Now suppose that the memory of this raid being still fresh, the President commenced threatening and bullying England, demanding that the Irish people should be masters in their own country, and protesting against the system by which an oligarchy (the word is apt) presumed to govern them against their will; suppose, further—for the sake of the parallel—that at this time the American navy was immeasurably superior to the British; and suppose that, during the negotiations the American President kept massing American warships in British waters. Now, in all this hypothetical case, which is exactly on all fours with the Transvaal case, does anyone imagine that England would refrain from striking whilst her enemy was weak—even though she thought her chances hopeless? And would many or any English publicists seriously reprove her? The English are great admirers of "pluck"—but it must never be pluck displayed against themselves; the majority of them are great admirers of "liberty"—but it must never be the liberty of other people. And if other "little peoples" prefer to be their own rulers and work out their own salvation for themselves, they are generally ignorant, or narrow-minded, or arrogant. The English, of course, it is unnecessary to say, are none of these things.

Perhaps all this is somewhat of a digression. But I was led into it in order to enforce the essentially unjust character of the war in which the British Government is

now engaged. My main purpose is to show how, in that inglorious undertaking—in which a giant is going out to fight a dwarf, and swaggering about it as if he were doing something heroic, or even respectable—God almost naturally comes to the surface. A good deal, of course, has been made out of the Boers' godliness, and it is of a sufficiently robust order. But there is a ring of sincerity about the poor Boers' faith which British godliness often lacks. As for open professions of piety, it is doubtful if there is so much to choose between, say, President Kruger and the late Mr. Gladstone, and the careers of both are remarkable for their combination of piety with shrewdness. Mr. Kruger will talk to his Boers loudly of God and the rest; but he is as able a diplomatist, probably, as any in Europe, and Mr. Gladstone, with all his theology, took good care of the market-place and the ballot-box. But as to how far the Boers' Bibliolatry is responsible for the war, opinions will differ. Personally, believing as I do that the Boers are absolutely in the right in this war, that they are fighting against British aggression and British bad faith, I do not think the wisest nation in the world in their place could have acted much differently.

As to British godliness, however, it has furnished some interesting specimens. There was the Rev. Arthur Robins, of Windsor, who contributed an outburst of blackguardism that was at first positively incredible (by the way, it is to be observed that this savage has since presided at a banquet to congratulate Dreyfus on his release, and doubtless lecture the French people on humanity). Of course we have had Mr. Kipling, who now seems to reserve his rhyming faculty for glorifying every passing brutality in whatever country he happens at the time to be a resident; his special forte is to work the brutality up into an exalted spiritual ecstasy. Thus, do you covet your neighbor's money? Mr. Kipling will forthwith inform you—in rattling verse, too—that in taking your brother's burden you are performing an act of heroic self-sacrifice. Do you wish to grab your neighbor's territory? Certainly; you are a noble champion of liberty emulating the example of the Barons at Runnymede. It is admittedly a quaint rôle, and Mr. Kipling fulfils it to perfection. Whether it is a rôle which will bring lasting fame is open to grave doubt. Whereas the ballads and verses of Russell Lowell during the American Civil War, with their splendid enthusiasm for emancipation, can still thrill and rouse by their vigor and their truth, Mr. Kipling's Biblical Imperialism, it is to be feared, will be forgotten in the next generation.

Next to Mr. Kipling's verses, we have the amazing contribution of Mr. Swinburne, which is explicable really only on the ground that the author of *Songs before Sunrise* took leave of his senses; in his sober moments he may well wish the passing insanity forgotten. The spectacle of Mr. Swinburne calling the Boers "dogs" with jaws agape and the rest is surely as idiotic as it is undignified. To fight your enemy is tolerable, but to call him names and blackguard him because he doesn't welcome you is merely contemptible. But, in truth, the Transvaal seems to be a danger to poetic reputations. Mr. Swinburne is the victim. I believe Mr. Austin has recently furnished a kind of *apologia* for his performance. He might as Poet Laureate send a notice to all his brother-poets, and it might run: "Keep off the veldt."

