

Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Old Nick Again.

SATAN has always been a popular character with the poets. Marlowe, of the mighty line, introduced him as Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*. Milton made him the hero of *Paradise Lost*: Adam and Eve, Raphael, Michael, Jesus Christ, and God the Father himself, being all subordinate figures, and the greatest of them but pale shadows beside that tremendous Prince of Hell. Goethe gave him the chief intellectual rôle in *Faust*, making him the mouthpiece of the most daring and incisive thoughts. Byron presented him, colossal, haughty, and cynical, in the splendid *Vision of Judgment*. Shelley had some slender dealings with him in *Peter Bell*. Philip James Bailey—sometimes called, erroneously, the man of one book—gives him a large part as Lucifer in *Festus*: a poem which is great in size, and only not so great in other respects because the poet was too little of an artist. And now we have a smaller than the least of these, Mr. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, giving us a new taste of his infernal Majesty in *Satan Absolved*, which is sub-titled "A Victorian Mystery." Mr. Blunt will not, we hope, take this as an insult. He might well be less than the least of the singers we have mentioned, and yet be a very considerable poet. We cheerfully admit that he has done some excellent work, particularly in the *Love Sonnets of Proteus*. He is far from any danger of being classed with the smaller fry of the poetical world, who sing of light loves and cheap sentimentalities by habit, and bay the moon occasionally by way of diversion. Nor is he ever likely to become the bard of the music-halls. He has a high idea of the poet's vocation, and acts up to it to the best of his powers. There is a certain dignity about his work which commands our esteem, even when he does not compel our admiration. It must also be allowed that his poetry has a special character. It is not a copy or an echo. It is individual and original within its limits. Mr. Blunt sees and feels and thinks for himself. And such a writer, although not to be ranked with the great, instinctive poets, or with those who charm us by subtle music and exquisite felicities, will always find an audience amongst the public—no doubt a small one—who appreciate substance and sincerity.

And now a few words on Mr. Blunt himself. He is a man of honest and chivalrous nature—one to sympathise with forlorn hopes and lost causes. We remember how he put his fortune at the service of Arabi Pascha. At that time the National Secular Society, which is not exactly a political association, sent Mr. Blunt a vote of respect for his action, and a cheque for five pounds on behalf of the Arabi Pascha defence fund; and the present writer had the honor of proposing that vote himself. Mr. Gladstone had bombarded Alexandria and carried the Egyptian "rebels" position out in the desert, and all the time (as he said) he was at war with nobody. And when Arabi Pascha was a prisoner, Mr. Gladstone who took him prisoner, tried him by some bastard law. It was a frightful farce, and Mr. Blunt nobly in seeing, as far as he could, the wrong of it, of defending himself. Since then we have seen little of Mr. Blunt, except as a poet and a philosopher. But it appears that he has been warring all along against the empire, and this war now finds expression in a poem before us. Mr. Blunt gives

where God the Father congratulates the whole establishment that all is going on well in the world, until Satan appears and impeaches the entire mundane creation, at least as it stands under the lordship of Man. Satan reminds the Lord that the original row in heaven was over the creation of this same Homo. It was a monstrous mistake to develop the rulers of this planet from the lewd, bare-buttocked simian. Any other progenitor would have done better—from an elephant down to a butterfly. A lurid picture is drawn of man's inhumanity to man, his murderous treatment of the lower animals, and his awful selfishness and hypocrisy. Thereupon the Lord God, who really ought to have known all this himself, is shocked and ashamed. Evidently he did no good by sending his Son into the world. What is to be done then? Another messenger must be sent, but that messenger will have to die on the earth, and from death there is no recovery. No archangel cares for the task. But this is Satan's great opportunity. He is weary of immortality, and he volunteers to go himself. What he is going to do, and how he is going to do it, is not very clear. All we see is that God has failed, and the Devil is to have a chance.

Mr. Blunt is evidently like the rest of us. He finds it easier to criticise than to improve; easier to diagnose than to remedy. And this suggests the folly of unlimited denunciation. Was it not Fielding—brave, wise, great-hearted Harry Fielding—who said it was no use damning the nature of things? One must either leave the world in disgust, or stay in it and do the best one can to mend it. Any other course is illogical. And what is the way to mend it? Certainly not wholesale impeachment, either of mankind at large or of any particular race. But this is the vein of reform into which Mr. Blunt has fallen. Take the following passage, for instance, in which Satan ends his diatribe against Man by impeaching the sanguinary Saxon:—

The red Japhetic stock of the bare plain
 Rolled
 A base-born horde on Rome erewhile a lust of gold.
 Tide following tide, the Goth, Goth, Vandal, Lombard,
 Spewed forth from the white North, their dominion
 In the fair southern lands, with flame at their heels,
 And rapine in their van, armed to the teeth,
 These made their spoil of all that was
 Its wealth, its beauty, its strength, its life,
 Her long renown, her strength, her fame,
 And with the rest her glory, her renown,
 From this wild, bitter, and unchristian creed,
 New Christendom upstart, and its fast down,
 Pagan in spite of Christ, and its fast down,
 Still ruled it, and its glory, its renown,
 Ay in Thy name, and its glory, its renown,
 And or its glory, its renown, its fast down,
 Like bats, and its glory, its renown, its fast down,
 The name, and its glory, its renown, its fast down,
 After that, and its glory, its renown, its fast down,
 Gaul the Dane,
 sued to them in vain.
 story. It is writ in blood,
 d man, by their brute hands subdued,
 ore, the hungriest of the pack,
 all men call the Sassenach,
 Norman dog, who goeth by land and sea,
 fathers went in chartered piracy,
 in his right hand.

No wonder, on hearing all this, that the Lord God wants to annihilate the Sassenach. Satan tells him, however, that the wretch is not so easily disposed of. He objects to annihilation. Though the very earth should be broken in twain, he would find a way of pulling through the catastrophe. The only thing to be done is to start afresh. Man is "beyond redeeming," and another life-form must be chosen "free from the

simian taint." But how that life-form is to get on, with the terrible and indestructible Man—not to mention the specially terrible and indestructible Sassenach—standing by to keep the world for himself, the poet gives us no sort of indication.

Mr. Blunt dedicates this poem by permission to Mr. Herbert Spencer, whom he describes as "the first of living thinkers," whom he praises for his "reasoned and life-long advocacy of the rights of the weak in Man's higher evolution," and to whom he owes "all that in the poem is intellectually worthiest." Mr. Spencer, however, is an evolutionist. He believes in progress. He is confident that Humanity is marching forward to better things.

Emotion is more powerfully stirred by verse than by prose. Fifty thousand leading articles would never produce the same effect as (say) a rattling poem by Mr. Kipling. But prose is more effective than verse in matters of pure reason. Mr. Blunt should therefore—for he *can* write prose—condescend to use this vehicle when he wishes us to think. He does give us prose in his Preface, from which we make the following extract:—

"He cannot expect but that he may wound by his plain speaking the feelings of those among his readers who sincerely believe that Nineteenth Century Civilisation is synonymous with Christianity, and that the English Race, above all those in existence, has a special mission from Heaven to subdue and occupy the Earth. The self-complacency of the Author's countrymen is too deeply seated to be attacked without offence. He has not, however, shrunk from so attacking, and from insisting on the truth that the hypocrisy and all-acquiring greed of modern England is an atrocious spectacle—one which, if there be any justice in Heaven, must bring a curse from God, as it has surely already made the angels weep."

Here we are on firmer ground, and we venture to suggest to Mr. Blunt that, while his heart is well-placed, his head is turned in a wrong direction. It is not some special form of Christianity that will restrain and temper the dominance of "superior" races. Religion is a capital ally of racial and national ambitions. The hope of the future lies in the sovereign conception of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Deficiencies of the Bible.

IN the opinion of a certain class of avowed Freethinkers, it is "questionable propagandism" to criticise the Bible and its teachings. These well-meaning Rationalists urge that militant Secularism is out of date, that the Bible and theological dogmas should be left alone, and that the principal attention of Freethought advocates ought to be directed to constructive Secular work. We certainly are not unmindful of the necessity of expounding the positive side of Rationalist principles; but, in our opinion, that is not enough. The Church party are still active in obstructing progressive thought, and the Bible is the principal weapon they use in their retarding work. Even many of those who profess to take a "rational" view of the Bible extol it as being the best book for human guidance. A greater fallacy, in our opinion, was never promulgated. So long as this delusion is taught, and the thoughtless multitude believe it, our duty as Secularists is to expose the deficiencies of the book as a monitor in daily life.

We have frequently contended in these columns that the Bible is quite inadequate and misleading as a teacher of history, philosophy, and ethics, and now we propose to show that it is equally deficient as an expositor of science. This last drawback deprives the book of any value as an active factor in the secular advancement of the human race, for the simple reason that it is to science we are indebted for the progress that has been made in the material condition of society. All intelligent thought to-day is more or less influenced by natural science. Old opinions, not only in the domain of the material, but also in that of the intellectual and moral, have to be remoulded or abolished in obedience to the dictates of the higher knowledge that we have attained of the workings of natural law. That which cannot be reconciled with science must be pronounced as out of harmony with the genius of the epoch. We do not, of course, allege that physical science covers the entire field of knowledge,

but we do contend that there is no phase of thought that is not very largely moulded by modern discoveries. Scientific truth can no longer be successfully opposed, even by the most dogmatic theologian, and it is now too powerful and too widely known to allow itself to be even ignored. Hence, whatever opinions are advocated, the pretence put forward in their favor usually is that they are in harmony with science. The difficulty, however, too often lies in making good this claim.

We are aware that many professed Christians assert that the Bible does not pretend to teach science. If this were true, it would corroborate our contention that the book is but of little use as a practical instructor in mundane affairs. Besides, the Bible, which is supposed to contain all that is necessary for the requirements of mankind, ought to inculcate the facts of science, which, as we have said, confer upon them the greatest benefit. Moreover, a book which professes to have been written under Divine inspiration for the guidance and instruction of the human race should not only teach science, but should expound its truths in such a concise and practical manner that, while harmonising with the facts of nature, it should also commend itself to the judgment and intellect of the humblest of the land. But the fact is, the Bible does refer to scientific subjects, and deals largely with matters that fall within the region in which science reigns supreme. Kalisch says: "The Bible is not silent upon the creation; it attempts, indeed, to furnish its history; but in this account it expresses as facts that which the researches of science cannot sanction." Now, the subject of creation is not the only topic upon which the book states the very opposite to what is correct. Surely when and how man was made, the phenomena of the solar system, and the mode by which disease and death entered the world, are scientific questions. These, with other similar subjects, are dwelt upon in the Bible, and a reference to its statements thereon will show that science and the Bible are not on the most friendly terms. The truth is, there have been but few discoveries of any magnitude in science that have not exhibited in some way the fallacy of portions of the Bible. That which in the days of Moses might have been considered right, and in accordance with the laws of nature, science has since proved to be incorrect; and what Christ taught as natural laws subsequent experience has shown to be in opposition to scientific discoveries.

