

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

County Council Nonsense.

We desire to speak respectfully of the London County Council. It has done very good work in its way. But it is not infallible, and to criticise it is not blasphemy. It is composed of men who are doubtless bent upon serving the public honestly according to their lights. But popular election no more guarantees wisdom than does the principle of hereditary succession. It only provides an easier way of getting rid of fools and nuisances when they are seen to be so.

Among the functions of the London County Council is the licensing of places of entertainment for music, dancing, and the sale of drink. Now there are many persons who hold that this function ought not to belong to such a large and composite body. The County Council is numerous enough to divide into several parties, and to partake of all the weaknesses of a public meeting. It can be swayed by passion and rhetoric, and moved by prejudice. It can also be whimsical and fluctuating. And all this is very serious when large commercial interests and wide public convenience are concerned.

The only way to secure any approximation to sense and justice in individual cases is to lay down a general policy and adhere to it. Both the public and the managers of places of entertainment would then know what to expect, and it would be simple and easy to agitate, when necessary, for a common line of improvement. At present, however, the policy of the County Council is quite chaotic. At one music-hall the public are not allowed to drink at all, at another they are only allowed to drink at the bars, while at another they are allowed to drink all over the place. It is not pretended that these differently-treated establishments are patronised by different classes of society. The sole explanation is that the Council chooses to make these distinctions; and the sole reason for making them is its own will and pleasure.

Why on earth should a man who drinks (say) a glass of beer be compelled to go without it in a place of public entertainment where he is to sit for several hours? Why should coffee or lemonade be offered him when he does not want it? Why should he be told to drink that or go dry? Even if you desire to make him a teetotaler you are going the wrong way to work. You simply fill him with a raging thirst, which he quenches at the nearest public-house, where he drinks twice as much and twice as rapidly as he would have done in the music-hall with plenty of time before him. Why again, in another place, where drink is permitted, should he be debarred from taking his glass comfortably where he sits? Why should he be forced to leave his seat and go to a bar? Suppose he has his wife with him, and she happens to be thirsty—as she may be, although she belongs to the angelic sex. Is he to drag her through the sort of crowd that usually stands about the bars? The truth is that the Council is defying the principle which should govern in all such cases. That principle is the public convenience. The Council has no right to set up its own fads and fancies as a standard, nor should the public be treated as children. Decency and decorum being secured, everything else should be left to individual taste. But it is always one of the besetting sins of persons in authority to want to act as a Providence to the public.

With regard to the Sunday question, the Council has also gone sadly astray. Here again it is aiming at

legislative powers, which belong only to Parliament. What the Council has to do is to carry out the law, not to make it. What it is really doing is making a Sunday law of its own. Mr. Fleming Williams, an alderman, and also a Christian minister, in the recent debate on licenses, called the action of Mr. Newman at the Queen's Hall an insolent defiance of the Council's authority. But the truth is that the Council is guilty of an insolent defiance of the law of the land.

Let us see precisely how the matter stands. There is no such thing as a Sunday license for a place of entertainment. The London County Council grants licenses under the general law, and the licenses are for six days. The condition attached is "That he (the licensee) does not open his said house or place on the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday." If the licensee does open his establishment, it does not lie with the Council to punish him; nor could the Council reasonably refuse to renew his license unless he so violated the conditions as to carry on his usual entertainment for seven days instead of six. If he opens it for another purpose he does so at his own risk, under the statute and common law of the country. According to the old Act of 1781, as it used to be interpreted, he is liable to heavy penalties for carrying on any entertainment on Sunday, to which there is an open or disguised charge for admission; this liability being quite irrespective of whether his "place" is licensed or not. But a new interpretation of the Act has been given by Mr. Justice Collins, who laid it down that there is no breach of the law as long as there are some free seats. Apparently a single row suffices. Now, if Mr. Justice Collins is right, the County Council has no business to interfere with a lessee like Mr. Newman, who opens his hall for high-class musical entertainments on Sunday; and if Mr. Justice Collins is wrong, the County Council itself violates the law during the summer, for it has established bands which play on Sundays within an enclosure to which admission is obtained by payment—this enclosure being a "place" within the meaning of the Act.

At present the Council is arrogating to itself the right to decide the Sunday question for the citizens of London. Sunday concerts, it says, may be given in this hall, but not in that one. Where the Sunday League operates the concerts are all right; elsewhere they are all wrong. But what is the Sunday League? It is a very useful body, no doubt, but it has no claim to monopolise Sunday recreation. Nothing could be more fantastic than the Council's condition that a licensee shall not open his hall on Sundays "for private gain, or by way of trade." If the Alhambra is let to the Sunday League, the proprietors receive rent, and that involves trade and gain. Still, the Council is satisfied. But if the Queen's Hall opens on its own account, and only earns the same amount that the Alhambra proprietors receive as rent, the Council falls into a fit of virtuous indignation. It declares that this is "trading," which is now the unpardonable sin. Apparently it is not trade if a man sits still and lets other people do the work while he takes the "gain." The Council does not trouble about anything else. All the lessee's employees may work only six days a week, but that does not matter. Well, we beg to say it is the only matter worth considering. Men and women ought not to work seven days a week. Anything beyond that is mere Sabbatarianism. This is what the County Council is promoting. This is what John Burns is passionately assisting in the name of Labor.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christian Revolutions.

THE history of mental progress has been a record of intellectual revolution. The revolt against existing conditions is an indication of the desire to secure a change and an improvement. This has been strikingly manifested in the inception and history of Christianity. Age after age has been marked by a revolution within its fold. This brings to our mind three prominent errors which have been associated with the Christian faith from its dawn, and also through its many stages of development. These are its alleged divine origin, its historical continuity, and its definite authority. These were once regarded by Christian apologists as undoubted evidence of the unique character of the Christian religion. With the exception of a few persons of the strictly orthodox type, the defenders of the faith have now given up such claims. The most profound thinkers and the ablest writers in the Church to-day have abandoned the old notions entertained as to the introduction of Christianity into the world, its continuity of teachings, and a uniform recognition of its authority. In these three sections of apologetics an entire revolution has taken place, which, in our opinion, is a decided proof of the utter fallacy of the original pretensions urged in favor of the Christian faith. Moreover, it shows that Christianity has not been materially different from other religions in its rise and development. The lesson of history appears to us to be that all theological systems have been the outcome of the human mind in ages of ignorance and credulity; and that such systems have varied according to the intellectual status of the people by whom they were professed.

The latest proof furnished of the revolution which has occurred in reference to Christianity is in an article by Mr. W. H. Mallock, which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* of last month, entitled "The Intellectual Future of Catholicism." It is a severe blow to the boasted consistency and stability of Christianity in general, and of the Protestant faith in particular. It is also a pleasing illustration of the rapid growth of Freethought criticism. Mr. Mallock seeks to show that the Roman Catholic Church is the only competent authority to settle the serious and important disputes now existing among the various Christian sects. He asserts in another form what we, as Secularists, have often contended—namely, that the final battle between reason and superstition will have to be fought by the adherents of Rationalism and of Roman Catholicism. Mr. Mallock shows very clearly that no one form of Protestantism, or any combination of its sects, has any final authority to which it can appeal against the teachings of historical or demonstrative sciences. This, no doubt, is true, but we should go further and urge that no authority whatever can set aside or overrule the conclusions of science—for the good reason that science means discovered and verified truth. Hence, the theological speculations of the world are outside the domain of demonstrated science, because its pretensions cannot be verified by reason and experience. Of course, the authority of science may be disputed, or its conclusions may be rejected; but that would not destroy the authority itself.

In stating his principal thesis Mr. Mallock says: "I shall endeavor to show that, if the Christian religion holds its own at all in the face of secular knowledge, it is the Christian religion as embodied in the Church of Rome, and not in any form of Protestantism, that will survive in the intellectual contest." He then proceeds to show how modern knowledge has affected the foundations of the Protestant and Catholic bodies respectively. The new knowledge is classified by him under two heads—the cosmic and the historical. The first-named science—which, according to him, bears "on the relations of man to the matter of which this planet is formed, and the relation of this planet to the solar system, and to the universe"—may "be set aside," because it equally affects all views of Christianity without distinction. There is, however, it is urged, this difference between this science and the teachings of the Christian faith. The former reduces man to insignificance, "whereas it is the essence of Christianity to invest it with some solemn and eternal import." But surely it must be evident to impartial thinkers that the old notion, that the universe was

created for man's special benefit, has long been exploded. The vastness of the universe, and its effects on the nature and conduct of man, have completely revolutionised the old theological theories as to the origin and nature of the universe.

Mr. Mallock recognises very clearly the changes and modifications which have marked the history of the Christian faith. He says:—

"Christianity, as we look back over the nineteen centuries of its existence, will be seen to have passed through two similar, though contrasted, crises, greater and more momentous than any others that can be compared with them. The first of these was the ultimate and decisive victory which Christian theology gained over the secular thought of the ancient world. The second is the victory, no less decisive, which the secular thought of the modern world has gained over Christian theology. The first of these events is summed up in the words of the Emperor Julian: 'Thou hast conquered, O Galilean.' The second may be summed up in words which, willingly or unwillingly, the Church, then so triumphant, has had to utter to another teacher—words almost identical: 'Thou hast conquered, O Galilee.' The significance of this last confession it is impossible to over-estimate."

Doubtless this is so, but does it not deteriorate the value of the Catholic, as well as of the Protestant, Church as an authority? We think so; for, despite its assumed infallibility, the Catholic Church, in its conflict with science, has been hopelessly defeated. Hence we can add the third exclamation: O Science, thou hast conquered, and we believe that thou wilt remain the victor for all time!

In dealing with the science of history, Mr. Mallock hits Protestant Christianity exceedingly hard. He says: "Historical science tends to annihilate completely, in the eyes of every thinking man, the two great principles which are the foundation of what is called Reformed Christianity." These principles he describes as being the inerrancy of the Bible and the arguments based upon the beliefs and practices of Christ's earliest followers. Of these he frankly writes: "Both these principles the scientific study of history is rendering, year by year, more completely untenable—indeed, we may say more completely unthinkable. Whilst increasing the interest of the Bible in many respects, it is exhibiting the Biblical books as utterly incompetent, in themselves, to supply us with any system of coherent doctrine, or to prove it. Whilst increasing the interest of the history of the Christian Church, it is showing us that the Christianity of Protestantism, no less than that of Rome, is, instead of being primitive, the gradual growth of centuries." Here is another of those justifications of the Freethought position towards the Bible and Christianity which modern thought and critical examination are constantly furnishing. The alleged truth of the Bible, which at one time was implicitly believed in, is no longer recognised by the more intelligent adherents of the Christian faith; and the old notions of primitive Christianity have entirely changed. We cannot but welcome these transformations, as they afford unmistakable evidence of the force of Secular philosophy. It would be interesting to read what the intelligent and respectable members of the Christian Evidence Society have to say of these acknowledged instances of the decay of "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

Noticing the important confession that science has triumphed over the Christian forces, Mr. Mallock points out "that in the eyes of the very Church itself... science has established its position as the sole and final authority with regard to all subjects amenable to its methods and apprehension; and that the question which now confronts us is not, as it was once, whether theology can find room for science, but whether science can find room for theology. It is for Christianity, not for science, to give this question its answer." Supposing Christianity could give the answer, it would, based upon facts, be in the negative. Science, as such, has nothing to do with the speculations of theology. The former, as we have already mentioned, represents verified facts, while the latter is a record of conjectures. The one deals with the realities of this life, but the other refers to hopes and fears pertaining to a future existence, if there be one. The value of the one can be

tested in Time; the truth of the other can only be decided, if at all, in what is termed Eternity.

