

# THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XX.—No. 8.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1900.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## The Greatest of Freethought Martyrs.

THREE hundred years ago, on February 17, 1600, a great heretic was burnt alive in the Campo di Flora at Rome. He was "butchered to make a Roman holiday," in a worse sense than Byron's gladiator. It was the Pope's jubilee, and the Eternal City was thronged with pilgrims from all parts of Christendom. Soldiers, monks, priests, statesmen, and the common rabble were all present to witness the delectable sight. Women held up babies in their arms to see the "infidel" tortured in the name of Christ. It was a most splendid entertainment, and Holy Mother Church was kind to present it gratuitously.

At one point of the burning a crucifix was presented to the victim to kiss. It was probably red-hot, according to the sarcastic mercy of the Church. But the victim did not kiss it. He spurned it. As a hostile eyewitness said, he turned away his head with a terrible and menacing gesture. He had done with such things, and his courage was equal to the cruellest of deaths. Not a groan, not a plaint, escaped him to make music in the ears of his enemies. He died as he had lived, with a bold front to fate. He was always fearless, and he never trembled at the end, when he stood against the world, without one drop of the balm of sympathy, or the vision of one friendly face to lighten the mists of agony.

Nearly eight years before he had been arrested by the Inquisition at Venice. Several months had been spent in prison there. But a demand was made for his body by the Inquisition at Rome, and the procurator who advised that he should be handed over reported that "His errors in heresy are very grave, though for the rest he possesses a most excellent rare mind, with exquisite learning and wisdom." For the next seven years his story is a blank. He was in the clutch of the vilest and bloodiest tribunal that ever disgraced and cursed the earth. During the whole of that time he probably saw no human face save that of the gaoler who brought his food, or those of the cowed Inquisitors who came to extract his recantation. No doubt he was frequently tortured, as Campanella was, and as Galileo was not long afterwards. He was kept alive in order that he might confess his errors and make his peace with the Church. It would have been a grand thing to break the spirit, and compel the submission, of such a famous and distinguished heretic. But the attempt was a failure. He bore his seven years' Gethsemane with invincible fortitude. At last they tried him, and sentenced him to death "without the shedding of blood"—the hypocritical formula for burning alive. Even at that supreme moment his matchless spirit lifted him up above his judges. He raised his head proudly, and told them that they pronounced his sentence with more fear than he heard it. Then he went out to pass through the shadow into the light of immortality. Not the immortality of the Christian's fabled heaven, but the immortality of the world's loving remembrance.

"He died the most desolate of deaths," said Tennyson. It is true and finely said. But the desolate Gethsemane was worse than the desolate Calvary. He who had drunk the cup of pain daily for seven long years might well clasp with a certain joy the cup that held the last fiery draught. It was fierce and racking, but it brought "endless oblivion and divine repose."

Giordano Bruno's life ended in the flames of the stake, and it lasted through storm and combat. From the  
No. 970.

moment he doffed the garb of a Dominican monk and fled from the persecutors who had drawn up an indictment for heresy against him, containing a hundred and thirty counts, he was a wanderer over the face of Europe. City after city received him and cast him forth. After a wearisome Odyssey of fourteen years he was lured back to his native Italy, where the Triumphant Beast with the great bloody jaws was awaiting him. For eight years its fangs were in his flesh, and then it crushed him to death.

It is pleasant to know that England furnished the one oasis in the desert of his career. The three years he spent here in the house of the French ambassador were sweet and fruitful. He lived without fear of a hand upon his shoulder, and wrote his principal works in his native tongue.

Bruno was rather a pioneer than an epoch-marking philosopher. Several historians of philosophy have likened him to a comet or a meteor. Coleridge praised his "lofty and enlightened piety," which was "unintelligible to bigots and dangerous to an apostate hierarchy." Tennyson's opinion of him is expressed in a passage of our great poet's biography by his son:—

"Walt Whitman had sent my father a little book containing two addresses on *Giordano Bruno* by Daniel Brinton and Thomas Davidson. The death of Bruno was a subject which my father thought might be good for a poem. Of Bruno he said: 'His view of God is in some ways mine. Bruno was a poet, holding his mind ever open to new truths, and believing in an infinite universe as the necessary effect of the infinite divine Power; he was burnt as a heretic. His age did not believe in him. I think he was misunderstood, and I should like to show him in what I conceive to be his right colors: he was the author of much of our modern philosophy. He died the most desolate of deaths.'"

Tennyson seems to us right in saying that Bruno was a poet. He was the poet-martyr of the new philosophy, which consisted first in an appeal to reason against authority, and secondly in a recognition of the might and majesty of science. Bruno warmly embraced the astronomy which is associated with the serener names of Kepler, Copernicus, and Galileo. He perished chiefly for proclaiming that the earth is a planet, that the sun is the centre of our system, and that space is strewn with constellations. All this is cheap knowledge now, but it was a blasphemous novelty then, and Bruno was killed for proclaiming it.

This noble scholar did not believe in whispering the truth. He was for publishing it even in the marketplace. He saw that the mind must be ploughed up to receive the seed of thought. In his own words:—

"By stirring, stimulating, surprising, contradicting, exciting men's minds, they are made fruitful; and this, according to Socrates, is a salutary vocation."

He laughed at the protests of habit and indolence, and ridiculed the orthodox appeal to antiquity, as Bacon did after him.

"The title of innovator which is bestowed upon us is not ignominious. There is no doctrine in antiquity which was not at one time new; and if age is the mark of truth, our century is fuller of dignity than the century of Aristotle, since the world has now attained a greater age by twenty centuries."

He called men from idle speculation to fruitful study. "Why lean upon vain fancy," he asks, "when experience herself is our teacher?" Certainly it was easier to believe than to investigate. The gold of truth could not be obtained without digging and sifting. And if the common man was too lazy to think for himself, the

more active minds should at least be free to carry on the great tradition of progress.

"Difficulty is ordained to deter mean spirits; rare, heroic, and divine men pass over the road of difficulty, and compel necessity to yield them the palm of immortality."

Tennyson was right, too, in saying that Bruno was "the author of much of our modern philosophy." He caught foregleams of modern Evolution. Against all the tendency of his time, he declared that reason and instinct are fundamentally the same; and that the difference between the "soul" of a man, an animal, and a plant, is in quantity, not in quality. His language was generally Pantheistic, but he also said that—

"A time would come, a new and desired age, when the gods should lie in Orcus, and the fear of everlasting punishment should vanish."