We allege that whatever is self-contradictory cannot be scientifically true, and, further, that that which is opposed to the facts of science is deficient as a guide in human affairs. That the Bible contradicts itself upon questions of science is beyond all doubt. Take the subject of creation as dealt with in Genesis; there are two accounts, and the difference between them as given in the first two chapters is most striking. For instance: In the first, the earth emerges from the waters, and is, therefore, saturated with moisture (Genesis i. 9, 10). In the second, the whole face of the ground requires to be moistened (Genesis ii. 6). In the first, the birds and beasts are created *before* man (Genesis i. 20, 24, 26). In the second, man is created *before* the birds and beasts (Genesis ii. 7, 9). In the first, all the "fowls that fly" are made out of the *waters* (Genesis i. 20). In the second, the "fowls of the air" are made out of the *ground* (Genesis ii. 19). In the first, man is made lord of the whole earth (Genesis i. 28). In the second, he is merely placed in the Garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it (Genesis ii. 8, 15). In the first, man and woman are created together (Genesis i. 28). In the second, the beasts and birds are created *between the man and woman* (Genesis ii. 7, 8, 15, 22). The contradictions here have been admitted by acknowledged Christians. Dean Stanley, in his sermon on Sir Charles Lyell, observes: "It is now clear that the two accounts differ from each other in almost every particular." Bishop Colenso wrote: "The second account is manifestly written by a different person from him who wrote the first." He arrived at this conclusion in consequence of the contradictions which he discovered in the two narratives. Kalisch frankly admitted that "the second in many important features contradicts the first." J. P. Lesley grants: "There is no alliance possible between Jewish Theology and Modern Science. They are irreconcilable enemies. Geology, in its present advancement, cannot be brought more easily into harmony with the Mosaic cosmogony than with the *Platonic, the Vedic, or the Scandinavian*"

(*Man's Origin and Destiny*, p. 45). In fact, so very evident has this become, even to orthodox believers in the Bible, that they are driven to the subterfuge referred to above—namely, that it was not the function of the Bible to teach science. We have seen, however, that its writers did undertake such teaching, but that, as upon many other subjects, what they taught was false and misleading.

Not only are the teachings of the Bible bearing upon science conflicting, but its statements on the subject are diametrically opposed to modern scientific discoveries. As to the alleged creation of the world, the origin of man, the introduction of death among the human race, and the nature and cure of disease, the Bible is wrong in every particular. It is also erroneous as to the progressive character of man. According to *Genesis*, he is a fallen creature; but science and experience prove that his career has been one of progress from a lower to a higher condition. Sir John Lubbock has shown (1) that existing savages have not descended from civilized ancestors; (2) that the primitive condition of man was barbaric; and (3) that the history of man has been one of progression, not of retrogression.

To sum up the differences between the Bible and the science, we may mention the following instances: The Bible proclaims the age of the world and of the human family to be about six thousand years; science knows nothing of creation, and it furnishes abundant testimony that man existed long prior to the date thus assigned. The Bible alleges that death was a supernatural infliction; science has proved that it is the effect of a natural law. The Bible attributes sickness to the possession of devils; science has demonstrated it to be the result of imperfect physical conditions. The Bible is stationary, and bound by the limitations of the past; science is progressive, and is guided by the revelations of the ever present. Finally, the Bible is deficient and ambiguous in its theory of the supposed supernatural, in its scheme of salvation, in its rules of ethical conduct, and in its doctrine of future rewards and punishments.

We, as Secularists, therefore, discard the Bible as our master, and use it, so far as it is possible, as our servant. We test its efficiency not by the weakness of the past, but by the utility of the present.

CHARLES WATTS.

Roger Bacon and the Awakening of Europe.

To the student of modern European history there is no period so full of interest, so replete with fascinating problems and character studies, as that between the close of the thirteenth century and the opening of the seventeenth. It is but 300 years all told, a mere episode in the life of a nation; yet what a contrast is the end of this period to the beginning! The thirteenth century shows us the Church all-powerful in Europe, reigning without a rival save for the declining Mohammedan power in the south-eastern portion of Spain. The feudal system was still unshaken, and the people, as a people, had scarce begun to exist. In science the Ptolemaic system, with its flat and stationary earth, still held sway, and all cultivation of the physical or mathematical sciences was open to the charge of necromancy or magic—a charge that meant a long imprisonment, if not death. Literature was practically unknown, the legends of half-mad monks being the chief material supplied to such as were able to read, who were as few as they could well be. Ignorance, despotism, and superstition reigned on all hands, and with them their accompaniments of almost unbridled evil, misery, and degradation.

The end of the sixteenth century lands one in a new world. In science the labors of Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo had completely shattered the conception of the universe upon which Christianity rested, and had laid the foundations of a structure that was to be completed in our own day by Darwin, Lyell, and Spencer. In philosophy the names of Descartes, Da Vinci, Montaigne, Bruno, and Bacon mark the inauguration of new methods of thinking that were bound to prove fatal to the claims of the Church.

In religion the revolt against the paralysing power of Rome was an accomplished fact; and, although Protestantism was at bottom quite as illiberal as the older form of Christianity, its success rendered religious unity for ever impossible, and to that extent made for a wider intellectual life. And in literature, to take England only, the names of Sydney, Spenser, Jonson, Shakespeare, and Marlowe are brilliant indications of the new world of life that had replaced the reading of monkish legends—partly the ravings of dementia and partly deliberate imposture.

It is difficult to name a precise date for the commencement of a historical movement; but I do not think that we shall be far out if we select the thirteenth century as giving the opening of the attack upon Christian beliefs, and of the downfall of a Church that had ruled Europe, almost unquestioned, for over 800 years. From the beginning of the fifth century the Church had dominated Europe, and before its growth and rule the learning and civilisation of antiquity had nearly disappeared. The museums, libraries, and colleges of Rome, Alexandria, and Athens had all been burned or otherwise destroyed; the civil and municipal independence of the Roman people had vanished; the whole status of society, mentally, morally, and socially, seemed to sink lower with the passing of each generation, until the predicted end of the world in the year 1000 seemed but a fitting conclusion to a society that was in the last stages of social degeneration.

It is usual for religious historians to attribute the inconceivable ignorance of these centuries and the decay of the ancient learning to the barbarian invasions; but I have never been able to find adequate justification for such a statement. The barbarians who overran the empire in the fifth and sixth centuries—itsself an event that could not have occurred had not the stamina of the Roman people been sapped by the growth of theology—the barbarians were far from unteachable, as their subsequent history proved. Indeed, it was Theodoric the Ostrogoth who made an attempt, and for some time a successful attempt, to revive the prosperity and learning of Rome during its last days. And, secondly, it would seem that the barbarians underwent a marked deterioration after their contact with the Christian communities.*

It is impossible to relieve Christianity of the lion's share of the responsibility for the ignorance and social degradation that existed from the end of the fourth to the fourteenth century. From the earliest times Christian leaders had set themselves strenuously against all Pagan learning, and there were none other. "Philosophy," said Tertullian, "is the patriarch of all the heresies"; and under the actual persecution of Christianity ancient learning flickered out its life in the barbarous murder of Hypatia (414) and the closing of the Greek schools of philosophy (529) by the Emperor Justinian. Henceforth the Church ruled, "and the disastrous influence she exercised on letters and science may be estimated by the simple fact that during the nine centuries of her undisputed dominion not a single classic writer, not a single discoverer whose genius enlarged the intellectual horizon, not a single leader of modern thought, arose to dignify her reign. The darkness of the Dark Ages was deepest when the power of the Church was least disputed; that darkness began to break when the doctrines of the Church began to be called in question; the dawn was coeval with an insurrection."†

From the long nightmare of the Christian ages Europe was aroused by the influence of Mohammedan civilisation, brought about chiefly through the Crusades, but assisted also by commercial and scholarly intercourse when Christian vigilance could be evaded. There is scarcely a writer of note and ability from the year 1000 down to the close of the fourteenth century who did not owe his learning directly or indirectly to the Mohammedan universities. It was in this manner that Christian Europe was once more brought into contact with the fertilising literature of Greece and Rome; it was in the classics of the Pagan world as preserved by the Mohammedans, and in the civilisation

* Gieseler says that from the Christians who came into contact with the invaders there proceeded "pernicious influences rather than enlightenment to the Germans" (*Ecclesiastical History*, ii., p. 158).

† G. H. Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, ii., p. 5.

reared by the followers of the prophet, that Christians found the impulse to development that their own creed had failed to supply them with. The world had to take up the story of civilisation where Christian bigotry had dropped it centuries before, leaving the eight or nine hundred years that intervened a hideous nightmare, with hardly a redeeming feature to relieve the haunting horror of its remembrance.

All great movements have their precursors, and in this instance the first clear indication of the new spirit that was moving over the chaos of Christian barbarism was given by the Franciscan monk, Roger Bacon, the most commanding figure of the thirteenth century; in many respects the most remarkable character of the Middle Ages. Born at Ilchester, in Somersetshire, about 1214—the precise date of his birth as of his death is uncertain—he must have belonged to a wealthy family if we are to judge from the amount of money he is said to have spent in acquiring information. How far he was representative of a school it is impossible to say; at all events, there would have been few in Christendom that equalled him in the thoroughness of his grasp of a scientific method, or his knowledge of physical science. Educated at Oxford, the memory of him is still preserved in the name of Brasenose College. The brazen nose is all that remains of the wonderful brass head that Bacon is said to have constructed, and which possessed the power of omitting sounds similar to those of the human voice. Many wonderful stories are told concerning this head, but the only clear result is that it fastened on Bacon the dangerous charge of commerce with the devil. Roger soon exhausted all that Oxford had to give him in the shape of knowledge, and, as was then the custom for promising students, travelled to Paris and carried off high honors there. But neither Paris nor Oxford could give to a man of Bacon's mental temper all that he desired. It was in acquiring and disseminating this wider knowledge that he paid to the Church the toll it has levied upon all thinkers and reformers who lived in the days when its power for evil was still uncurbed.

The difficulties in the way of such a student in the thirteenth century were enormous. From the Christian world around he could get nothing. To turn to the Jews and Mohammedans was to invite the charge of heresy; to study the stars was to hold intercourse with Satan; to know more than the ignorant rabble of monks around the most unforgivable of crimes. Books were often not to be obtained, and, when obtainable, only after much difficulty. Bacon himself complains: "The philosophical works of Aristotle, of Avicenna, of Cicero, of Seneca, and other ancients, cannot be had without great cost; their principal works have not been translated into Latin, and others are not to be obtained in ordinary libraries or elsewhere. The admirable books of Cicero de Republica are not to be found anywhere, so far as I can hear, though I have made anxious inquiry for them in different parts of the world, and by various messengers. I could never find the works of Seneca, though I made diligent search for them for twenty years or more." Few words, but they help us to realise vividly the intellectual vacuity of his age, and the immense injury done by Christianity to the world of letters.

Unable to find what he required in Christendom, Bacon turned elsewhere. Moslem and Jewish doctors became his instructors—whether by personal contact or by writing only is not clear, save that their influence is plain. Through him we again trace the influence of the East on the West, and it is for that reason that I have selected him as the incarnation of the new spirit. Disheartened by twenty years of disappointing labor, ruined by the money spent upon purchasing of books and manufacturing of instruments, disgusted at the ignorance of the monks, whom he describes as knowing no more of the properties of a circle than its power of keeping away evil spirits, despairing of making any impression upon the thick wall of ignorance behind which Christianity had entrenched itself, Bacon joined the Order of St. Francis, among whom books and study were looked upon as hindrances to a pious life.