Other examples of pietism we have had, of which, perhaps, the most nauseous was the appeal of Mr. Chamberlain at the end of his defence to the God of Battles—an appeal echoed the next day by the *Times*. Mr. Chamberlain, pursuing the exact course which he himself has declared to be "immoral," and the God of Battles form a combination which must excite in anyone of ordinary sanity alternate laughter and disgust.

The men, however, who have stood for peace in England have not talked much about God. There is John Morley, whose splendid speeches must surely add fresh lustre to a name which one may safely say will live in English literature and English history when that of the political charlatan who has dragged his country into this war is forgotten, or remembered only with contempt. There is Herbert Spencer, whose courageous letter practically crystallises the case. There is Frederic Harrison. There are Mr. Courtney and Mr. Labouchere,

whose godliness is not remarkable. It would, of course, be the grossest sectarianism to withhold tribute from Christians like Sir Edward Clarke, who also courageously worked for peace. But the lead, it must be admitted, was with the men of reason, not the men of God. The fact is that godism is incapable of helping a nation or an individual to higher levels of thinking or of conduct. It has never yet checked brutality, or discouraged injustice, or prevented war. Justice, truth, the desire to understand the point of view of others, the checking of passion and of prejudice—all these assuredly come from reason, from knowledge, from wider sympathy, from the natural forces which educate and sweeten humanity. Godism is either reactionary or neutral; it is reactionary in so far as it represents ignorance and the arrogance which ignorance breeds, neutral in so far as educated and humane men either ignore their belief or transfer their own humanity to their idol. And in all that makes for peace, for the real and valuable humility which bids us look to our own shortcomings rather than to our neighbors', which impresses on us that the setting-in-order of our own household is more creditable work than interfering in the households of other people; in all, in short, that makes for what we call civilisation, it is not in the dead superstitions of the past we must trust, it is in the reason of the future we must hope, if hope be possible at all.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Freethought Destructive.

WE are told that Freethought is destructive. To that proposition we cheerfully give our unqualified assent and approval. Most certainly Freethought is destructive. Its destructive influence is widespread and wide-spreading. It affects every department of human thought and activity to such an extent that in its absence civilization would be utterly changed, and history would be another story.

Is this an indictment or a justification? To answer this question intelligently, we must discover what suffers from the destructive tendency of Freethought. Is it the good that suffers, or the bad? Error or truth? Intelligence or ignorance? In short, does Freethought destroy joy and replace it with sorrow, or does it banish sorrow and replace it with joy? The touchstone by which all influences are to be tested is human happiness.

"And the truth shall make you free." When Jesus uttered these words he meant the truth as it seemed to him (assuming for the moment his words to be correctly reported in the Bible), but in a large and complete sense the utterance is strictly true. It is only through knowledge of the truth that man can ever hope to escape the slavery of adverse circumstances, can ever expect to reduce to a minimum the calamities of fortune and the divers castigations of nature.

What is the truth? That is what Christian and Freethinker alike are trying to discover. The Christian accepts Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life; the Freethinker accepts no man as the truth, and bows to no authority in deciding what is the way and the life. The Christian endeavors to discover the will of Jesus and of God, and there ends the search. The Freethinker endeavors to discover if there is a God, and, finding none, there begins the search.

Freethought destroys belief in the revengeful God of the Bible, in the notion of a fiery hell, in all the theological dogmas which have struck terror to the hearts of human beings; it destroys the delusion that this life must be frittered away in the service of the supernatural in order to secure the benefits of a future life, which, if it comes, must be as absolutely natural as anything else in the universe, as accessible to monkey as to man; it destroys the influence of priests who assume to guide men on the strength of their acquaintance with the plans and purposes of the Almighty; it destroys ideals based upon false conceptions of life and the universe; it destroys the misery which arises in the breasts of men and women when they discover that their most cherished beliefs and fondest hopes are not in adjustment with the facts of existence.