It was charged against him by his Venetian accuser, the stupid and bigoted Mocenigo, that besides sneering at the miracles of Christ, including the miraculous birth from the Virgin, he had actually asserted that "not to do to others that which we desire them not to do to us suffices for good living; and that he laughs to scorn all other sins." He was evidently far in advance of his time. That was his misfortune, and his glory. His personal loss was our universal gain. It is ennobling to think of that fiery daring spirit which flamed against the most terrible obstacles. We can imagine the light in his splendid eyes as he penned this lofty invocation:—

"O worthy love of the beautiful! O desire for the divine! lend me thy wings; bring me to the dayspring, to the clearness of the young morning; and the outrage of the rabble, the storms of Time, the slings and arrows of Fortune, shall fall upon this tender body, and shall weld it to steel."

His prayer was answered. Strength and courage were his to face the worst martyrdom in history. He stood alone at the stake against the world. And he stands alone still—the supreme martyr of all time.

G. W. FOOTE.

### Secular View of Existence.

HUMAN existence has its joys and its sorrows, its sunshine and its clouds, its charms and its perplexities. Therefore, it behoves us to endeavor to have a true conception of the nature and capabilities of life, so that we may make our sojourn on earth as happy, as prosperous, and as useful as possible. In order to do this thoroughly we should obey the injunction which was inscribed on the temple of Delphos: "Man, know thyself." By such knowledge alone are we enabled to avoid many of the evils of life, and at the same time to fully realise life's potency and requirements.

There are two aspects of existence—the one which refers to the universe, its alleged origin, etc., and the other which pertains to the human race. With the former aspect we are not now concerned beyond stating that, as Secularists, we do not accept the theological theory that the universe was created by God, as stated in the Bible, and that it is governed by what is termed a "divine power." These are mere speculations, in which we refuse to indulge. We fail to see any evidence to justify us in dogmatising either for or against the existence of a God who is said to have been the creator of all things. As to the supposed "divine" influence, I believe that such a force requires the exercise of more faith than Secularists can command. Even if such a power exist, it is beyond man's experience, and is, therefore, not a recognisable element in human affairs. This being so, we prefer dealing with our duties as members of the great human family. The Secular view of existence is the very opposite of the theological one, inasmuch as the latter involves the theory that we are by nature corrupt and, at the same time, incapable of self-purification; that our bodies are "vile," that our "hearts are deceitful," and that even our righteousness is as "filthy rags." Such a representation of human nature Secularists regard as a libel on existence. We do not believe that life is merely a gloomy nightmare, nor that man is necessarily depraved. On the contrary, where theological power is absent, where mental freedom is unfettered, where moral obligations are in force, and

where reason is properly cultivated, existence, thus untrammelled by superstition, will be associated with order, progress, and general happiness.

The Secular view does not extend to any existence beyond the grave. We do not, as it has been frequently avowed, deny a future state, but we frankly acknowledge that we have no vision to enable us to penetrate the darkness of the tomb. As Secularists, therefore, we maintain the modesty of silence, rather than indulge in the egotism of theologians, who assume a knowledge upon this subject which they do not possess. The voice of science and reason is silent as to what awaits us (if anything) when we have passed through the portals of death. It is true that some persons desire an after life, but this fact furnishes no proof that such a desire will be realised. Goldwin Smith evidently saw how baseless is such a belief in immortality. He says: "The mere existence of a desire in man to prolong his being, even if it were universal, can afford little assurance that the desire will be fulfilled. Of desires which will never be fulfilled man's whole estate is lamentably full. If to each of us his own little being is inexpressibly dear, so is its own little being to the insect, which, nevertheless, is crushed without remorse and without hope of a future existence. It is sad that man should perish—and perish just when he has reached his prime. This seems like cruel wastefulness in nature. But is not nature full of waste? Butler rather philosophically finds an analogy to the waste of souls in the waste of seeds. He might have found one in the destruction of geological races, in the redundancy of animal life, which involves elimination by wholesale slaughter, in the multitude of children brought into the world only to die. The deaths of children, of which a large number appear inevitable, seem to present an insurmountable stumbling-block to any optimism which holds that Nature can never be guilty of waste even in regard to the highest of her works. Waste there evidently is in nature, both animate and inanimate, and to an enormous extent, if our intelligence tells us true. The earth is full of waste places, as well as of blind agencies of destruction, such as earthquakes and floods, while her satellite appears to be nothing but waste."

According to the Secular view of existence, man is a material being, possessing thought, mind, and intelligence. These are qualities of his material system, and upon it they depend, and by its condition are their operations controlled and regulated. All such operations are natural consequences, and, so far as we are aware, they are not known apart from the material organisation. What some folk call their spiritual nature we regard as the emotional part of the material being, upon which it always depends for its manifestation. Having no idea of the alleged supernatural, we hold that all existence is governed by natural law, and that it is our duty to learn the operations of that law, and the different results which follow the obedience or violation of it. Further, we must never fail to recognise that in proportion to the knowledge we possess upon this point will be our ability to realise the fulness of existence. We do not ignore the moral nature of man when it is properly understood. By a moral man we understand one who does his best to produce and maintain a well-organised state of society, and who, as far as possible, avoids the performance of acts which he knows would injure either himself or others. This view of morality has its basis in human nature, its incentive in human happiness, and its reward in the establishment of peace and justice on earth. The Secular view of the best way to attain success in life is that it depends upon personal effort, systematic conduct, the wise use of knowledge, and the observance and carrying out of the principles of truth, honesty, and temperance.

The great objection to the Secular view of existence is that it ignores the belief that the affairs of life are controlled by God. This is so, as we consider that, if any God did interfere in human affairs, no results could be depended upon with any degree of certainty; the law of cause and effect would be of little or no value. Here we should come into direct conflict with the fundamental conclusions of natural science, which teaches, as Professor Tyndall states, that there is an invariable order of nature. We are not now concerned as to why this is so, but only as to the fact that there is such an observed uniformity of causes and consequences, and

that, if the belief in God's interference were true, the stability of natural law would not exist. Either theology or science must be accepted, and those who are influenced by known facts, rather than by conjecture and assumption, should have no hesitation as to their choice.