But another question arises. Assuming "that the Christian religion is a religion which may be true possibly, our sole question here is whether, in the face of advancing knowledge, men can any longer believe it to be true actually." To this we reply that, whatever Mr. Mallock intended his article to have proved, the facts which he gives amply show, in our opinion, that the alleged truths of the Christian religion are thoroughly refuted by the scientific criticism of modern times. This we will endeavor to demonstrate in our next article.

CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

The Atonement.

A COLLECTION of all the different theories of, and apologies for, the doctrine of the Atonement of Jesus Christ would constitute a very bulky, if not a profitable, volume. Probably no other portion of the Christian faith has called forth so much apologetic literature, nor is there any other portion that presents so many difficulties—particularly those of an ethical character—to the modern mind. Difficulties connected with other aspects of Christianity may be shelved with comparative ease. Difficulties in the way of accepting the belief in creation may be parried by confusing the popular and scientific sense of the term; the authenticity of the Biblical writings by vague talk concerning the sublimity of their teaching or style; the belief in God by the saving presence of loose thinking and false analogies. The doctrine of the Atonement does not admit of such easy acceptance or explanation. Its general meaning is simple enough to be within reach of the meanest understanding—and this, in religious matters, is far from a blessing. No religious doctrine is safe while people can understand it. To be invulnerable it must be full of mystification from beginning to end. No man, it has been said, is a hero to his valet, and no religious teaching properly impresses a true believer unless he fails to understand what it is all about.

The whole doctrine of the Atonement may be expressed in a sentence. Man, born perfect, has fallen into sin and incurred the anger of God. God Almighty, anxious to save man from the effects of Adam's disobedience, cannot do so unless the price of his forgiveness is paid. A substitute is found in the person of Jesus; he takes upon himself the burden of man's disobedience, God forgives man for the sake of Jesus's suffering, and—curtain. That Christ died to save sinners from the wrath of God has been the chief burden of Christianity right through the ages. The great Christian father, Origen, laid it down definitely that the whole race was in the power of the devil, who demanded Christ's blood as the price of its redemption. Dr. Watts, in one of his delightfully cheerful hymns, speaks of the "black drops" of Jesus's blood "that cleansed God's frowning face." Mr. Charles Haddon Spurgeon declared that "Christ seized the cup in both his hands, and, in one tremendous draught, drank damnation dry." The whole of Protestantism is built upon this idea, and it is difficult to see what Christianity has without it.

To the uncivilised mind such teaching presents few or no difficulties. Gods are sociological products, and the most devout or enlightened believer only gives to his deity the qualities he admires or fears in man. Where naked despotism exists, where people may at any moment be sacrificed to the gratification of a caprice, or where revenge is one of the cardinal virtues, the idea of a God who needs his wrath appeasing by the sacrifice of an innocent victim fits in well with the circumstances of daily life. But for the very reason that this teaching harmonises with one phase of civilisation it is distasteful to another. To the developed mind the idea of a God demanding a blood sacrifice before he will pardon those who are what they are, as the result of his own handiwork, is as distasteful as the savage practice of sacrificing a whole tribe because one of its members has committed an offence.

It is only to be expected, therefore, that the cry of "Washed in the blood of the lamb," etc., should tend to become the exclusive property of the uneducated portion of the Christian world; while, on the other hand, the educated portion seek by methods more or less legitimate to so frame the doctrine that its repulsive features may be lost sight of. The first answer to the Rationalist objection was that all nature testified to the reality of vicarious suffering. Man is constantly receiving the benefits or bearing the injuries of others' actions; and, therefore, the vicarious suffering of Jesus was only upon all-fours with common experience. To this defence the reply was easy. That society collectively shares in the results of the actions of its individual members is true; but there is a world of difference between the inevitable communion of good and evil resulting from social life and the arbitrary infliction of punishment by a vengeful deity. Besides, it is not so much the *fact* that is objected to as the moral nature of the fact. It is no excuse for cruelty to say that nature too is cruel. Cannibalism cannot be defended upon the ground that the practice is tolerably common in the animal world, nor can the morality of vicarious punishment or suffering be defended on the ground that it exists in nature. All that the argument proves is that the Christian deity is as brutal, as callous, to suffering as nature itself; that each is a fair reflex of the other.

But religious apologies are not usually long-lived. Invented to overcome or silence the difficulties of a day, they usually disappear with the night; while their decease leaves the creed poorer by the burden of their support. The price that has been paid for the various apologies concerning the doctrine of the Atonement is strikingly brought out in a series of articles by prominent religious writers, and now appearing in the *Christian World*. To this series Dean Farrar and Dr. Lyman Abbot contribute the more important articles, and neither of them seems to leave much of the doctrine by the time they have finished explaining away its difficulties.

Nearly the whole of both articles is taken up with disclaiming certain current views of the Atonement. Dean Farrar rejects as "utterly false" the teaching that represents "God the Father as full of wrath and vengeance." Jesus was not killed to satisfy God's vengeance; the notion that he bore our punishment is "dishonoring to God, and revolts the unsophisticated conscience of man." His death was not a counterpart of "the mosaic sacrifices of the old dispensation"; indeed, the *death* of Christ occupies an altogether subordinate position in the Christian scheme. All this with that display of learning and pretence of accuracy characteristic of the Dean—a parade and a pretence that break down before a little close scrutiny.

Dr. Lyman Abbot follows suit, in a much more attractive style, in denouncing all teaching as non-Christian that pictures God as angry, or conceives of man as by "his repentance and acceptance of a vicarious sacrifice securing the Divine favor," or "of the sacrifice itself as offered by one Divine Person to appease the wrath and satisfy the justice or fulfil the law of another Divine Person." And, after all this pretentious rigmarole by the new Anglo-American alliance, one wonders what there is left of the Atonement. If it does not mean any of the things denounced by these two writers, what on earth does it mean? And what becomes of the doctrine of Grace, or that of Justification by Faith?

Dean Farrar, after taking up four columns in saying what it does *not* mean, comes to the brilliant conclusion that "We know that Christ died for us men and for our salvation"; but "any attempt to explain the exact nature and method of this transcendently Divine compassion is a futile attempt to be wise above what is written." We must, therefore, be "content to know that, 'after a certain admirable manner'—but *how*, we are unable to define—it was in its *effects* a full, perfect, and sufficient redemption.....for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual." There! it takes a Dean of the English Church to tell the world that he *knows* that "Christ died for us men"; but how he died, why he died, what he died for, whom he died to satisfy, and who was benefited by his dying, we cannot know without committing the unpardonable sin of trying to be "wise above what is written."

Dr. Lyman Abbot is a little less incoherent, but hardly more satisfactory. According to him, "The object of the Atonement is the purification of Man, not the appeasement of God." The sacrifice of Jesus was necessary because "an *unsuffering* God could not redeem a perishing world. The passion of Christ tells us what sin is, for it tells us how a sinful world treats perfect love." So that, while one member of the Anglo-American Alliance tells us we know nothing at all about the matter, the other assures us that the whole affair was in the nature of a theatrical performance, designed for the purpose of showing the people how the world treats "perfect love." Imagine the same principle carried into social life, and we should ill-treat children to show "a sinful world" how bad parents ill-use their families, crucify reformers on the principle of warning others not to do it, and generally punish innocence so that guilt might see the folly of its ways. Dr. Abbot might remember that this exhibition theory of suffering was once the regular thing in criminal procedure. People were placed publicly in the stocks, whipped in public, hung in public, so that the world might learn something from the spectacle. All that it did learn was to become familiarised with suffering, to applaud the criminal who "died game"; and the civilised conscience which has rejected this principle in social matters is hardly likely to tolerate it for any length of time in theology.

The truth of the whole matter is, that the doctrine of vicarious atonement of blood-sacrifice represents, to use Farrar's expression concerning the opinions of his brother clerics, "a survival of doctrinal crudities"—only its origin goes much farther back than Christianity. Blood offerings to gods and ghosts, human sacrifices to appease the anger of incensed deities, are common with all early religions. They can be traced in the Bible, and the sacrifice of Jesus is only a more refined form of the earlier revolting ceremony. After all, man's religious history is as continuous as his social development; the latest and most refined religion is a direct descendant of the earliest and most brutal, and its refinement bears evidence to the purifying influence of man upon his gods, not the reverse. And it is this progressive civilising tendency that renders the Atonement an impossible doctrine for the modern mind to retain in both its intellectual and moral aspects. The Atonement is meaningless without the Fall; the Fall is a doctrine incredible to all who understand the A B C of modern science; and it is this last fact that induces preachers to try and read a new meaning into the death of Christ. In its way, all such apologising is welcome. It is a confession that all is not as well with Christianity as it might be. Of the results of such effusions we need have no fear. They convince none who do not already believe; they suggest many doubts where none previously existed. When all is done, the notion of an innocent man, killed to appease the anger of God, is the only foundation for the Christian doctrine of the Atonement. That idea is bound to die out as civilisation advances, and its decease is only an indication of Christianity's ultimate fate.

C. COHEN.

The "Church Gazette" and Atheists.

THAT very lively and up-to-date "Review of Liberal Religious Thought," the *Church Gazette*, returns to the charge. In its issue of the 2nd inst. it publishes the following editorial notes, in the way of rejoinder to some observations of mine in the *Freethinker* of the 26th ult., which primarily had reference to a reply of the *Church Gazette* to an article on "The Country Parson."

We have now, it will be seen, drifted from the question of skeletons in parsonic cupboards—which, after all, is of less importance to Freethinkers than to the Church itself—into the discussion of whether there are any Atheists in the world, or whether, as the *C. G.* continues to suggest, the race is as extinct as the dodo. The idea of raising—and persisting with—this question must be rather staggering to readers of the *Freethinker* acquainted with the past and present of the movement, and a little annoying to individual members, who are

thus informed that they are non-existent. But no matter; here is the rejoinder of the *C. G.* :—

"We think it is both a crime and a blunder to treat with a silence, which verges on contempt, the honest opinions and utterances which represent any shade of actually existing opinion. Thus it appears to us to amount to distinct neglect of their duty on the part of journals representing Christianity of any type, when these journals utterly ignore the protests or the difficulties of non-Christians, or when they refuse to meet them on their own grounds. To meet them on any other is plainly as bad as not to meet them at all, while silence is apt to be construed into a confession of weakness.

"These remarks apply, or should apply, with equal force to the representatives of all Christian forms of belief. If they hold their own doctrines to be defensible, they should take the trouble to defend them, not in the ears of their friends, but so as to convince their opponents. But whether party journals, devoted to merely party aims, can ever be expected to do this is a very different thing. Whether or no, it is evident enough that to do so is, in a special sense, the duty of a print which strives to present the wider phases of religious thought.

"Among these unfashionable folk is certainly the editor of the *Freethinker*, who states in so many words in his last number that he rejoices to call himself an Atheist, which he does in reply to a previous statement of ours that the breed of Atheists was 'as extinct as the dodo.' Well, we cannot go behind his confession of faith. Suffice it that no one can prove there are not one or two dodos remaining to this day.