Yes, Freethought destroys some pleasant dreams. So be it. There is one drawback to pleasant dreams—

the ever-present possibility of a rude awakening to the stern reality. The child of penury, brought up to enjoy life under the most adverse circumstances, fares better in the end than does the child of luxury thrown unexpectedly upon his own resources, and unable to cope with the difficulties that beset him upon every hand. It is better to realise the truth at all hazards, and then send every faculty to the task of readjustment and construction along new and true lines, than to cling to a pleasing error, only to discover the frailty of the foothold and the unexpected proximity of the dark pit of despair.

The truth shall, indeed, make you free; but the truth is contained in no Bible, is bound in no creed, is known by no man, is created by no authority, is the property of no mental plutocrat. The truth is not to be found by raising barriers. It is not to be found by peering questions. It is not to be found by limiting discussion. It is only to be found when thought is absolutely free, and thought is not free until it may be freely expressed, and it is not freely expressed until action may follow expression.

Freethought is destructive. It destroys every barrier which is raised against truth. The truth shall make you free, and freedom is the key-note of joy. Without Freethought, all the weeds and barnacles of superstition which impede the vessel of progress would flourish and thicken, and she would gradually settle, and finally sink down to the quicksands of barbarism and fanaticism. To prevent such a fate, the destructive influence of Freethought is directed against superstition's weeds and barnacles.

—*Boston Investigator.*

The Decadence of Godism.

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

THIS quotation from Solomon has been used for centuries as a veritable scarecrow to prevent too close investigation into the alleged evidences for the existence of a personal God or Creator. But natural advancement of civilisation means that each succeeding generation probes deeper into the mysteries of nature than previous one could do. The result so far has been that many false and cruel superstitions have been laid bare and forsaken. And to many now the religions of to-day are founded on the flimsiest absurdities.

Although the investigators in numberless cases have been persecuted and murdered by adherents of superstition, yet science and its forerunner, investigation, are conquering all obstacles. The most potent and longest-continued influence that ever acted on the human mind was, and is, the belief in the existence of a personal God or Almighty Creator. This belief prevailed as far back as the dawn of authentic history, and how much farther back can only be conjectured. But evidently there was a beginning to this belief, for there must have been a time when the brain had not yet developed sufficiently to imagine an unseen existence.

Man was once an absolute savage, intent only on his search for food and safety from other savage animals. To him there could be no god, because that god was not visible to the material senses. It was only after ages of mental and material progress it could be said man's mind was able to imagine a creator-god, and to formulate theories accounting for the existence of animate and inanimate nature. Therefore, so far as the mind of man was concerned, God had a beginning. Will the rule that has always, in modern times at least, been held to be absolute and without exception, hold true in this case—"Everything having a beginning has an ending"?

CANDOR STILL HAS ITS PENALTIES.

Within one hundred years it was worth a man's life to deny the existence of God, or even to deny his interference in man's affairs. Thomas Paine, declaring his belief in a deity, but denying the divinity of Jesus Christ, was the victim of lying aspersions and social ostracism. After his death preachers and laymen vied with each other in inventing and telling lies about his character and death. To many thousands throughout our land Paine the Deist is considered a back number. There are to-day tens of thousands of absolute Atheists. In

all our centres of culture Atheism, open or concealed, is prevalent. Professors in colleges, editors of newspapers, and other advanced thinkers, are more or less permeated with Atheism. But it must not be denied that loss of position and social ostracism await the professor who openly avows his true convictions.

While this is true of to-day, it is easily seen that it is only a question of time when Atheism will be the rule among the higher classes. The lower classes in intellect will continue to be ruled and humbugged by priestcraft for ages to come.

Godless science is as far above religious belief as cultured enlightenment is above barbarism. The one means intellectual liberty, the other leads to mental stagnation, decay, and death. Man is physically an upright being. Independence is his goal; to bow his head and bend his knee to worship the gods of his barbarous ancestors is an act of humiliation, degrading to his manhood.

The foundations of all religious worship are ignorance and credulity. Science depends on reason and a desire for knowledge. As man progresses, his reason strengthens directly as his faith weakens.

JEHOVAH A VARIANT OF NEIGHBORING GODS.