The lesson of all experience proves that practically it is not God, but man, who is the principal factor in promoting the happiness and in diminishing the misery of humanity. We can form some idea of the result of a widespread sympathy and goodwill among men, founded purely upon a desire for the common good. We know, judging from experience, that if this desire existed in a greater degree than it does, society would be superior to what it now is. Ample evidence is at hand to prove that by intelligence, unity, and reliance upon secular effort, the sum of human happiness can be increased, and the amount of suffering lessened, without any dependence on, or appeal to, any god. Rectitude and self-help are the hinges by which the door is opened to the increased comfort and welfare of modern life. There is an old proverb to the effect that "Heaven helps those who help themselves"; but, if the people have power to help themselves, they can leave heaven out of their calculations.

CHARLES WATTS.

### Lachrymose Religion.

"Is it nothing to you all, ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.....Mine eye runneth down with water. I am in distress; my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth."—*Lamentations of Jeremiah*.

"Why these weeps?"—*Artemus Ward*.

THE onion was at one period of history an object of worship with the Egyptians. In modern Christendom it is not worshipped, but it seems to be extensively utilised in connection with the predominant religion. Poor Jeremiah had real reason for his tears in the then miserable state of Jerusalem, and there is little doubt that his grief was sincere. The lachrymose religionists of to-day have no such tangible ground for lamentation; and often it is quite open to suspicion whether their tears are genuine—whether, indeed, there is not an artificiality about them highly suggestive of the flow of eye-water which the once-worshipped esculent might readily evoke.

On the part of the robust school of modern Christians there is an endeavor to present their faith as a gospel pre-eminently of joy and gladness, beaming with beatific smiles, and suffused with happiness, present and promised, in all its elements and aspects. Whether it is really so upon examination is a point on which much may be said in the way of denial. But, however that may be, there are large numbers of Christians—self-styled "miserable sinners"—who take their religion sadly, and who, sincerely or otherwise, seem always to be overwhelmed in pious woe. The morose sternness of the old Puritan spirit has apparently, in their cases, melted down into a maudlin emotionalism. These are the people who regard the world as a vale of tears, and existence a sorrowful pilgrimage, and who sing:—

Earth is but a desert drear;  
Heaven is my home.

To them most pleasures are sinful; merriment, if not exactly unholy, is out of place, and the only subject worthy to engage supreme attention is the agony of Christ in the garden and on the cross, and the salvation thereby accruing. Good Friday is the day in the year which commends itself to them above all others, for then they may publicly indulge in their doleful outpourings to their hearts' content. These are the kill-joys who object to any kind of amusement on Sundays—who are opposed to the opening of museums and art galleries, to concerts, sacred or otherwise; to Sunday steamboats, cycling, fishing, rowing, or anything whereby the dreadful monotony of the Lord's Day can be, to some extent, relieved. They are the people who meet in Exeter Hall, and lament in sackcloth and ashes the heathenism of the world. "Let us think, my dear friends," they say; "O, let us think of all the poor savages and semi-civilized populations of Africa, India, China, and other parts of the globe, who are dying for the message of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us think of

all the golden opportunities for their reclamation that we are daily allowing to slip by, and let us acknowledge with repentant tears the culpable inactivity of which we have been guilty." Truly it must be distressing to sincere believers in Christ's Gospel to find that its teachings are so little spread; that so vast a proportion of the earth's inhabitants are living and dying in absolute ignorance of its existence. But one would think that that was a matter more for the grief of Christ himself, who neglected to arrange for the better promulgation of his Gospel, than for his humble followers, who cannot be expected to accomplish impossibilities. Still they whip themselves with cords, pull long lugubrious faces, and otherwise present themselves as if about to sing that depressing ballad, "The heart bowed down with grief and woe." All the same, there is a sleek, fleshy, oleaginous aspect about many of them that suggests that the race of Chadbands is not extinct.

These lachrymose Christians, professedly if not actually, obey the apostolic injunction to "love not the world nor the things of the world." They affect to despise this sublunary sphere, and to seek not the meat which perisheth. The world is simply a wilderness in which they "nightly pitch their moving tents" in life's journey to Zion. The expressed contempt for the world and the things of the world—which, after all, according to the Christian faith, must be the creation and under the direction of their Deity—is, of course, only to be exhibited in a practical fashion by retirement to monasteries, convents, or other religious retreats. When a Christian has thus immured himself or herself, we may conclude that there is at least some courage in the devotee's conviction. Failing that step, it is reasonably open to doubt whether these professions are absolutely sincere.

From an entirely different point of view, Schopenhauer arrived at the conviction that the world was hardly worth living in. In his *Parerga* he says: "If you try to imagine what an amount of misery, pain, and suffering of every kind the sun shines upon in its course, you will admit that it would be much better if on the earth, as little as on the moon, the sun were able to call forth the phenomena of life, and if here, as there, the surface were still in a crystalline state." He combats Leibnitz's contention that this is the best of all possible worlds, urging that if this were correct it would not justify God in having created it. "For he is the creator not of the world only, but of possibility itself; and, therefore, he ought to have so ordered possibility as that it would admit of something better." Schopenhauer argues that in this world it is the good which is negative; happiness and satisfaction always imply some desire fulfilled, some state of pain brought to an end. Life is an unprofitable episode disturbing the blessed calm of non-existence. "Even though things have gone with you tolerably well, the longer you live the more clearly you will feel that, on the whole, life is a disappointment—nay, a cheat." He considers the Brahminical idea, that the world was produced by a kind of fall or mistake, to be an admirable account of the origin of things, as also the Buddhist view that the world came into being as the result of some inexplicable disturbance in the heavenly calm of Nirvana. The world he regards as simply a penal colony.

Practically, the doleful and ascetic religionist arraigns the Divine handiwork as pointedly as Schopenhauer does, for it cannot be pretended that lifelong tribulation and tears are an *indispensable* preliminary to a future life of felicity. Why should we be put to all this pain without being consulted as to whether we care to undergo the ordeal? If we fail in the ordeal, why should we be, as Oliver Wendell Holmes puts it, "sentenced to capital punishment for the crime of living"? Weak as we mortals are, we have a right to protest against this Divine experimenting. The pious believer accepts it, but, in effect, not uncomplainingly, for, especially with the lachrymose Christians, nine-tenths of their lives are occupied in lamenting that they are obliged to live.