"But further we come to something which demands explanation, as being important. 'Might we not,' he says, 'imagine, with all due respect, that the *Church Gazette* has failed to understand the term "Atheist"?' And again: 'As a matter of fact, the *Church Gazette* is under a misapprehension as to what Atheism really is, and has been.' This may very easily be true; but if, as is immediately after explained, Mr. Watts has shown, from 'the definitions of leading Atheists from whom he quoted,' that the Atheist does not 'deny' the existence of God, we desire to note two points: (1) If Atheists are to go by 'leading' authorities, they are as much in the nature of a flock of sheep as are certain canonists amongst ourselves. (2) Why retain a name which gives their position away? It is plain these 'leading Atheists' are not actually Atheists at all, but pure Agnostics. We never doubted for a moment the wide spread of Agnosticism."

Of course, the reference of the *C. G.* to the editor of the *Freethinker* is a little oversight—perhaps a slip of the pen. The remarks were made by the undersigned, and not by Mr. Foote, and were not intended to be taken as other than my own expression of opinion. They probably have the added weight of being the views of other Freethinkers, but I ask no one else to be responsible for what I say. With the broad-minded spirit of the first two paragraphs quoted above all, I think, must agree. It is something to be assured that the opponents of Christianity are nowadays to be dealt with by other methods than fine and imprisonment and legal disability, and that a "silence which verges on contempt" is not the way to meet non-Christian protests and difficulties at the present time. The other paragraphs of the *C. G.*'s rejoinder are based upon a confusion of terms and a difference of interpretation, the main point being that the editor will not give Atheists credit for knowing their own opinions and the most suitable name whereby to denote them. The joke about the dodo may be passed over, because the editor, though he seems to talk as if there were only one or two Atheists in existence, can hardly controvert my former assurance that "there are many persons—more than may be supposed by the clerical mind—who describe themselves as Atheists," and that "the race of Atheists, so far from being extinct, is very much alive and constantly increasing."

Everything, of course, depends upon the meaning attached to the term "Atheist." The *Church Gazette* had apparently previously understood an Atheist to be one who "denies" the existence of God. It seems only half inclined now to alter that opinion. It makes a little point of the reference to "leading" Atheists, but is too intelligent not to be aware that the allusion was simply to the prominent and more widely-known exponents of Atheism, none of whom have ever made any claims to dictatorship similar to the assumptions of the priestly caste. Any such domination as that exercised over religious "flocks of sheep" would be promptly and effectively resented by Freethinkers—simply because

they are Freethinkers. There are in the domains of Freethought, as in those of science, thinkers whose expositions, from their inherent lucidity and power, commend themselves to the acceptance of persons of a like turn of mind, and who, in giving expression to their own individual views, find responsive echoes in the minds of others. But they claim no authority apart from truth.

One of these exponents of Atheism, Mr. Bradlaugh, said from time to time—and his declaration received then, as it does now, widespread approval: "The Atheist does not say 'there is no God,' but he says, 'I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word God is to me a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which by its affirmer is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me.'" Yet the *Church Gazette*, in its issue of September 30, says that "Atheist describes a man who has definitely found out that there is no God." To which Mr. Charles Watts very emphatically replied: "We have never met an Atheist who professes to have 'found out' anything of the kind. The most he does is to acknowledge that he has failed to find out that there is a God." Mr. C. Cohen, in the last issue of the *Freethinker*, says: "What Professor Huxley called 'dogmatic Atheism,' and which was held to assert that there is no God, is a form of anti-theism which existed only in the writer's imagination, or in the mouths of those who could hardly be taken as representative speakers. Such belong to those who are, to use Cudworth's language, 'more novices in Atheism, and a kind of bungling well-wishers to it.'"

But the *Church Gazette* asks: "Why retain a name which gives the position away?" Gives it away to whom? To no one surely who has taken the least trouble to inquire, who is in the least concerned as to the accuracy of the terms he hears or employs. Nor to anyone who, apart from inquiry, gives the matter a moment's thought, for he must at once perceive that the Atheist who denies that there is a God must be a god himself. Though we may be as extinct as the dodo, I am not aware that any of us have claimed to be deities. It is the gods and not Atheists who are going the way of the dodo.

The *Church Gazette* would have all of us who are "without God" accept the name of Agnostic. Well, it is a matter of individual preference. On a former occasion I stated my reasons for preferring to call myself an Atheist. I agree with the observations of Mr. George Jacob Holyoake made many years ago, and recently quoted with approval by Mr. Charles Watts: "Atheism is a defiant, militant word. There is a ring of decision about it. There is no cringing in it. It keeps no terms with superstition. It makes war, and means it. It carries you away from the noisome word-jugglery of the conventional pulpits, and brings you face to face with nature."

Agnosticism is a term scarcely less open than Atheism to misinterpretation and misapplication by people who are given to loose and random phraseology. I make this assertion with the support of the *C. G.*, for, in its editorial of September 30, it speaks of the "man who proclaims lazily that he is an Agnostic, because he finds it too much trouble to think rigidly or connectedly of any question which presents difficulties." And it further refers to "the divers uncalled-for imputations vaguely entertained against Agnostics by an undiscerning public, which attributes to them a general laxity of conduct and carelessness as to belief," and regards them as displaying "mere intellectual *laissez-faire*." So that, according to this *Church* journal, we should, whether as Atheists or Agnostics, still be liable to uncalled-for imputations from an undiscerning public. But what matters the opinion of such a public? Tolerant and intellectual Theists are fast drifting to the conviction that "an honest Atheist is the noblest work of God."

FRANCIS NEALE.

Christianity Reconsidered.

DOUBTLESS a large number of Freethinkers have been, like myself, at some time or other during their lives, connected with some section of the Christian Church. In this country, and in all countries where Christianity is the recognised religion, where it is looked upon as good form, and proper, decorous conduct, to be associated with one or the other of the Christian sects, it is likely that the majority of those who are at the present time in the ranks of Freethought have been at one time of their lives Christians, and have, for reasons which it would not be difficult for them to specify, been compelled to discard the faith of their fathers to enable them to accept broader views of life which have been held by such men as Charles Bradlaugh, Robert Ingersoll, etc. At any rate, speaking personally, this has been my own experience, for I was brought up in a Christian family, and, up to a few years ago, I adhered to the faith; but, having seen good cause to change my views and to join the army of sceptics, it occurred to me that it might be of interest to others, whether Christians or Freethinkers, to have put before them briefly some of my reasons for the rejection of the Gospel. It is not intended that this article should be autobiographical, but it will seek to examine, in a general way, the doctrines of the Christian religion, pointing out what, in my opinion, are the error and falsity of that religion.

I have said I was brought up in a Christian family; but let me say also, at the outset, that, although this was the case, yet my experience was very different from that of a good many people I have been acquainted with. The religion I was taught at home was not of a hard and cruel type. I was never terrified with vivid pictures of hell, or stories of the Devil waiting with a black bag to carry off naughty children who would not do what they were told. I was blessed with a father who, though a Christian, yet was sufficiently free of thought to know that everyone has a right to his own opinions, and that the mind of the young should be allowed to grow as far as possible untrammelled by the authority of ancient tradition. In other words, I was taught to think for myself, to read for myself, and examine the foundation of the faith that was within me. The natural result of this was that, in early years, I became exceedingly "heterodox," taking modified and toned-down conception of the doctrines which I accepted as true, with certain reservation of my own. I think the works that really influenced me most were some books by Samuel Laing, which my father borrowed from a friend of his, and which he allowed me to read. The titles of the books were *Modern Science and Modern Thought*, *Problems of the Future*, and *A Modern Zoroastrian*. These first set me thinking along the particular line of thought which I afterwards adopted in place of the ancient faith. Then, I think, Thomas Paine's works influenced me a good deal, and I must not omit to mention Ingersoll's works, which I have, from time to time, devoured with much relish. Perhaps I have now said sufficient of a personal nature by way of introduction, and will at once proceed to a brief examination of the Christian religion, with a view to showing, in a small way, my reasons for rejecting the creed to which I was educated in my younger days.

To the sceptic attacking the Christian faith one initial difficulty presents itself at the outset, and that is the difficulty of coming across a satisfactory definition of what Christianity is. There are so many sects and sections of the Christian Church, all of which have a specialty of their own to distinguish them from the others, each of which either dogmatically asserts, or, by the mere facts of its separate existence, proclaims to the world that it is the true Christian Church, and all others are more or less false. To get over this difficulty, I shall take it for granted that all those religious bodies which call themselves Christian are such, and I have no doubt my remarks will touch them all in turn. At any rate, I shall do my best to so state my case against Christianity that it shall leave no sect untouched in some way or other.

In examining the Christian religion, the first thing that we have to do is to test the foundations of that faith. The Christian Church is built on the Bible (or is supposed to be) as a Church, and, as a system, it stands or falls with the Bible. The claim is made that the Bible is an inspired book. It is almost as difficult to get a definition of inspiration as it is to get a definition of Christianity itself. At first the claim was made that the Bible was inspired in every word, and even every letter, of its contents by God; that every word was true in every respect. Then, when it was driven (and not until it was driven) from this position, the Church made the claim that, although not inspired in its science, it was inspired in its history.

This, again, was disproved, and, being compelled to give in once more, the position, that the moral and ethical teaching of the Bible was unique and inspired, was taken up. But this claim, in turn, has also been shown to be unfounded. In fact, every claim which has endeavored to place the Bible on a different footing to that of other literature of the world, which has endeavored to place it above the ordinary productions of man's mind, has been shown to be false and untenable. But, in spite of this, in spite of the fact that time after time

He who helps a child helps humanity with a distinctness, with an immediateness, which no other help given to human creatures in any other stage of their human life can possibly give again.—*Phillips Brooks*.

the claims of Christianity have been shown to be false and unfounded, yet there are to-day in our midst people who will often stand for the old-fashioned ideas concerning their religion which some of us may have thought were long ago dead and buried. It is quite true that many Christians who are described as "enlightened" have given up the *extreme* position which I have outlined above; still, as I have said, there are people, even in these days of enlightenment, who stick to the old claim for the inspiration of the Bible. It is for this reason, amongst others, that I think it is necessary at the outset of an article of this nature to first of all deal with the Bible, which is the book or collection of books on which the superstructure of Christianity has been erected. We will, therefore, examine the Bible from three points of view—*i.e.*, as to its scientific, historical, and moral aspects. Taking these aspects in the order given, let us first inquire, Is the Bible inspired as to its science? If it is inspired, we ought to find in it no erroneous views, no wrong ideas of life, of nature, of man; in all things it should be true and should controvert no known facts. But what do we find? The world is stated to have been created in six days; the sun, moon, and stars are regarded merely as "lights," created solely for the purpose of giving light to our little planet; the world itself is evidently regarded as being larger than all the surrounding heavenly bodies. The whole earth is supposed to have been drowned in a flood which covered the tops of the highest mountains, and from a few animals which are supposed to have been saved in the Ark the whole earth has since been populated in an incredibly short space of time. Against these ancient traditions we have to place the revelations of modern science, which teach us that the earth has been ages upon ages evolving from a gaseous condition up to the state in which we find it at the present time; that the sun is many times larger than our earth, and that there are other bodies many times larger than the sun; that there never could have been such a flood as is recorded in Genesis without leaving some geological record of it, and there is no such record to be found. And so on, through the various accounts of the circumstances of the creation and early history of the earth, as recorded in the Bible, we find that the ascertained facts of science are controverted. Therefore, it is claimed that in its science the Bible is shown to be inaccurate and misleading, and, consequently, not inspired.