His new masters forbade him to write anything under pain of imprisonment, and Bacon does not appear to have disobeyed for some time. But the craving of his mind was not to be suppressed. "Some few chapters on different subjects, written at the entreaty of friends,"

called down the attention of his superiors. Deprived of writing materials, Bacon was sent to Paris in 1257, like a badly-behaved school-boy, to await the pleasure of the General of his Order. His pleasure was soon expressed. To prison Bacon went, and remained there for ten long, weary years, deprived of writing materials, books, instruments; the first in modern times to be persecuted for a philosophic heresy; the first also of that long list of victims that Christianity sacrificed upon the altar of its ignorant idolatry in the futile attempt to suppress the awakening European intellect. C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

General Oliver Cromwell.

THE House of Lords saw fit to advertise its own impotence by a belated protest against the statue of Oliver Cromwell. Within a week the statue was standing erect under the shadow of Westminster Hall. It stands upon a huge mass of masonry, which typifies the fact that Cromwell was the rock upon which the aspirations of the Commonwealth foundered. And it shows the man, as Voltaire described him, "with the sword in one hand, the Bible in the other, and the mask of hypocrisy on his face."

Cromwell has appropriated to himself a certain amount of admiration as the central figure of the great revolt against the despotism of Charles I. The real heroes of that period were such men as Pym, Hampden, Prynne, and Ireton; but *their* names have paled in the superior glare of Cromwell's. The popular imagination is dazzled with the vision of the man who began life as an ordinary country squire, and ended it as the autocrat of the three kingdoms. Yet the part he played was neither great nor noble; he was merely a successful general, whose victories made him the most powerful man in England, and who used his power for his own advantage.

The praises of Cromwell come from those who regard him as the champion of Nonconformity. On the ceiling of Dr. Parker's Temple, amid the names of preachers and divines, we read the name of Oliver Cromwell; for he was the head and embodiment of that short period of Nonconformist triumph, signalised by the persecution of Quakers, the hanging of Papists, and the expulsion of the Episcopal clergy. When everybody was made uncomfortable by Act of Parliament: when laws were enacted against popery and "infidelity"; when holidays were superseded by fast-days: and when bear-baiting was abolished, not because it hurt the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. Those days of the liberty of the Saints, when freedom of the press was destroyed, and no printing allowed except in four particular cities; when book-hawkers and ballad-singers were suppressed lest they should spread reflections upon the Lord's chosen ones; and when obnoxious persons were kept in prison for years, without trial or accusation, simply because the authorities were unable to bring legal actions against them. Those halcyon days when the Nonconformist Conscience ruled the land!

As before remarked, Cromwell owed his career entirely to his military capacity. While the struggle with the king was conducted on constitutional lines, he remained in obscurity; but when the constitutional struggle became aggravated into an armed rebellion, Cromwell speedily rose into importance. The most remarkable thing about him was that his military career only commenced when he was verging upon middle age. Most great generals begin young, and die young. Charles XII. and Alexander the Great were dead before they were thirty-six; Cromwell was forty-three before he saw a battlefield. His tutor was an obscure officer, Captain Dalbier, who had seen much service abroad; but the pupil soon outshone the master.

The reason of Cromwell's success in the field is totally obscured in the current fables. Imaginative persons attribute his victories to the religious fervor of his soldiers. We are constantly being told that the Ironsides became good soldiers through their habit of intoning psalms through their noses, and talking in an artificial language, interlarded with texts of scripture, and garnished with appeals to "the Lord." Battles are

not decided by such rubbish as this. All military history shows that religious enthusiasm is the worst thing an army can be afflicted with. We need not desert Cromwell's own times for a striking illustration of this cardinal fact. If ever there was an army of pietists, it was that which opposed him in his Scottish campaign. The Scottish clergy were the life and soul of that army. Every worldlying was chased out of its ranks, and every soldier was a pillar of true-blue Presbyterian orthodoxy. This army was strong in numbers, well appointed, well posted, and well commanded; it was raised to the highest pitch of excitement by the exhortations of its preachers, and it was blazing with religious enthusiasm. Yet in one hour it was totally annihilated by the "poor, scattered, hungry, discouraged army" of Oliver Cromwell. If, therefore, piety was such a disastrous weapon for the Scotch, it cannot have been of any value to the English.

The true reasons of Cromwell's success as a general are not very far to seek. They simply consisted in strong common-sense methods, and in his adherence to the known rules of practical warfare. We must bear in mind that in the seventeenth century the cavalry was the only really formidable force. The infantry was of little value; its musketry fire was slow and ineffective; and infantry engagements were usually decided by the pike—a most deadly weapon in skilful hands. The field-artillery was nothing more than a costly and cumbersome species of fireworks. And it was the action of the cavalry alone which decided most battles. Cromwell perfectly understood the importance of cavalry, and even in the earliest stages of the war he was continually impressing upon his party the necessity of raising horse-soldiers rather than footmen, "for one troop of horse will far more advantage the cause than two or three companies of foot." The Royalist cavalry was formed of most excellent material. The men were good riders; they wore little or no defensive armour, and were, therefore, able to make their charges at full gallop, and gain the full effect of their speed and momentum. The Parliamentary cavalry, on the other hand, were nearly all cuirassiers. These mail-clad horsemen were at first nicknamed "lobsters," from their armour; but later in the war they were more respectfully styled "ironsides." The protection of their armour gave the men confidence, but so overweighted their horses that they could only charge at a trot; and their sole hope was to bear down the enemy by sheer weight of man and horse. Thus, the Royalist horsemen excelled in speed, and the Parliamentary cavalry in weight.

The men on both sides being good, there remained the question of tactics. Now, it is a recognised axiom in cavalry-fighting that the side which brings up the last reserve wins the day. The horsemen are drawn up in several lines, one behind the other. Your first line charges and overthrows the enemy. The enemy's second line comes up, charges, and throws your men into confusion. Your second line charges, and overthrows the enemy. And so the game goes on, until the last squadron has come into action; and the side which makes the last charge with an unbroken force wins the day. This simple and infallible principle was totally neglected by both royalist and parliamentary generals. Both sides collected their cavalry into single masses, and exhausted them in one charge. The consequence was, that the officer who got his charge in first always overthrew the other; and, as the other side had no second line, there was an end to the struggle. Oliver Cromwell was the first man in the war to grasp this principle of alternate cavalry charges; and, when he was in command, he invariably took care to keep his reserves well in hand, so that it was his side which delivered the last charge. By this means he gained most signal advantages at Grantham, Gainsborough, and other minor actions, until he had established his reputation as the best cavalry-general in England.

Cromwell not only observed the recognised rules of tactics, he also paid particular attention to the discipline of his troops. In this he was greatly aided by the command. As before remarked, the Royalist cavalry were light horsemen, who charged at full speed. The consequence was that the shock of their charge carried everything before it; but, at the same time, it scattered their ranks and

broke their formation; and their impetuosity carried them clean off the field of battle, and rendered it almost impossible for them to rally or re-form. On the other hand, the heavy Parliamentary cuirassiers charged at a trot, and forced down their opponents by sheer weight. The consequence was that their charge did not carry them very far. They remained well within reach of their officers, and the comparative slowness of their movement made it possible to halt them, and re-arrange their ranks, without difficulty.

We see a striking difference between those great pitched battles, where Cromwell was only present as a subordinate officer, and those in which he held a command. At Edgehill, Cromwell was merely captain of a troop. Part of the Parliamentary horse happened to be posted in the rear of the infantry, and thus did not come into the line of the Royalist charge; but, instead of delivering a counter-charge, it waited quietly till the enemy had driven both the cavalry wings off the field, and then fell on the Royalist infantry. The result was a drawn battle, equally disastrous to both sides. At Marston Moor, however, Cromwell commanded a brigade of cavalry. His men were drawn up in the front line, with Leslie's Scotch Brigade in the second line. The Royalist cavalry was, as usual, massed in one large body under Rupert. Cromwell advanced to the attack, and was immediately charged and overthrown by Rupert. Leslie, in his turn, charged Rupert, and forced him off the field. Cromwell re-formed his squadrons, crushed down all opposition, and gained a decisive victory.

A great defect in both armies was the maintenance of the feudal idea. Each great landholder brought his relations and dependants to join one side or the other, and expected to command them in the field. The king was surrounded by great nobles, jealous of one another, and refusing to obey any orders but those of Charles himself. The result was that the Royalist armies could never attain any strong organisation, or be directed by any trusted and competent general. Matters were nearly as bad on the Parliamentary side. Cromwell clearly saw the cause, enlisted the co-operation of the Earl of Manchester, and persuaded the Parliament to abolish the feudal idea and reorganise its forces on a modern basis. The "New Model" Army—the first regular army ever seen in England—properly drilled and disciplined, and led by the best general in the country, shattered every force opposed to it, and made its commander the chief power in the land.

(Of Cromwell as a strategist we have not space to speak, and can only refer to Colonel Baldock's *Cromwell as a Soldier*.)

The war with the king being ended, the Parliament naturally wished to disband its forces and apply itself to carrying out those reforms which were the ostensible cause of the outbreak. But this was resisted by the military leaders. It was the Army which had raised them into position and power, and they, therefore, made every effort to keep the Army together to enforce their own interests. Roman history told of Cincinnatus, who left his plough in the furrow, raised an army, defeated the enemy, saved the Republic, and then returned to his farm as a private citizen, content to have served the State and done his duty. But Oliver Cromwell was no pagan Cincinnatus. First, he felt that it was the Lord's will that he should hold the balance of power between the captured king and the victorious Parliament; but as soon as he discovered that the king could not be trusted to serve his interests, the enthusiastic courtier became the stern Republican, and signed King Charles's death-warrant. Thus was England left face to face with Cæsarism. The rise to power of Napoleon Bonaparte led to the Napoleonic wars. The rise of the Protectorate was accompanied by useless and costly wars against continental nations. Cromwell then felt that it was the will of the Lord that he should be King of England; but he could not persuade a Parliament to seat him on the Stuart throne, and therefore the Lord's will remained unfulfilled.

The Civil War was undertaken to settle certain national grievances. Oliver Cromwell caused the revolt to succeed; and it was he who made it entirely useless. For ten years the land writhed under the heel of military despotism. Charles had failed for want of an army; Cromwell succeeded with an army. Charles attempted

to arrest five members; Cromwell expelled a hundred. Charles employed lawyers to extort illegal taxes; Cromwell employed major-generals. Charles dissolved parliaments with writs, Cromwell with muskets. Thirty millions sterling were spent, a million lives sacrificed; and the country was compelled to return to Stuart rule, and leave its political problems to be solved by future generations.

CHILPERIC.

A Feat of Hands.

"When Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed."—EXODUS xvii. 11.

SOME feats of arms you read about,
And some you may have seen;
But what I write this screed about
Has never equalled been.

The date of this sensation act
Was thirty hundred years
Before our "Education Act"
Filled parsons' minds with fears.

The hero of this tussle was
The Hebrews' warlike chief,
Although his senile muscle was
As soft as potted beef.