Divested of all the mystery and obscurity in which religion has enveloped it, the present existence is not, on the whole, unendurable, however much it leaves to be desired. At any rate, there is no need to move about in it with a spirit of sourness or sorrow which aggravates the evils to be encountered. There is nothing

more ludicrous than the spectacle of these lugubrious Christians groaning and moaning in the outer world, when it is always open to them to decently hide their morbid melancholy in some religious retreat. What is especially annoying about them is that they should obtrude it on secular-minded folks, who are content to take things as they come, and endeavor to make the best of them. And still more aggravating is it when they strive to place a ban on the all-too-limited pleasures of others.

FRANCIS NEALE.

### Religious Advertisement.

THE other day there appeared in one of our religious weeklies an article on religious advertisement. The writer was in no sense condemning the practice; on the contrary, he insisted on its value, and even on its careful cultivation. It was not only a powerful feature nowadays, but had been during the whole history of the creed. In the days of primitive Christianity this advertisement was effected by the travelling zeal of the early Christians and by the persecutions which it was said to have undergone. During its subsequent history the various heresies were often brought into the greater prominence by the persecutions directed against them, and in our own days such an organisation as the Salvation Army has been practically created by systematic and extensive advertising. Indeed, a not uninteresting book on *The Way to Advertise Religion* might be compiled by a smart business man.

No one who studies the history of religions can question the advantage derived from advertisements. Not only do the Churches thrive upon them, but, as is the case with a great many business gentlemen, very little attention is paid to the nature of the advertisements provided they have the redeeming quality of serving the purpose aimed at. Surreptitious appeals to pruriency, such as addresses to "Men only," are notoriously common. Of course, nothing indelicate takes place at such meetings; but, all the same, there is the suggestion that something "tasty" may be heard, and this has its effect in bringing a good many who would otherwise stay away. Converted burglars—usually converted at an age when burgling is apt to be unprofitable—reclaimed pickpockets, saved niggers in their national dress, etc., are the stock advertisements for religions; and, like many other well-advertised articles, there is often found on examination a sad disproportion between the article advertised and the pains taken in heralding its virtues to the world.

In truth, the present position of Christianity is very largely the result of persistent advertising. Fifty thousand professional agents are abroad touting for customers, and their efforts are backed by a large army of non-professionals. The Press dwells unctuously upon the superior quality of the goods provided; papers that would not give a line to the most able attack that was ever made against Christianity devote columns to recording the imbecile utterances of the clergy. Old ladies, of both sexes, blessed with more cash than intelligence, spend their money in circulating business puffs, in the shape of tracts. No business in the world has ever been advertised with the same persistence as Christianity; no business has ever had an equal amount of money spent in the same direction. For hundreds of years thousands of writers and speakers have been trumpeting its virtues to the world, and the fact that, in spite of all this gigantic advertising, Christianity is yet losing ground, speaks volumes as to the intrinsic worth of the article offered for general consumption.

What other individual has ever received the advertising that has been accorded to Jesus Christ? Not Plato, not Aristotle, not any of the world's real teachers. All of these have had to win their way by individual worth, and retain their place by individual utility; while the position of Jesus, in spite of advertising, becomes more insecure as time advances. There is in one of Zangwill's books a clever satire on the way to manufacture a genius. A number of journalists get together, select the most incapable of their number, and agree to transform him into a genius. They commenced by inserting casual references to his supposed

writings. Then notices began to appear concerning his personal habits, his family, the nature of his forthcoming book, and the conditions under which his last one was written, with numberless other items of the kind usually given to a celebrity-loving world; until, finally, without ever having written a word, the obscure journalist finds himself established in the world as a literary genius.

It is a satire, and yet there is much truth underlying it. At any rate, the method is not altogether foreign to that by which the ordinary individual is led to accept Jesus as a heaven-born moralist, an invaluable ideal, the savior of the world. People find these characteristics in the New Testament Jesus, simply and solely because they have always been told they are there. Their opinion is only a re-echo of the assiduously-circulated advertisement. Had they have come to the New Testament without this preparation, the result might have been very different.

It was Napoleon, I think, who said that the only figure of any value in rhetoric was repetition. The business and the religious worlds alike bear witness to the shrewdness of the remark. Whole businesses are built up by the simple process of covering hoardings and newspapers with the repeated assertion that somebody's soap, or pills, or cocoa, is the best in the market. It is repeated so often that people end by believing it. "Everybody says so" is still the strongest reason the majority of people can offer for their belief. Seeing is believing in more senses than one.

How many people would ever have discovered the literary beauties of the Bible but for this reason? I remember a local preacher once dilating upon the literary aspect of the Bible in reply to one of my lectures. I asked him for a specimen, and promised him to more than equal it by a quotation from one of the English poets. He quoted the *Ten Commandments*.

No; people know the Bible has great literary beauties because they have been reading advertisements to that effect, and that is all. Ask them to point out where they are and in what they consist, and not one in a thousand could offer you a reasonable reply. Never was this shown more clearly than by Dean Farrar, who, in one of his recent books, devoted whole pages to cataloguing the opinions of great men concerning the Bible, much as a pill-maker displays his testimonials. The value of advertising has never been lost sight of by religious leaders, and, in addition, they have had the advantage of paying for their advertisements out of the public purse.

I am not arguing that, in advertising their wares, the clergy have been guilty of any grave misdemeanor. I am only pointing out some of the methods by which religious opinions are manufactured, and what an amount of nonsense there is in all the religious twaddle concerning the "permanence of the religious instinct." But even in the matter of advertising the clergy have not played a fair game. With a capital of millions, and a band of trained commercial travellers numbering thousands, with the prior right of advertising on some of the best hoardings in the country—Parliament, the Law Courts, etc.—they have, in addition, claimed and exercised the power of excluding the advertisements of all antagonistic firms. The result has been that people have taken Christianity, not so much because they were convinced of its value, as because they were unaware that anything of a really valid character would be said against it. Ordinary conversation with Christians proves this, and almost any volume on Christianity provides evidence of the same character. Thus, Professor Momerie, discussing what will be the religion of the future, asks, "Will the religion of the future include immortality?" and replies, "I think so. There is absolutely no evidence against it." That anyone would require some evidence for it before believing never crosses his mind. And in the same vein the late Sir G. G. Stokes, in a lecture on "The Absence of Real Opposition between Science and Revelation," arguing for a creative intelligence back of all evolutionary processes, asks triumphantly: "Now, against these statements (those of Revelation), what have we to adduce on the side of science?" As though every statement that cannot be demonstrated to be false must at once be accepted as true.