As to history, if the Bible is inspired, its so-called historic records should not only be true and square with facts, but it should also be consistent with itself. But it is not so. Where does the inspiration come in? When it tells us that Goliath of Gath was killed first of all by David and afterwards by Elhanan? As if it were not sufficient that the poor warrior should be killed once, he must needs be killed over again to make sure of it! Take another little example of Bible "history." We find, in dealing with the plagues that were supposed to have befallen the land of Egypt under Rameses II., that the cattle of the Egyptians were all killed by a hail-storm; then the first-born of the cattle were destroyed. Thus, we see that, to say nothing as to agreeing with actual history, the Bible is self-contradictory as to its own records. How, then, can it be inspired?

Coming to the question of morality, we have only to refer to many passages in the Old Testament to find records of immortality and filth, which it would be difficult to equal in the whole range of the world's literature. This fact is so true that, were some of the records published in this journal, it would render itself liable to prosecution for publishing immoral and debasing literature. Of course, any of our Christian friends who should happen to read this article will say: "Oh, but you were speaking of the Old Testament, of the ancient writings which it comprises, and you must make allowances for this." But no. If the claim of inspiration is of any effect, then it must apply to the Old as well as the New Testament; and one part of the Bible is as authoritative as another, and we have an inspired book and guide which records, without a word of reproof or a suggestion of disgust, stories so revolting and repulsive that no clergyman or minister would dare read them to his congregation, and which no man of decency and refinement would read even at a meeting "for men only." How, then, can the Bible be inspired when these things can be said without fear of contradiction?

HAROLD ELLIOT.

(To be concluded.)

How to Help Us.

- (1) Get your newsagent to take a few copies of the *Freethinker* and try to sell them, guaranteeing to take the copies that remain unsold.
- (2) Take an extra copy (or more), and circulate it among your acquaintances.
- (3) Leave a copy of the *Freethinker* now and then in the train, the car, or the omnibus.
- (4) Display, or get displayed, one of our contents-sheets, which are of a convenient size for the purpose. Mr. Forder will send them on application.
- (5) Get your newsagent to exhibit the *Freethinker* in the window.

Acid Drops.

COUNTY Court Judge Bacon had a lady before him who wished to affirm instead of swearing. He asked her "On what grounds?" and she replied that she considered her word as sacred as any oath sworn on the Bible. "That," said the Judge, "is not a conscientious objection. It is not conscience, but vanity. Still, you may affirm." Now, could anything be more absurd? Where on earth does the "vanity" come in? Surely it is not vanity, but self-respect, to regard one's word as sacred, and to have only one measure of veracity. Moreover, the judge had no right to talk about a "conscientious objection" at all. No such words occur in the Oaths Act which was carried by Mr. Bradlaugh. Those who claim to affirm have simply to state, either that they have no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath is against their religious belief. Having stated one or the other, they have an absolute legal right to affirm, in spite of all the bigotry of the bench.

There was an excellent and powerful leaderette in the *Daily News* on this case in Judge Bacon's court. "It is intolerable," our contemporary said, "that Judges should take advantage of their privileged position to insult respectable men and women who are exercising a legal right. The next witness who is asked by Judge Bacon what his conscientious objections to being sworn are should tell him to mind his own business, which is judicial, and not inquisitorial."

The *Daily News* was a little off color, however, in trusting that this case would "meet Lord Halsbury's eye." Lord Halsbury is himself one of the worst bigots in England. All he ever did to gain the woosack was to bait Bradlaugh and send the editor of the *Freethinker* to prison. Judge Bacon need not fear the wrath of such a Lord Chancellor.

The Halifax Board of Guardians have invented what the *Leeds Daily News* calls a new denomination. Paupers whose creed is doubtful are no longer to be credited to the Church of England. They are to be entered as "creed unknown." A close inquiry would probably show that this denomination included the majority of the inhabitants of Great Britain.

Martha Flatley is a woman with a real grievance. She was brought before the Hanley magistrates for using strong language; and, although no fine was inflicted, she had to pay the costs. Now the person who informed against her was her next-door neighbor. He was a very religious man, who wrestled in prayer with God at the top of his loud voice till three o'clock in the morning. He thus prevented her from sleeping; indeed, she had shifted her bed downstairs to escape his vehement pleadings with the Throne of Grace, but even there her slumbers were fearfully broken. When she could stand it no longer she let out. He prayed, and she swore. And perhaps that should have ended the matter. But this is a Christian country, and if you care to disturb your neighbors with your prayers you are at liberty to do so; but if you believe in the efficacy of your prayers, like the Peculiar People, you are liable to be treated as a felon.

Mr. Frank T. Bullen, the charming author of sea-stories, has been interviewed by the *Daily News*. He is now forty-three years of age, fifteen years of which he spent at sea. Once he was nearly flung overboard by shipwrecked sailors, who resolved that he was the Jonah. Mr. Bullen is a great reader of the Bible himself, but he has no very high opinion of missionaries. "I am bound to confess," he says, "that many of the white missionaries lead disgracefully easy and luxurious lives, and I often smile when I read their flaming reports and reflect on what lies behind." There is a happy ambiguity in that "lies behind."

"Providence" has forgotten to send rain to India, and the distress is increasing. Nearly a million of the absolutely destitute are receiving State relief. "Providence" must have meant to call them home, but the Government is trying to keep them here.

Donald Mackenzie, fisherman, of Eoropic, Ness, far away in the Highlands, is married to a witch, in the opinion of his neighbors. Donald's wife is credited with the power of bewitching cattle, and was specially accused of influencing Mrs. Morrison's cow to give a poor supply of milk. Donald flared up at this accusation, and administered a castigation to Mrs. Morrison, who had him up for assault, so that he was fined thirty shillings, with the option of fourteen days' imprisonment. Sheriff Campbell told all the parties to go home and behave themselves properly. He said there was no such thing as witchcraft, and we quite agree with him; only the Bible says there is, and it seems hard for one Bible-worshipper to rate another for believing the Blessed Book.

Christianity is a wonderful soul-saving religion, and its missions are all over the world. There would be some in other worlds if they were only accessible. Even the souls of lepers are attended to. At least there is a Mission which

collects, and of course spends, a fair amount of money for the spiritual refreshment of those unfortunates. God's hand is heavy upon them, and the missionaries (in God's name) try to lift it a bit.

By the way, there are more lepers in the East than is generally supposed. India has 400,000, China 400,000, and Japan 200,000. What appalling statistics of the most loathsome and humiliating of diseases.

A good deal is written about leprosy in the Bible. When the Lord spent forty days with Moses, he gave him most minute instructions how to tell whether a man had leprosy or not; but he never gave him a prescription for curing it. This fact was adduced by Ingersoll to show the uselessness of revelation.

Rose Earle, aged forty, of no occupation, was indicted at the Liverpool Assizes for the murder of her daughter. Dr. Price, the principal medical officer of Walton Prison, testified that she was insane. She said she was called upon by God to destroy herself. The poor creature was ordered to be detained during her Majesty's pleasure. It is always a very bad sign when people get what Mr. Stead once called "tips from heaven."

Colonel Philips, of the 14th Hussars, is probably a good soldier. That is his trade. But he is a silly speaker. Some days ago he addressed a Young Men's Christian Association meeting at Exeter Hall, and in the course of his speech he remarked that the war cloud in South Africa had a silver lining, for "the country had never sent out so many godly soldiers as on the present occasion." He forgets that President Kruger has also sent a lot of godly soldiers into the same part of South Africa, and that the two different sets of godly soldiers are doing their best to send each other to glory.

This pious Colonel expressed a hope that our godly soldiers would "be the means of bringing many of their comrades into the Kingdom." But it is more probable that they will be the means of bringing into the Kingdom a good many of their godly enemies.

Certain pious people are suggesting that there should be a "Truce of God" observed by the fighting Britishers and Boers on Christmas Day. Why? To celebrate, forsooth, the Nativity of the Prince of Peace and the introduction of the Gospel of goodwill to all men. This is really a rich proposal. What about the day before and the day after? Does not this remind us of the letter of General Gordon, wherein, admitting his inconsistency, he speaks of the Christian members of his troops hurrying over their prayers at breakfast—in which they ask God to forgive them their trespasses as they forgive those who trespass against them—in order to quickly resume the fighting of the day before.

The proposal as to Christmas sounds almost ironical, especially when it is suggested that we should thus have a day resembling the Nativity, of which Milton sings:—

No war or battle's sound
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high up-hung.

If the Boers agreed to this "truce of God," we should recommend Redvers Buller to take no notice of their acquiescence. The pious Doppers are not to be trusted in the matter of truces.

The Dean of Durham declines to use in the Cathedral which is under his charge the prayers in war time recommended by the Archbishop of Canterbury and York. No wonder! One of these petitions is addressed to the "Lord God of Hosts, our only strength and refuge." Common-sense people are inclined to think that our present strength is in Redvers Buller and his "Tommys." Of course, the Lord may be hoped to strengthen their arms, but if he intervenes now it is rather late in the day. The intervention of Providence would have been more opportune during what the prayer calls "the controversy which has led us into the present strife."

It has been pointed out as rather curious that the orders for the Queen's present of chocolate to the troops were given to three firms of Quakers, who are necessarily opposed to war, and may have some difficulty in reconciling their consciences to the supply of even such mild pabulum to men on fighting service.

Can Christians, under any circumstances, engage in war? A writer in the *Christian Budget* replies to this question as follows: "It is an undeniable fact that no nation can hold its place in this world without war. Each nation has to fight for its existence. If a single nation should totally disarm, and should determine that under no circumstances would it engage in war, there is not the slightest doubt but it would soon cease to exist as a nation; it would be seized upon and swallowed up by the others. But all this does not make war

right. The Gospel proclaims peace on earth; Christ commanded his followers not to resist, even when trampled upon and beaten, and to suffer the loss of all their goods rather than use violence against any man. A Christian man can no more fight and yet retain his Christianity than he could steal and yet be an honest man."

Victor Hugo, though a Freethinker in regard to many of the doctrines of theology, never divested himself of the major superstition—the belief in God. Once he saved the life of a mouse, and quoted the Divine kindness as his reason. "To that little being," he said, "I am Providence." Therein Victor Hugo proved himself much more tender-hearted than his God, who is now looking silently and inactively on all the terrible slaughter of human beings in South Africa.

The following amusing comment on the action of the Indiana Sunday-school, in condemning as profane the works of certain contemporary writers—Mr. Kipling amongst them—comes, says the *Literary World*, from the other side of the water:—

The prim and cultured stripling
Will piously declare
The world would swear by Kipling
If Kipling wouldn't swear.
Though, while his fancies break red
And lurid from his brain,
Some hold that Kipling's sacred,
Altho' he be profane!

Sea-submerged churches is the subject of some interesting little contributions to *Notes and Queries*. One correspondent writes that four or five years ago he saw a church standing in the sea close to Happisburgh, in Norfolk. It has, he believes, since fallen down. The ruins of another church, he adds, were visible in the same neighborhood. Other correspondents mention similar instances, including the old church at Whitby, which is likely to soon share the same fate, though tradition says that it was built at a distance from the sea. And it is surmised that there are several churches under the Goodwin Sands.

These facts are interesting from an archaeological and ecclesiastical point of view. But they also have a bearing on the doctrine of Providence; for, if a god cannot, or will not, take care of his own temples, specially and solemnly dedicated to his service, how much dependence can be placed on him in other directions? Churches, of course, like other edifices, are subject to decay and destruction, but why did not Providence, in these cases of submerged churches, inspire their founders to build a little more inland?

