

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

War and Humanity.

In opening this article we take (or make) the opportunity of expressing what all our readers must more or less feel—namely, a sympathy with Lord Salisbury in his domestic bereavement. It is a sad blow to lose a devoted and beloved wife. Life is never the same afterwards. The greatest social and political triumphs are unsatisfying; the most golden fruitage of success has an aftertaste of bitterness. Death is the great leveller. It makes no difference, when the dear partner of all one's joys and sorrows lies dead, whether her body rests upon a bed that cost ten shillings or one that cost fifty pounds. External are nothing then. It is only the internal that counts. The stroke is the same for all; every circumstance of environment disappears in the tragedy; the man himself shivers in the chill wind of fate. Lord Salisbury, therefore, will feel this shock like the poorest plebeian. And it comes at a moment which is otherwise very trying. Few men would envy the Premier's position. He bears a very heavy burden of responsibility. All his statecraft will be strained to see us right through this South African trouble and its collateral difficulties. Surely, then, he is entitled to our profoundest sympathy. He is an aristocrat, and sometimes a haughty one; but he is spending his life in his country's service, according to his lights, and this is infinitely better than the pursuit of personal pleasure, into which so many men of wealth and social position are naturally tempted.

From the stricken Premier we turn to the gay and festive German Emperor, who is on a visit, not to us, but to his grandmother. The ordinary newspapers, with their god-almighty omniscience, inform the British public of the political significance of this visit; but, of course, they are all drawing cheques on the bank of conjecture. This much at least may, perhaps, be taken for certain. In coming here at all, at the present juncture, the Emperor shows that he cherishes no positive unfriendliness, and that the Government of Germany—which is really the principal thing—is desirous to be at peace, if not at amity, with us. And, indeed, there is no reason in the world why England and Germany should quarrel. England has nothing to gain by a breach of good will with any of the Powers; and, on the other hand, Germany has a good deal to gain by not quarrelling with England, if she really means to pursue her policy of colonial enterprise. We are quite aware that some German newspapers are printing very bitter things about England. But the power of the press is tremendously exaggerated. It is a pleasant fiction amongst editors and journalists, but statesmen smile at it amongst themselves. Newspapers are absolutely irresponsible, and for that reason they carry little weight. They follow instead of leading public opinion and sentiment. They are echoes rather than original voices. And in this fact there is at present a large grain of consolation. Certain publicists remind us of what they are pleased to call the public opinion of Europe. They point to some German and a great many

French journals. Well, if this were really public opinion, the reminder would be impressive. But is it public opinion? The German newspapers pointed at are *always* against England—which discounts the importance of their hostility on this occasion. As for the majority of French journals at present, it is the simple truth that they are suffering from a bad attack of "England on the brain." Anglophobia is the order of the day in France. The Nationalist party—the liars, tricksters, and assassins of the Dreyfus case; the persecutors of the Jews, merely as Jews; the conspirators against the Republic and freedom of thought and speech—have all along had only one foreign policy, and that is an insane hatred of England. Well, if these men rail at us with extra vehemence just now, why should we regard it as particularly significant? National hatred and envy are not public opinion. The latter we should always listen to respectfully; the former we should shrug our shoulders at, while taking precautions against any possible act of madness. On the whole, the Catholics and Royalists of France are playing a bad game very badly. They seem bent on picking a quarrel with England if they can. But if they do they will need something stronger than the Pope's prayers to help them. A war with France would be hateful to all Liberals, Radicals, Socialists, and Republicans in this country; but, if it were forced upon us, it would be prosecuted with vigor; and, as it would be almost entirely a naval war, the result would probably be that at the end of a month or two every French battleship still afloat would be shut up in harbor. The *Patrie* is good enough to say that 25,000 Frenchmen, while we are occupied in South Africa, could invade and conquer England. Well, for their own sakes, we hope they will stay at home. Happily, however, the French government keeps sane and level-headed; so we may smile at the ravings of boulevard journalists.

And now we turn to the more especial purpose of this article. The war is going on in South Africa, and of course it is a ghastly business, as war always is. Guns, rifles, lances, and bayonets are not holiday articles. They are meant to wound and kill. We pity the poor wounded on our own side, and we pity still more the widows and fatherless children of the dead. We also pity the poor wounded Boers, and the widows and orphans in many a far-off Transvaal farm. Human feelings are much the same everywhere, and suffering and grief on all sides call for our compassion. We hope this war will soon be over; and, as there can be but one end to it, we hope that General Buller will be swift and thorough, and compass his aim with the least possible loss of life. When *he* has succeeded the political problem begins. That, indeed, is what will tax the wisdom and sagacity of our statesmen.

Meanwhile it is pleasant to note the amenities that alleviate the horror of this struggle. No doubt the threat to shoot British officers at Pretoria if a certain Boer spy comes to grief at Ladysmith is only a bit of brag. President Kruger, who is not a savage, could hardly mean it seriously. Indeed, we hope the report

is an invention. On the other hand, the English (and Scotch and Irish) prisoners seem to be treated fairly. No fault whatever can be found with our treatment of Boer prisoners, and the wounded Boers in our hands appear to be treated with tenderness. That they expected something very different only shows that the Boers misunderstood us. It is delightful to read how Tommy Atkins, after a hard day's fight, and as dry as a sandheap, gave his drop of water to his wounded enemy; and how the stalwart Gordons carried the disabled Boers to the hospital with sensitive gentleness. One of the best things we have read for a long time is the following extract from the letter of a sister-nurse at Ladysmith:—

"We have several wounded Boer patients, and it is really amusing to see our large-hearted Tommy Atkins fraternising with the enemy. A touching little scene happened yesterday. One of the Gordons had his arm amputated. A Boer in the next bed had had his arm taken off in exactly the same place. I took charge of the latter as he was brought down from the theatre, and on his becoming conscious the two poor fellows eyed each other very much, till our good-natured Tommy could bear it no longer. 'Sister,' he called, 'give him two cigarettes out of my box, and tell him I sent them. Here is a match; light one for him.' I took the cigarettes and the message to the Boer, and he turned and looked at Tommy in amazement, and then, quite overcome, he burst into tears, and Tommy did the same, and I am afraid I was on the point of joining in the chorus, but time would not permit it."

Well said and well done, Tommy Atkins! The tears you fetch from a wounded enemy's eyes are better than all the blood you draw from his veins. It is this spirit of human fellowship, deep down in men's hearts, that gives us the best hope for the future. How much of the quarrelling and fighting in the world is, after all, the result of mere misunderstanding! If we could only get to know each other more, we should be better friends. It is mutual intimacy that must lead to the fraternisation of the peoples.

G. W. FOOTE.

Blight of Superstition.

IN all ages of its existence superstition has proved a blight upon the noblest instincts and the loftiest aspirations of the human race. It has cramped the growth of intelligence, filled life with gloom and mistrust, associated death with groundless terrors, and substituted phantoms for realities. Thus mental light has been prevented from illuminating the human mind, from the cradle to the grave. The province of Secularism is to destroy as much as possible this nightmare of priestly dominion, and to replace it with a consciousness of man's real power and duty.

The term "superstition" has received many intended definitions, each explanation of the word being deemed appropriate to views which were thought absurd and opposed to the belief of those who furnished the definition. For instance, orthodox Christians, who repudiate the notion that the features of their religion are superstitious, readily apply the phrase to the views of others whose faith rests upon the belief in another kind of supernatural power. We intend, however, to show that in many respects the tenets of Christianity are the very essence of superstition, and that they differ only in degree from the wild fancies indulged in by the so-called heathen. Superstition has been defined as "Belief without evidence"; "Belief based on mere sentiment." Miss Plumtre says that superstition is "the tendency to embrace a statement with little or no investigation, and, having embraced it, to endow it with a spurious infallibility." Dr. Maudsley remarks: "To treat ancient truths as necessarily modern verities is superstition." If the orthodox faith be tested by these definitions, it must be pronounced as thoroughly superstitious. Perhaps the following may be taken as the most apt definition of the popular theological superstition: "Religious fear which stands over, as it were, and overwhelms the mind." Such fear is common, more or less, to all the popular supernatural faiths of the world. The feeling of awe and helplessness produced by the various convulsions of nature has caused the belief in the interference of some

invisible, mysterious power, and the assumption that all extraordinary phenomena are attributable to a supernatural event. This view is held by many even at the present time in the case of thunderstorms, pestilence, and epidemics. The amount of superstition prevailing in Italy, Spain, and Portugal has been attributed to the frequent and destructive agencies of nature; and it so happens that these were the countries in which the clergy first established their authority, and where they still retain much of their influence over the general masses of the people.

Taking the popular belief in Christianity, apart from modern modifications, it is not easy to discern any great distinction between it and what is generally looked upon as superstition. If we take away from the Christian faith the item of fear, and the idea of the direct agency of a superior power in the events of human life and in the movements of general nature, there is practically nothing remaining of the theology of Christ. This fact is the more perceptible if we follow the development of Christianity from its inception to the present time. To show the force of this statement, we need only take the belief of the first generation of Christians, that the end of the world was then at hand. Notwithstanding that the predicted signs of such an extraordinary event were not realised during the lifetime of those to whom the prediction was made, many Christians still profess to believe that the "last day" is not far off. If this is not a Christian superstition, the word has no rational meaning. What were at first regarded as signs of the end of the world have been repeatedly observed since, but the "end has not yet come." Scientific observation has demonstrated that these "signs" were not indications of a general dissolution, but simply manifestations of the regular operations of nature. This is a proof that science and superstition cannot be united.

Let us take the central and universal heathen belief of sacrifice. How such a cruel, unjust, and absurd doctrine became so universally believed is not to many minds obvious, when it is seen what the barbarous practice connotes. It is difficult to recognise any necessary relation between the guilt of one person with the suffering of another where no personal associations have occurred. Yet punishing the innocent for the guilty is regarded as a divine command. To us, the excusing of the guilty and the inflicting of punishment and misery upon the innocent are unjust, and a violation of the dictates of common sense. How the two, taken together, can constitute divine justice can only be understood by those who accept superstition in preference to acting upon the principle of the sense of human right. But this heathen doctrine is found to be an important factor in what are held to be superior religions. The innocent lamb of the Old Testament is said to have atoned for the sins of Israel, while the lamb of the New Testament is supposed to have taken away the sins of the world. But if such were the object of Christ's coming on earth, he decidedly failed in his mission, inasmuch as there are more "sins" in Christendom to-day than ever. This may be unfortunate for us, but is it not a "godsend" for the clergy? What would they do for a living if all sins had been gone? Truly their occupation would have been gone. In both the Old and New Testament teaching of sacrifice the idea of innocence is presented, the only difference being that in the one case a lower animal was sacrificed, while in the other God gave his beloved son to be executed amidst the exultations of an infuriated mob. We hardly know which is the more astonishing fact—that so many persons should believe such a superstition, or that any sane individual should, in the nineteenth century, attempt to impose it upon others. The much-talked-of purity, simplicity, and divine nature of Christianity amount simply to this—the substitution of a man for a lamb or goat as a satisfaction to God. According to modern ideas, the sacrifice of the man instead of the beast would be considered more revolting; but, in either case, the belief in sacrifice, as set forth in the Bible, is a grovelling superstition. It should not be overlooked that the prevalence of such a belief in the infancy of the human race is a direct contradiction to the Christian theory, that man was more virtuous in the morning of time than his descendants are to-day. Christians indulge in a very foolish superstition in reference to the supposed termination of all mundane