The same absurd idea, that it is the function of one party to propound doctrines, and that of its opponents

to disprove or accept them, lies at the root of the fantastical and mystical doctrines with which the world has been so sorely troubled. The ground argument that any religious man has to offer for his belief in the existence of God, or the immortality of the soul, is that you cannot demonstrate their falsity. He holds them, in the first instance, because they have been constantly thrust upon him, and retains them afterwards, partly because he fails to appreciate all that may be said against them, and partly because their falsity cannot be demonstrated.

The recognition of these two simple facts, that by constantly impressing one set of views upon people, and excluding all antagonistic views, they will come to regard such teachings as unquestionable, lies at the root of Christian policy in general and that of the Roman Catholic Church in particular. All the efforts of Christian leaders have been directed towards this end. It is for this reason that Christians exclude antagonistic literature as far as possible, not only from the young, but also from adults, if they can be properly called adults who are never out of the leading-strings of the clergy.

Fair advertising the Secularist has no objection to. All that he need do is to point out that, if the people can only be brought to retain their religious ideas by dint of a huge army of professionals singing its praises on the one hand and suppressing by legal or social enactments everything of a contrary character, then the religious sentiment cannot be of a very durable or serviceable nature. And, in closing, I may point out one important difference between the clergy and ordinary traders. The trader is compelled, if he would find a market, to produce goods that do in some manner satisfy a want. The clergy go to work in the contrary manner. Instead of producing goods that will induce people to purchase, they breed people in order to purchase the goods. The whole efforts of the clergy in the schools and elsewhere are simply directed to the end of breeding future customers for their special wares. Place the clergy in an open market, and a great many of the Churches would soon be bankrupt.

Finally, for Secularists there are two lessons to be learned from the tactics of the Churches. The first is how much may be done by keeping our cause well before the public notice. Given the means, what the clergy can do we can do. We have a much better article to offer than they; all that is required is the means to place it before the public in a proper manner. And, secondly, there is the lesson that I laid some stress on in my last article—the lesson that truth, no matter how pure, will not prevail unless we do something to secure the conditions of its triumph. Many a good business has come to grief through want of capital to develop it, and many a good serviceable doctrine has been trampled underfoot for want of adequate support at the right time. Let us see that Secularism does not fail through either of these causes.

C. COHEN.

## Coming Away from the Bells.

THE PROVINCIAL ENGLISH SUNDAY.

(Concluded from page 108.)

I vow Saint Beuve never enjoyed a dinner more than I did the one provided me by the busy manager at the Railway Hotel. Of the meat I am not going to say anything. It was mutton, roast mutton, and I should be inclined to say very nice roast mutton; I was hungry, very hungry, but I had been tied down to roast mutton for about seventeen consecutive days, and I am afraid a proud and ungrateful epicureanism for a moment rebelled at the idea of a half-day's walking and riding to be trapped into one more dinner of roast mutton.

Only for a moment, though; the swede turnips redeemed the mutton, and the sight of the apple tart, custard, and cheesecake inspired an assault which should have been incense to any cook devoted to her craft. After a small portion of cheese and a stick of crisp celery, I sat down in an easy chair, in front of a good old English fire, and felt it almost possible to shake hands with Hugh Price Hughes or Mark Guy Pearse, who had just visited Buxton to tell lies about Charles Bradlaugh and Freethinkers.

The dinner was good and the charge was fair, so after a rest I went on my way rejoicing, and continued my studies of Buxton's exteriors and Sunday's peculiarities.

Of the exteriors I need not say much here; they are effective generally, exceedingly handsome some of them; the universal use of stone ensures an architectural dignity which is never found in our southern and common brick.

A hovel, shed, or pig style in stone, even in ruins, never seems to take on the rottenness and sordidness which we so often see in the brick-built districts.

Beyond the shutting of the shops and the pulling down of a few blinds, the houses vary little, Sunday or week day.

But what of the people?

The difference is appalling. It is positively the truth that there are thousands of grown people in England who regularly, fifty-two times every year, wish themselves dead, and that from sheer *ennui*; another lot would do so if they had brains enough to think or feel at all: these simply bemuddle themselves on bad beer and tobacco.

A miner told me that he smoked two to three ounces of tobacco from Saturday midday to Sunday bedtime.

"Only leave off smokin' to do a bit of grub."

"Don't you ever read?"

"Oh, no; we don't get any papers our way."

"But can't you get a book?"

"Oh, ah yaas, but ah don't bother bout bukes."

And they never walk, never. I believe in many parts of England there are to-day scores of grown men and women who have never in their whole lives gone ten miles from where they were born; in fact, from some conversations I have heard, I am inclined to say that a fair gathering could be made of adults who have lived a lifetime within a five-mile circle.

Oh, no, they never go for a walk, for the sake of a walk.

And so it comes that all the bars are full all the legally allowed hours, and the street corners crowded when the bars are closed.

Each important corner of Buxton seemed to be supported by its special set of Carytides, or rather Atlantes, who seem to pass most of the time between meals in smoking and making rude remarks on any females or strangers who may chance by; and that is one of the most striking peculiarities of the English Sunday, not only in Buxton, but in any town or village you may be a stranger in. In Buxton, as in any place of similar size and importance, each of the various corners will have its own regular set of supporters, the variations in social standing being very clearly marked and rigidly adhered to. Clay pipes, briars, cigarettes up to cigars, "of sorts," as the florist says in his catalogue.

And this is the only way in which thousands pass Sunday after Sunday.

Any one who has done much touring on foot in rural England will admit that one of the great difficulties has been to get definite information as to local topography. If you are going for a fifty or hundred miles tramp, you had better go over the course with your map before you start, and be careful never to ask a villager as to any place more than one remove off. As to the history, the geology, the botany, or any other special detail, don't worry the native—try Kelly, failing any more handy guide book.

How do those people manage to live now that religion has so completely lost its hold on so many of them? It is empty enough on fine days, when it is possible to sit on the bridge or the stile, or a cart shaft; but what of the wet days?

And what of the smaller number who don't care to sit on the bridge? They are all in the same boat; get at the inside of their confidences, and you will get the same admission: "Oh, Sunday is fair sickening; I'm going to cut it soon."

And of course they do "cut it," and thus you get one of the reasons of rural depopulation.

Of the superficiality and decreasing power of religion a long stay in any country district provides the drollest examples.