The Rev. David Samuel Donovan, clerk in holy orders—that is to say, a clergyman of the Church of England—is a curious illustration of the height to which Christian charity can attain. He presented a petition in the Divorce Court for the dissolution of his marriage, and his wife had to come over all the way from Kimberley, where she was acting as a nurse in the Hospital, in order to defend her honor. It was alleged by this man of God that she had committed adultery with two co-respondents, but the evidence he produced was of such a ridiculous character that Mr. Justice Barnes had no hesitation in saying that the charges of misconduct had been made without the slightest foundation. On the other hand, the Court held that Mrs. Donovan had been the victim of her husband's cruelty and desertion. Accordingly she was granted a decree of judicial separation, with costs, and the custody of the children. Probably this servant of the Most High regrets having entered into litigation. He has lost his case, and has been stigmatised in a Court of Justice as a malignant liar. The blow he aimed at his innocent wife has recoiled upon himself.

Parson Donovan can, of course, appeal to the Court of Heaven. He conducted his own case in the Divorce Court, and if he does the same in the other court, at an early date, it would not be exactly a calamity.

James Thomson ("B.V.") the poet once saw Kegan Paul, the publisher, with a view to getting a volume of his verses brought out. The negotiations came to nothing; and Thomson, who had a keen satirical wit, summed up his impression of the publisher by saying that "There was a good deal of Kegan and very little Paul."

Mr. Kegan Paul was supposed to be a Freethinker, a Positivist, or something of that sort; but by-and-bye it was rumored that he had become a Christian, and eventually that he was a Roman Catholic. In his recently published *Memories* Mr. Paul attributes his conversion to "the Great Lying Mr. Paul," to the writings of Thomas à Kempis and Cardinal Newman, and to some miracles at Lourdes and elsewhere. Perhaps there is some significance in the fact that he made submission the day after Newman's death.

"Positivism," says Mr. Paul, "is a fair-weather creed, when men are strong, happy, untempted, or ignorant that they are tempted, and so long as a future life and its dread possibilities

do not enter their thoughts; but it has no message for the sorry and the sinful, no restoration for the erring, no succor in the hour of death." This is remarkably like saying that Mr. Paul became a Christian when he grew weak and frightened.

One of Mr. Paul's stories relates to John Bright. The great Radical orator was staying at a certain house, and on Sunday evening he was asked to read something aloud. "What shall I read?" he asked. One of the party handed him a volume of Shelley. Bright put it aside, saying "Shelley was an Atheist." Well, it was *true*, anyhow.

Mr. Paul tells another story about Renan. Readers of the *Vie de Jésus* will remember that, in the great French sceptic's most famous—though far from greatest—book, the raising of Lazarus is spoken of as perhaps a little plot—no tragedy, but a comedy—in which Jesus was implicated; Lazarus not being really dead, but feigning to be, and Jesus being aware of the fact. Well, it was pointed out to Renan by Mr. Paul that Englishmen could not stand this sort of thing; whereupon the fat, bland, witty Frenchman said, with an air of astonishment, "Mais, mon ami, ce n'était qu'une hypothèse"—But, my friend, that was only an hypothesis. Mr. Paul, with his duller British mind, evidently did not see that Renan was poking fun at him, and at the same time avoiding a profitless controversy.

Seven hairdressers have been summoned at Woolwich for exercising their trade, contrary to Act 29 of Charles II., ch. 7. The stipendiary was rather of opinion that shaving and hair-cutting was not a "trade," because a hairdresser simply sold his labor. If a hairdresser sold a newspaper or a bottle of pomade, he would be liable to be fined. It was urged by the prosecution that the shops were open and goods were exposed for sale in the windows. The magistrate thought there might be something in that, and he fined the defendants one penny each without costs, and said that if they asked for a case he should be happy to grant one.

From this it is evident that the Woolwich stipendiary is not in favor of the enforcement of this obsolete statute. Though the prosecution was instituted by the Woolwich District Hairdressers' Association, the spirit underlying it and the enactment appealed to are Sabbatarian and extremely absurd. Why should there be any difference made between a man going into a shop for a shave or going into it for a newspaper or a cigar? Sometimes all these wants are met in the same establishment.

It is noted by the *People* with great satisfaction that Parliament is to be asked to take away from the London County Council the licensing powers it has so scandalously abused. "Its recent proceedings," says the *People*, "show that this fussy and fanatical body have no idea whatever of equal treatment for all places of entertainment, and, indeed, some unfortunate lessees might as well have been Uitlanders before Judge Gregorowski as applicants for licenses to the London County Council. It is imperative that this tyranny should be put an end to, and the licensing vested in some impartial and really judicial body."

Reader Harris, Q.C., is an ungrateful man. He quotes in his *Tongues of Fire* the comments of religious journals, such as the *Christian*, the *Christian World*, the *Baptist*, and the *Record*, on the late Pentecostal League Conference. But he never says a word about the comments of the *Freethinker*. Their reproduction would, at least, have relieved the arid wastes of the paper he edits.

A writer in the *Church Review* warns the bishops that "Should they find their seats totter, and the whole edifice of State Establishment come clattering about their ears, they, and they only, will be to blame." Well, whether they will be to blame or not, it is to be hoped that the "clattering" will not long be delayed. In view of such a contingency, we should warmly recommend the bishops to keep on putting down the use of incense, processional lights, and other nonsense. Two good ends will thus be served.

Mr. Lloyd George, M.P., in an address at Liverpool, said that the Anglican Church was undoubtedly being Romanised, and the people were advised to trust the bishops; but the bishops were firing with obsolete guns and plugged shells and at too long range, and some of them, he was afraid, were *too intent upon the loot*.

The *Christian* is sorry to learn from the *Sussex Daily News* that "the sporting persons are not, as we supposed, nearly extinct. The race seems to be numerous, if not as numerous as ever, and greatly enamored of fox-hunting as a form of amusement. One would have thought that humanity and a sense of things becoming a Christian pastor would lead ministers to seek recreation somewhere else than at the tail of a pack of hounds."

There is something sweetly naive and simple about the

following sentence in the report of the Evangelical Mission to Theatrical Employés: "To conduct such a mission on Evangelical lines, and yet in such a way as to retain the attendance and confidence of theatrical people, would appear no easy task." No, we shouldn't think it was, and can quite understand the poorness of the results.

The Bishop of London has been telling tales out of school. He was entertained the other day by the Authors' Club. In the course of a speech, he said the religious historians and the chief theologians were profound readers of novels. "I know two bishops who read all novels, and I once stayed with one of the most eminent theologians, who took me into his library, and, pointing to the formidable tomes, said: 'You will find something better behind.' On investigating I found this was the case; behind these front books were—well, something much more readable in leisure moments."

The two bishops who read *all* novels must have plenty of time on their hands. And their minds must be reduced to a very fit state for the composition of episcopal charges and cathedral sermons. No wonder we come across astonishing examples of prelatical incoherence, flabbiness, tendency to wild fiction, and sometimes absolute imbecility.

But what about that "most eminent theologian," or rather that sly dog, who hides the literary solace of his leisure hours behind heavy tomes? Are Rabelais, Paul de Kock, Flaubert, Daudet, Ernest Feydeau, and Zola to be found secreted at the back of Butler, Paley, and stately editions of ecclesiastical history and of pious meditations on Christ? Of course, the two bishops who read *all* novels must have gone rambling through some French fiction of a rather special type.

A Texas minister, the Rev. G. E. Morrison, has been hanged for the murder of his wife. The motive of the crime was said to be to rid himself of a pretty, amiable, loving wife in order to marry a wealthy woman.

The Rev. W. Acraman, Vicar of Crich, has been proved guilty of indecent assault on a girl, aged thirteen, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. He declared in "the sight of God" he was innocent, and that he believed the girl to be over fifteen; but the judge told him that this seemed to make his offence morally ten times worse, as showing that he had been watching for some girl of an age when he could so behave with impunity.

A girl aged thirteen was charged at Bow-street with picking pockets. She confessed to stealing several purses during the past four years. Evidently she had had some religious training, for when she heard the order of the magistrate that her father should be bound over for her good behavior, she exclaimed: "God be merciful to me a sinner."

The Rev. Dr. Tulloch seems to be a clerical toady, with no small opinion of his own abilities. He has "had the honor of conducting Divine service and preaching before her Majesty the Queen," and he can't forget it. So he has been writing to an American periodical on "How Queen Victoria Goes to Church." He does not fail to mention how delighted the Queen appeared to be with his performances, and apparently would like to have the job of preaching to her every day of the year. His article is very sickening.

The bishops are not going to abolish the use of incense in the State churches. They are only going to regulate it. Thus the High Church party wins again, and the Church of England is one step definitely nearer Rome.

Unbelief will soon be done for in England. Cardinal Vaughan is going to deal with it in earnest. While opening a new Catholic church at Ealing he stated that a big national propaganda of the Catholic religion would be inaugurated here at the beginning of the new century. There were to be lectures, sermons, religious services, and leaflets. Above all, a pilgrimage would be organised to visit the Pope. Many thousands of English people, he said, refused to believe in the divinity of Christ, and this crusade would remove their disbelief. Thus far Cardinal Vaughan, and now it is our turn. We beg to remind him that the imbeciles who will be influenced by such a crusade are not unbelievers at all. If this Catholic prelate wants to reach unbelievers *really*, he should address them through the columns of the *Freethinker*. And he shall have an opportunity if he desires it.

Nor does it seem that the present time is favorable for a Catholic attack upon the minds of any section of Englishmen—not even the imbeciles. The Vatican press at Rome and elsewhere is ferociously Anglophobe; so much so, indeed, that Cardinal Vaughan is reported to have addressed to the Pope a strong letter of remonstrance.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 10, Athenæum Hall, London, W.; 7.30,
"The Mother of God."
December 17, Athenæum Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 10, Manchester; 11, Bolton; 15, Stockton-on-Tees; 17, Manchester. January 14, Leicester. February 4, Sheffield; 25, Glasgow.—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.

G. J. WARREN.—Thanks. Late for this week, but will be noticed in our next issue.

JAMES NEATE.—We have handed over to the Secretary the Application you send us from your brother-in-law for five fully paid-up Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited. Accept our thanks for your trouble. Receipt will be forwarded by the Secretary.

J. BONNOR.—A third series of *Flowers of Freethought* has not been promised. Another volume of Mr. Foote's essays—the longer ones—will probably be published in the new year under another title. The second volume of *Crimes of Christianity* will be pushed forward as soon as the new Freethought Publishing Company's arrangements release Mr. Foote from wearying detail work, and set him free for his more special labors. Nearly all the back numbers of the *Freethinker* can be obtained from Mr. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C.

R. CHAPMAN.—See paragraph. You did not give the date.

S. A. BUTLER.—Charles Bradlaugh was an Atheist. He called himself so, and he wrote *A Plea for Atheism*. He never adopted the badge of Agnosticism. Of course he did not say "There is no God." He said he knew of none, and believed that every other man was in the same state of ignorance. Certainly, though, he denied all the gods that were ever defined, for he found their alleged attributes either self-contradictory or contradicted by facts.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance, secretary, acknowledges:—W. Hunt, £1.