affairs. They believe that the earth is to be consumed by fire, as it is said it was once destroyed by water. Christians also suppose that the eye of an angry god is watching every action of his children, and taking note of their every word; that behind them is the fallen Adam, who was the cause of all their misery; and that before them are the penal fires of hell, from which but few of the human family can ever escape. It is difficult to say who holds the more enviable position—the untutored child of nature or the modern Christian, whose little culture and semi-civilisation should make the torment of his mind the more acute. It has been remarked that, if men could not have superstition in one form, they would secure it in another. This certainly does appear to be the history of the human race where ignorance has prevailed and priestcraft has reigned supreme. Instances of this unfortunate state of man's mind may be seen in the substitution of saints for less animated idols and the incorporation of Pagan ceremonies into the Christian Churches. The worship of the Virgin Mary, or the observance of Lady-day (March 25), took the place of the day dedicated in Pagan times to Cybele, the mother of the gods. At the Reformation some of the beliefs of the Dark Ages were left in the hands of the Catholic Church for the reason that the Protestants were content with less belief, and fewer miracles and legends. They reduced the number of ceremonies, and did less fasting and penance than their predecessors; but orthodox Protestants never entered into the domain of Rationalism. They modified their superstitions, but they did not part with them. In the early portion of the present century Sweden enacted inquisitorial laws as cruel and unjust as those of Spain and Portugal, and Scotland was as superstitious as Catholic France. A still more striking illustration of the tenacity with which some people cling to old superstitions is furnished in the history of the Abyssinians, who became nominally Christians centuries ago. Kraft, who visited them in 1839, says their Christianity was mixed up with Judaism, Mohammedanism, and idolatry, and was a mass of rites and superstitions. The fact is, if unfettered thought is ignored and the habit of reasoning despised, nothing remains but a tendency to vague superstitions, whether it be among the unclothed savages or the robed saints of Palestine.

If ever superstition is to be banished from the earth, it must be by a general recognition of the invariable order of phenomena, which is one of the most important discoveries of modern science. When this truth is fully recognised, the foolish suppositions about the interference of angels, gods, or devils will disappear. That which is marvellous and extraordinary will then no longer be feared, but will be investigated. And the more the investigation is extended and its results made known to the masses, the less likelihood there will be of forming inaccurate conclusions about the laws of mind and matter, and superstition will proportionately cease to blight the happiness and thwart the progress of the world.

CHARLES WATTS.

Roger Bacon and the Awakening of Europe.

(Concluded from page 740.)

BACON'S first term of imprisonment endured until 1267—a period of ten years. During his confinement the malice of his enemies indirectly led to the writing of the books by virtue of which he still lives. Reports having reached the ears of Pope Urban IV. concerning the heretical nature of Bacon's work and writings, one of his chaplains, Gui Fulcodi, afterwards Clement IV., was commissioned to inquire into the matter.* Whether Fulcodi was favorable to the poor imprisoned scholar, is uncertain. Several writers are of that opinion, but Professor Adamson dismisses such an opinion as a "pure conjecture." Whatever be the true motive of Clement's interference, it is certain that, immediately after his election as Pope, he commanded Bacon to

supply him with a "fair copy" of all his writings. The issuing of such an order was easier than its execution. The bare materials required would cost about £60. The Pope had sent nothing, and Bacon was penniless. From people in position he could get nothing. The Franciscans were too powerful to be crossed. "How often," he laments, "was I looked upon as a shameless beggar! how often was I repulsed! Distressed above all that can be imagined, I compelled my friends, even those who were in necessitous circumstances, to contribute what they had, to raise money at interest, to sell much of their property, to pawn the rest." It was by such struggles as these that Bacon was able to comply with the Pope's demand, and in the extraordinarily short time of about eighteen months he wrote those treatises, the *Opus Majus*, *Opus Minus*, and *Opus Tertium*, which mark him as the first Englishman to point out the proper course for a scientific study of nature.

These three essays are, as Green says, wonderful alike in plan and detail. With many of the scientific idiosyncrasies of his age Bacon had not quite parted company. He accepts alchemy and astrology, and even appears to have speculated on the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone and the elixir of life. But in nearly all other respects he belongs to the seventeenth century rather than to the thirteenth. At a time when the introduction of mathematics into physics was being protested against by Albertus Magnus, the "Ape of Aristotle," Bacon wrote: "Physicists ought to know that their science is powerless unless they apply to it the power of mathematics, without which observation languishes, and is incapable of certitude." And, again, he complains that the neglect of this instrument of research has paralysed all efforts: "For he who knows not mathematics cannot know any other science; and, what is more, he cannot discover his own ignorance, or find its proper remedies." While Thomas Aquinas and his school were spinning metaphysical subtleties, and discussing questions that fully realised the child's definition of a parable as "A heavenly story with no earthly meaning," Bacon was striving to introduce a new method into philosophy, insisting upon the uselessness of speculation unless brought into line with experience, warning his contemporaries that "The shortness of life requires that we should choose for our study the most useful objects, and exhibit knowledge with all clearness and certitude." At a time when to question the authority of the Church meant imprisonment or death, he could declare that "Authority is valueless unless its warranty is shown; it does not explain, it only forces us to believe. And, as far as reason is concerned, we cannot distinguish between sophism and proof unless we verify the conclusion by experience and practice."

A theoretical musician, geometrician, and geographer, Bacon stumbled upon many truths, the full value of which was not seen till centuries later. Whether he discovered gunpowder as the result of his own researches, or simply gained a knowledge of its manufacture from the Mohammedans, is uncertain, but his writings show him to have been acquainted with it. He also describes a substance (phosphorus) that "glows in the dark like a full moon." He suggested the possibility of reaching the Indies by sailing to the west—a suggestion which reaches Columbus through the medium of a Spanish writer, Pedro de Alliaco. He suggested a reform of the calendar that was not carried out until 1582. If he did not construct a telescope, he at least laid down the lines on which one might be built, 200 years before Galileo. It is after having dealt with the laws of light, and corrected many of the erroneous opinions then current, that he finishes by saying: "It is easy to conclude from the rules established above that the largest things can appear very small and *vice versa*, that very distant objects can appear very near and *vice versa*, for we can cut glasses in such sort and dispose them in such a manner in relation to our sight and external objects that the rays are broken and refracted in the direction which we wish. So that we shall see an object near or remote, under whatever angle we wish, and thus at the most incredible distance read the most minute letters or count the grains of sand. In this way we may also make the sun, the moon, and the stars descend by bringing their figures nearer the earth."

Bacon is never tired of pointing out that withal he is

* Green says (*Short History of English People*): "Some of the brief writings of Bacon had been brought under the notice of Pope Clement IV. by one of his chaplains. The chaplain was Clement himself, serving Urban in that capacity."

only at the beginning of the possibilities of science. "Nothing in human inventions is final and perfect," he says, quoting Seneca approvingly. "The most recent ages are always the most enlightened"; therefore, "Let not man boast or extol his knowledge. What he knows is little to what he takes on credit, less to that of which he is ignorant. He is mad who thinks highly of his wisdom; most mad who vaunts it as a wonder." Yet he predicts great things from the advance of scientific knowledge, and looks forward to a time when "There shall be rowing without oars and sailing without sails; carriages which shall roll along with unimagined speed with no cattle to drag them; instruments to fly with, with which a man shall, by a spring, move artificial wings, beating the air like the wings of birds; a little mechanism three fingers long, which shall raise or lower enormous weights; a machine to enable a man to walk on the bottom of the sea and over the surface of waves without danger, and bridges over rivers which shall rest neither on piles nor columns." So dreams the imprisoned monk in his cell—a dream based upon the possession of much knowledge, much insight into the nature of things; a dream that after ages saw partly realised in fact.

A study of Roger Bacon irresistibly suggests his Elizabethan namesake, Francis Bacon; and the suggestion is accentuated by the close likeness of much of their writings, although the comparison is not always favorable to the later of the two. What Roger lacked in epigrammatical force he more than atoned for by the greater inventiveness of his mind and the greater originality of his genius. One can hardly imagine Roger Bacon in the place of Francis rejecting the Copernican astronomy, or looking with disfavor upon the use of instruments or mathematics in science. But in actual teaching the monk often antedates his namesake. Francis Bacon's "four species of idols which beset the human mind" are anticipated by Roger with four stumbling blocks to truth—the influence of authority, of custom, of undisciplined senses, and of the concealment of ignorance by a pretence of wisdom. Francis's epigram, "The old age is the youth of the world," is forestalled by Roger with, "No doubt the ancients are worthy of all respect and gratitude for having opened the way to us. But, after all, the ancients were men, and have often been mistaken; indeed, they have committed all the more errors just because they are ancients, for in matters of learning the youngest are in reality the oldest." A good lengthy list of parallelisms between the two has been compiled by Forster in his *Mohammedanism Unveiled*, where he charges Francis with having borrowed largely from his predecessor. Hallam says the resemblance between the two is "most remarkable"; and Lewes declares that, "had there been on external grounds the shadow of a probability, there would have been on internal grounds the strongest evidence of Francis Bacon's plagiarism." I think one may reasonably assume some connection between the two writers. Roger Bacon's works, although not printed, circulated in MS., and there is nothing new in one writer borrowing from another without confessing his obligation.

To return to the man. Whether Clement interfered to cut short Bacon's imprisonment is unknown, but he was released in 1267. For ten years Bacon managed to elude his enemies. But the Franciscans were good haters, and had long memories. In 1278 Jerome of Ascoli, General of the Order, held a chapter at Paris for the purpose of considering the various heresies that were troubling the Church. Bacon was cited to appear on the general charge of holding and teaching suspected doctrines. Once more he passed into a long imprisonment, the precise duration of which is unknown. He was at liberty fourteen years afterwards, 1292, and engaged in a great work, interrupted by death, and of which there remained only fragments. He died, most probably, in 1294, and was buried in the Grey Friars Church, Oxford.

The Church buried both the man and his writings. For centuries his writings were only known to a learned few in the form of manuscripts. To the mass of the people his name lingered on in popular legends as an old-time wonder-worker—half real, half mythical. It was not until nearly 450 years after his death that his *Opus Majus* was translated into English by Dr. Samuel

Jebb; not for a hundred years later (1859) did the *Opus Minus* appear in an English dress.

In the whole history of Christianity there is nothing more disgraceful than its treatment of this thirteenth-century scholar. One-fourth of his life spent in prison, prohibited by his Order from writing under penalty of "many days' fasting on bread and water," his instruments seized, manuscripts destroyed—no man ever worked under more discouraging conditions than he. We can well understand his plaintive cry, that "It is on account of the ignorance of those with whom I have had to deal that I have not been able to accomplish more." After forty years of labor and self-sacrifice, beggared by his studies, Bacon found himself "unheard, forgotten, buried," and died with the trouble-laden lament, "I repent that I have given myself so much trouble for the good of mankind." The name of Roger Bacon should bring a blush to the face of every Christian, and serve as a new inspiration to the mind of every Freethinker.