One of the oldest gods known to history was Bel-Marduck, the "god of mercy." He was the supreme god of Babylonia. Another famous god was Ashur, the "god of war," the supreme god of Assyria. The supreme god of Egypt was Ra; that of Greece was Zeus; of Rome, Jupiter or Jove. The contention that the Hebrews were the earliest monotheists is not strictly true. They borrowed their god idea, as they did nearly every other character and story in the Bible, from the cult of surrounding nations. Their God Jehovah was only a Jewish variation of neighboring gods. In no quality was he superior to the other gods, except, perhaps, in the matter of boasting. He was ignorant, cruel, and at times very depraved—an ideal deity of the people, who adopted and fashioned him to fit their own traits; an anthropomorphic god to the last degree of coincidence. Let us quote from Professor Jastrow's brilliant new book on *Assyria and Babylonia*: "The religion of Babylonia had numerous gods, with one supreme god. The oldest form of this religion known to us was a mixture of local and nature cults. It was animism, the worship of trees, stones, and plants, and the phenomena of nature—as storm, wind, and rain—probably borrowed from an earlier cult. The Babylonians impressed the stamp of their own spirit, and the nature-beings became real gods among them."

The same personifications of natural phenomena became real gods among other ancient nations. So we see religions were evolved from the lowest forms of idolatry to the worship of one supreme idol.

JEHOVAH ON HIS LAST LEGS.

We are again forced to the conclusion that all personal gods had a beginning. Growing intelligence will at some time make an end of them. Jehovah, the last lingering relic of barbaric gods, is on his last legs; dainty Christians rarely mention him by name, appearing to be ashamed of his record. The constant stream of money pouring into his contribution-boxes is the only thing that keeps him alive—a mere money-god. It will be safe to say that after his death no new gods will be created, for the material of which gods were created and made to flourish will be as stinkweeds in man's upward path, to be uprooted and destroyed.

When man ceases to imagine and believe in a god, the existence of a god will practically end. Every god had a birth, every god will die. Therefore the belief in, and worship of, a god is merely a stage in the passage of man from barbarism to civilisation and enlightenment.

Is there an Almighty Creator? In the Jewish and Christian religions their supreme God is made to say that he "created the heavens and the earth, and all the things that therein are." But modern thought reasons this to be impossible.

What is the meaning of the word "created"? The dictionary meaning is, "To bring into being; to form out of nothing; to cause to exist." Taken in connection with the text just quoted, it means to the religionist that the material out of which the universe

was formed was itself created, of course out of nothing. The advanced reasoner considers this to be an utter impossibility. It violates a cardinal principle of mathematics; if we multiply naught by any number, even up to infinity, the result is naught. But to the ignorant, stuffed full of credulity, "all things are possible with God." Here is a shining example of the difference in results between science and religion; the one requires cultivation of reason, the other leads to a blind adhesion to absurdity.

W. E. BOND.

—New York "Truthseeker."

Mrs. Ingersoll on Divorce.

"I HAVE read the views of Bishop Potter upon the subjects of marriage and divorce, and have noted the almost universal support which has been accorded him by the heads of the Episcopal Church. To me the attitude of these men is cruel, thoughtless, merciless, almost inconceivable, when we consider that they are posing as good, honest, learned gentlemen and as leaders of enlightened society.

"If they are sincere and thoughtful men, if they have either love or respect for women, if they know of the hopes, the aspirations, the humiliations, and the sufferings of the opposite sex, I can conceive of no excuse for or sense in their attitude towards women.

"They may mean well, they may not desire to be selfish; but, nevertheless, they are striving to deprive woman of her only escape from a life of misery, humiliation, and despair; to rob her of her independence and self-respect, without which she is nothing but a poor, pitiful slave, a social football for the sport of man.

"Divorce is the greatest legal concession ever made to woman. The privilege of divorce, of legal separation, is as sacred, as important to the welfare of society as the privilege of marriage, of the union of two souls.

"The indissolubility of marriage is a dogma which, like many other harmful ones, has come down to us from the superstitions of the Christian theology. That unfortunate and illogical sentence, 'Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder,' has made the lives of countless millions one long agony of despair.