This old semitic hero was—
Though bloodier by half
Than Atilla or Nero was—
The Chief of Jahveh's staff.

His biceps won a victory
O'er Amalek, his foe,
And yet—though contradictory—
He never struck a blow.

He merely struck an attitude
Which struck them dead as pork,
In 29 North latitude,
And 40 East from Cork.

He raised his hands invokingly,
Which forced the foe to fail;
His arms grew tired, provokingly,
Which made the foe prevail.

"Here, Aaron! Half a mo'!" said Mo.
"You see what tiring means!
Support me! Thanks! What Ho!" said Mo,
"Now God will give them beans!"

Said he—without surprise, it seems—
On seeing some retreat:
"My feat of hands gives rise, it seems,
To flighty feats of feet."

Since Kruger's God is Moses' God,
His hands should win the fight,
Unless he now supposes God
Too weak for Britain's might.

The Lord had once to fly, you know,
From folk who'd iron trolleys,
Which makes Him now fight shy, you know,
Of metal guns and volleys.

But Britain's God is Moses' God,
By Royal proclamation;
An honor which disposes God
To help the British nation.

In name of bloody Moses' God,
Each hates his foreign brother,
And fancies he disposes God
To spifficate the other.

Yet Kruger's God is "oors" as well;
And God says we're his children—
The Britons and the Boers as well—
It's dev'lishly bewild'rin'!

G. L. MACKENZIE.

IN KANSAS.—First Populist—"We expelled the deacon from the party fer mixin' religion an' politics." Second Populist—"Mixin' religion an' politics?" First Populist—"Yes; he'd go to a political meetin' an' he'd fall asleep in the middle of a speech, b'gosh! jest like as if it was a sermon."—Puck.

Acid Drops.

ADMIRAL DEWEY has gone and got married. His wife is a Roman Catholic, and, as he is not, a special dispensation was required from the Church. No doubt it was obtained very easily. The Church is always glad to let its female devotees get hold of powerful heretics. Common-garden heretics are quite another matter.

The Lord's Day Observance Society points out to the London County Council that the concerts of the National Sunday League still "profess blasphemously to be the meetings for worship of a body of anonymous Dissenters, and are registered as such at Somerset House." This is extremely funny.

According to a law passed in 1603, a fine of one shilling may be inflicted on all persons over nine years of age who are not present at their parish church on Sunday. Sir Montague Burgoyne was prosecuted at Bedford, in 1817, for having been absent from the parish church for several months. He was let off on the evidence of his doctor. Isaac Watton, a manservant, was fined nine shillings and ninepence, in 1864, for refusing to go to church on Sunday when asked to do so by his mistress.

Mr. John Burns is opposed to "industrialising the Sunday." He is rather fond of phrases, and this one is supposed to justify his attitude on the Sunday Concerts question. But the truth is that Mr. Burns wants to have just as much industrialising of the Sunday as he personally approves. There is absolutely no logic in allowing Sunday Concerts in some halls and refusing to allow them in others. Wherever they are allowed they entail Sunday work, and the Sunday work has to be paid for.

Miss Spedding, of Mire House, in the parish of Henshall-cum-Heck, has set up a wayside crucifix, partly in memory of "fourteen years' Church progress in this parish," partly in "pious homage to our Divine Redeemer," and partly to mark "the opening of the twentieth century," which, by the way, doesn't begin as soon as the lady imagines. Finally, the inscription on this superstitious emblem runs, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us." Miss Spedding ought to put up another memorial to the "Father of God." We suppose, in the natural course of things, he has two parents; and why should one of them be neglected?

Mr. Justice North's judgment with regard to the copyright of Lord Rosebery's speeches has been reversed by the Court of Appeal. It was an amazingly foolish and perverse judgment. Lord Rosebery was denied the copyright of his own speeches, which was declared to belong to the shorthand writer who took them down for the *Times*.

The Catholic Church, which has been the curse of Spain, still hangs on like grim death to that unhappy country. The Bishops are now agitating for a restoration of all the old privileges of the Church, including Catholic public instruction and the prohibition of all but Catholic Associations.

One of our readers has asked us for the name of the Christian manual which advises communicants to rinse their mouths out well overnight, so as to avoid having to do it in the morning, when they might swallow a little water accidentally, and thus break the Church's rule that the Holy Communion must be taken fasting. The manual in question is entitled *The First Communion*, and is published in Brookstreet, Holborn. Quotations were given from it by Dr. Parker in his recent address before the Council of the Liberation Society at the Memorial Hall.

Dr. James Edmunds, a friend of teetotalism, has just given utterance to a dreadful wish. "So great," he said, "was the value of awful examples that he sometimes thought it would be a good thing if the Archbishop of Canterbury, instead of being the excellent man they all so greatly honored, were a thorough drunkard, often brought before the magistrates and fined five shillings." We have not the nerve to dwell upon this awful picture.

A house of God with a steeple on it is far from being a safe shelter when there is lightning about, notwithstanding that the Lord directs the lightning, and might naturally be supposed to take some care of his own temples. We are led to these rather trite reflections by the fact that in one of the recent destructive thunderstorms the spire of Rockliffe Church was destroyed by lightning. There were no worshippers in the church at the time, but if there had been we suppose they would have had to take their chance.

The Free Church bell at Dunoon is said to have been cast in the same key as the bell of the parish church. This is the nearest approach to union that the two congregations can boast of. They ought to be thankful that they have reached even as far as this in Christian unity.

A VERY ORTHODOX ANIMAL.—Bishop—"Doesn't shy, eh, Mr. Perkins?" Horse Dealer—"Shy? Never! Stop, my lord. I must be honest with you. I did know him shy once—but that was at a Salvationist Army passin' by!" Bishop buys horse at once.

Satis Biswas is in trouble. The charge against him is that of obtaining money by fraudulent representations. He is a native of India, and has been a law student at Gray's Inn. His brother is a district Judge in Bengal. According to the evidence of Detective-Sergeant Seymour, this young and subtle Hindu was in the habit of visiting clergymen, and other simple persons, and representing that his family refused him help because they were so opposed to Christianity. He had been baptised in several different faiths already, and was apparently willing to be baptised in as many more—if he could find them. The judge facetiously remarked that he did not seem to be a Christian martyr.

Everyone—says the *St. James's Gazette*, in commenting on this case—who has lived in foreign lands knows that this is a class of convert frequently obtained by our missionaries. In India the higher castes are not accessible to Europeans at all, and family ties and traditions are too strong to permit a change of faith. It is chiefly the lower castes, who have nothing to lose socially, and can make a preliminary gain, that offer themselves for baptism.

The same journal adds that "the better-class missions, such as the Cambridge mission at Delhi, have almost given up the attempt to proselytise, and are content nowadays to further the advance of civilisation by the example of their lives."

The oft-predicted "end of the world" was confidently expected at Tripoli to arrive on the 13th inst. The Israelites sent their wives some days previously to pray in the synagogues, and most workmen ceased work. The Arabs fired volleys, and held religious meetings to welcome the Prophet. Debtors, we are told, refused to pay their debts, though what good they could hope to do by retaining the money does not appear. However, the predicted time has passed over, and the world still wags on.

The *Westminster Gazette* has noticed a point where sacerdotal contentions are mutually contradictory. On the one hand Ritualists maintain that their congregations are quite desolate and bereaved when deprived of certain forbidden "privileges," such as incense, etc.; and, on the other, they deny that the tastes and wishes of these same people—that is, the laity—are in any way to be consulted as to the Church practices which are to be adopted. This is, according to them, not a matter which depends on the preference of the laity, but on the authority and tradition of the "Catholic Church." How these two positions are to be reconciled we cannot say.—*Church Gazette*.

President Kruger is reported to be unmoved by the train-loads of wounded men brought back to Pretoria from the front. He smokes his pipe with great composure, considering that the Boers' cause is in the Lord's hands. Really it is quite touching.

"He heaps up posts and public wealth on his relations in a way that would put Tammany Hall to shame." Thus writes Mr. F. A. McKenzie in his newly-published little book on President Kruger. He holds, however, that the Boers are not exactly corrupt. Believing, as he does, that the Boers are a sort of chosen people, and that it is lawful to spoil the Egyptians, the pious old Dutchman is able to look upon all this distribution of money to his own family and relatives as having a certain religious sanction.

Livingstone, long ago, noticed this "chosen people" idea amongst the Boers, and made it account for their unspeakable treatment of the African natives. "They are all traditionally religious," he wrote, "tracing their descent from some of the best men (Huguenots and Dutch) the world ever saw. Hence they claim to themselves the title of 'Christians,' and all the colored race are 'black property' or 'creatures.' They being the chosen people of God, the heathen are given to them for an inheritance, and they are the rod of divine vengeance on the heathen, as were the Jews of old."

This religious exclusiveness hardened the Boers' hearts wonderfully. "It is difficult," Livingstone wrote, "for a person in a civilised country to conceive that any body of men possessing the common attributes of humanity (and these Boers are by no means destitute of the better feelings of our nature) should with one accord set out, after loading their own wives and children with caresses, and proceed to shoot down in cold blood men and women, of a different color, it is true, but possessed of domestic feelings and affections equal to their own. It was long before I could give credit to the tales of bloodshed told by native witnesses."

Livingstone's account of the Boer forays amongst the natives is very interesting. "When they reach the tribe to

be attacked," he wrote, "the friendly natives are ranged in front, to form, as they say, 'a shield'; the Boers then coolly fire over their heads till the devoted people flee and leave cattle, wives, and children to the captors. This was done in nine cases during my residence in the interior, and on no occasion was a drop of Boer's blood shed."

We are not at all surprised at the treacherous misuse of the white flag by the Boers. Our own side would probably be doing the same thing if we were nurtured upon the Bible as exclusively as those Dutch farmers are. The ancient Jews thought pretty nearly anything was fair against the Lord's enemies—that is to say, their own enemies; and people who read their history too much, and even regard it as divine, are only too apt to imitate them.

This stupid practice may cost the Boers dear in the long run. Some of the wounded Gordons say that they were shot down at Elandslaagte after the Boers had exhibited no less than four flags of truce. Now, if the Gordons come again to charging the Boers, as is very possible, what sort of mercy are they likely to show? They may disregard the white flag even when the Boers hoist it honestly. That would be very shocking, but who can say it would be unnatural?

The Secretary of the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society died suddenly at its last meeting. The Rev. C. G. Lang, who was in the chair, told the meeting a few minutes afterwards that he had "offered a few prayers and commended Mr. Balshaw to the Lord." This was very kind on the reverend gentleman's part. No doubt the Lord would have taken no thought for the poor dead gentleman without Mr. Lang's generous intervention.

Mr. H. Grimshire Bennett asks, in the *Christian World*, the (to the orthodox) somewhat startling question, Shall we say grace? He thinks that the custom, viewed in the light of practice, is often a blasphemous farce. He submits a few instances to the consideration of the devout: "A number of select citizens meet at a civic meal. What is their prime purpose? Surely to eat, drink (if not to get drunk), and to say convivial things about each other. Music, instrumental and vocal, sometimes of a comic kind, always very decidedly secular, aids digestion. Now, is it consistent with the character of such a feast to commence by singing: 'Be present at our table, Lord?'"