One is led to think of what might have been—of a dream of what the world might now have been like had the Church smoothed the way for the struggling thinker, instead of weighting his limbs with chains and clogging his mind with care. To what height of energy might the race have climbed had the centuries of energy expended in fighting an ignorant and tyrannical Church been devoted to the acquisition of light-spreading, life-giving knowledge! The Church pursued a different policy. It strove to crush knowledge with the stake; to check civilisation by the murder of those who aimed to promote its growth. Happily, it met with but partial success. It did crush many; it embittered the lives of many more. Withal, the tide of civilisation flowed on; knowledge grew "from more to more," and this wider, freer knowledge has enabled us to rescue the name of Roger Bacon from the neglect of centuries and the obloquy of the Church, and place it first on the roll of those who strove to bring about the dawn of a new day.

C. COMEX.

The Prince of Peace.

A ONCE-CELEBRATED theatrical manager explained certain of his financial reverses by declaring that Shakespeare spelt Bankruptcy. He was right as far as his own ill-fated Shakespearean revivals had gone, but wrong in regard to many others that preceded, or have followed, them. His was but a limited experience upon which to base that generalisation; but when we, parodying his declaration, assert that Christianity spells Inconsistency, we have over eighteen hundred years of experience to point to, with the additional fact that, from the very nature of things, there is no possibility of rectification in the future. And we do assert that the history of the Christendom, the whole theory and practice of the Christian faith, since its foundation to the present time, and every reasonable presumption in regard to the future, afford abundant justification for asserting that Christianity spells Inconsistency, and on that ground, if no other, must stand condemned.

How else could it be when Christian teachings—the basis of Christianity as found in the New Testament, and, to a large extent, by endorsement in the Old Testament—are inconsistent in themselves, and when, moreover, the character of the Founder of the Faith is remarkable chiefly for its incongruous features—intelligible enough, perhaps, in a merely human promulgator of a new gospel, but absolutely inexplicable in the authoritative utterances and in the conduct of one who is said to have brought a Divine message, and to have presented a perfect example.

The fact has often been pointed out that we have in the Gospels two Christs—one the meek and lowly, the other haughty, arrogant, vituperative, and unforgiving. One is the Prince of Peace preaching a message of love and goodwill to all men, the other breathing a message of fire and sword, not unwittingly or reluctantly, but with full recognition of the fact, and apparently without regret. "Think not," he said, "that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes

shall be they of his own household" (Matthew x. 34-36).

The Christian household—in which must be included the pious Boers, as well as their loving brethren in Carist, the pious Britishers—are at the present moment engaged, tooth and nail, in fulfilling the prediction of the great Head of their Church. With bombardments, sieges, sorties, sharp-shooting, "splendid" cavalry and bayonet charges—with lyddite, dynamite, and all the destructive engines and agencies of war—they are affording the latest exemplification of this Gospel, which is at once a gospel of peace and war, goodwill and the sword; which is simultaneously to bind all men in the bonds of love, and to involve them in internecine conflict. The same Prince of Peace, who came not to bring peace, but a sword, makes confusion worse confounded by declaring that they who take the sword shall perish by the sword. The same Prince of Peace, who enjoins non-resistance of evil, affords an example of how it is to be done by flying into a towering rage and upsetting and driving out of the Temple the money-changers and "those that sold doves," denouncing, in his meek and lowly way, those tradesmen as "thieves." No doubt Kruger devoutly believes that at this moment he is following the Divine example by endeavoring to whip out of his Republic those whom he regards as Oolanders rather than as Outlanders—worse intruders and greater thieves than those of the Temple, inasmuch as they are money-grabbers rather than money-changers, and sell diamonds instead of doves.

The so-called Prince of Peace (with a sword in his hand) has much to answer for, if he only knew. The best thing that can be said for him is that he never anticipated the effect of his teachings on the temporal affairs of the world centuries after his death—that he never dreamt of all the religious wars, crusades, massacres, and persecutions which would be prosecuted in his name, blotting the pages of history with blood—that he never knew how ineffective his preaching of peace would prove when his followers were incited, as at the present time, to sanguinary strife by other causes than religious fanaticism or pious hate. He thought that the world was speedily coming to an end, and his immediate disciples shared that belief. The sword that he had in his mind, in bellicose moments, was only still to exist. Possibly, he merely anticipated domestic feuds. The misfortune is that at this day, and with nothing but the most unsatisfactory traditions to go upon, it is difficult to determine what he did mean. That is why—as it has often been said—there ought to be a Second Coming of Christ, if only to enable him to explain what he meant when he was supposed to have been here before.

Now, indeed, would be an opportune time for him to reappear on earth—if only on a flying visit—just to stop this dreadful war, and put things to rights for a million years or so, or, at any rate, for such time as may elapse pending his reappearance in State with the celestial *junior* that is to announce the great Assize. But, alas, there is no indication of his intention to turn-up or drop down, or in any way intervene. Though an almighty Prince of Peace, with no obligation to consult treaty powers, he is content to let the war proceed. His attitude is one of masterly inactivity, in spite of all appeals. Possibly, after all, we have mistaken his real desires in respect of peace and war. His teachings are so equivocal, just as were the prayers of many of the clergy before the war commenced.

In default of his reappearance—oft-predicted, but apparently as far off as ever—we can only fall back on surmises as to what is the real Gospel he has left us. The pious believer, having paid his money (to the Quaker, and believe that the spirit and essence of Christ's teaching is diametrically opposed to war under any circumstances: that those who engage in it incur a terrible responsibility not merely here, but hereafter; that eventually they will have to face an offended Deity, and account as they may for the shedding of blood expressly forbidden by the Son of God. Or he may prefer to believe that peace at any price is not the Christian policy; that war is defensible, however deplorable, in certain events and under certain conditions—these, of course, to be determined in strict accordance with his own desires when the critical

moment for decision arrives. Then, if so minded, he takes up arms, Gospel or no Gospel, and saddles all the responsibility on the Almighty, who—the spring being touched—begins, automaton-like, to "move in his own mysterious way, and to work out his plans with unerring and unfathomable wisdom."

Taking the history of Christendom from its earliest stages down to the present week, it cannot be said that the world has much profited by the appearance of the Prince of Peace on our sublunary sphere. Is it likely that things would have been any worse if he had stayed away? One thing is certain—there would have been no Christian inconsistency, hypocrisy, and cant, and that would have been something to be thankful for.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Notes by the Way.

I HAVE just concluded a fortnight's provincial tour, having in that time visited Glasgow, Renfrew, Airdrec, Motherwell, Carluke, Aberdeen, Dundee, and Liverpool. I found that the "God" Mars was in evidence against me the whole time, for the war in the Transvaal seemed to be the principal topic engaging public attention wherever I went. People, as a rule, did not appear to take a dispassionate view of the situation; they were either excited by a high state of war fever, or their judgments were impaired by an undue passion for peace under any circumstances. As the war is the question of the hour, and as my view of it has been repeatedly asked, I may here note that I do not think the present is an opportune time to discuss the justice or otherwise of the present conflict with the Boers. There is no doubt in my mind that the action, or non-action, of our Government contributed in a great measure to the outbreak; but the real causes of the war extend farther back than the present administration. However, the point with me just now is that Kruger declared war upon us, and thereby placed thousands of British lives in danger, A defensive policy was therefore forced upon us, and, in my opinion, it is our duty to render all the aid we can to our soldiers in the Transvaal, and to do what is possible to alleviate the sorrows of their relatives at home. When the strife is over, and the passion of the hour has passed, every effort should be made to prevent the recurrence of a war which, whoever is to blame, is a fearful calamity and a disgrace to our boasted civilisation. It is a terrible indictment of the influence of the alleged "Prince of Peace" that two Christian peoples should be engaged in brutal warfare, making widows and orphans, and rendering thousands of homes the abodes of the direst misery and desolation. Perhaps Christ was not far wrong in saying: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword."

During my forty years of propagandism I never experienced such a continuation of tempestuous weather as existed during my recent fortnight's tour. The rain which poured in torrents, and the wind which blew hurricanes, very much affected my audiences, particularly in the outlying districts of Scotland. Still, in Glasgow, Dundee, and Aberdeen the evening gatherings were large and very enthusiastic. In fact, it would be almost impossible to have had a warmer reception than that which was afforded me at all my meetings. The Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. deserves all praise for the excellent propagandist work it is doing, not only in Glasgow, but also in the small surrounding places. Our movement is making rapid progress in Scotland. During my stay in Aberdeen and Dundee two additional branches of the N. S. S. were formed, and every indication was given that they would be successful. I endeavored to impress upon our friends in each place that the veterans in the Cause should continue to co-operate with the young blood. The union of the two is necessary to perpetuate the useful work now being done by the various branches throughout the country. It was encouraging to see so many young men joining our ranks, and to notice the large number of the wives and daughters of the members who attended the meetings. The sale of Freethought literature is increasing at all our gatherings, and the highest approval is given of the two organisations recently

formed in London by the President of the N. S. S. for the purpose of extending the usefulness of Secular work. The one great want felt is music at our meetings, and personally I should feel delighted to see the want supplied. The Secular Society, Limited, when it acquires a few more legacies and bequests, will probably consider this important question, with a view of seeing what can be done in the matter.

I ask our friends throughout the country to avail themselves of the present activity in our movement. With the advent of the New Year, strenuous efforts in the field of propagandism should be made. There is plenty of room for more destructive and constructive work to be done; there are hosts of willing workers ready to do it; and it is to be hoped that ample means will be forthcoming to enable such a desirable object to be accomplished.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Absent-Minded Beggar.

(With pious apologies to Rudyard Kipling.)

WHEN you've shouted "Rule Britannia!" when you've sung
"Gawd save the Queen"—

When you've finished making faces with your mouth—
Will you kindly pray to God that He will make it "all serene"
For the fifty thousand slashers ordered South?

He's an absent-minded beggar—always been so, up to date—
But all of you must take Him as you find Him;
He has sworn to answer pray'r, but He's forgotten to of late—
So you'd better shout and "holler" to remind Him.

Chorus.—Duke's son, cook's son, son of a girl that
"spins"—

Punctured by the bullets from the guns
of Mr. K.!

Britons are doing their Maker's work—
their Maker should *thicken their skins*.
Down at once on your "shivery-shakes,"
and pray, pray, pray!

There are boys from England, boys from Wales, and boys
from Ireland too,
And some boys that don't wear "togs," and never did;
There are single boys, and married boys gone out to fight old
"Kru,"

And there's many a one, alas! that's but a kid.
They've a Father up in Heaven, but it's miles from where
they've gone,

And an absent-minded beggar they will find Him:
It was He that planned the war, but He'll forget the war is on
If you do not shout and "holler" to remind Him.

Chorus.—Cook's son, Duke's son, son of a bloated
Earl

(Fifty thousand British slashers gone to
Table Bay!);

Each and all of you now, for the sake of
the Son of the Carpenter's girl,
Kneel and bow till your backbones ache,
and pray, pray, pray!

There are parsons here in thousands—thick as beetles, so to
speak—

And they ought to go to Africa to spout.
They're engaged on "active service" only once or twice a
week,

So the order ought to be "send 'em out."
He's an absent-minded beggar is the Father of us all,
So the parsons ought to be there to remind Him
That Tommy's skin's not thick enough to stop each rifle ball
From the right and left, in front of, and behind him!