H. THORP.—Thanks for your amusing letter. One never knows who may be in a Freethought meeting.

T. HIBBOTT.—Mr. Foote is writing you.

W. SIMONS asks us to state that contributions to the Fagan Testimonial Fund should be forwarded at once, as it closes shortly.

H. R. W.—"Hope" and "float" don't rhyme. Writing good verse does not come by nature. Intellect and imagination are natural gifts, but the *technique* of art has to be acquired. It is always best to stick to prose, unless one really is inspired and *must* write verses.

YOUNG FREETHINKER.—We advise you not to cause more trouble than you can help in the domestic circle. Youth should never be preemptory. Nor are you bound to talk with your relatives on such subjects unless the conversation is forced upon you. At the same time, they have no sort of right to dictate what you should think, and you should resist any such attempt on their part. You can read and think for yourself, quietly; and if you otherwise show respect for your elders, and affection for all members of your family, you will probably come out all right in the end.

S. O. FOWLER.—We do not think any of the late Grant Allen's books are worth troubling about except his *Evolution of the Idea of God*. That is a work of very considerable merit, showing wide research and careful thought.

CORRESPONDENTS must remember that the Editor cannot undertake to answer questions by post.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Secular Thought—Cork County Eagle—Nottingham Daily Guardian—Freidenker—Der Arme Teufel—Blue Grass Blade—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Ethical World—Crescent—Yarmouth Mercury—Truthseeker (New York)—Free Society—Liberator—People's Newspaper—De Vrije Gedachte—Public Opinion—Isle of Man Times—Sydney Bulletin—Church Missionary (Japan) Quarterly—Progressive Thinker—Boston Investigator—Aberdeen Evening Express—Leeds Daily News—Derbyshire 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 the number in a colored wrapper when their subscription is due.

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

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

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

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

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 at the Athenæum Hall—73 Tottenham-court-road—this evening (Dec. 10) and on the following Sunday. In view of the approaching Christmas season he will deliver two discourses on the primary Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. The first will be entitled "The Mother of God," and the second "The Baby God of Bethlehem." These two lectures will, as far as possible, cover the whole ground of the subject; and Freethinkers will do well to induce their most orthodox friends to attend.

The dense fog which prevailed in London last Sunday interfered with Mr. Charles Watts's meeting at the Athenæum Hall. Still, the audience was an enthusiastic one, and warmly applauded the various points in Mr. Watts's new lecture, "The Defeat of the Cross." Mr. C. H. Cattell presided, and, in opening the proceedings, made a neat little speech upon propagandist work. We are glad to hear that the sale of literature was very good.

To-day, Sunday, December 10, Mr. Watts lectures three times in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester, when he hopes to see his friends from the surrounding districts. On Monday, the 11th, he visits Bolton, and on Friday, the 15th, he lectures at Stockton-on-Tees.

The first special article in the *Secular Almanack* is entitled "Our Outlook." It is from the pen of Mr. Foote, writing as President of the National Secular Society and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited. We commend it to the attention of all Freethinkers. Everyone of them ought to read it. There are other interesting articles in the Almanack by leading Freethought writers. We may add—or rather repeat—that this Almanack is issued by the National Secular Society, and that whatever profit accrues from its sale will go into the Society's exchequer.

We are happy to be able to state that only a very few of those who promised support to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, have not yet applied for Shares. One or two of them were poor people, who now find themselves unable to do what they expected. On the other hand, between four and five hundred Shares have been applied for by persons who did not make any promise. This is highly gratifying, and it may be added that applications for Shares are still coming in. Still, we should like to impress upon all well-wishers—that is to say, all real, earnest Freethinkers—the advisability of acting forthwith, if they have not yet moved. He gives twice, the proverb says, who gives quickly. Support at some future time will of course be welcome, but it is doubly valuable just now. If all the 4,000 Ordinary Shares were taken up by the end of December, the Company would begin the new year with a splendid prospect; and Mr. Foote himself would face the future with a lighter heart.

Those who place any value on Mr. Foote's service to the Freethought cause should recollect not only that he is mortal, but that he is getting older. Naturally he has not the same life-prospect that he had ten years ago. Not that he is an old man by any means. By looking in the *Secular Almanack*, under the date of January 11, which is his birthday, you will see how long he has been a pilgrim in this world—as the Christians say; and you will be able to form some estimate of how long he may reasonably be expected to retain something like his present activity. Year by year slips away, the sense of mortality deepens, and the desire intensifies to make the most of the life that is left. And to make the most of it the Freethought party—if it shares his desire—must supply the sinews of successful warfare.

The Howard Association's Annual Report, dated October, 1899, contains the following reference, which our American exchanges will please note: "It is only fair to the late Colonel Ingersoll to say that he, too, set an excellent example to the Churches in his defence of the oppressed race. A negro newspaper says, 'For thirty years we had no truer friend.'"

The New York *Truthseeker* for November 25 reports the Annual Secular Congress held at Boston a week before. There seems to have been a fairly good attendance, but we do not gather that our American friends are making much headway in the matter of organisation. The third and last

day of the Congress was devoted to the late Colonel Ingersoll. Many enthusiastic eulogies were pronounced, one of them by a lady, Mrs. Ricker, who thanked the great dead Freethinker for his chivalry to women—not a mawkish, but a manly chivalry. A letter, in which Ingersoll was highly praised, was read from Mr. G. J. Holyoake. The letters from Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts do not seem to have reached the Congress.

Mr. Holyoake quoted Ingersoll as saying that "He would make health as catching as disease." This is not accurate. Ingersoll went much farther. What he said was that, if he had the arrangement of things in this world, he would make health catching *instead* of disease.

"Charles Bradlaugh and His Visits to Yarmouth" was the title of a lecture by Mr. A. H. Smith, which is reported at considerable length in the *Yarmouth Mercury*.

Mr. Andrew Lang, writing in *Longman's* on the late Grant Allen, says he "behaved, if I may say so, more thoroughly in the spirit of the Gospel than any man I ever met, though his intellect rejected so much that religion believes." No doubt this is well meant; and, perhaps, it is ungenerous to scrutinise a eulogy too closely; otherwise we might have asked Mr. Lang to tell us what he means by "the spirit of the Gospel."

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner has been fixed for Monday, January 8, at the Holborn Restaurant. Mr. Foote will preside as usual. Further particulars in due course. The tickets are 4s. each.

At a smoking-concert held recently at the Radical Club, North Shields, a presentation was made to a veteran Freethinker, Mr. Thomas Thompson. County Councillor Hogg paid a high tribute to the recipient in making the presentation. Mr. Thompson suitably responded, and the rest of the evening was spent in sociality. Councillor Robinson presided, and was supported by the Mayor.

The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, has in the press a new edition of Ingersoll's brilliant and wonderfully entertaining *Mistakes of Moses*, which has been for some time out of print. This edition is not to be printed from stereotype plates, but from a nice font of good clear type; and it will probably be ready by the first week in the new year. The popular edition, in stiff paper covers, will continue to be priced at one shilling, and will be a very cheap shilling's-worth. An *edition de luxe* is also being printed on fine toned paper, and will be handsomely bound in cloth. This edition will doubtless be welcome to the admirers of Ingersoll who can afford it. The price will be half-a-crown. All who wish to secure a copy of it should order in advance. If they send half-a-crown per copy to Miss E. M. Vance, the Company's secretary, at 377 Strand, London, W.C., they will receive as many copies as they subscribe for post free. Orders and remittances should be sent to Miss Vance only—not to Mr. Foote or elsewhere. The receipt of orders will be acknowledged by postcard.

Prison Reform.

IN an appeal for pecuniary support, the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Department of the Humanitarian League regrets to say that "there is no Branch of the League which stands in such need as that which is doing its utmost to humanise the barbarous English prison system." To the usefulness of such work the following letter from Dr. W. Douglas Morrison, author of *Juvenile Offenders*, and editor of "The Criminology Series," bears witness: "I can safely say that the Prisons Department of the Humanitarian League has been instrumental in exposing many abuses, in redressing many wrongs, in acting as a salutary check on a bureaucracy whose actions seldom see the wholesome light of day.....It was recently stated in an official Report on prisons that the Home Secretary—the parliamentary head of the Prison Service—cannot follow the details of prison management." To follow these details in the public interest is one of the duties which your Society undertakes, and it is a duty which deserves public support. I trust that the public will generously assist you in the admirable work in which you are engaged." We hope that those of our readers who agree with the principles of the Humanitarian League will do what they can to support it. Mr. Joseph Collinson, the Hon. Secretary, will be happy to furnish anyone with particulars as to the aims and objects of his Society, together with literature bearing on the subject. All communications should be addressed to him at 53 and 54 Chancery-lane, London.

Freethought in Cromwell's Time.

(BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.)

THE time of the Commonwealth was one of religious, no less than of political, turmoil. The Episcopalian party, which had used its authority without bounds for the purpose of restraining the liberty of all who differed, was at last overthrown. From out of the strife of Papists and Protestants, Calvinists and Arminians, prelacy and independence, at length emerged the idea of toleration, at first feeble and tentative, but gradually acquiring strength and universality. The most persecuted sects, the Anabaptists and Antitrinitarians, were naturally the first to plead for liberty of conscience. Shortly after the burning of Legate and Wightman, Leonard Busher had issued a tract, earnestly pleading for liberty of conscience. This was reprinted in 1646, when already Sir Henry Vane, Lord Brooke, Roger Williams, and John Milton had given their voices for freedom. Vane (who had fled from England in 1635, in his twentieth year, resigning all his prospects at Court in order to enjoy liberty of conscience in Massachusetts, returning in time to sit in the Long Parliament) had published *An Earnest Plea for Universal Liberty of Conscience, and against the Magistrates Intermeddling with Religion*. To this Milton doubtless alludes in the line of his "Sonnet to Vane"—

"The bounds of either sword to thee we owe."

Lord Brooke, son of Sir Philip Sidney's friend, Sir Fulke Greville, in his *Discourse on the Reformation of our Mother Church* (1641), pleaded for toleration to Separatists, as the Nonconformists were then called. *The Bloody Tenent—i.e., tenet—of persecution* was ably attacked by Roger Williams, the founder of Providence, Rhode Island, and apostle of civil and religious liberty in America. This work, which he wrote in London whilst occupied in obtaining the charter for Rhode Island, was published in 1644, the same year which saw the birth of Milton's famous *Areopagitica*, that store-house of noble thoughts in eloquent language whence all succeeding advocates of the liberty of the press have drawn supplies. Williams, like Milton, was a Freethinking Christian, attached to no Church and strongly opposed to the legal establishment of religion and the compulsory support of the clergy.

Shortly after these two more orthodox defenders of toleration appeared in the persons of John Goodwin, the independent vicar of St. Stephen's, Coleman-street, who preached a sermon defending the execution of Charles I.; and Jeremy Taylor, whose *Liberty of Prophesying* (1647) and founded on the difficulties of agreement in dogma, did a service for Freethought, despite its author's after sanction of persecution, which he had denounced when his own party was in adversity.

The impulse given to the demand for toleration was stimulated by the proceedings of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, the Presbyterian majority of which, especially when the Scots Army was near at hand, fully disclosed that "New Presbyter is but old priest writ large." Some of the divines induced the whole of the London ministers assembled at Zion College to frame and send in a petition to the Assembly, declaring "how much we detest and abhor the much-endavored toleration." This petition evoked a little anonymous pamphlet, worthy the author of the *Areopagitica*, entitled *Tolleration Iustified* (1646), in which for the first time toleration is claimed even for those "so far misinformed as to deny a deity, or the scriptures."