"Why should the Church, either directly or through its influence on legislation, try to prevent man or woman from correcting an error, the continuance of which would render life a failure?"

"According to Bishop Potter and his ecclesiastical supporters, it is a question whether even the innocent party to a divorce should not be made to suffer as well as the guilty, and be forever deprived of the privilege of re-marriage. Why? Is marriage a crime? Is there something wrong in wedlock that it should not be indulged in a second time?"

"To a refined and sensitive woman, could any state of existence have greater tendency to render her reckless, if not desperate? Is not the marriage state, where love and respect have ceased to exist, a dangerous one? And if a sick and discouraged soul eventually falls, what is to be her fate? Would it not be charitable to permit her to form another alliance, where life would be tolerable and temptation less?"

"In conclusion, I can only repeat the sentiments of Mr. Ingersoll: 'To the husband, if it can be proven that the conduct of the wife has been flagrantly, outrageously bad, I would grant a divorce. To the woman I would give a divorce simply for the asking, not alone that she is deserving of more consideration, but because only through love can children be born who will be a credit to posterity.'

Book Chat.

The *Agnostic Annual* for 1900 (Watts & Co.) is well printed as usual; but the type, though handsome enough, is rather small, and may be trying to elderly eyes. This number opens with four articles on "The Future of Religion," which are bracketed together as a "Symposium." Of course, they constitute nothing of the kind. The writers do not so much allude to each other; their separate contributions are entirely independent; and to call their efforts a Symposium is an abuse of language. No doubt the editor sins in what he may regard as very good company. First-class magazines have committed the same offence. True, but that does not make it a virtue. We look to Rationalists, at any rate, to preserve the purity of language, which is one of the chief safeguards of accuracy of thought.

The first of these articles on "The Future of Religion" is by Mr. J. Allanson Picton, a Rationalist who has never been able to shake off the essence of his old faith. He still believes in the value, and in a certain sense the necessity, of a "transcendental sanction" of morality. He is unconsciously

answered, later on, by Mr. Alexander Sutherland, in an able article on the Teaching of Religion in our Schools. Mr. Picton is followed by Mr. J. M. Robertson, who looks forward to the extinction of religion altogether. Then comes another Theist, the Rev. Charles Voysey, who condescendingly tells us that "It is more than halfway to become religious to be good." We wish we could reverse the admission, and say that being religious is always more than halfway to becoming good. Finally, we have another Atheist, Mr. F. J. Gould, whose article is beautifully written. Mr. Gould pours scorn on "Infinity" and the "Absolute," as words by which we "try to hide our intellectual penury." Still, he values what he calls "the religious temper," which is a different thing from religious belief. "Religion," he says, "is the habitual recognition of a larger self." Whereupon he proceeds to develop his view of the Religion of Humanity, though he does not call it so; and what he says is in direct opposition to the view presented by Mr. Robertson. On the whole, the reader is likely to feel bewildered; and will perhaps come to the conclusion that, after all, it is dangerous to prophesy, and that these four gentlemen know as much about the "future" of religion as he knows himself.

One of the longer articles in this Annual is Mr. Charles Watts's, entitled "Personal Recollections of Colonel Ingersoll." This article is very carefully written, and is excellent as a panegyric. But there are no "personal recollections" in it; indeed, with the exception of a single sentence, it might have come from the pen of an admirer who had never once heard or seen Ingersoll. Of the other articles we can but speak briefly. Writers like Mr. Joseph McCabe, Mr. A. G. Whyte, and Mr. C. E. Hooper cannot help lending interest and instruction to any publication to which they contribute. It almost goes without saying that the 1900 *Agnostic Annual* is a good sixpennyworth.