Chorus.—Duke's son, Cook's son, son of the Lord
No-Zoom

(Fifty thousand British slashers gone to
Table Bay!);

Hardly a blessed parson there to guard
'em from Mr. Oom;
Down at once on your "shivery skakes,"
and pray, pray, pray!

Let us manage to get round the Lord and "kid" Him to His
face,

And tell Him that we'd very much prefer
That He backed the British Empire and consigned old Kruger's
race

To the clime that's always torrid as it were.
He's an absent-minded beggar, and He may forget it all,
So you'd better keep on shouting to remind Him
That "Codlin" is His friend, not "Short," and say "God
damn old Paul,

And the troops he's got in front of and behind him."

Chorus.—Cook's son, Duke's son, son of a million-
aire
(Fifty thousand British slashers gone to
Table Bay!);
All of 'em doing their Maker's work with
maxim guns and prayer;
They've plenty of guns, but down on
your knees, and pray, pray, pray!

ESS JAY BEE.

Acid Drops.

THE end of the world did *not* happen on November 13. A few silly people, like the wide-mouthed dupes of Prophet Baxter, were frightened a little by the prediction; but other people kept calm, and went about their business and pleasure as usual. Here in England the Leonids did not make so much as a decent show. The fog came and hid everything; indeed, a wag said it was thick enough to hide the end of the world if it happened.

Over in Russia, however, where the people are so much more superstitious, hundreds of thousands spent three nights in the open air, in spite of the intense cold. They were afraid that the Leonids meant the end of the world, or at least some terrible calamities such as universal earthquakes. Many parents actually killed their children to save them from perishing in the catastrophe. Even in the city of Odessa, according to the *Daily News* correspondent, a man's four children had to be taken from him by force to save their lives.

Such are the beautiful and beneficent effects of superstition! Ay, some will say, but superstition is not religion. No, but it *was*. Superstition is only religion out of fashion. The superstition of to-day was the religion of yesterday; the religion of to-day will be the superstition of to-morrow.

The Second Adventists in America—and they are rather a numerous body—have often expected the end of the world and the second coming of Christ. A few years ago they all got their white ascension robes ready. Christ was coming that night, and they expected to float up to meet him. One enterprising elder, meaning to gain the best possible start, climbed up a tree, and when the clock struck twelve he jumped. There was no Christ that night, but the enterprising elder was carried home with a broken leg.

One fatal result has followed the recent scare as to the end of the world. An elderly lady, a well-known resident at Nice, died of fright on the 13th inst., in spite of the efforts of four doctors. She was convinced that, as predicted, the end of the world would take place on that day. It proved indeed, the end of the world for her. If she had but possessed her soul in patience till the next morning, she might have corrected her belief and lived till, in due time, the scare came round again.

The *Globe* is responsible for the statement that a country paper, which professed a profound belief in Dr. Falb's theory of the destruction of the world by Biela's comet, published a list of fixtures for the week. Among them appeared the following: "Monday, 10.15 p.m., the end of the world; Wednesday, the Queen goes to Bristol." The joke will pass, but it would puzzle the *Globe* to find that "country paper."

Ingersoll was once libelled by a Rev. Mr. Dixon, partly, we believe, in relation to the great orator's views as to the sinfulness of suicide under certain hopeless conditions. Well, we wonder if it is the same Rev. Mr. Dixon who has startled the religious world in America by advocating the extermination of habitual criminals. This is what he is reported to have said to the Chautauqua Circle of Methodists: "Justice to humanity demands that in order to obliterate a hereditary source of crime the individual must die. Imprisonment for life would be a grievous error. It is not right that 100,000 criminals should be kept in comparative ease at the expense of their fellows, whom they can only injure. I would chloroform these confirmed criminals. The guillotine is too bloody, hanging too violent, electrocution too uncertain. In death by chloroform there is no pain, nothing revolting."

This is not very accurate psychology. The real sting of the death sentence is having to die. There is little practical difference, as far as suffering is concerned, between one form of execution and another. The trouble is having to be executed at all, and chloroform doesn't seem to alleviate it. However, if the Rev. Mr. Dixon's pious suggestion catches on, we hope he will be made Chloroformer-in-Chief of the United States. It is a post which a clergyman would fill with great *éclat*.

We never had a very high opinion of the leaders in the Irish papers. Nor, apparently, has the Bishop of Derry.

He told the members of the Dublin Trinity College Theological Society, the other day, that there were in Dublin churches quite as good sermons preached as there were leading articles written in the papers. This is really playing the Dublin press down very low. If the leaders are no better than the sermons, there ought to be immediately some sweeping changes on the staffs.

The Bishop of Derry further assured the good young men of Trinity College that "the influence of religion is not waning." This bold assertion is quite contrary to the fact, but no matter. There is a plucky ring about it that one cannot but admire. Never say die, my good young friends; never admit that you are being beaten until you come to your very last gasp.

Instead of rendering unto the Great Central Railway Company that which belonged to them—namely, a third-class ticket or the equivalent fare—Mr. Samuel Harley Redfern, who had travelled on the line to Marylebone, offered to read to the ticket-collector Psalm xxiii. This not being regarded as satisfactory, Mr. Redfern has been hailed before the Marylebone Stipendiary, who has remanded him. He has no fear, however, though cast into prison, for, he says, "God would see him righted." That is more than God has done for a great many other persons, but we must not prejudge the event. By the way, it is rather disillusionising to find that this godly man made the journey in question on a Sunday.

Why should the poor people, who undertake to foretell other folks' future by means of palmistry, be prosecuted in this Christian land? Are there not whole armies of clerics and ministers engaged in doing pretty much the same thing by means equally reliable? Mrs. Mary Claire St. Ledger York has been prosecuted for fortune-telling by palmistry at Wolverhampton. One of the magistrates did not see any particular offence in this wheedling of half-crowns. Nor is there, if it is not an offence for sky-pilots to wheedle hundreds of thousands of pounds by pretending that they have information as to the hereafter.

Marcus S. Berginnan, honorary translator of the Yiddish Bible and missionary to the Jews in London, has been lecturing under the auspices of the British Israel Association. He said: "No doubt God, working in his own mysterious way, was bringing home to the minds of the Jews, by the condemnation, retrial, and liberation of Dreyfus, the crime which they committed in condemning our Lord."

Now, really, what can be said of such a hideous suggestion? Was this the only means open to Omnipotence of bringing the lesson home? Mr. Berginnan's God must be an Almighty fiend as well as a fool.

The Rev. W. H. Pinkham, Baptist minister, of Colorado, has been deposed on the ground "that he recognises a human, fallible element in the Scriptures, and that his doctrine of the Resurrection does not affirm the identity of the risen body with the corporeal elements committed to the tomb." If he had lived not so very many centuries ago, and within the jurisdiction of Holy Mother Church, he would have been cremated alive. However, he doesn't know what is waiting for him in kingdom come.

A clergyman has been fined for the insanitary state of his own property in Shoreditch. He had already been twice summoned to appear at Worship-street Police Court and give an account of his neglect to comply with a notice from the vestry. But this man of God—the Rev. W. Earle, whose address is given as Craven-buildings, Newcastle-street, Strand—seems to be quite too superior a person to answer the call of mere temporal authorities. The dwellings, from which he draws his rents, were shown to be in a shockingly insanitary state—too filthy and dangerous for human habitation. He was ordered to pay a fine of 40s. and £2 2s. costs.

According to an article in the *Chretien Français*, by M. Augustin Baumann, a former priest of the Passionist order, fifty per cent. of those who have entered the priesthood in America forsake the clerical ranks some years afterwards, on finding positions in business. That is a very satisfactory circumstance, if the statement be correct. Probably a number of priests, and a still larger number of clergymen, would shake off their professional shackles if suitable secular openings presented themselves.

But what is a poor cleric to do who finds that his training, if it has not unfitted him, has certainly not equipped him, for the keen competition of a worldly calling, especially in the old country, where openings are not so numerous as in the United States or the colonies? And the difficulties are still greater if the clergyman happens to be a man with a family. Not unnaturally he sticks to his post. It is his cross.

The Rev. A. W. Savory, vicar of Hesse, is a pretty specimen of clerical arrogance and pig-headedness. He it was

who, a little time ago, approved of a seven-year-old child being beaten at his Church Sunday-school until there were weals on the poor child's body and legs—the said child, however, being only a wretched little pauper placed out at a cottage home. On the strength of Solomon's injunction, he declared that the lad deserved a "jolly good caning." Since this delightful episode, the Rev. Savory has been displaying himself as an object for further contempt.

The Urban Council, it seems, have placed a hydrant near the vicarage wall. This, he says, is a deliberate insult to himself. We don't see it. The Urban Council may have done it out of kindness, believing that such a hot-tempered gentleman might be benefited by having something handy wherewith to cool his heated brow. He says he is "perfectly certain the people of Hesse would rise *en masse* and say, 'We will not allow our vicar to be annoyed by any such thing being placed opposite his dwelling.'" O Lord, gie us a good conceit of ourselves! The people of Hesse, if they interferred at all, would, we should think, utilise that hydrant on the rev. gentleman in a way that would be salutary, if unpleasant.

The "Tongues of Fire" have been wagging at Exeter Hall, though, perhaps, with more heat than sense. The great Reader Harris, Q.C., has been "putting the case" for that precious Pentecostal League. He has been asking the Lord to so whip the Boers that further bloodshed shall be avoided. Poor Kruger! to have to fight his own Lord as well as Redvers Buller. From Boers to unbelievers is an easy transition for Reader Harris, and he said he had been told that "not one church-member in a hundred believed that prayers were answered. He met a great many people who admitted that they were no longer Christians. When he urged them to become such again, their answer invariably was 'never no more.'"

Further, he assured the Church that, unless it accepted the Pentecostal spirit, "its candlestick would be removed." Dreadful possibility! Especially for those Ritualists who would sooner part with life than their candlesticks. In the terrible event of the Lord thus "dowsing the glim," one would be inclined to think of that once familiar query: "Where was Moses when the light went out?"

That clerical snob of the very first water, the vicar of Windsor, announces that "the Queen and the Prince of Wales have been graciously pleased to accept copies of the prayer and hymn written by the Rev. Arthur Robins [*i.e.*, himself] for use as a pocket pistol by the Household Cavalry in the face of their enemies."

The *Westminster Gazette*, quoting the announcement, says: "We are sure that the prayer and hymn were not so described by her Majesty. Mr. Robins has on a previous occasion distinguished himself by his intemperance of language about the Boers. He hardly improves his position by becoming patentee of this form of pocket pistol."

The Oxford University Press has printed, Khaki bound, 40z. Bibles for the use of our troops. It is to be hoped that Kruger has made equal provision for his men, though, probably, he relies upon the fact that each Boer has a Bible of his own, and does not need, like Tommy Atkins, to be supplied with a copy of that precious work. The Boers carry the Bible in their heads rather than in their knapsacks. T. A. would sooner have 40z. of 'bacca than 40z. of Bible.