One Sunday morning I was having a quiet read, thinking I had the entire establishment to myself, when in came one of the inmates whom I thought had gone to chapel.

"Hullo, Miss Leeds, how is it you are not at chapel?"

"Oh, I don't like chapel here; it's not like ours at home."

"Indeed, how's that?"

"Oh, I don't like the shape; it is such a wilderness. Ours at home is that shape," pointing to the arch-shape moulding of the register stove.

"Really; well, then, don't go if you don't like the shape."

I didn't laugh out loud, but it was too comic for further discussion.

Everywhere their backs are turned upon the bells. Everywhere can be found evidences of a decaying power.

The elder men, forced by business and wage-earning considerations, still stay with the women in the fold; but the young men and lads, and naturally many of the younger women, have thrown off almost every pretence of adherence—their backs are towards the bells—and this in spite of the fact that there is so little to attract or make up for the companionship thrown away.

Here and there will be found a solitary student poring over, often out of date, primers and science handbooks; or, Sunday after Sunday, working their fancies into some unexpected creation in wood or stone.

If the "one educated gentleman" which the Church of England is supposed to plank in every parish in the land

really realised his power, a wonderful change could be made in rural England in a few years. If these men would only consent to put aside their insufferable parsonic manners, and allow themselves to be real teachers and leaders, they would yet have a splendid chance with the new generations, who, with enough of education to criticise what used to be accepted in blind faith, but still wanting the mental equipment required to provide proper compensation for the old-fashioned hypnotising occupations or conventions, are for the time so hopelessly resourceless.

English critics of *La Terre* have made much of some of the disgusting pictures Zola paints as to rural life in France, but people qualified to speak can tell some astonishing things as to rural English life, especially during the holy Sabbath.

Let the Church Missionary Societies spend millions on their futile work abroad; our work is at our own doors, with our own people, so long hounded and humbugged by the biggest gang of professional thieves the world has ever seen, the clergymen of the Church of England, always the enemies of education and rational amusement, or life of any sort.

When a few more sums have fallen safely into our coffers, and a few more home missionaries have been sent out by the N. S. S. and the Secular Society—when the stupid old Sunday Act has been repealed, which it will be ere long, then will be hope of a rational, full, and enjoyable Sunday, instead of the ghastly weekly horror it is in thousands of lives now.

T. SHORE.

### Acid Drops.

MR. TIM HEALY has found at least one British admirer of his House of Commons speech on South Africa. This is no less a person than Dr. Parker, the oracle of the City Temple. Mr. Healy uttered a certain word which delighted that great Christian—we had nearly written "that great man." What that word was will appear from the following passage in an address of his reported in the *British Weekly*:—"In the debate there was not a religious voice heard in the whole utterance but one. The greatest speech of the debate was in that one word. It was made by Mr. Healy, one of the brightest intellects of the century. When challenged to say to whom the Boers looked for support, he said 'God.' It did my heart good—poor old withered, disappointed heart—to hear that sacred word."

Dr. Parker's heart may or may not be old and withered. That is a personal matter with which the general public have no particular concern. But it would seem that his head is in pretty much the same condition. What can be thought of the intelligence of a man who wants to hear talk about "God" in the House of Commons at this time of day? It may be, however, that this reverend gentleman is not such a fool after all, but is merely showing the bias of his profession. He likes to hear about "God" as another man likes to hear about soap, mustard, or anything else in which he happens to traffic for a living.

As for Mr. Tim Healy, he may be a friend of God, though he was not always reputed to be so. He may also be one of the brightest intellects of the century. We have neither time nor taste to discuss this question. We admit, however, straight away that he is undeniably clever. But the one famous achievement of his life was siding with the Irish priests to break Parnell. And what was the result? The complete disruption of the Nationalist party and the postponement of Home Rule as a question of practical politics? Years have rolled by, and the Nationalist party is now reorganised. But it is reorganised on a Parnellite basis, and its elected leader has all along headed the little band of Parnellite members who were stedfast to their chief while he lived and to his policy when he died. It does not seem, therefore, that Mr. Healy's brightness of intellect, even when assisted by his godliness, has been equivalent to political wisdom.

As for the recognition of God, there has been too much cant already about God in connection with this war. Nobody really believes that he has anything to do with it. Nobody acts as if he thought the Deity had. Both sides rely on their own material resources, and would be very silly if they didn't.

Dr. Parker forgets the command of his Savior about the use of the word "fool," and the danger which he incurs in employing it. Being asked his opinion about the twentieth-century discussion, his reply was "that we are in the twentieth century, and anyone who questioned it was a fool." It would perhaps be rude, but probably accurate, to call Dr. Parker a fool for talking in this fashion.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain is coming out in a new character. He is going to participate in the celebration of the hundred and nineteenth anniversary of the death of John Wesley.

This event occurs on March 2. A four hours' prayer-meeting will open at five o'clock in the morning. But the great Joseph will not be in that. To do so he would have to "sit up for it," as the curate said who was required to take the 7 a.m. service. He is to preside at the luncheon (even men of God eat—yea, and drink), with Mr. Ebenezer Parkes, M.P., and the Rev. Dr. Rigg as vice-chairmen. We look forward with interest to the report of what Joseph Chamberlain has to say about John Wesley. It would be hard to imagine two more dissimilar characters.

Several Wesleyans have written to the *Morning Leader* protesting against this arrangement. "There is in the Wesleyan Church," it appears, "as well as in the whole country, a very divided opinion as to the righteousness of the present unhappy war; and still more as to the righteousness of Mr. Chamberlain himself." But what do these protesting Wesleyans want? They ought to know, as their leaders do, that the show business cannot be run without "attractions," and they should congratulate the bosses on having secured such a monster one for this great occasion.

The Bible, we know, is useful for stopping bullets. Now we learn that it has been used to stop up rat-holes, an ancient copy having been found in the pulling down of some premises in Uxbridge, where it had thus been utilised. Believers seem to put the Bible to nearly every use imaginable, except the chief one, of perusal.

Sunday trading has been discussed in the Glasgow Presbytery, and remitted to a committee to take steps with a view to its suppression. There are, we learn, 3,077 shops in Glasgow open on Sundays. This does not include the gospel-shops. These latter involve a considerable amount of paid Sunday labor, but that does not count, because it is in the service of the Lord. The other shops only contribute to the convenience of common mortals. The shopkeepers, it is said, require their day of rest. Yes; and they exhibit their burning desire for it in the plainest of all possible ways—namely, by voluntarily opening their establishments.