This pamphlet excited the ire of Thomas Edwards, who immortalised by Milton as "shallow Edwards," who also mentions: "There is a pamphlet, *A Demurer to the Bill for Preventing the Growth and Spreading of Heresie*, that came out lately since that ordinance against heresie was brought into the House of Commons, that pleads (p. 3) with many Libertine arguments against all punishing of those that maintaine there is no God." This pamphlet I have been unable to trace. Shallow Edwards enumerates with all the bigotry and bitterness of his prototypes, the early Christian Fathers, Irenaeus and Epiphanius, and, probably, with as little discrimination, no fewer than one hundred and seventy-six heresies rife in 1646, and to these he added, in subsequent parts

of his then famous *Gangrana*, enough to make up the number to two hundred. One must not suppose this represented the number of sects, since many heresies could be, and doubtless were, held by the same persons. The heresy of heresies in which all agreed was Liberty of Conscience. Among the damnable heresies catalogued by Edwards are:—

"That the scriptures are a dead letter, and no more to be credited than the writings of men. That right reason is the rule of faith. That the magistrate may not punish for blasphemies, nor for denying the scriptures, nor for denying that there is a God. That the least truth is of more worth than Jesus Christ himself. That the soul of man is mortal as the soul of a beast, and dies with the body. That many Christians in these days have more knowledge than the Apostles. That it is lawful for women to preach. That it could not stand with the goodness of God to damn his own creatures eternally."

From which it will appear that much of modern heresy is not so novel as some persons think. Since Edwards is the first who mentions the open preaching of Free-thought in England, I must make a few more extracts. Thus he cites a letter:—

"Some sectaries do commonly affirm they are not to believe the scriptures further than [*sic*] their own reason doth persuade them of the truth of them, and that the scriptures are no more the word of God than the words any man speaks are, because he could not speak those words but by a power from God. It hath been told me from good hands that there is a company of persons about London who meet weekly to reason and object against the scriptures; their meetings were about the Spittle, and since in Houndsditch, and now they shift places for fear they should be discovered, and surprised; it were good that authority should look into it to find them out; I shall be ready to name the men from whom I have had such information."

In his third part Edwards also mentions—

"A woman preacher in Lynn who vents many heresies—as that the scriptures were not the word of God, that the drowning of the old world and story of Noah were not true, with other things of that nature. Further, that at a house in Redcross-street, City, some forty persons being present, one did affirm: (1) That Jesus Christ was not God, nor the son of God; (2) That the scriptures were not the word of God, and brought many arguments to prove it; (3) That the souls of men dye with their bodies."

This last heresy was, as far as I am aware, first broached in a pamphlet entitled *Man's Mortalitie*, a treatise proving man a compound wholly mortal, by "R. O.," dated from Amsterdam, 1643, but probably printed in London early in 1644. The author, Richard Overton, was a Materialist, who defended his position from the scriptures like the modern Christadelphians. On the title page appears the text: "For that which befalleth the sons of man befalleth beasts; as one dieth so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath" (Eccles. iii. 19). Overton got into trouble for contumacy, and from his prison in Newgate sent forth *An Arrow against all Tyrants*. "Printed at the backside of the Cyclopien mountains by Martin Clawclergy, printer to the reverend Assembly of Divines, and are to be sold at the signe of the Subjects Liberty, right opposite to persecuting court, 1646."

Another writer against the toleration of heresy was Ephraim Pagitt, whose *Heresiography* (1645) passed through several editions. In his *Epistle Dedicatory*, after speaking of "the impure Familists who blasphemously pretend to be Godified like God; whereas, indeed, they are divellified like their Father the Divell," he continues:—

"We have Atheists too many, as amongst others, one who was committed by a Justice of Peace, who mocked and jeered at Christ's Incarnation. His father was burnt at Thoulouse in France; he'scapeth unpunished amongst us; too many others we have. They preach, print, and practise their hereticall opinions openly: for books, vide the bloody Tenet; witness a tractate of Divorce in which the bonds are let loose to inordinate lust."

This last reference is to Milton's *Discourse on the Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce Restored*, which was first published in 1643, the second edition appearing with Milton's name in 1644. No other tract upon divorce is known as belonging to this period. Thus our Freethinking Puritan poet is catalogued amongst the Atheists.

Neither Edwards nor Pagitt speaks of the existence of any sect of Atheists, although that term is used as a convenient one of reproach. It was, as we have seen, part of the armory of the *odium theologicum*. The earliest printed English treatise against Atheism I have met with is that of Sir George More, published in 1597, the same year which saw the publication of Bacon's essay; but More directs his argument against the Atheists of ancient times. Dr. Dove (1605), as we have seen, classes all kinds of unbelievers as Atheists. Bishop Fotherby's *Atheomastix* (1622), the title whereof was copied from a Latin treatise by Assomlevilla, published in Antwerp 1601, is rather an argument for Theism than an onslaught on Atheists, and it is not till after the time of Hobbes that the name seems applied with any sense of propriety. Edwards speaks of one Clement Wrighter, formerly of Worcester, now of London, sometimes a professor of religion, but now a fearful apostate, a seeker, and "I fear an Atheist"; this Wrighter being one of the chief heads of those that deny the scriptures to be the word of God, and that question all points of Christian religion. It appears that he affirms that those in the grave sleep until the resurrection, and declares the Virgin Mary—what we forbear to name. Then there is a certain John Boggis, who went to such unheard-of lengths that even Wrighter must have disowned him.

Archbishop Trench, in his *Study of Words*, gives the first use of the word Rationalist as occurring in a news-letter from London, dated October 14, 1646, preserved in the Clarendon State papers: "There is a new sect springing up among the Independents, and these are the Rationalists, and what their reason dictates them in Church or State stands for good until they be convinced with better." Possibly these Rationalists were followers of John Biddle and Paul Best, both of whom had been imprisoned for denying the Trinity. Or they may have been of the school of Falkland, Chillingworth, and Hales. In 1648 Sir John Suckling, the poet, published *An Account of Religion by Reason*, not without fear of a charge of Socinianism.

(To be concluded.)

National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting, held at the Society's office, 377 Strand, W.C., on Thursday, November 29; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, V. Roger, F. Schaller, W. Heaford, J. Neate, T. Thurlow, A. B. Moss, W. Leat, H. Brown, B. Munton, R. Edwards, H. Cooper, C. Quinton, T. Wilmot, E. E. Sims, and the secretary (Miss Vance).

Minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed; and the cash statement was received and adopted.

New members for the Finsbury and West Ham Branches, and also for the parent Society, were proposed and accepted.

An application for permission to form a new Branch was received, and, upon the Secretary reporting that the necessary conditions had been complied with, it was resolved "That permission be granted for a Tooting and District Branch of the N. S. S."

It was decided to have the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant, on Monday, January 8, 1900, and the arrangements were left in the hands of the officers.

The President called the attention of those present to the unfortunate circumstances of Mr. Peter Weston, an old and valued friend to the cause in Newcastle and the surrounding neighborhood. The Secretary was instructed to send him a special grant, and the President moved, and Mr. Cohen seconded: "That this Executive deeply regrets to hear of the misfortunes that have overtaken Mr. Peter Weston, one of the most steadfast and devoted of Freethinkers, and begs to assure him of its sincere sympathy." Mr. Cohen, Mr. Moss, and others, spoke in support of the resolution, and it was carried unanimously.

The President reported the issue of the Society's Almanack for 1900, and the meeting adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary.

Testimonial to Mr. John Fagan.

The following further amounts have been received, per Miss E. M. Vance:—E. R. Webbley, 6d.; J. Groves, 6d.; W. H., 6d.; Arnold, 6d.; C. Bowman, 2s. 6d.; R. Lancaster, 1s.; —Wilson, 2s. 6d.; W. Hunt, 2s.; G. J. Warren, 1s.—GEORGE WRIGHT, Treasurer, Bradlaugh Club, 36 Newington Green-road, N.

The London County Council and Sunday Observance.

THE Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, in a letter to the *Times* on November 21, 1899, refers to the letter by Mr. Mark H. Judge, of the previous day, in the following terms:—"The older I grow the more I realise that there are some people who believe every bold statement that is not contradicted. It is, therefore, conceivable that there may be some persons capable even of believing Mr. Mark H. Judge's statement that 'A League concert is in exactly the same position as the orchestral mission at St. James's Hall.' It is, consequently, necessary to say that what Mr. Mark H. Judge describes by the absolutely meaningless expression, an 'Orchestral Mission,' is a religious service of the most pronounced type. Just as religious services elsewhere are sometimes preceded by an organ recital, and generally by an organ voluntary, it is customary to precede the religious service in St. James's Hall on Sunday afternoon and Sunday night by some instrumental music, as we do not use the organ, but this is simply preliminary to religious worship, consisting of sacred hymns, prayers, the reading of the Word of God, and, invariably, a sermon of half an hour's duration. Of course, admission is free."

To this Mr. Judge replies, on November 25, as follows:—"As it is conceivable that there may be some persons capable even of believing that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, in his letter which appeared in the *Times* on Tuesday last, contradicted some statement contained in my letter published the previous day, it may be well to point out that he has done nothing of the kind. My statements with regard to the concerts of the National Sunday League of Protestant Dissenters, who object to be designated, was that these concerts were 'in exactly the same position as the orchestral mission at St. James's Hall.' The 'contradiction' attempted by Mr. Hughes is simply a statement to the effect that the 'orchestral mission is a religious service of the most pronounced type,' the implication being that the services of the National Sunday League cannot be so described. He might, with equal relevancy, have set out how his orchestral mission varies from the services of every other body of Protestant Dissenters. He has left untouched my statement that 'a League concert is in exactly the same position as the orchestral mission at St. James's Hall.' Mr. Hughes is equally unhappy in describing the particular religious services conducted by him. As if to make the readers of the *Times* believe that his non-conformity is not of a very pronounced type, he says: "Just as religious services elsewhere are sometimes preceded by an organ recital, and generally by an organ voluntary, it is customary to precede the religious services at St. James's Hall on Sunday afternoon and Sunday night by some instrumental music, as we do not use the organ." 'Some instrumental music' is Mr. Hughes's euphemism for a concert when writing to the *Times*, but when appealing to his congregation he is more realistic. It is then: *Oh! listen to the band!* as will be seen from his current advertisement, from which I quote the following:—"West London Mission, St. James's Hall. Sunday. Military Band will play at 3, and Orchestral Band at 6.30."

Obituary.

THE Freethought circle in Leicester has lost one of its Grand Old Men through the death of Mr. John Hart, at the age of seventy-nine. In his youth Mr. Hart was attracted by the teachings of Robert Owen, and, having given up orthodoxy, remained a staunch Freethinker for sixty years. I conducted the funeral ceremony on Saturday, December 2. Some of the family who were present are Christians, but they respected the opinions of the deceased, and readily consented to my carrying out the service in the Secular form. Mr. Hart died at peace with all men, and every neighbor respected him.—F. J. GOULD.

The *Academy*, in reviewing Dr. Cheyne's *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, remarks: "Canon Cheyne would no doubt consider us uncharitable if we suggested that he is here saying, in a periphrastic way, that the priestly writer deliberately wrote for ulterior purposes what he knew to be false." And, after quoting the Rev. Canon's statements about the utter dubiousness of the existence of Abraham, and another contributor's demonstration that the theology attributed to Paul in the Acts is totally at variance with the theology of his Epistles, it adds: "One begins to wonder whether such critics consider any part of the Bible trustworthy." This perfectly substantiates our oft-expressed position that the Christian Scriptures are admitted by all competent scholars to be false; and it is an obvious fact that the defence of the Bible is now left entirely to illiterate and scurrilous ranters at street-corners and in the public parks.