The Empress of Germany has come to the rescue of the Bible, nobly and majestically vindicating it from ridicule. A very proper step indeed, and deserving the approval of "myself und Gott." It seems that there has been a tax imposed recently on the inhabitants of Berlin for the purpose of building Lutheran churches in the city. The municipality declares it is unfair to tax Catholics, Jews, and Freethinkers to build churches with which they have no connection. Dr. Preuss, a Jew and tutor in the University, in ridiculing the proposal, parodied a well-known passage in Job, by saying: "His Excellency gave, and his Excellency taketh away; blessed be the name of his Excellency." Very innocent; there have been quite as bad things said in the *Freethinker*.

The Empress has promptly written, expressing regret that a member of the Council "should have thought fit to throw ridicule on certain passages in the Bible and hymn-book." Beneath the weight of this august censure poor Preuss has sunk—crushed to the earth, damned everlastingly in Berlin, perhaps doomed hereafter.

The University authorities, now that their attention has been drawn to the matter by an expression of opinion from so high a quarter, are dutifully and inexpressibly shocked. They are, therefore, proposing to "discipline" Dr. Preuss. He now, probably, wishes Job and the whole Bible at the bottom of the sea, and the super-sensitive Empress with it.

From the recent decision of that embodiment of imbecility, the Licensing Committee of the London County Council, it

would seem that we have indeed gone back to the time of Cromwell, of whom we have lately heard so much. Modern regulations from Spring-gardens are quite in the spirit of the enactments of the Commonwealth. Here is one of the latter: "Anyone found idly standing or walking on the street in sermon time, or playing at any game upon the Sabbath or fast-day, shall be fined two-and-sixpence, or lie in prison till he pay the same."

"The Power of Prayer" is the title of last week's short sermon in *Lloyd's Newspaper*. The writer is the Right Rev. the Bishop for North and Central Europe. We have not the pleasure of knowing his name, but we beg to remark that he has a tidy-sized diocese. Perhaps that accounts for his hasty and superficial thinking. Merely to go round such a diocese is enough for one man to do, even with divine assistance. Hard thinking, in addition, must be an utter impossibility.

Well, this Bishop of etc., etc., states that at the time of General Gordon's death at Khartoum he "saw in the window of a small Atheist's bookshop at Brighton a picture representing Gordon lying dead on the Residency stairs, and beneath it the words, 'Thus the Christian God answers the Christians' prayers.'" Upon this incident the Bishop of etc., etc., founds the following remarks: "Poor fool who says in his heart there is no God. How little he knew how General Gordon longed for death, prayed for it, as a letter in my possession, and many of his letters, testify.....And his prayer was granted—granted to the full, poor atheist."

This right reverend man of God refers, of course, to the *Freethinker*. But he misses the point of our cartoon. The satire was aimed at the Christians at home. They prayed and prayed and prayed for Gordon, and when the curtain lifted the answer was a bloody and dishonored corpse. Let us pray!

We are told by this right reverend man of God that Gordon prayed for death himself. If that be so, it is wonderful how he received God's reply. According to Neufeld, he killed at least a dozen of his assailants, using sword and revolver until he was cut down dead. That is how Gordon accepted the death he prayed for so ardently.

This, also, must be said. If it be true that Gordon prayed for death and got it, why did so many Christians talk about "avenging Gordon," and about his *being* "avenged," when all those thousands of Dervishes lay dead on the desert sands, and when the Mahdi's tomb was desecrated at Omdurman? Was it not sheer, flat, rank blasphemy to "avenge" an act of God?

Finally, we have to remind this Bishop of etc., etc., that the cartoon he refers to was not atheistic at all. It might have been designed by a Deist. It was directed against the Christian God—a deity who has made the most lavish promises to answer prayer, and has never yet been known to keep a single one of them.

The father of Judge Koch, who was wounded and taken prisoner at Elandslaagte, was nominally in command, but "instead of fighting he read the Bible and prayed"—says the *Daily Chronicle* war correspondent. And what was the result? One bullet passed through the old man's shoulder, and another through his groin. "So he lay still and read no more." What a touching answer to prayer!

Mr. John McCormac, an excise officer, has lost his wife. It appears that he had committed adultery with the servant girl. His wife found him late at night in the girl's bedroom, but he assured her that there was "nothing wrong." A court of justice, however, has naturally discounted this sweet assurance, and Mrs. McCormac has obtained a decree nisi in the Divorce Division. After the decree was pronounced, Mr. John McCormac's piety waxed strong within him, and impelled him to express great anxiety about his eldest son, ten years of age, whom he wanted to have brought up as a Roman Catholic, like himself. But the unsympathetic judge gave the mother the custody of the children.

Mr. C. Napier Bell, in a new book entitled *Tangweera*, describes his "Life and Adventures among Gentle Savages." These gentle savages are the Mosquito Indians, who, after two centuries of British protection, were handed over to the rule of the two Spanish Republics of Honduras and Nicaragua. The Spanish priests have been hard at work upon them, and this is the result:—"The once-happy Indians, handed over to their old enemies the Spaniards, are now worried to frenzy by taxes, and Catholic priests dispensing the dubious blessings of civilisation, accompanied, as usual, by disease, demoralisation, and death."

Sacrifice is still performed on Mount Gerizim by the Samaritans. The rite has been witnessed by Mrs. Margaret Thomas, who describes it in *Two Years in Palestine and Syria*. While the lambs were being roasted in the fire, after being slain by the High Priest, the Samaritans sat round

praying. Then they broke into groups of seven, the roasted flesh was placed before them, and they tore it to pieces and ate it. Fragments were sent to the tents of the women, and the bones and refuse were carefully collected and burnt. No doubt such scenes were frequent in ancient times under the sublime worship of Jehovah.

The notion that Christianity introduced new principles of humanity into jurisprudence is historically absurd. No wonder the *Daily News*, in a recent review of a work on Byzantine Constantinople, points out that "blinding was perhaps as common among Christians as among infidel potentates. Capricious alternations between vindictiveness and leniency were as common among the former as among the latter."

Fun indulges its feeble wit at the expense of the late Charles Bradlaugh. It represents Lord Salisbury suggesting a statue to Bradlaugh by way of a set-off to Lord Rosebery's statue of Cromwell. Our professionally facetious contemporary doesn't see that this is a handsome compliment to the great Radical-Atheist. In spite of all the "loyalists" may say, Cromwell was one of the foremost men in English history. Admire him or not on principle, you cannot deny the place he fills—and keeps. And to bracket Bradlaugh with him is anything but an insult to Bradlaugh. *Fun* will have to try again.

Gladstone's opinion of Cromwell, by the way, was characteristic. According to Sir Edward Russell, the Grand Old Man remarked to a Cromwell biographer, "I should not have said myself that he was a very great man—no greater, for instance, than the late Lord Althorpe." Historical criticism could hardly sink lower than that.

The *Edinburgh Evening News* is down on the new *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, with special reference to the article on "Bartimeus." This was the name of the blind gentleman to whom Jesus gave good eyesight. It appears, however, from this new clerical work that the biographers of Jesus were mistaken. What he gave to blind Bartimeus was *bodily* spiritual sight, and they wooden-headedly made it *spiritual* sight. Upon which bit of exegesis our contemporary remarks that the story of the same writers about the Resurrection and Ascension "must be taken with substantial grains of salt." But if the miracles of the New Testament are explained away, what is left to constitute it a supernatural revelation? No wonder the *News* says that "Church professors and clergymen are rapidly reaching the conclusions of Tom Paine and Charles Bradlaugh." Good. But why Tom?

John M'Neill is a successful revivalist. A hoary-headed stockbroker explained to a *North British Daily Mail* man one of the secrets of this success. "Well," he said, "M'Neill don't trouble us, at any rate, with the old hell. He does not use the brimstone business as an accessory, and his God is not of the cruel and remorseless kind. I have hopes, some how, that I will escape the roasting process."

Dr. Peters, of nigger-flogging fame, has discovered Ophir, but it has been discovered so many times, and in so many places, that there is no need for much excitement. But it Ophir really was in South Africa, the Anglo-Israelites have another argument in favor of British supremacy there. They tell us that Englishmen are Jews, descended from the lost tribes, and that Queen Victoria is the lineal descendant of King David. How natural, then, that we should get hold of King Solomon's mines. They never should have gone out of the family.

Father Coupe, of the Society of Jesus, has an article in the *Catholic Times* on "Miracles." There is no argument in it. It is a mere rhapsody for believers. Incidentally he refers to the "twenty millions of martyrs" furnished by the early Christians. Well now, this number is distinctly good. Or all liars we prefer the big liar. He is most entertaining. The boy who saw five cats was a mere worry; the boy who saw five hundred was an amusing little beggar. In the same way, the Gospel writers make Jesus appear to the twelve after his Resurrection; but Paul the magnificent comes along and makes him appear unto five hundred nameless brethren at a once. And why for no? One figure is as easy as another, and while you are about it you may as well write down a lot. In this spirit we admire Father Coupe's twenty million martyrs. Of course they never existed. But that doesn't matter. It is all the same to people who don't know different. When a good, orthodox, credulous Catholic has his mouth well open, he swallows twenty million martyrs as easily as twenty.

Superintendent: "Yes, and where did John the Baptist live?" Scholar: "In the desert." Superintendent: "Quite right! And what do we call people who live in the desert?" Scholar: "Deserters."—*Brooklyn Life*.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 26, North Camberwell Hall; 7.30. "Britishers and Boers: A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa."

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—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. DUNBAR.—We take your letter in the spirit in which you wrote it. Pleased to hear from an old reader like yourself. In the world of thought, as in the world of life, we must live and let live. You cannot think more highly of the late J. M. Wheeler than we do. Every word in his praise is grateful to our ears.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your welcome batches of cuttings. Glad to hear from you again.

ESS JAY BEE.—We were wondering what had become of you. Glad to hear from you again.

W. SIMONS (Secretary) wishes to state that the Testimonial Fund on behalf of Mr. Fagan will remain open until December 9.

W. COX (Liverpool).—No doubt the delay was in the post; but, whatever the explanation, we are not responsible. Mr. Foote will gladly visit you in January. Choose your own Sunday, only do it at once, and let him know.

E. VETTERLEIN.—Your last week's postcard was dated Tuesday, and bore Tuesday's postmark. Please note that announcements for insertion in the *Freethinker* must reach us at the latest by the first delivery on Tuesday morning.

T. JENKINSON.—Thanks for copy of the *Clarion*. Mr. Blatchford is generally racy, and is not less so when the "Philistines" are upon him. No doubt the differences amongst Socialists are as great as those amongst other people. They are united on one point only, and that point is an ultimate one, for the far future; and, on a matter so distant, a very close agreement is comparatively easy.

T. HUNT.—Thanks. Cuttings are always welcome.

S. FRANKLIN.—Ingersoll's last lecture on *What is Religion?* is not out of print. There are plenty of copies left. Order of Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

W. J. ILFORD.—We have already noted that Dr. Tylor's Gifford Lectures will be published shortly. Certainly the book will be reviewed in our columns as soon as possible after its appearance.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Gateshead Friend, 5s.