Again, he says: "I have been present at the ordinary mid-day dinner of a Puritan family, when five youngsters, of ages ranging from six to sixteen, eyed the covers squintingly while an elder sister, scarcely less anxious to begin the real business of the hour, mumbled: 'For what we're about to receive,' etc. And, oh! the sigh of relief when those covers were removed! I did not blame the youngsters; they were merely submitting perforce to the usual tincture before the cake—perhaps not an unsuitable simile for the customary grace before meat! But is it not equivalent to training children to worship cant, to keep up this miserable farce? Does one child compare his dinner to a sacrament? Is it to be expected? Parents are sometimes answerable for this state of things. There is a father, not a thousand miles from South London, who insists that grace be said on Sundays only. Whether this is to form an additional sauce to the weekly hot joint I do not know. Cant works into all observances, but into not one so successfully as the daily grace. I heard four years ago a young curate ask, 'Why do we not say our grace at afternoon tea?' I thought, 'My good sir, thank God that we do not!' Fancy the secret parish scandal prefaced by 'For what we are about to receive!' Could absurdity go farther?"

At Thames Police Court a Chinaman named Ah Hang, who was charged with assault, went into the witness-box when the oath was administered thus: A lighted candle was placed before him which he blew out, at the same time swearing that what he was about to state was the truth, and if it were not might his soul be extinguished in the same summary manner. Yet, after all this ceremonial fuss, the magistrate refused to believe him—or to credit that he was actually influenced by it in the direction of truth. He denied the assault with which he was charged, but was sentenced "allege same" to a month's hard labor.

AT THE SESSIONS.—Counsel—"Do you know the nature of an oath, my good woman?" Witness (with a black eye)—"I did ought to, sir. Which my 'usban' 's a Covin' Garden porter, sir."

The rising generation of Hoxton are making rapid progress in learning the Church Catechism, if we may believe the following dialogue, which is led off by a teacher in a Sunday-school asking the question, "And who is your neighbor?" "But a child promptly replied: "Them as lives next door." "But what is your duty towards your neighbor?" "To keep an eye on 'im." "But nothing more?" "To see as 'e doesn't get what's not his own."

Canon Driver has been discoursing on the progress of Biblical studies during the past century. He says the time is now past for considering it a heresy to question the accuracy of the Hebrew text. The only question is, How can the text be corrected? Well, of course, there is one reflection that immediately presents itself: If the Lord didn't think it worth while to preserve the text of his Holy Word in its integrity, why should we trouble ourselves about it? And then Canon Driver knows, as well as anybody, that the only way to correct a large portion of the text is to strike it out bodily.

Whilst, however, Canon Driver is talking in this strain, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America is affirming a resolution previously affirmed in 1892, That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are without error. The General Assembly may go on affirming as long as it pleases, but all its resolutions will not alter the fact that the Bible is full of error, and that vast numbers of the clergy know that it is, however reluctant they may be to admit it.

One of the strangest cases of mixed religions is vouched for by a Louisiana writer. A negro washerwoman of Natchez married a Chinese laundryman; she was "a good, stirrin' Methodiss," and Ah Yan had his joss behind the kitchen door. Asked what the children's religion would be, the woman triumphantly explained: "We fixed dat. We compromised on dem. We's goin' to make dem Jews!"

"A prayer was once made at Harvard University," said a speaker at the recent Unitarian Conference in Washington, "in which the minister implored that the incorrigible might be made correctible and the industrious dustrious. Our aims," continued the speaker, "should be to make the indiffernt different."

RURAL FELICITY.—Sympathetic Old Parson—"You appear in deep thought, my friend. May I ask what chiefly occupies your mind?" Countryman—"Maistly nowt."

The Rev. Ernest Boys, fifty-five, a clergyman of the Church of England, has been charged at the Mansion House with indecent conduct in an omnibus. He grossly misbehaved himself in the presence of two ladies as the bus was proceeding towards St. Paul's Churchyard. He was fined £25 or one month. Cannot it be doubted that if he had been any other than a Church of England clergyman—say a working man—he would not have had the month without the option of a fine?

According to our Spiritualist contemporary, the *Two Worlds*, the late Mr. Grant Allen has by this time "realised the certainty" of some things in which the readers of that journal believe. Of course this is an extremely safe assertion. It can neither be proved nor disproved. Nevertheless, it can be met with a direct assertion to the contrary.

"The next duty of Republican France," according to the *Daily News*, "is to stamp out priestcraft as the enemy of religion and mankind." We agree with this if the word "religion" be omitted. How is priestcraft an enemy to religion? And how can you have priestcraft without religion? A good many of us think, also, that you cannot have religion without priestcraft.

The French government has made a raid upon the office of *La Croix*, a malignant organ of bigoted Catholicism, owned by the Assumptionist Fathers. This is one of the unauthorised, and therefore illegal, religious organisations; and the government officials collared the fine sum of £70,000, which was found in the office safe. *La Croix* poses as St. Anthony's commission-agent, collecting money for this saint on the understanding that he will recover lost property, enable parents to find wealthy husbands for their daughters, make dull boys pass difficult examinations, and help believers to make money on the Stock Exchange.

"Despite the failings of her priests, despite many wicked things which have been done by misguided men, the Church of England is still the Church of God." So says the Rev. Maurice Parkin, vicar of St. Mark's, Hull. For our part, we don't say he is wrong, for we don't know one way or the other. But what does God say? It is about time that he made a statement on the subject himself.

Rev. George Richardson, canon of St. Augustine's, Salford, writes to the *Manchester Guardian* asking whether the alleged decrease in the number of Catholics is anything for Protestants to brag of. "The people who have ceased to be Catholics," he says, "have simply joined the enormous herd of infidels and Atheists who now swarm this country." Canon Richardson sees the real danger which threatens all Christian denominations.

The Bishop of London had better be careful. He seems fond of a joke, but some jokes are dangerous. Only the other day, while addressing a Girls' High School, his lordship said that a governess, who took her charge for a walk

in the woods, pointed out to her how the bog-myrtle gave forth a beautiful odor when crushed, and drew a moral from this about the uses of adversity. Some days afterwards the child was refractory, and the governess gently reminded her of the illustration of the bog-myrtle. "Oh, I remember," said the youngster; "you said that if you pinched a Christian he smelt." Really, your lordship! This is pretty strong. And the worst of it is, there's a good deal of truth in it.

The Rev. C. Lloyd Engström is publicly stating that "a very high official" of the National Secular Society has spoken to him in uncomplimentary terms of the lectures of Mr. E. Pack. Mr. Engström is also disclosing the name of this "very high official" in confidence—which is very characteristic of this reverend gentleman. Miss Vance, as secretary of the N. S. S., has written to him for the name of the official, stating that the matter would be laid before the Executive. Mr. Engström replies that she is the person in question. He says that he called at the N. S. S. office on January 26, when Miss Vance said that "the N. S. S. would not employ such a man as Mr. Pack." Miss Vance's answer is, that she said nothing of the kind. What occurred was this. She twitted him with the tactics of some of his lecturers, naming Mr. Tarry; whereupon he asked her whether Mr. Pack's tactics were not very irritating; to which she replied that Mr. Pack was not employed by the N. S. S. Executive, as Mr. Tarry and others were employed by Mr. Engström's committee. Miss Vance affirms that she said no more, and did not express any opinion whatever, on her own part, as to Mr. Pack's merits or demerits; indeed, it was not a subject she could think of discussing privately with Mr. Engström.

"God's Greater Britain" is the title of a new volume of Lectures and Addresses by the Rev. Dr. John Clifford. This is really funny, not to say cheeky. Why is Greater Britain "God's" any more than Greater France or Greater Germany? Has the Lord a particular interest in that part of the world in which Dr. Clifford happens to be personally concerned?

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, the Bible says. Well, if Dr. Clifford does not take God's name in vain, we should say that this offence is impossible. The impiety of his title—no doubt an unconscious impiety, but really all the worse for that—is just as bad as the German Emperor's "Me and God" in the famous satire.

Referring to a Christian's objection, mentioned in our last issue, to fighting battles on the Lord's Day, a correspondent relates that he was in the train on Easter Tuesday, 1898, sitting opposite a clerical gentleman. The battle of Athara had been fought on Good Friday, and our correspondent tried to draw the man of God on the subject, suggesting to him how wicked it was to commit such slaughter on the most sacred day in the Christian calendar. The man of God had nothing to say, but he looked very uncomfortable. Whereupon our correspondent observed, with commendable benevolence, that it was after all, perhaps, not so wicked as it looked; for there was at least a precedent, Jesus Christ having been crucified on the very same day. All the people in the compartment laughed outright, but the reverend gentleman did not appreciate their hilarity.

A man told his wife that he had calculated that one-third of his time was wasted in sleep. His wife asked him if that included the time he put in at church.

German Lutherans, in Illinois, have pronounced against life insurance. They say it takes a man's trust off God; moreover, it is gambling on chances, and much like stealing, as the insurer gets what he doesn't pay for. Such is social science amongst these Christian stick-in-the-muds! They ought to be all deported to Jerusalem, if even Jerusalem would take them.

Checks to the Increase of Genius.

The astonishing productiveness of the nineteenth century in every branch of human endeavor, in science, literature, invention, everything, is a commonplace. But what is its cause? Why does our own time differ so profoundly from the Middle Ages? Mr. Francis Galton, in his work on *Hereditary Genius*, has sought to solve this problem, and finds the answer in many agencies—freedom of thought, commingling of races, interchange of ideas; above all, in the absence of persecution. Galton estimates that during 300 years in Spain there were 32,000 Freethinkers burned, and 291,000 more condemned to banishment, imprisonment, or other penalties. Italy, France, and even England, were stained by like crimes. Mr. Galton's book is of exceeding interest, and the selections from it contained in the Library of Famous Literature will stimulate many to read the entire book.—From an advertisement in the *Daily News*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

November 26, Camberwell.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 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.

T. WILMOT.—See paragraphs.

W. B. THOMPSON.—We heartily congratulate you on your success in spite of such disgraceful opposition. The efforts of the clergy and their allies to defeat a Secular Education candidate show that they feel it is a life-and-death fight, and that they lose all if they lose the power of indoctrinating children with their religious nostrums.

H. THORP.—Your verses have merit, but the workmanship is not equal to the conception.

D. F. GLOAK.—We are pleased to hear that Mr. Watts's visit to Dundee has stirred up the local "saints" to re-form the N.S.S. Branch, which we hope, with you, will be stronger and sturdier than before. Let us know how the new effort progresses. We presume you do not want the meeting announced, as you say it will be held "in all likelihood," which involves a doubt. Of course, we shall be happy to announce any definite fixtures.

ALEXANDER ROSS.—There is plenty of evidence, and good evidence, to the contrary. Don't believe all you see in print, merely because it supports your own preconception. Even the *Daily Chronicle* is not infallible in its statements. Moreover, you are more British than we are, for you seem to think it would be a sort of crime on President Kruger's part to cherish the dream of a Dutch empire in South Africa. We don't. We admit his right to be ambitious for the "greatness" of his own race.