Book Chat.

THE RELIGION OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

UNDER the prophetic—and, as some will think, fantastic—title of *The Religion of the Twentieth Century*, Mr. Joseph McCabe has published through Watts & Co. a very excellent and carefully-written volume of Rationalist criticism. Of course it is difficult to discover or invent new arguments at this time of day. Originality in that direction is hardly to be expected. Nevertheless, there is a certain originality in the way in which Mr. McCabe puts the case against religion—or, if you please, theology. He is not an old hackneyed hand, like some of us; he writes from the fresh outlook of one who has rather recently left what is called "faith" behind him, and now turns to examine and discuss it with as little as may be of partizanship or personal feeling. Not that he is cold or emotionally indifferent. He has taken his side on intellectual grounds, but he sees the far-reaching ethical change which is involved, and he hails with enthusiasm the decadence of supernatural religion and the slow but sure advent of the new religion, or idealism—call it what you will—of humanity.

Mr. McCabe's first chapter is on "The Right and Duty of Reason." He points out how idle it is to assert, as Newman did, and as so many smaller apologists who follow his lead are doing, that reason and faith are two distinct faculties dealing with different subject matters. Ultimately, if you think at all, you must come to an intellectual basis, and the most mystical faith is found to rest upon certain ideas which are or are not true, and do or do not stand justified by evidence. Everything else is subsidiary and derivative. "Religion," Mr. McCabe says, "is a matter of truth, not of taste." This is enforced in a really fine passage, which is a rhetorical amplification, so to speak, of a remark attributed to George Eliot. That great writer is reported to have said to a clergyman that she had only one objection to Christianity; and when he hopefully asked her what it was, she replied: "It isn't true."

With regard to the "consolations" of faith, Mr. McCabe writes: "The man who felt real consolation in the belief that he would suddenly become rich at the age of forty, because some prophet had foretold it and it harmonised with his inclination, would be an object of derision. What essential difference is there between such a case and the case of a man who believes he will be made infinitely richer when he dies, because his parents and pastors have told him so, and he finds the assurance consoling?" This is well said, but something might be added. Every faith consoles its devotees because they have been trained to require that particular sort of consolation. Their feelings have been adapted to their creed, and the adaptation is cited to prove that the creed is true. Which is substantially, if not formally, reasoning in a circle.

The next two chapters of Mr. McCabe's little book are a trenchant criticism of religion, first in the light of modern science, and secondly in the light of modern philosophy. There is no trace of God or immortality in the teachings of physical science, none in human history, none in biology or psychology. There is no gulf between mind and matter; the gulf is only between the highest and the lowest forms of mind. "The human mind," moreover, as Mr. McCabe remarks, "is not an isolated phenomenon." It is included in the general scope of evolution. Any alleged supernaturalism must be placed behind the world-process, not behind special phases of it; and it can only be placed there, logically, by those who know—if they *do* know—that the universe ever had a beginning.

Mr. McCabe's fourth chapter deals with "Authority as an Impossible Basis." He points out that authority must ultimately rest upon reason, since it is reason which prompts us to defer to the judgment of better-informed or superior thinkers. Any other submission is indolence or cowardice. Moreover, it is not true that religion is honestly able to boast the greatest names on its side. It is not true in Germany or France, or even in England. But this is merely a reply *ad hominem*. Logically, as Mr. McCabe sees and says, it does not really matter how many distinguished friends a religion has. The great question, the final question, is this—Is it true? Does it correspond with the reality of things? Is it supported by adequate evidence?

Perhaps the most important chapter of this volume is that on "Morality as a Connecting Link." It is argued that morality is a purely natural growth. Its genesis was independent of religion, and so should be its final status. Supernaturalism did not teach us the distinction between right and wrong, any more than it taught us the distinction between beauty and ugliness. Beauty is what charms our taste, good is what ministers to our welfare. Morality

springs from society. If man had not been gregarious, he would have had no more morality than a shark or a tiger. All this is admirably worked out by Mr. McCabe. It was man, he declares, and not God, who said, "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The priest is only able to teach the contrary, because the average man's morality is the fruit of his early training—a process which he forgets in his later life; and because the average man knows next to nothing of the evolution of patriarchal, tribal, and national morality in ancient times. Just in the same way he listens acquiescently to nonsensical talk about his free-will, because he knows that he wills, but does not know the causes that have determined him to do so.

* * *

Here we may be permitted to say that Mr. McCabe fails a little at one point. It is quite true that morality does not originate in altruism, but in the course of time the social instinct, which is developed in society, may carry a man instinctively to the loftiest self-sacrifice. Action ceases then to become a calculation of loss and gain. Something more is involved than "a sacrifice only in a limited sense," which Mr. McCabe seems to imagine is all that a man makes in subordinating his personal interest to the general good. In some instances he expects no sort of advantage, direct or indirect; if he faces death, he crosses his personality out of the result. This is something more than "commendable and intelligible egoism." It is the social instinct asserting itself in the individual, and dominating his personal instinct of self-preservation.

* * *

We quite follow Mr. McCabe, however, when he turns the tables upon Christian advocates, and argues that Freethinkers have not borrowed ethical ideas from Christianity, simply because Christianity borrowed them from the common ethical fund of the race. As a matter of fact, in the present century it is Christianity that has borrowed from Freethought. "The human improvement," as Mr. McCabe says, "which has come over most of the Churches during this century is solely due to the fact that they have borrowed and adopted the ethical ideas of purely natural moralists." A process of which several pertinent instances are given.

* * *

Mr. McCabe urges that the dogmas of God and immortality must be destroyed, that morality must be wrested from the patronage of theologians, and that religion must be dethroned from its political and social predominance. This is the justification of "a critical propaganda." Destructive work, he says, is as necessary as constructive work. He applauds the labors of the National Secular Society, while praising the efforts of the Ethical Societies, the Positivists, and other divisions of the one great army of progress. Finally, he ventures to prophesy that, while the decadence of religion will continue, a "strong effort will be made by professional ecclesiastics at the commencement of the [twentieth] century, and progress will be temporarily impeded." Naturally we cannot contradict this, but we hope it is not true. At any rate, it is covered by the larger prophecy that the religion of the future will be an "ethical and purely human idealism."

* * *

We take leave of Mr. McCabe's little volume by saying that we have read it through with pleasure and admiration, that it is calculated to do great good in the hands of non-Rationalists who are nevertheless open-minded, and that we hope it will have an extensive circulation.

Correspondence.

OLIVER CROMWELL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Dunbar will pardon my remarking that he also has fallen into the error of confounding the man with the cause. Cromwell did not originate the revolt against the despotism of Charles I., and he took no part in the events which led up to it. Furthermore, Mr. Dunbar seems to think the civil war was the whole sum of the struggle with the king, and talks of Hampden as falling early in a skirmish! Hampden was the central figure of the period. He opposed the tyranny of Charles for eighteen years; and he suffered fine, imprisonment, and prosecution in the cause of right and justice; while Cromwell was doing nothing better than breed pigs at Huntingdon. If the civil war had never been fought, Hampden would still have been remembered as hero, patriot, and martyr; whereas

"A Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood"

would have remained for ever unknown.

When the war did break out, Oliver Cromwell discovered great military talent—we might almost say genius—and it was the object of my article to explain the causes of his success as a general. For, whatever view we take of Cromwell or the Commonwealth, it should be interesting and instructive to trace out the reasons why the war resulted as

it did, more especially as this is the very point which is most often misrepresented and misunderstood.

Mr. Dunbar objects to Cromwell being compared to Napoleon Bonaparte, but the two cases are perfectly analogous. Bonaparte, being a man of great military capacity, became the head of the Republican armies; and, when he thought the French house of representatives opposed his interests, he turned out the members by force, and seized the Government himself. Cromwell did exactly the same.

Mr. Dunbar objects to Cromwell being equated with Charles I. I gave a very incomplete list of things in which Cromwell went to greater lengths than the king, and I fail to see how those actions can be defended, except on the assumption that what is wrong in a king is right and proper in a military usurper.

The allusion to bear-baiting was an obvious repetition of Macaulay; and as to persecution for conscience sake, freedom of the Press, etc., Mr. Dunbar had better refresh his memory with the Acts of Parliament promulgated during the Commonwealth, and he will then perceive that the Commonwealth was not an advance edition of Paradise Regained, but was a very dangerous and uncomfortable government to live under. No one finds fault with Cromwell for being a Christian; that was the effect of his environment. His toleration was the result of his position as an Independent, which put him in conflict with the powerful Presbyterian majority, and compelled him to make common cause with the other minor Protestant sects.

Mr. Dunbar agrees that Cromwell used his power for his own advantage. His monetary position has nothing to do with the case, for a man's life consisteth not in the multitude of things that he possesseth; and it is surely futile to deny that Cromwell was actuated by love of power, or that he showed at critical moments in his career a firm determination to keep the reins in his own hands.

The struggle between Charles and his Parliament ended with the death of one party to the quarrel; and the interval between the king's death and the restoration of Charles II. remained entirely fruitless. Cromwell's part was merely that of general to the Parliamentary armies. As a soldier, he occupies the first rank in his own period; but as a civilian he is indefensible. In the November number of the *Century* Mr. John Morley aptly says: "Wherever force was useless Cromwell failed."

CHILPERIC.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

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

BRADLAUGH CLUB AND INSTITUTE (36 Newington Green-road, Ball's Pond): 8.30, Miss Bertha Jeffries' Dramatic Company in a celebrated Farcical Comedy.

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, René Bull's Photographs (taken under fire), entitled "The Soudan Campaign." Exhibitor and lecturer, Brandon Medland.

NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Leighton Hall, Leighton-crescent, Kentish Town): 7, G. H. Perris, "Fin de Siècle: A Retrospect."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Political Ethics."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Empress Rooms, Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Universities for the People."

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Originality of Jesus."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): J. McCabe—11, "The Catholic Church in France"; 7, "The Dream of Immortality."

BOLTON (Socialist Hall, Co-operation-street; entrance Lorne-street): December 11, at 7.30, Charles Watts, "The Secular View of Existence."

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Stanley Jones, A lecture.

DERBY (Central Hotel, Market-place): 7, Mrs. Trumally, "Is the War in the Transvaal Justifiable?"

EDINBURGH (Moulders' Hall, 105 High-street): 6.30, A. Paul, "Was Jesus the Messiah?"

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Barker, "The Origin of Species"; 6.30, Social Meeting.

HULL (St. George's Hall, Story-street); C. Cohen—11, "The Value of Unbelief"; 2.30, "Is there a Life Beyond the Grave?" 7, "In His Steps; or, What would Jesus Do?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, H. Snell, "Emile Zola and Religion."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Haydon, "Science of Ancient Egypt."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Charles Watts—11, "Emancipation of Human Thought"; 3, "Secular View of Existence"; 7, "Colonel Ingersoll as I Knew Him." Tea at 5.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street) : 7, W. Dyson, "The Morals of Evolution."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place) : 7, Adjourned discussion, "Patriotism, Militarism, and Imperialism."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—December 10, Hull; 17, Leicester; 31, Birmingham.

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

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