J. R. WHITEELL.—(1) The most serviceable translation of Plutarch (of course you mean the Lives) is the one in "Bohn's Library." It is in four volumes, at 3s. 6d. each, subject to the usual 25 per cent. discount. Several of the Lives were translated by George Long, the historian and translator of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus. The rest are translated admirably by his friend, Mr. Stewart. Clough's edition of the "Dryden" translation is more expensive. The fine old translation by North was not made direct from the Greek, but from the French. (2) We have not seen the book you mention, but it can hardly be complete. George Eliot's translation of Strauss fills a big volume of many hundred pages. The price was 15s., but we believe copies are now going for about 9s.

A. J. SHERWIN.—Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* will shortly be offered for sale in a bound volume. The two numbers he intended to add will be kept back to form part of another work.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Liberator—Boston Investigator—The Truth-seeker (New York)—Public Opinion—Awakener of India—Sydney Bulletin—Ethical World—De Vrije Gedachte—Crescent—Braam's Iconoclast—Free Society—Common Sense (Chicago)—Church Gazette—Two Worlds—Printing Trades' Gazette—Lucifer—Der Arme Teufel—Freidenker—Torch of Reason—Secular Thought—Blue Grass Blade—Fun—People's Newspaper—Progressive Thinker—Rockhampton Record—Isle of Man Times—Edinburgh Evening News—North British Daily Mail—Hamilton Advertiser.

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 due 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.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE lectures in the Secular Hall, Camberwell, this evening (Nov. 26). By special request he will take for his subject "A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa." We are informed that there is likely to be a large meeting and plenty of discussion—which, by the way, Mr. Foote rather likes. We understand that several young reformers, who have studied the South African question very profoundly, are thirsting to wash their spears in the President's blood. It is to be hoped he has enough to go round.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured to a capital audience at Camberwell. His estimate of the grand character of Colonel Ingersoll was fully appreciated, and his entire lecture was enthusiastically applauded. Many strangers were present, and ladies formed a large section of the audience.

Mr. Cohen had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. He occupies the same platform again this evening (Nov. 26), and will doubtless have another good evening, perhaps even a better one. On the following Sunday (Dec. 5) Mr. Watts lectures there, and Mr. Foote will occupy the platform during the rest of the month.

The Secular Society, Limited, held its first Annual Members' Meeting at the Manchester Hotel on Wednesday evening, November 15. There was a fair attendance of London members. Country members were represented by proxies, most of them in favor of Mr. Foote. But there was no need to use these. No poll was taken; indeed, everything passed off with the greatest harmony. The Chairman read the Report, which was accepted and ordered to be printed. A copy will be posted to every member, and will also appear in the *Freethinker*. Mr. Thomas Shore was elected a Director in place of Miss Annie Brown, who is unable to attend the Board meetings. With this exception the Board remains as it was. Amongst those present was Mr. Embleton, who suggested that the members should give more in the way of donations, and added (what all believed) that he was ready to do his share. Mr. Moss proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, to whom the members, and the whole Secular party, were so much indebted. This was carried unanimously. A vote of thanks was also given to the Secretary.

Applications for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, are still coming in, but we should like to see them coming in a little faster. We beg all those who reckon themselves valid Freethinkers—that is, ready to do as well as believe—to fill in the Application Form at once, if they have not already done so, and forward it to the Company's secretary with the requisite remittance.

Newcastle-on-Tyne friends are requested to note that an important meeting will be held to-day (Nov. 26) at No. 1, Granger-street, at 3 p.m. Also that they are to have a visit from Mr. Percy Ward on the following Sunday. Mr. Ward lectures in the Co-operative Hall, Whitehall-road, Gateshead. Friends coming from a distance can be supplied with tea at the Park Café close by.

The Newcastle Branch has received a very nice letter from Mrs. Ingersoll, expressing thanks for its message of sympathy on Colonel Ingersoll's death.

The *Rockhampton Daily Record* (Queensland) gives a three-column report of an eloquent address on Colonel Ingersoll by our old friend, Mr. Wallace Nelson. Mr. Nelson went out from England some thirteen years ago. The doctors thought he was booked as a consumptive, but they were mistaken. Anyhow, he is still alive and very active. Besides being a sterling advocate of Freethought, Mr. Nelson is a noted politician, working for the labor party and conducting the *People's Newspaper*.

Mr. Nelson's *People's Newspaper* for October 13 is before us. After quoting from and condemning the Jingo press, Mr. Nelson writes: "It is pleasing to turn from the silly Jingoism of the daily Press to a really sane presentment of the case for the Outlanders." A long extract is then made from one of Mr. Foote's articles in the *Freethinker*, to which Mr. Nelson adds, "Now, I quite recognise the force of all this." At the same time, he argues that "There is no justification for war." Indeed, he says that "Mr. Foote puts the whole thing in a few words when he says: 'Let us not rush into the frightful crime of an avoidable war. Let patience go with firmness, and magnanimity with strength.'" Evidently our old friend has taken the trouble to read and understand what we wrote, which is more than some impatient Freethinkers have done at home. How refreshing it always is to meet with one who, if he differs from you, knows where you are and where he is,

and precisely why you and he do not stand quite together! How blessed a thing is intellectual hospitality!

The *Secular Almanack* for 1900 is nearly ready for publication. It will be on sale next week for certain. Orders should be placed at once with Mr. Forder. Besides the usual supply of information, there are special articles by G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, C. Cohen, Francis Neale, Mimnermus, and others. We may add that this Almanack is issued by the National Secular Society, and that all profit realised by the sale of it goes into the Society's exchequer. Those who buy the Almanack, therefore, help the movement while getting their money's worth.

An Empress's Piety.

LETTER TO BERLIN TOWN COUNCIL.

THE local topic of conversation here [Berlin] is a letter which Baron von Mirbach, of the Empress's Household, has written, on her Majesty's behalf, to the President of the Berlin Town Council. After thanking that body for its congratulations on her birthday, her Majesty expresses her regret that a controversy of many years' standing between the Town Council and the different parishes has not yet been settled, and then proceeds to say: "With deep grief her Majesty also learns that a short time ago, during your absence, a teacher of the University, a member of the Town Council, scoffed at sacred, evangelical, and Biblical words of comfort without being reprimanded, in a manner which must deeply shock all morals; but, above all, Christian feelings. Her Majesty hopes that in time the good and true elements will succeed, next to the promotion of outward prosperity, in healing the many internal sores from which the Imperial capital suffers."

This strange reprimand from the Empress refers to the following occurrence: At one of the sittings of the Town Council Dr. Preuss criticised the credulity and indolence of some members of that body, who trusted that the municipal authorities and the Minister would make things all right, and that, therefore, no one else need trouble about them. These people, he said, thought "His Excellency gave; his Excellency hath taken away; blessed be the name of His Excellency." He then quoted the words of an old hymn. This was, to say the least, tactless. Dr. Preuss was immediately censured by the speakers who came after him, and he himself expressed his regret, saying that he did not intend to hurt anyone's feelings. He has, however, aroused the Empress's indignation to such a degree that she ordered Baron von Mirbach to write the letter, the reading of which caused enormous sensation. The Government, of course, has hastened to open a disciplinary inquiry against Dr. Preuss, to decide whether he has violated the dignity of his position as a teacher at the University.

The controversy between the Town Council and the parishes to which the Empress's letter refers is also very interesting. The Orthodox discovered in the archives a decree of the year 1573, according to which, in the Mark of Brandenburg, the towns are obliged to build churches for the evangelical parishes. This three-hundred-years-old decree has now been declared to be still in force. The city of Berlin maintains that it is for the parishes to build their own churches, the treasury of the town being filled by taxpayers of all creeds, so that it would not do to favor the evangelical churches at the expense of the Catholic and Jewish rate-payers. The parishes then demanded from the Town Council an indemnity of several million marks, but the Council refuses, and this is what her Majesty, who greatly favors the building of churches, complains of.—*Daily News*.

Cecil Rhodes' Religion.

ACCORDING to the *Review of Reviews*, the "Colossus of South Africa" is an Agnostic. Mr. Rhodes, we are told, although the son of a clergyman, is no great Churchman. His moral sense revolts against accepting the Divine origin of the Hebrew writings which exult over the massacre of the Amalekites. In the doctrine of eternal torment he is an out-and-out unbeliever. Upon many questions relating to the other world his one word is Agnostic—"I do not know." But on the question of hell he is quite sure he knows, and he knows that it is not true. Indeed, it is his one negative dogma, which he holds with astonishing vigor and certitude.

Testimonial to Mr. John Fagan.

D. Colville, 15s.; B. Hyatt, 2s.; G. J. Holyoake, 2s. (who wishes Mr. Fagan success, and says he would send more if he were richer); Chas. Watts, 2s.; G. Ward and Miss Robins, 10s.—GEORGE WRIGHT, Treasurer, Bradlaugh Club, 36 Newington Green-road, N.

"Skeletons in Parsonic Cupboards."

WITH this heading, the *Church Gazette* publishes the following editorial note on a little sketch contributed by me to the *Freethinker* of the 12th inst.:

"Although, as we remark elsewhere in this issue, there may be no Atheists, there are plenty of sceptics, of whose views the *Freethinker* is, perhaps, the most prominent exponent. That journal, in the course of a genial article on 'The Country Parson,' treats our reverend friends to a little not unwholesome satire. In the course of its description it deals with some difficulties which are supposed to haunt the cleric mind as follows:—

"Who knows the number of ivy-covered vicarages and rectories dotted about rural England, in which behind their placid exteriors there may not be hidden away, as the spiritual skeletons in the cupboard, terrible doubts not only as to Jonah's whale, but Jesus's resurrection? Let the *Church Gazette*, which should be able to form some opinion upon this matter, answer."

"Being appealed to, we give our answer in all good faith, and expect it to be taken in like spirit.

"Speaking, then, from large experience, we decidedly think that the class of ideas suggested do not occur to the minds of three out of four of our rustic priests. Some of them are so far given up to class and professional obsessions that they never have allowed their thoughts to verge on such dangerous themes. This is true; but yet we are not proud of it. For these men ought to be leaders of thought, or else they have no *locus standi* at all, except on the foundation of clothing clubs and mothers' meetings; except, too, on the grounds of certain superhuman powers which some of them claim, but which here it is not worth while to discuss.

"There remain the exceptions, dotted not thickly, but all too sparsely, over the wide rural districts of the land. These men are mostly, if not entirely, Broad Churchmen. If the *Freethinker* does not understand the technical term, it may be explained to mean men who think freely. In doing so they have been obliged to recognise the difficulties which certainly do attend the class of subjects under discussion; and not only to recognise them, but to think about them as deeply and as thoroughly as their culture and ability sufficed for. But, in general, all this is no longer a 'skeleton in the cupboard' to these men, because they have laid the ghost by living down the crudity of their earlier thoughts, and have seen their way to something higher and more worth living for than the blank negations of mere materialism.

"Our answer, then, to the *Freethinker* is, that the tone of thought it represents has to do with a mere half-truth, but one which, when amplified and ripened, carries in it the promise of better things."

In the first place, one must thank the *Church Gazette* for responding so readily and with so much politeness to the invitation which was offered. For the better understanding of the first sentence of its reply, it may be explained that the remark alluded to is in another note, wherein the editor observes:—

"There are not many polytheists in these days, the prevailing secular sentiment being decidedly in the direction indicated by Clough's satirical couplet—

Thou shalt have one God only—who
Would be at the expense of two?