J. MOORHOUSE.—We have not the slightest desire to maintain a wooden uniformity of opinion amongst the contributors to the *Freethinker*. Every writer signs his own articles, and expresses his own views. The editor does the same. It must not be supposed that we endorse all or any special opinions of our contributors. This week, for instance, there is an admirable, brilliant article on Cromwell, and we are glad to lay it before our readers; but, at the same time, we differ very considerably from the writer as to Cromwell's genius, character, and statesmanship. We are not called upon to controvert this writer's views; only, if we wrote on Cromwell, we should state our own views with freedom and sincerity. When you think it over, you will probably agree that this is a wise, honest, and dignified policy.

H. POYSER.—See "Acid Drops."

W. F. JAMESON.—Cardinal Newman's *Grammar of Assent* is beautifully written, and is a subtle piece of Christian (and Catholic) apologetics. You will not agree with it, of course; but you will find that mastering it, and answering it, is a fine intellectual exercise. Newman was the last of the great Christian writers in England. We do not believe there will ever be another. The decadence of Christianity is too far gone.

G. DAWSON BAKER.—Sorry to have missed you when you came to town. Better luck next time.

J. UNPLEBY.—Very glad to know you are taking Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. Your application and cheque are handed to the Secretary, who will send you receipt and allotment. The example of a veteran like yourself should be a stimulus to others. There are many who can do something who have not yet moved.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—J. P., £2; H. M. Ridgway, 10s.

TOM MCCARTHY FUND.—Mr. S. Hartmann acknowledges:—H. M. Ridgway, 4s. It is not intended to keep this Fund open long, and all who mean to subscribe should forward their donations at once to Mr. Hartmann, 21 Australian-avenue, E.C.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Crescent—New Century—Blue Grass Blade—El Libre Pensamiento—De Vrije Gedachte—Open Court—Ethical World—Liberator—Isle of Man Times—People's Newspaper—Freethought Magazine—Truthseeker (New York)—Sydney Bulletin—Hull Daily Mail—Ilford Guardian—Progressive Thinker.

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.

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

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

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Special.

We do not want to keep that big advertisement of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, standing on the back page of the *Freethinker* perpetually. All who intend to help this enterprise are earnestly invited to apply for Shares as promptly as possible. To-day is better than to-morrow. Now is better than next week—far better than next year. The form of Application for Shares is appended to the Prospectus, and we beg those who wish well to the scheme, and who can afford to invest something in it, however little it may be, to fill in that form at once, and forward it to the Secretary with the requisite remittance. The Board of Directors mean to begin work in the Company's own premises by the New Year, and it would very greatly assist them, and guide them in their plans and decisions, if the whole of the Share Capital were subscribed within the next few weeks.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE delivered three lectures at Birmingham on Sunday. The Local Branch suspended free admission for the day, and made a charge at the door. Nevertheless there was a good attendance in the morning and afternoon, and a fine meeting in the evening, when the chair was taken by Miss Goyne. A lady in the chair was quite unusual, and the lecturer congratulated the Branch on the pleasant innovation. The afternoon lecture was followed by several questions and a good deal of discussion. The evening audience, which included a considerable number of ladies, was particularly enthusiastic.

Mr. Foote is not lecturing to-day (Nov. 19). Next Sunday he occupies the platform of the Camberwell Secular Hall, and by special request will give his lecture on "Britishers and Boers: A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa." The secretary informs us that there is likely to be a full house and a good deal of discussion.

Mr. Charles Watts had a very hearty reception last Sunday in Liverpool, where he lectured three times. The boisterous weather interfered with the morning and afternoon gatherings, but in the evening there was an excellent audience. All the lectures were heartily applauded. Messrs. Ross, Small, and Hammond presided. There was a good sale of literature.

This Sunday evening, November 19, Mr. Watts lectures at the North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road, taking for his subject "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him." As this is the only time Mr. Watts will give this lecture in London, it should draw a large audience.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Athenæum Hall platform this evening (Nov. 19), and on the following Sunday. It is some time since he lectured there, and we hope he will have good meetings and a hearty reception.

Mr. W. B. Thompson has been returned for the third time as a member of the Gillingham School Board. Practically he holds the same position, being third on the list of successful candidates. We regret to see that he polled rather less votes, but this is easily accounted for. A large number of the Dockyard employees were working overtime on the day of the election, and were unable to go to the poll. In the next place, Mr. Thompson's supporters were asked not to plump for him, as on former occasions, but to split their votes amongst the five "School Board Candidates." Finally, there was a terrible and malignant effort made by the Church party to get Mr. Thompson defeated. A special bill was issued, signed by two reverend gentlemen, denouncing him as an avowed Atheist, charging him with "shameful desecration of the Sabbath," and with taking a prominent part in the proceedings at "the Atheistic hall" where "our common Christianity is constantly reviled." Mr. Thompson's wife and children were also dragged into this miserable effusion; and, on the whole, it is really surprising that he has done so well. Bigotry has done its worst, and has failed. No doubt it will make another attempt, but it cannot be more venomous, and it has little chance left of success.

The late Samuel Seal was a generous friend of the Freethought Movement. His remains were cremated at Woking, and the following inscription has been placed on the tablet over his ashes:—"Beneath lie the remains of Samuel Seal, of Craven-hill, Hyde Park, who died January 16, 1898, in his seventy-eighth year. He was the first in this country to

raise a mural tablet to Thomas Paine, Deist, Thinker, and Statesman, at Lewes, Sussex, where the latter lived." The mural tablet referred to bore the following inscription:—"Thomas Paine, b. 1739, d. 1809, Author of *Rights of Man* and *Age of Reason*, Foreign Secretary to American Congress, and Member of the French National Convention, lived in this house as Exciseman and Tobacconist."

"Protestantism in Scotland," the *Edinburgh Evening News* says, "is passing through a crisis of the utmost gravity." Our contemporary declares that the Higher Criticism "knocks the foundation from Protestantism," and that "Unitarianism seems to be the logical resting-place of Calvinism." Well, that is the beginning of the end, for Unitarianism has never caught on, and never will catch on, with the people. The multitude will have revealed religion or none at all. Theism and Deism are religions for the closet, not for the market-place.

Mr. Joseph Symes is fighting as gallantly as ever at Melbourne, but we regret to see that his difficulties increase rather than diminish. He says he has dropped, for the present at any rate, his idea of a trip to England, and that he must find more support for the *Liberator* if it is to be continued. We earnestly hope that support will be forthcoming. We also hope that Mr. Symes's trip to England will be accomplished; and, as before hinted, we shall be ready to assist him in accomplishing it.

Mr. John Burns, in his recent speech on the Sunday Concerts question at the London County Council, described himself as "not a Sabbatarian," but a "respectable Freethinker."

"A. Mugwump" is contributing Character Sketches to the *Iford Guardian*. Number V. of the series is entitled "The High Churchman," and describes the Rev. Richard Thingambyob, of St. Allsnobs, Tweedledum-cum-Dee! It is a highly sarcastic composition, with a strong vein of heterodoxy running through it.

Professor York Powell, in the *Oxford Magazine*, pays a high tribute to his friend, the late Mr. Grant Allen, who, as our readers know, was a most pronounced Freethinker. "Grant Allen," he says, "was my friend for thirty years, and of the men I have known well I have known few who were so fixed in their convictions, so absolutely true in their lives to these, and, at the same time, so tolerant and generous-minded towards those that differed from them. Allen was always ready to sacrifice himself for others, and his kindly help, whether of brain or purse, was prompt and ungrudging. He was an honorable man, a steady friend, and a good citizen, a sincere seeker after truth, and an honest worker; and to those who have known him his loss will assuredly be deeply and continually felt."

Mr. Jacob Bright, whose death occurred so recently, was something more than the brother of John Bright. He had opinions and a character of his own. At any rate, he spoke out manfully against our prosecution and imprisonment in 1883, and the few who stood firm at that time for religious liberty deserve to be remembered.

The Bright brothers are now all dead. John was a liberal-minded Quaker, Jacob was reputed to be anything but strictly orthodox, and Tom—the one who looked after the business at Rochdale—was reputed to be a fairly strong Freethinker. A good many years ago he sent us a cheque towards a subscription list in the *Freethinker*, together with a brief letter of encouragement.

The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, has issued a fresh edition of Ingersoll's *Reply to Gladstone* (4d.). This is one of the great Freethinker's most brilliant efforts. It is a masterpiece of controversial dexterity. For some time the pamphlet has been out of print, and the number of inquiries for it of late augur a rapid sale of the new edition, which is well printed, as everything will be that this Company produces.

A new edition is preparing of Ingersoll's *Mistakes of Moses*—of course by the same Company; also a new edition of the *Bible Handbook*, which has been so long out of print. To produce a proper edition of this latter work will cost nearly £100. This fact will give some idea of the absolute necessity of a large capital in the publication of Freethought works, and explain why the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, has had to be formed.

"The Kirk tried to put down winnowing machines and mill-dams as interferences with the free wind and water of heaven." So says the *Daily News* in reviewing Mr. H. G. Graham's new book on the Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century. Good old Kirk! No wonder every godly Scot is proud of it.

Churches and Things.

WE do not often go to church, because the natural delights of the place are apt to pall. There is the organ which would be more musical if it were less lugubrious. There is the stained glass with its pictured Christ wearing the inevitable halo, which looks too much like a straw hat to be impressive. There are the Lord's Prayer and the Commandments, inscribed with an appropriate illegibility; and Edgar Allan Poe's "Imp of the Perverse" lures you into insane attempts to read them. There are the choristers chanting a melody that does not enchant—a bar of sing-song made hideous by repetition. When you have heard it a score of times in the space of a few minutes, there comes a yearning desire for change. But the end is not yet. You must possess your soul in patience, or find inglorious sanctuary in sleep. You gaze abstractedly into the vista of Gothic arches, and your head aches; you contract your pupils till they rest upon a wide expanse of shining baldness in the next pew, and your fist tingles with a longing that is better unexpressed.

Then there is the central figure with its factitious draws and snuffles, waving its arms languidly and with fine consequence. And then the stereotyped collection of worshippers! There is the city magnate who understands the uses of advertisement. There is the prosperous tradesman who considers the feelings of his wealthy customers. There is the British matron—stout, comfortable, and ineffably stupid—whose regard for respectability is excelled only by her reverence for the Crown. There are her daughters, not quite so unconscious of admiring males as they pretend. And as for the admiring males—*c'est tout simple!* Here, in the sacred edifice, passion and piety are as naturally associated as strawberries and cream.

For the rest, there is an artificial solemnity on their faces responding to the artificial atmosphere—that overdone solemnity suggestive of the stifled laugh. And it is more than possible they feel that way. For the sake of their mental equipoise, let us hope they do. It is comforting to remember how slight a thing will provoke a laugh in church, albeit the merriment has an hysterical sound about it. It does not require a clerical Grimaldi to convulse a congregation. In the pulpit—that paradise for incompetents—the veriest dullard may gain an easy reputation as a finished humorist.