A newspaper in Accrington recently counted the people who attended the local churches and the local public-houses respectively on a particular Sunday, and it was found that the men who visited public-houses numbered more than twice those who attended places of worship. Whose fault is this—the public-houses' or the churches'? It is no use blaming the men, who gravitate towards the strongest attraction.

The Primate makes the astounding statement that public opinion in England is prepared for, and would sustain, a measure for closing public-houses entirely on Sundays. The wish is father to the thought. If there were any real danger of that restriction being imposed, the Archbishop would find such a storm of indignation aroused that he would be glad to rush off and bury himself in the inmost recesses of Lambeth Palace. The cause of temperance is made the ground for this Sunday-closing demand, but there is not the slightest doubt that the clerical support it receives is instigated by other reasons. The men of God are bent on shutting up on Sunday every shop, of whatever kind, except their own. That is at the bottom of all their Sabbatarian agitation, and no protestations to the contrary can alter the fact.

Colonel Ingersoll has been dead eight months, but he is still in the lecture field. He is speaking from the spirit-world (we are told) through the lips of Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond, of Chicago. This clever and eloquent lady advertised that the great Agnostic would orate on Sunday evening, December 17, on "How it Seems to be Thought Dead." Apparently the (dead) Colonel turned up punctually at the appointment, and his address has been printed. We have read it, and it isn't a little bit in the style of Ingersoll when he was living. It is exactly in the style of other addresses which Mrs. Richmond has delivered "on her own." We don't for a moment question the lady's honesty. Still, everyone can form his own judgment on the facts.

Spiritualists can make Ingersoll talk, but they can't talk like Ingersoll.

Rev. Charles Sheldon, an American pastor, has written a number of books, all pious and all trashy. The most famous of them is *In His Steps; or, What Would Jesus Do?* One thing may be taken as certain: Jesus wouldn't read Sheldon. But a number of Christians have read him, and some Free-thinkers have done the same, just to see what the Christians were raving about. Well, this Pastor Sheldon, in the famous book aforesaid, depicts a wealthy lady giving a quarter of a million dollars to sustain a Christian daily newspaper. More recently he has suggested that a million dollars ought to be forthcoming for that sublime object. But no millionaire seems inclined to take the hint. This has happened, however:

the reverend gentleman has had the offer of a newspaper under his own control for one week. On March 13 he will take over the entire editorial and business management for six days of the Topeka (Kansas) *Daily Capital*. Every day's business will be opened with prayer. What it will end with is a matter of speculation.

The Topeka *Daily Capital* has taken care to protect itself against the consequences of any of Sheldon's vagaries by drawing in plenty of shekels beforehand. It has boomed the thing for all it is worth. The price of the paper has been raised for the particular week, and we learn that already the newspaper office is swamped with letters containing remittances, four or five thousand being received in one day—which shows what a lot of fools there are in the world, even amongst the ordinary 'cute Yankees. The religious journals on this side of the Atlantic are already pointing out that the experiment will be absolutely worthless. One week would prove nothing, especially under such circumstances. What Sheldon should do would be to go on with the thing for three years—if he could make the paper last so long, which seems more than doubtful.

The Rev. Wesley C. Haskell, pastor of a church in Rockford, Illinois, has tendered his resignation on account of his heterodoxy. He says: "How can I be orthodox? I do not believe the Bible is the book of God from cover to cover..... I do not believe in the doctrine of everlasting punishment, as taught by the Church. I cannot believe blindly against the truths which history, science, and reason reveal. Can I, not believing in these things, preach in a church which does? I want to be honest with myself and friends, and, above all, I prize a clear conscience."

This is a manly statement and a manly resolve. The *Church Gazette*, in quoting the above extract, makes the disingenuous suggestion that Mr. Haskell would better serve the true interests of his community by remaining in its fold, and leaving the minds of its members. It offers this advice because it knows that in the Church of England there are clerics who have no more right to be there than have members of the National Secular Society. A Church, whether in Rockford, Illinois, or State-established in England, has its defined doctrines of belief, and to take its pay while controverting its teachings is pure and simple dishonesty.

According to the absurd dictum of ex-Justice North—who retired none too soon from the judicial Bench—the copyright of a speech rests not with the speaker, but the newspaper that reports the speech. A fine commentary on this is afforded by a pamphlet, published by Mr. Andrew Melrose, containing Lord Rosebery's address on Oliver Cromwell. The publisher obsequiously states on the back of the cover that he is indebted to the proprietors of the *Daily News* for permission to reproduce their report in book form. Yet one of the most striking parts of the address is presented in a horribly mutilated form, the *Daily News* making Lord Rosebery refer to the 168th Psalm when it was the 68th Psalm, and omitting the four verses which were quoted, and also some sentences which followed.

The Bishop of Mackenzie River writes home rather rejoicing that the gold-mining excitement is over so far as his diocese is concerned. Prolonged contact with the mining element, he says, would not have been for the real welfare of the Indians. The honesty of the Indians as compared with that of nominal Christians is shown by the following extract from a newspaper: "As an instance of how goods can be left unmolested anywhere, a quantity of flower was left along the river bank, where it must have been seen by dozens of Indians, and, although it remained there eighteen months, it was not disturbed."

The Vatican authorities and newspapers are furious with the Government for refusing admission to Italy of 400 French pilgrims who were going to Rome for the Holy Year. They were stopped on the frontier, and returned to Marseilles. Of course, says the *Rock*, this is regarded as a fresh injustice to the Pope; but the explanation of the Government's proceeding is less sinister: it was to avoid the possible introduction of small-pox from Southern France, where it is raging, into Italy. The *Times* correspondent says the irritation felt is "not unnatural in view of the comparative failure of the Holy Year and the consequent scarcity of pilgrim traffic," an always highly valued source of income to the papal coffers.

The clerical press at Rome is still carrying on a campaign against Great Britain. English Catholics have appealed to the Pope to stop the scandal, but he does not intervene. What can be the reason of all this? Italy is friendly to Great Britain, but the Vatican Press is not Italian; it is international in the sense that it is controlled by Jesuits in the interests, or supposed interests, of the whole Roman Catholic Church. At present the Jesuits have got the upper hand in France, and their policy is to humor the Military and

Nationalist parties. Hence the Vatican Press is playing up, or down, to the worst passions of the French mob.