As for Atheists, we are inclined to believe that the race is as extinct as the dodo."

The editor rather implies, in the first note above, that the *Freethinker* does not understand the technical term Broad Churchman. Might we not, with all due respect, suggest that the *Church Gazette* has failed to understand the term Atheist? Certainly there are many persons—more than may be supposed by the clerical mind—who describe themselves as Atheists. For myself I take that designation, and do so in preference to that of "Agnostic." I count it as of no consequence that the religious prejudices of the past have heaped odium upon it, so that to the common ear it sounds hardly "respectable." Atheism has its inspiring traditions, and can point to a noble army of heroes and martyrs; and its attitude, as defined by leading exponents, being quite in accordance with my own views, I call myself an Atheist, and should think it disloyalty to those who have labored and suffered in the past to discard the name for some new designation, though it denoted, as Agnosticism does, the same phase of thought.

But, as a matter of fact, the *Church Gazette* is under a misapprehension as to what Atheism really is and has been. This was shown by an editorial article in its

issue of September 30, entitled "The Agnostic." To that article Mr. Watts penned a most admirable and effective reply, as the readers of this journal will doubtless remember. The *Church Gazette* assumes that the Atheist "denies" the existence of God. But he does not, as Mr. Watts showed by the definitions of leading Atheists from whom he quoted. There is no need to repeat these definitions. The race of Atheists, so far from being extinct as the dodo, is very much alive and constantly increasing.

The answer to the interrogation, as to country parsons, being given in all good faith, is readily accepted in that spirit. As I accompanied the question with the expression of belief that the *Church Gazette* "should be able to form some opinion on the matter," it would ill become me to quarrel with the information it is kind enough to afford. I formed no estimate myself as to the number of "skeletons in parsonic cupboards." Necessarily it is a matter upon which it would be hazardous for me or any other Freethinker to venture an opinion. A special intimacy with what is behind the "placid exteriors" of the parsonic homesteads would be indispensable to an approximate idea. That is why I appealed to the *Church Gazette*. It is rather disappointing to learn on so good an authority that the number is comparatively small; and that the larger section of rural priests are so devoted to "class and professional obsessions" as not to concern their minds with themes which now, more than ever, are occupying the attention of the outer world.

The other section, mostly composed of Broad Churchmen, are happy indeed if, as we are assured, they have "laid the ghost by living down the crudity of their earlier thoughts." That is exactly what Freethinkers have done. For the most part, they have been brought up in a belief in the principles of the Christian religion. They have "lived down the crudity of their earlier thoughts." As far as they are concerned themselves, they have laid their theological ghosts for ever. Perhaps they are now only in possession of "a half-truth"; but that, at any rate, is better than an entire falsity. Their principles are not mere "blank negations," as the expository articles in this journal—especially those of Mr. Watts—from week to week testify. Naturally, we hope to "amplify and ripen" into better things as knowledge increases, and views of life and its duties expand. That earnest progressive spirit is the essence of Freethought, and the ever-present inspiration of us all. But the movement is not likely to be in the direction of supernaturalism, even of the Broad Church type, whatever temptations may be offered by the *Church Gazette* in its amiable and cultured advocacy.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Thomas Paine.*

BY COLONEL INGERSOLL.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—It is not simply a duty, but it is a privilege, to help rescue the reputation of a great and noble man from the slanders of ignorance and hypocrisy. We have listened to a very noble eulogium upon Thomas Paine by Mr. Conway, and the reason it is so noble is that it is true. We have been told what he did, something of what he accomplished in this world, and a little of what he suffered. We must remember that for many, many ages mankind was governed by two ideas—one, that all power to govern came from the clouds—came from some king of kings—and that all who ruled occupied their thrones because it was the will of him who sat in sovereignty above all. This was the belief; and this power from on high, coming to the king, going on down from him to the lowest one in authority, finally reached, and robbed, the poor, wretched peasants.

Thus it was for many, many generations, and the result of it was that the many toiled in vain, with little to eat and little to wear, living in huts and dens, that the few might live in idleness—might be clad in robes

of purple. That was the scheme of the divine government, believed in by our ancestors—honestly believed in, at least, by those who submitted; and they were to be rewarded for all the pains suffered in this world by having harps when they should go to another. And they consoled themselves with the thought: While the kings and the queens and the lords and the ladies have their good times here, we will have our good times after we die; and possibly we will have the happiness of seeing all these ladies and gentlemen in hell. The latter reflection, undoubtedly, was a great consolation.

That, I say, was the first idea; but the man of whom you have heard so much, which has been so well said, took the other ground, and said: "This power to govern does not come from God. God must be retired from politics. This power to govern comes from the consent of the governed. The source of this authority must be the people themselves." Well, nothing could be more laughable at that time than the idea of having a government administered by shoemakers, and carpenters, and farmers, and simply buyers and sellers, and traders. It was thought impossible that such people should have brain enough to really administer a government.

This governing power—this governing sense—was confined to the few—the few that had been chosen by the king of kings; but finally, through the efforts of Thomas Paine, more than through the efforts of any other man who ever trod the Western world, that experiment was tried here on our soil; and the question was whether ordinary human beings, with ordinary intelligence, even though they were mechanics and farmers and merchants—and lawyers—whether they had the sense and the honesty to form a government, and patriotism enough to administer it. It was tried here; and I need not say it has been an amazing success. In all these other governments the Church and State existed together. They were united. But a few people in the days of Thomas Paine said: "Let us separate Church and State"; and our forefathers agreed to it. Very few, however, were in favor of it.

I will tell you to-night why they agreed to it. A few, like Thomas Paine, like Benjamin Franklin, like Thomas Jefferson—few knew there should be no such marriage. But the question came up before the many—the average multitude—and then the question took a different form. It was not with them, Shall there be a Church and State? but, Shall it be our Church? The Puritans would have had their Church united to the State if they had had the power; the Episcopalians the same; and so in every sect in the thirteen colonies. But there is a little human nature even in a Church; and the Church that could not be a bride was willing the State should remain a bachelor rather than marry a rival. In that way, and in that way only, we got rid of the Church in this country.

Now, then, that was the first great step. Political power does not come from God; or, if there be an infinite being, he allows human beings to govern themselves. He refused longer to be accountable for the blunders of any administration, and that was an excellent thing for him. So, since that time, in this country, and in some other lands, the people have endeavored to manage their own affairs, without the interference of any gentleman pretending to be the agent of some power above the clouds. That was the first step.

Then there is another thing. For many, many generations, it has been believed—is believed by a great many good people to-night—that religion comes from the clouds. We have now got to the point that we know that political power comes from the people, and that every government should rest on the consent of the governed. We know that. We have found out that the people themselves make and create and administer better government than they ever got from the clouds. I say, then, the belief was that religion came from that same country; and that if some being, somewhere in the midst of the constellations, had not written the Ten Commandments, we would never have known right from wrong.

Now, it has always seemed to me—and I think I can make it clear to you—that no such information was necessary. In this world, for a great many years, people have had to work to get an honest living; and, wherever man has worked to get an honest living, he has always objected to some fellow who did not work

* This address was delivered immediately after one delivered by Moncure D. Conway, since the author of Paine's Life and Works, in the city of New York, a few years ago, and reported for, and published in, one of the city papers.

taking the result of his labors. If a man that planted a few acres of potatoes, and hoed them all summer, and dug them in the fall, and picked them up—using his own back—it would never have occurred to him that a gentleman who had sat on the fence and watched him—I say, it would never have occurred to him that the fence-sitter, even if no Ten Commandments had ever been given, had a better right to the potatoes than the man who raised them. So it seems to me that in every country where the people, or a majority of the people, objected to being murdered, there would probably have been a law against murder, whether they had ever heard from Mount Sinai or not. And so we might go through most of the Decalogue.

I say, then, we had to take another step, and that was that religion does not come from the clouds. Religion comes from the heart of man. Human affection is the foundation of all that is holy in religion. Human intelligence, applied to human conduct, is what we call morality; and you add to simple morality kindness, charity, love—and there can be no more perfect religion imagined by the brain of man. Now, then, as we succeeded so well in politics, by getting out of our mind the idea that power and authority came from beyond the stars, so I hope that we shall make the greatest possible advance in religion when we get it out of our minds that religion comes from another world.

There is no religion except humanity. There cannot be. Those clouds called creeds are destined all to fade away, but the sky will remain—humanity; and in the sky will shine the constellations of human virtues. In other words, we want to outgrow the supernatural in these affairs.

Thomas Paine helped take the first step. He dug down under the throne, searching for bedrock, and he found nothing but lies, mistakes, assumptions—everything that is infamous. And, when he got through with that work, it occurred to him one day to dig under the altar and see what was there; and it was worse there than under the throne. Thomas Paine was not what would be called to-day much of an infidel. I think he would have cut me dead. If he were alive to-night, he would be off with the Unitarians—and with the conservative wing of the Unitarians. That is to say, he believed absolutely in the existence of an infinite God; and in some way he excused that God for making this world—for giving power to the Catholic Church. How he did it, I don't know; but he did it. In some way he excused that Deity for all the volcanoes and plagues and famines of the world. How, I don't know; but he did. And he may have been right. I am not saying that he was wrong. All I am saying is that I do not believe he was right.

As I have said a hundred times, you have no idea how little I know on this subject; and you never will know how little I know until you appreciate the state of your own knowledge. Paine, I say, not only believed it, but he believed in a special providence, exactly as Mr. Conway has told you.

Well, so did Voltaire; he wrote essay after essay, not simply to prove the existence of God, but that he in some way ruled this world. Well, I don't deny it; but there are two facts inconsistent in my mind—that is to say, one fact is inconsistent with the alleged fact. I cannot harmonise God and Siberia. Still, I don't say that I know; because you know that I don't, and I know that I don't. But Paine wanted to do one thing. He wanted, in religion, to get rid of middlemen. He wanted the citizens of the United States to transact what little business they might have with the Deity without paying any commissions to gentlemen who were in the guessing business for a living. And whoever steps between a priest and his salary will find that he has committed all the crimes in the statutes; and, if he does not find it out, others will find it out—when he is dead.

That is all he tried to do. He taught pure morality. He taught that we should worship God simply by expressing and feeling our gratitude, and that gratitude should rise from the heart for favors received, like perfume from a flower; that there need be no form, no ceremony, no costly cathedrals for this business, no hired clergy; that man could worship God for himself. Then he made enemies. Then they began to look, as Mr. Conway has said, for special providence.

(To be continued.)

Confucius.

(551-479 B.C.)

KUNG-FU-TZU, or 孔子 (Kung-tzu), popularly known as Confucius, was neither a philosopher nor a founder of religion; he was a moral teacher, or more properly a statesman, whose maxim was that the people should be governed by the ethical law of sympathy,* rather than by the jurisprudential principle of right and duty. Therefore, those ontological and epistemological problems which led Greek and Indian minds into a maze of metaphysical speculation did not claim much attention from the Chinese sage, nor did the deep and pessimistic religious feelings which occupied the heart of the Semitic prophet stir in him any aspiration for God or the kingdom of heaven.