The November number of the *Literary Guide* (Watts & Co.) contains some capital reading. Mr. A. G. Whyte leads off with a strong article on "The Religion of Consolation." Mr. Gould's article is very bright. The longest article is an able (anonymous) review of Professor James Ward's much-praised Gifford Lectures on *Naturalism and Agnosticism*. Other reviews, and the usual supply of paragraphs, make up an excellent number.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake supplies a short, hypercritical note to the *Literary Guide* on "Ingersoll's Last Poem." Ingersoll wrote, "We have no God to serve or fear," and Mr. Holyoake says that "have" should be "know" to make the line logical. Well, it wouldn't improve the melody, to begin with; nor do we see that it would improve the logic. If you "know" no God, you *have* no God. God exists, or does not exist, independently of our belief; but, from the very nature of the case, our own belief is everything to us. Mr. Holyoake, as an Atheist, or an Agnostic, or whatever he now likes to call himself, *has* no God; although, if there be a God, God may have *him*.

Ingersoll ended that stanza with these lines:

And endless sleep may close our eyes,
A sleep with neither tears nor sighs.

"Now," asks Mr. Holyoake, "how does the poet know this, which he so distinctly and positively asserts?" Well, the "distinctly" and "positively" are in Mr. Holyoake's hasty imagination. Ingersoll says "may," and this is no more than a statement of reasoned probability, if it is even as much as that. Mr. Holyoake calls Ingersoll's verses "the most brilliant and expressive of all Agnostic poems." If that be the case, he had better not try to tinker them.

We have pleasure in calling attention once more to the modest little monthly organ of the Humanitarian League. The November number of *Humanity* contains the ninth article of a very interesting series on "Pioneers of Humanitarianism," dealing with Shelley, Owen, and some French thinkers. Amongst the editorial notes is a paragraph on a recently-published book entitled *Good Citizenship*, edited, we believe, by a clergyman. *Humanity* remarks that not one of the twenty-three essays in this book deals with man's duties to the lower animals. "Is it not time," our contemporary asks, "that Christian Socialism awoke to the fact that there are other sentient beings besides mankind, and took a lesson from the National Secular Society, which recognises humaneness to animals as a part of civic duty?" *Humanity* is published by W. Reeves, 185 Fleet-street, E.C. The Humanitarian League's office is at 53 Chancery Lane, E.C.

The one really important series of Gifford Lectures was delivered a considerable time ago by Dr. E. B. Tylor, the author of that magnificent *Primitive Culture*. We wondered why this series of lectures was not printed, while so many inferior ones were placed before the public. It appears that Dr. Tylor has rewritten the manuscript of his lectures, and that the revised work will shortly be published under the title of *The Natural History of Religion*. It is a book to look forward to.

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, R. Forder, "The Gospel as History."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A lecture.
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, R. P. Edwards, "The Recent Church Congress."
EAST LONDON BRANCH (Swaby's Coffee House, 103 Mile End-road): 8, A. B. Moss, "Poets of Progress." With recitals.
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion on "Scepticism of the Bible"; 7, H. Rix, B.A., "A Modern Christ."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Dynamics of Democracy."
WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Greenvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Prisoner for Blasphemy: Nine Months in Holloway Gaol."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): G. W. Foote—11, "Back to Christ"; 3, "The White War in South Africa: A Freethinker's View"; 7, "The Dream of God."
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Sunday."
EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, R. Brown, "Progress."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe—12, "The Dream of Immortality"; 6.30, "The True Meaning of Conscience."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. Lowe, "How to Listen to Music." (With Musical Illustrations.)
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Watts—three lectures.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward—11, "Christianity and the Slave Trade"; 3, "The Impracticability of Socialism"; 7, "The Madness of War." Tea at 5.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): C. Cohen—11.30, "A Seventeenth-century Freethinker"; 3, "The Origin of God"; 7, "Religion and War." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, T. Thompson, "The Transvaal War: Are we in the Right?"

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—November 12, Sheffield. 19 and 26, Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—November 12 and 19, Manchester. 26, Birmingham. December 17, Birmingham.

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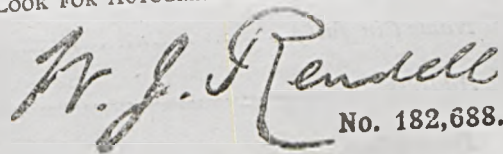
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