These are the aristocracy of supernaturalism; this is a palace among the gospel-shops. Let us enter a less pretentious building—a small Baptist chapel or a Methodist meeting-house. The interior is of an austere and rectangular plainness. It is the antithesis of the ornate. Not a picture decorates the staring whitewashed walls. A crazy harmonium is but little concessive to worldly æstheticism. It were rank presumption to oppose a tessellated pavement here to the golden streets in store for us hereafter—an elaborate organ on earth to the countless harpsichords in heaven. Such is the honest ratiocination of our Little Bethel. But the harmonium, crazy though it be, is a serious flaw in the logical unities; it makes us think of the fly in amber—we wonder how it got there.

The congregation is much more interesting than the place. Here are a certain life and earnestness that bespeak sincerity. If the faithful do not sing, it is not from lack of energy and lungs. The men shout in well-meant dissonance; the women scream perspiringly. It is nothing to them that their hymns are wretched doggerel, devoted to a savage apotheosis of the sanguinary; they "praise Gawd" as a matter of course, embracing conclusions without stopping to analyse premises. We may feel sorry for these people without entirely disliking them; if the truth must be told, they afford us no little amusement.

The most noticeable members are noticeable because they are frank egoists. They will not be kept down. They are elderly men with high, bald heads, rather narrow at the temples. Their sparse hair has a singular way of coming to an abrupt conclusion half-way down their occiputs, leaving some three inches of excessively red neck above the collar—a redness that always increases in precise proportion to their religious fervor. They close-shave their long, upper lips, and have a distinct partiality for goatee beards, which are more

often sandy than not. Equipped with these credentials, they throw up their chins and swell out their chests, as who should say—Behold a godly and upright man!

And they are animated with a vigorous spirit of competition. At hymn-time each wants to be a note or two in front; at prayer-time each vociferates "Amen!" or "Praise the Lord!" at the smallest provocation—accompanying every success with a defiant glance at his outdone rival. And when, on special occasions, he is allowed the luxury of a *vivâ voce* supplication all to himself, the petitioner prays against his competitors in a style that effectively exposes their " manifold sins and wickedness"—and his own fondness for the aspirate.

This sort of thing gives the necessary sporting touch to the proceedings. There is the glowing excitement of the *casino* without their viciousness. It is Monte Carlo minus diabolism. It is a sort of pious indoor Derby, with the Devil left out.

We have seen the House of God in two aspects. But cathedral or mission-room—what matters? It is all for Christ and Him Crucified. Perhaps the *Gloria in Excelsis* of the one may seem remote from the humble "Praise Gawd" of the other. But dog-Latin or bad English—again, what matters? The obfuscation of a dead tongue cannot be entirely obnoxious to one who purposely spoke in parables, so that his hearers might hear and not understand. Nor can the rough-and-ready verbiage of Little Bethel be seriously offensive to the divine solecist who asked, *Whom do men say that I am?*

The Protestant votaries of cathedral and mission-room, with all the infinitude of warring sects between, are offspring of one parent. "Holy Mother Church" and her too numerous progeny—these are the sheep within the fold. The children pause in the intervals of their strife, and unite in cursing the mother who gave them birth, while she weeps in the impotence of her solitude. These are the sheep within the fold, and Christ is the shepherd of them all!

And the excluded goats? Well, if the truth be told, they do not mourn overmuch at their exclusion. The sight of family discord is very saddening, but there is always a consolation in immunity. This may sound cynical, but it is good philosophy. And perhaps the same reflection may sustain the unbelieving goats, or even light their sadness with the promise of a smile.

E. R. W.

Byron's Religion.

"I am now of all humors, that have show'd themselves humors, since the old days of goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o'clock at midnight."—PRINCE HENRY, in "*King Henry IV.*"

GOETHE once called Byron a "demonic personality," and Lamartine asked whether he was "Angel or Demon?" Stendhal and St. Beuve said the same thing. Like his contemporaries, we have all felt this fascination. He was so much more than a mere author. Here, at least, was a man. He was like one of the Greek heroes, youthful, resplendent, and as skillful with the sword as with the lyre. Compared with so many of his poetic rivals, his voice was as the roar of a hurricane above the whisper of the foam of the ocean.

His burning words, like those of Voltaire, roused men like a trumpet blast. This man sang of liberty, took up arms in her cause, and died in her defence. Even the anti-poetical English race were captivated; whilst his magnificent music thrilled to the very heart of Europe, compelling a whole continent, as at a god's command, to turn once more towards the altars of liberty.

For Byron is appreciated more than any other English author, except Shakespeare, on the continent. He led the genius of his native country on a pilgrimage through Europe. He awakened as no other writer has ever done an admiration and a sympathy for England. From the moment when he awoke and found himself famous, until his heroic death in Greece, Democracy never had a more romantic champion.

After his death, the Greeks desired that the body of the liberator might be buried in the Temple of Theseus at Athens. But it was considered that the body of the great poet should more fittingly be laid to rest in Westminster Abbey.

But Byron's admirers reckoned without Christian bigotry. Byron was refused burial in the Abbey by the most low servants of the most High God. To call such a proceeding an outrage is simply to use the language of flattery. The voice of the nation, and not of an ecclesiastical corporation, should most certainly have the right of deciding as to the proper resting place for the greatest of England's sons. For, rightly or wrongly, Westminster Abbey is now regarded as the National Valhalla.

"The Bride of Christ" need not have been affrighted at the ashes which once were Byron. She had buried "infidels" as pronounced as "Childe Harold" in the Abbey. She had permitted Christian burial to several by no means immaculate actresses. She had even taken to her sacred bosom John Broughton, "the prince of prizefighters." But consistency was never the strong point of the "Bride of Christ." The fact remains that Byron was obnoxious to the Church. Christian charity usually disappears when the Church is dealing with Freethinkers. And Byron was almost as terrible an opponent as Voltaire, Heine, or Shelley.

Byron is Liberty's voice, the identification of a great individual nature with the spirit and life of humanity. And great as are his poems, his own manhood was even greater than anything he produced.

There can be no doubt about Byron's scepticism. He had a strong sense that all forms of faith were of equal inutility:—

Foul superstition! howsoe'er disguised—
Idol, saint, virgin, prophet, crescent, cross,
For whatsoever symbol thou art prized—
Thou sacerdotal gain, but general loss,
What from true worship's gold can separate thy dross?

The *Vision of Judgment*, in which Byron's genius for scathing satire has full force, is startling in its blasphemy. From its opening, with the foolish angels all singing out of tune, to its close, with His Most Gracious Majesty George the Third, sometime King of England, practising the hundredth psalm, it is full of cold-blooded contempt for all the hallowed paraphernalia of the religion of Christ Jesus. Every epithet hits, every line that does not convulse with laughter stings or lashes. In the preface to that very profane drama *Cain*, Byron sarcastically remarks that it is difficult to make the devil "talk like a clergyman," and that he had endeavored to restrain him within the bounds of "spiritual politeness." The restraint is not very manifest in the drama, for the Luciferian logic put into the mouths of the various characters is strong enough to frighten even a bishop, fortified with a salary of several thousands of pounds per annum.

Cain pours his scorn on the God who takes "his high pleasure in the fumes of scorching flesh and smoking blood"; and, even when offering him some samples of green-grocery, says:—

If a shrine without a victim
And altar without gore may win thy favor,
Look on it! And for him who dresseth it,
He is—such as thou madst him; and seeks nothing
Which must be won by kneeling.

Indeed, the whole drama is a forcible protest against the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

In *Childe Harold*, his noblest, if not his ablest utterance, we find something of the nature-worship of Rousseau. In this light the petty religions of man all dwindle into insignificance:—

Even gods must yield; religions take their turn;
'Twas Jove's, 'tis Mahomet's, and other creeds
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds—
Poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is built on reeds.

Byron may at times have hoped for immortality. He certainly did not believe in it. How finely he apostrophises this longing in *Childe Harold*:—

Bound to the earth, he lifts his eyes to heaven;
Is't not enough, unhappy thing! to know
Thou art? Is this a boon so kindly given
That being, thou would'st be again, and go,
Thou know'st not, reek'st not, to what region, so
On earth no more, but mingled with the skies?
Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe?
Regard and weigh you dust before it flies,
That little word saith more than thousand homilies.

Most competent critics assign the first place among Byron's works to *Don Juan*, whom Leigh Hunt said he

designed, with an acute knowledge of religious human nature, at last to turn into a methodistical Methodist. Certainly the work could have been written by no Christian. Byron's views were, like most poets', fluid and fluctuating; he was, more or less, the slave of his emotions. Yet he doubtless uttered a predominant mood when he wrote:—

Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,
In nameless prints, that I have no devotion;
But set these persons down with me to pray,
And you shall see who has the properest notion
Of getting into heaven the shortest way.
My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, sea, stars—all that springs from the great whole
Who hath produced, and will receive my soul.

This is very like Rousseau—the same Jean Jacques whose books were solemnly condemned by the Archbishop of Paris. In *Childe Harold* this pantheism peeps out again:—

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart?

Leigh Hunt, his friend, says Byron was "an infidel by reading." Thomas Moore, minor-poet and flunkey, was compelled to admit that he was, "to the last, a sceptic."

Byron's heterodoxy is fairly explicit in his poetry; but his letters, particularly those to his friend Hobhouse, show much more clearly that he was no Christian. In his correspondence with the Rev. Francis Hodgson he writes even more strongly. His scepticism deepened as he grew older, but far too early came "the blind Fury with the abhorred shears" cutting the thread of his existence. On the rude coffin, at Mesolonghi, were placed sword, helmet, and laurel crown. It was happily done. A braver and more brilliant soldier never fought in the great army of Human Emancipation.

MIMNERMUS.

Should Ethics be Taught in Board Schools?

I DESIRE to make a few remarks on the article entitled "The Sanction for Right-Doing," by Mr. Charles Watts, which appeared in the *Freethinker* of November 5.

I believe I am correct in saying Mr. Watts proposes that the Bible and religious teaching should be excluded from the Board schools. The reason for so doing is that nothing should be taught in a school that is objectionable to those who are *compelled* to pay for the support of a school to which they are *obliged* to send their children. To this I heartily subscribe; but Mr. Watts sees no objection to morality being taught if properly understood. Note this proviso—if *properly understood*. Again, Mr. Watts says his experience is that parents who keep their children from church and religious instruction take care to "impart to their young minds, both by example and precept, moral lessons and a knowledge of what is right and wrong."

Now I, with Mr. Watts, see no objection to morality being taught, providing a code of morals can be formulated to which all will agree. But, up to the present day, no such code of morals or ethics has been decided on, and, further, no *basis* on which to build a system of ethics has been found to which all agree. There are many schools of ethical philosophy, but no agreement has been come to. The ethical problem has not been solved. "Before you cook your hare you must catch it." Before you teach morals you must find them, and this has not yet been done by those who propose to exclude the Bible and religious teaching from the Board schools, and to teach morality only.

Mr. Watts says his experience is that parents will teach their children, by example and precept, "moral lessons and a knowledge of what is *right and wrong*." Fortunate children they who are taught right and wrong. What will be the parents' standard—what their *basis of right and wrong*? On what *authority* will they teach what is *right* and what is *wrong*? Where have they got their knowledge of this? If the great ethical problem has not been solved by our Ethical Societies, who can have done this for the people whom Mr. Watts considers will teach their children a knowledge of right and wrong?