Meng-tzū, or Mencius,† one of the most prominent leaders of Confucianism, spoke of him as one who collected ancient traditions and brought them to perfection. Confucius himself once said that he propounded the old doctrine of ancient sages, and did not proclaim anything new and original.‡ This spirit of conservatism and common sense being the spirit of Confucianism as well as the national character of the Chinese, Confucius, who was living at the time when the Chou dynasty was separating into smaller dukedoms or kingdoms known as the *Ch'un ch'iu* and *Chan kwo* § period, naturally desired to rescue the dynasty from disintegration, and to actualise again, if possible, the administration of Yao and Shun, the two most reverend sage-kings of China.

Confucius, accompanied by his disciples, wandered from one place to another till he was sixty-five years old, trying to persuade the feudal lords to adopt his method of administration, and to make a practical application of his ethical teachings. He did not think of propagating his doctrine of sympathy directly among the masses, and expected to reform the people through the government solely; but he encountered many disasters and much suffering, and was at last obliged to retire from the world, and to find comfort in the contemplation of his doctrine, which now became the principal subject of his dialogues with his disciples. The *Lun Yü*, one of the canonical books of Confucianism, is the record of the "sayings and conversations" of this latter phase of his life, and must be deemed of paramount importance for the students of Confucianism as being the only authentic statement of Confucian ethics.

In Confucius and in his doctrine are solidly crystallised the essence and the ideal of the Chinese people. When we understand Confucius we understand the Chinese. The greatest man who has acquired unshakeable national renown and reverence in a long course of time can be looked at as the perfect mirror of the nation, in which their prominent characteristics are revealed in their brightest and clearest colors.

What reflections of the Chinese mind, then, can we see through Confucius? They are a lack of imagination and a tendency to positive conservatism, utilitarianism, practicality, and optimism. These elements are deeply rooted in every tissue of the Chinese mental constitution.

The most metaphysical book of Confucianism is the ancient *Yih King*, or *Book of Changes*, on which Confucius is said to have written a commentary known as the *Hsi ts'ü ch'uan*, and this fact is confirmed by the tradition which says that by his constant study and handling of the book its leather binding-string was thrice worn out. Though this proves to a certain degree that he had a speculative mind, we observe even there the predominance of ethical elements which put aside all abstruse philosophical arguments and soaring poetical imaginations. How sober, positivistic, and in a sense agnostic he is, when compared with his elder contemporary Lao tzū, whose mind, transcending this phenomenal world, wanders in the eternity of the *Tao*! It is true, Confucius occasionally makes mention

* In Chinese 仁 (*jên*).

† He lived about a hundred years after Confucius, and was a contemporary of Chwang-tzū, the best known follower of Lao-tzū, though they did not know each other.

‡ A liberal translation of "shu erh pu tso, hsün erh hao ku."
§ *Ch'un ch'iu* means "Spring and Fall," and *chan kwo* "war country."

of 帝 (Ti), the Lord, or *Shang Ti*, the Lord on High, or *Tien*, Heaven, which some Christian Orientalists would like to render *God* or *Heaven*; but he, even if there might have been in his practical mind some vague conception of the All-Containing-One, did not assume any such attitude towards it as Christians do.

When he was wandering about almost in a state of exile, unable to find any royal listener, he ascribed his misfortune to the iron hand of fate (*ming*), but he did not personify it, nor did he exclaim, "Thy will be done."

His *Tien* or *Tien ming* is not animated; it is merely another name for nature or natural order. Of course, he tried every means in his own power to realise what he thought good; but when he had done all in his power he calmly resigned himself, and suffered the law of causality to take its own course. When his disciples were exasperated with their misfortunes, he consoled them by simply saying: "A superior man calmly endures misfortune."*

Confucius was, therefore, an advocate of realism; he did not dare to propound definite speculations about the beyond. When he was asked his opinion of death, he said: "How can one know death when one does not know life?" and when questioned regarding supernaturalism, he replied: "A superior man does not talk about mysterious powers and supernatural spirits." This keeping within the limits of experience is throughout characteristic of Confucianism, and it is the very reason why his doctrine has acquired such a controlling and enduring influence over Chinese minds as we observe to-day. Even such philosophers as Chou-tzū (1022-1073), Chu-tzū (1130-1200), Liu-hsiang-san (1139-1192), and Wang-yang-ming (1472-1529), all of whom were greatly influenced by the highly-speculative philosophy of the Mahāyāna Buddhism, could not forsake their native Agnostic teacher, nor shake off the fetter of their national peculiarity. While they borrowed many things from Buddhism, they still continued faithfully to transmit and to interpret the doctrine of Kung-fu-tzū.

Morality goes side by side with peace, and peace means order, a necessary product of conservatism. How, then, can Confucianism be other than conservatism? Besides, Confucius was born, as said before, in a time of disorder and transformation, and all he wanted was a reform of the evils of his age. He proposed to restore the moral relations of human society as they were in the bygone golden age. And to effect this he found the guiding principle in sympathy (*jen*) and benevolence (*shu*). The basis of his doctrine, "Do not do to others what you would not have done to you by others," has a striking similarity to the golden rule, the saying of Christ. Lao-tzū also speaks about compassion (*ts'ü*) as one of the three treasures, but he entirely disregards the form by which this inner principle might become manifest to others. His whole emphasis fell upon our subjective attitude, while Confucius, being more of a Chinese than Lao-tzū, considered it necessary to have a proper way of manifesting what is going on in one's mind. To this end he repeatedly appealed to the observation of the ancient habits and customs, and of the traditional rules of propriety. His disciples, therefore, minutely describe in the *Lun Yü* how the teacher appeared and behaved on certain occasions.

TEITARO SUZUKI.

—From "The Open Court."

(To be concluded.)

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- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
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* *Chün tzū ku ch'ing*

The Boy's Story of Benjamin.

[Excerpt from the exercise book of Joseph Watkins, aged twelve, pupil of the Band of Hope Sunday-school, Worthing. The date of the essay shows it to have been written for the Sunday-class, October 1, 1899.]

BENJAMIN was a 'cute little chap. He cooked savory meat, such as his father loved, and got round him in many other ways. One day Benjamin said to his father: "Oh! Pa, I've had such a funny dream. I dreamt there was a ladder which went up to the moon, and creatures with gold and silver wings were hurrying up and down it like winking," added little Benjamin, with a sly air, for he couldn't think of a good comparison being anything but poetical. "That, my little man," said the father kindly, "was a vision of the Stock Exchange. Go," he added, "and tell Zaber that my public agents are to sell out Sinais and buy in the New Hittite loan, while my secret agents do just the reverse. In that way we shall rig the market and make a pot of money." Benjamin flew like the wind, but took the plate closet on his way, and embezzled the famous family drinking cup of solid gold, that had been in Noah's Ark, and in the family time out of mind, for Methusaleh had left it in his will to the first member of the family, who was a particular friend of his; he had left it by a special codicil, the nine hundredth one, for you know he was 900 years old when he died, and he made a new codicil to his will every year. This will was one of the wonders of the world, for it was so long that it reached all the way from Jerusalem to Alabama, or even to San Francisco, if you paid the extra railway fare; and all the forests in Palestine had been barked for the lawyers to have bark enough to write it out upon, and that is why, even to this day, there are no trees to speak of in the Holy Land. Well, old Ikey rushed to the plate closet as soon as he heard the street door slam to, and was beside himself with joy when he found that the famous cup was gone. "He's fly, a chip of the old block, just what I should have done myself under similar circumstances," exclaimed the old fellow, chuckling and rubbing his hands with glee. "Of course I shall come round him in the end," he added, with a more than archangelic leer, "but that will only make him flyer still in future." So saying, he rummaged in his strong box until he had found a packet of debtors' bonds, and hurried off with them to Fairrow, the pawnbroker, for he knew that the famous cup would now be in his hands. At first Fairrow denied any knowledge of it, but old Ikey made him open a sack of mouldy oats, destined for the new corps of Egyptian volunteers, for Fairrow was also an army store contractor, and there at the bottom of the sack lay the wonderful cup, shining and blinking like the sun setting through a purple haze. Then old Ikey drew out his bonds and threatened to distrain if the cup was not at once returned to him. But Fairrow was not to be bit. He went up to old Ikey and whispered something in his ear, but only the words "Pot-affair," "Divorce," and "Public Scandal" were audible. Old Ikey turned very pale at first, but then he pulled himself together, took Fairrow frankly by the hand and said: "Well, old fellow, don't let us turn enemies in our old age; I tell you what, I'll give you the straight tip this time, you'll make a pot of money by it, and in return you'll give me back our family pots. Fairrow declared himself agreeable, and old Ikey said: "My dear, very dear friend, buy in Sinais and sell out New Hittites—and you just see!" Fairrow pressed the old man's hand affectionately—tears of gratitude were actually trickling from his long hooky nose. And so the old man took leave of him. "We shall meet again," he said, with a gentle sob, and went. Then he instructed his public agents on the Stock Exchange that, as soon as they saw Fairrow's agent come to buy, they were to buy in Sinais and sell out Hittites as long as he was there, so as to make quite sure that Fairrow should do just the opposite of what old Ikey had advised him to do. In this way Fairrow, the pawnbroker, was quite "bust up," and declared bankrupt; and old Ikey, for a trifling sum of money, bought in the family drinking cup, when Fairrow's effects were put up to auction. In those days this method of doing business was called spoiling the Egyptians, and going through the Bankruptcy Court was alluded to euphemistically as the Passage of the Red Sea. I need hardly add that after this little Benjamin was unanimously elected a member of the Stock Exchange, and when Fairrow hanged himself for vexation married Potaffair, and they lived together happily everafter.

"There's one thing that has always puzzled me," said the deacon. "Only one?" the parson asked. "Well, not in particular. You say there is no marrying nor giving in marriage in heaven." "Yes, that's what the Bible tells us." "Well, in that case, what do the preachers do who have small salaries up there?" After the deacon had finished laughing at his joke, the parson said: "Oh, I don't know. The two dollars I got for marrying your son to Brother Pritchard's daughter didn't make me independent for life." The deacon now threatens to go over to another church.—*Chicago Times Herald.*

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.

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, The Bohemian Comedy Company in "The Snowball."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Britishers and Boers: A Freethinker's View of the White War in South Africa."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 11.15, Discussion on "Early Marriage," opened by Dr. Drysdale; 7, F. J. Gould, "The Sacred."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "The Religion of Democracy."

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, H. Courtney, "History of Freethought."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): H. Percy Ward—11, "Why the Church of England Should be Disestablished"; 7, "How Christianity has Degraded Woman."

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

DERBY (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, Social evening and reunion.

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, Mr. Macwaters, "The Fall of Man."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Chalmers; 6.30, A. G. Nostik.

HULL (Friendly Societies Hall, No. 2 Room): 7, F. W. Booth, "Harry Lowerison's *Sprays of Sweet Briar*." (An appreciation.)

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. McCabe, "The Church in France."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, W. Stanley, "A Day Trip to London." (Lantern views.)

PORTH BRANCH (100 Primrose-street, Tonypanyd): 6, A Meeting.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Robert Law, F.G.S.—3, "Fossils, and What they Tell Us of the Earth's History"; 7, "My Journey to Switzerland and the Geology of the Alps." Tea at 5.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—November 26, Athenæum, Tottenham Court-road. December 3, Sheffield; 10, Hull; 17, Leicester; 31, Birmingham.

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

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