Mr. Watts thinks "there is no objection to morality properly understood being taught in the Board schools," but I ask who is to decide what "morality properly understood" is that should be taught in the Board schools when the Bible and religion are excluded?

The reason Mr. Watts gives for the exclusion of the Bible and religious teaching is that many of the parents of the children who are forced to attend the school do not believe in the Bible being a fit book on which to found the religion they wish their children to be taught. They hold it to be a cruel wrong to be *forced* to pay and *compelled* to send their children to be taught that which they hold to be false. If this be just and reasonable on the part of those who object to theology and religion being taught, why should a code of morals be taught which many of those who pay to support the school object to and consider to be wrong? The "morality properly understood" by Mr. Watts might not be the "morality properly understood" by Mr. Jones, and therefore Mr. Jones would object to paying for his child being taught that morality. This I hold to be reasonable on the part of those who object to certain morals being taught. If the Bible and Christian teaching are excluded because they are objected to by some, why should not morals also be excluded if some object to them? The Christian, Moslem, Jew, Buddhist, Mormon, Secularist, Agnostic, and Anarchist—each has his conception of morals and of what is right and wrong; but they all differ from each other.

Ethical philosophers have not yet agreed on a basis of ethics, or by what *authority* they could enforce any system of morals on which they might agree. What are good and what are bad actions has still to be decided. Shall the basis on which to build an ethical code be Intuitionism, Utilitarianism, Moral Sanction, Hedonism, Expediency, or Sympathy? Can, therefore, therefore must. Which or the above is to be a basis of morals? By what *authority* can what is right and what is wrong be decided; by what *authority* can any system of ethics be *enforced*?

Theology, religion, and morals are speculative subjects, and, therefore, ought not to be taught in schools which are supported by an *enforced rate*, and to which the *people who hold different religious and moral opinions are compelled to send their children*.

It were waste of space to write more on this subject, because readers of this journal have given their attention to the ethical problem. Until we have decided on a basis on which to build a system of ethics, until we have found an *authority* by which we can enforce it, let us exclude the teaching of morals as well as religion from our Board schools and give a purely secular education.

HENRY SMITH.

Sunday Museums.

UNDER the heading *Sunday at the Museums*, Mr. Mark H. Judge, Hon. Sec. of the Sunday Society, writes: "As the close time for Art on Sundays, at the National Galleries, is again to be put in force for some months, it will not be without interest to place on record the attendance at the museums and galleries on Sunday, October 29, together with the corresponding Sunday last year:—

	1899.	1898.
British Museum	1,302	1,684
Natural History Museum	1,829	1,684
South Kensington Museum	1,510	1,684
Bethnal Green Museum	158	994
Geological Museum	968	643
National Gallery	977	325
Tate Gallery of British Art	386	6,025
National Portrait Gallery	7,912	6,025

From this it will be seen that in every case but one the attendance was considerably more this year than last, making a total increase of no less than 1,889. The five museums are to remain open throughout the winter, and, in face of the above attendance on the last Sunday in October, it is difficult to find any justification for closing the National Galleries on the one afternoon in the week when so many are anxious to visit them."

The heathen in his blindness
Bows down to wood and stone;
But after he's been Christianised
He worships gold alone. —Town Topics.

God's Senseless Cruelty.

AN OPEN LETTER TO MY WOULD-BE CONVERTER.

SIR,—You sent me through the post last week a little book giving an account of a very unfortunate woman, Miss H. R. Higgins. I thank you for the present, and will now make a remark or two upon its contents.

Miss Higgins, I learn from the book, began early in life to suffer from some mysterious and terrible disease in her right hand—a disease which baffled the skill of the doctors. She suffered very acutely, I learn. By-and-bye her right arm was amputated below the elbow; later her left leg had to be cut of; then her left arm had to be removed; and, at a later stage, what had been left of her right arm had also to be cut away.

When her right arm was cut off she learnt to write with her left; when that was removed she invented an instrument by which she could write, and another for turning the leaves of a book.

You send me this little book, if I understand you, for the purpose of leading me to adopt Christianity. Had I been inclined that way, the book would have turned me in the opposite direction. I sometimes wonder whether you ever think of what you are doing in religious matters. Were you half as great a blunderer in things social and commercial as you are in religion, your neighbors and friends would set you down as a hopeless case. You send me a book to recommend both your God and Miss Higgins—a book which exposes both of them, more especially the former.

The lady has been afflicted and suffering for many years. If Christianity be true, these sufferings are all the result of a more than diabolical crime started and perpetuated with all conceivable malice and fiendish persistency for over twenty-seven years! The criminal, the infinitely worse than fiend, who has done all this, is the thing you worship and would like me to worship! Where is your judgment—your common sense? Where is your sense of justice? Why should you wish me to worship and respect absolute wickedness?

If Miss Higgins had been bitten half away by a shark, you would have been pleased to know that the shark had been killed, although the monster did it to satisfy his hunger. How infinitely more detestable is Miss Higgins's tormentor and destroyer than any shark! And you want me to worship him! If he is guilty of what this book records, I shall be glad to devise means with you and others to hunt and to kill the monster, if he can be found. A being that could torture his own innocent, living, sensitive handiwork as you, in effect, tell me God did Miss Higgins, deserves endless damnation a thousand times over. And you want me to worship the monster! Where is your sense of decency?

You would have cured Miss Higgins, if you could; your monster God could, but would not. Nay, he was for and to his victim; her friends and the doctors did their best for her. You do not ask me to worship her benefactors. Why? They are much too good to be worshipped; your God infinitely too vile.

You send me the book to show Miss Higgins's Christian conduct, but it shows that she is an Anti-theist, if not an Atheist. When God afflicted her, instead of obeying the New Testament and calling in the elders, she betook herself to doctors! By so doing she showed herself to be no Christian. Had she been, she would have obeyed the New Testament and had nothing whatever to do with doctors or drugs.

When God afflicted her he did so, as you say, in infinite wisdom and goodness! Then why did the patient try to oppose him? Why call the doctors to undo or reverse, by their Atheistic skill, what God had just done for his own glory and her eternal welfare? Really, her conduct was shocking and highly blasphemous.

When God took away her writing limb, he clearly meant her to write no more. She baffled him by using her left arm, then she took away her left arm, and she tried to baffle him by her inventions! And you call this Christian conduct!

Really, I am a bit disgusted with you. You send me a record of God's most infernal malice, in order to lead me to worship him. I should be as likely to accept a

rotten, stinking fish you sent, were you capable of such an act. If you know of any good God, I shall be glad of an introduction to him. But a God who treats millions more or less as he treated Miss Higgins!—Oh! Sir, have the decency to hold your tongue if you are on terms of friendship with such an indescribable monster!

You wish to lead me to Christianity, and you send me the autobiography of a person who entered into a fight with God and trampled Christianity under foot in her efforts to save her limbs.

I admire the poor creature's pluck and skill, and am glad to know that she baffled her tormentor, God, so long. But why you should send her *un-godly* record to me to convert me to Godism is more than I can understand. If you have a real Christian about anywhere, I should be glad to see him as the greatest curiosity of his day. *He*, now, might convert me. Bring him along.

JOS. SYMES.

—*Liberator*.

What is Your Religion?

THESE be stirring times. Young Britons are everywhere fancying they can "hear the trumpets clanging from afar." Young blood leaps in. The questions put to each recruit are numerous, and are run rapidly through. "What is your name? Where were you born? Are you a British subject? What is your age? What is your trade and calling? Have you resided out of your father's house continuously for three years; if so, where?" are the first six questions put, and then comes a fair warning that a wilfully false answer to seven that follow will entail liability to two years' hard labor. The questions relate to a possible apprenticeship, or marriage, or previous imprisonment, or previous enlistment, or rejection. Perhaps the queerest question of the whole eighteen or twenty is: "What is your religion?" It is really very droll to see the effect of this sudden poser, which, for some reason or other, is not included in the printed list of questions given to the recruit.

"What is your religion?" demands the Major; and the look of blank perplexity, the hopeless obfuscation that immediately beclouds the military ardor that is already beginning to scintillate in the face of the young warrior, is really laughable, though perhaps it oughtn't to be. Not one in a dozen can give it a name. One goes through a process of mental fumbling for a few seconds, and then declares that he is "English," and another, after a similar brain cudgelling, says he is "British."

"'British' isn't a religion," retorts the officer, who perhaps in his time has made more members of the Church of England than all the Bench of Bishops put together, by the simple psychological process of suggestion. "Do you go to church or chapel?"

The word "church" was just what the recruit had been fumbling about for, and for the life of him couldn't find; and the instant the suggestion is made he snaps at it.

"Church—I'm Church of England." And down goes another contribution to the numerical superiority of the Establishment.—*Daily News*.

Board and Voluntary Schools Compared.

THE common statement, that Denominational schools give as good an education as Board schools, has led the National Education Association to distribute to its members an analysis and summary of the last report of the Education Department. A number of interesting comparisons are made between the awards of the Government inspectors to the Anglican, Wesleyan, Catholic, British, and School Board schools, and these show the general superiority of the Board schools in every particular. The British schools show best among the various sections of Voluntary schools, the Wesleyans are next, then the Catholics, and in almost every case the Church of England schools show the worst results. A few general comparisons between the Board schools and the Voluntary schools as a whole give the following results:—

"General moral tone and discipline."—Board, 97 per cent.; Voluntary, 91 per cent.
 "Accuracy of knowledge and general intelligence in elementary subjects."—Board, 85 per cent.; Voluntary, 63 per cent.
 "Quality of infant instruction."—Board, 82 per cent.; Voluntary, 58 per cent.
 "Singing."—Board, 96 per cent.; Voluntary, 86 per cent.
 "Class subjects."—Board, 95 per cent.; Voluntary, 85 per cent.
 "Specific subjects taught."—Board, 25 per cent.; Voluntary, 9 per cent.
 "Cookery and laundry" taught to girls.—Board, 23 per cent.; Voluntary, 6 per cent.

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, C. Cohen, "Religion and War."
BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, A. T. Dancey's Dramatic Company in "The Harvest of Hate."
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Mr. Storrar; 7, H. Burrows, "The Woman of the Future."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "A Democratic Church."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): Harry Snell—11, "The Higher Criticism and What it Leaves Behind"; 7, "The Story of the Atheists in the French Revolution."
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Joseph McCabe, "The Deities of the Modern World."
DERBY (23 Sitwell-street): 7, M. McGuinness, "The late R. G. Ingersoll."
EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, A Local Friend, "The Antiquity of Man."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson—11.30, "Sham-Fighting over Spirit and Matter"; 2.30, "Clerical Influence in France and Britain"; 6.30, "Christianity and Character."
HULL (Friendly Societies Hall, No. 2 Room): 7, Mr. Horton, "Citizenship."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, W. Archer, "The Ideal Theatre." (Lantern illustrations.)
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Hammond, "The Earth and its Neighboring Planets." (Lantern views.)
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. Percy Ward—11, "Ingersoll and his Gospel"; 3, "Why the Church of England Should be Disestablished"; 7, "How Christianity has Degraded Woman." Tea at 5.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday Evening—Musical and other Recitals.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Readings, "Against Vegetarianism."

Lecturers' Engagements.

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

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

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