Irishmen still help to keep up the gaiety of nations. In the House of Commons, the other evening, Mr. William Redmond, speaking of the strength of the British Army in South Africa, said that the movement of such a force had never occurred before in the British Empire, and if it had occurred before there would never have been any British Empire. Mr. Flavin, another Irish member, went one better if possible. "The Irish soldiers," he said, "lose their lives in South Africa, and on their return home are starved to death by the War Office."

There are forty-four Training Colleges for school teachers in England. Of these thirty-six are "sectarian." There is no Conscience Clause, and Dissenters are shut out. The Wesleyan Colleges are said *not* to be "sectarian," just because Dissenters are admitted, though preference is given to Methodists. It is high time that this matter were tackled by the Government.

The Rev. Silas K. Hocking, in the *British Weekly*, and a number of correspondents, in the *Christian Budget*, are still insisting that the present war is opposed to the teaching of Christ. Mr. Hocking challenges the Rev. W. J. Dawson to show in the spirit of love, as becomes a disciple of the Nazarene, what is the true meaning of the Angels' Song and the Sermon on the Mount.

The orthodox have scented a new danger ahead—namely, the introduction of the Higher Criticism in public schools. The master of Marlborough College, it seems, has recently published a pamphlet advocating such introduction, and announcing that he has already begun with the sixth form at Marlborough. Upon this Mr. Robert P. C. Corfe writes, pointing out the kind of destructive teaching which will thus be given. He says: "Amongst the persons and events alleged to have never existed or happened are Adam, Eve, the Fall, Noah, Abraham, the offering of Isaac, Moses, Samson, Elijah, Elisha, the stories of Ahaz, Hezekiah, Jonah, Daniel; it is also alleged that David did not write his Psalms, and that they contain no reference to our Lord, his life, death, or resurrection. The above are variously described as mythical, dramatic composition, unhistorical fables, idealism, didactic fiction; and, as to the writers themselves, 'the Hebrew writers of the Bible were considerably less developed morally than Pindar, and take a manifest pleasure in the exhibition of craft and shiftiness' (Cheyne). On hearing such things, some small boy will be certain to ask how Christ could have talked of these people and these events if they never happened. Here comes in the Christian doctrine as now taught by critics; and that boy, and all the boys, will have to be told that critics have discovered that, in consequence of the *Kenosis*, Christ held and taught erroneous views, and did not know things which the critics of to-day know; and as for the Bible itself—well, 'the writers of the Bible told the truth so far as they knew it.' Further, the Christian doctrine of the critics opposes the teaching of the Church of England as to our Lord's birth, miracles, resurrection, ascension, and particularly the idea that Christ's blood was shed for the sins of man."

To Mr. Corfe, and those who think with him, all this kind of teaching may appear very dreadful indeed. But the point is—Is it true? If so, it should be taught in all the public schools where Scriptural knowledge is a part of the curriculum. There is no justification for teaching even "small boys" that which is false. Of course, if the conclusions of the New Criticism are without foundation, they ought not to be set forth in public schools or anywhere else. But it will take Mr. Corfe all his time, and perhaps more ability than he possesses, to upset the allegations of which he makes a very neat summary.

With justifiable derision the *Church Gazette* thus alludes to Convocation: "The solemn farce of Convocation has again been indulging in its laborious trifling. After making Latin speeches to each other, which certainly savored more of the ridiculous than the sublime, its members have proceeded to discuss matters of comparatively trifling moment, while questions of real urgency and importance have been completely shelved. We should certainly have thought that the most desirable subject of the deliberations of Convocation as a whole would be to consider the reform of the venerable body itself."

According to a correspondent of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, who writes on "Canon Cheyne and the Psalms," there is a beautiful commentary on the Psalms by Neale and Littledale, in which it is abundantly shown that much of the allegorical and mystical language of those compositions has reference to the "history and work of Christ's Church." Now, if there is any one thing clearer than another about the Old Testament, it is that there is not the slightest allusion, intentional or otherwise, in the Psalms to either Christ or his Church.

Ask the Jews—they ought to know. Neale and Littledale have read into them a meaning they were never intended to possess, and the humbug of the thing is obvious.

The rector of Coventry, Cambs, has been making a great potter over the desire of a parishioner to erect a monument upon the grave of his wife in the form of an obelisk with the inscription, "Peace, perfect peace." The rector says the obelisk is heathenish, and the inscription is not in the Bible or the Prayer-book. The matter has now been decided in the Ely County-court. The obelisk is to be permitted, but another inscription substituted. The objection of the rector is stupid, though quite characteristic of the little God Almighty who, as clerks in holy orders, lord it over rural parishes. The *Christian World* observes that this case is "one of many which illustrate the necessity for putting churchyards under popular instead of clerical control."

A pretty squabble came before Mr. Justice Darling in an action for slander by one lady against another. The plaintiff gave birth to a child nine months after her marriage, and this appeared to the defendant to look "rather fishy." So she said that she would go "visiting," thereby alluding to plaintiff's visits in connection with a London religious association. Afterwards she said that the father of the child was an old Welsh clergyman of good position, and that the reason the plaintiff's husband was so kind to it was that he was well paid for it. The jury, however, awarded only one farthing damages, and the judge would make no order as to costs.

A Board of Trade clerk of "strong religious views" was desirous of building a public hall at Wandsworth for the purpose of carrying on religious work. An elderly lady of independent means, and also of "strong religious views," was induced to draw out from safe deposit a sum of £2,110, and hand it over to the pious clerk for investment. Now he says he received it, not as a loan, but as a gift. The case came before Mr. Justice Bigham in the Queen's Bench Division, and was adjourned for the parties to arrive at a settlement. The lady now probably wishes she had left her money where it was—in the safe security of Birmingham Corporation Stock.

A nasty knock is administered to the clerical profession by ex-Detective Inspector Lansdowne, in his *Reminiscences of Scotland Yard*. He ridicules the popular delusion that detectives are in the habit of going about in elaborate disguises. He says: "Personally, in my experience, I never had to go about in disguise, and I have actual knowledge of one case only of a brother officer having adopted that expedient. That was when Inspector G—, in a case concerning the sale of indecent prints, dressed as a clergyman. It was scarcely a credit to the cloth that a clergyman's attire was considered the best disguise; but so it was" (p. 143).

Mr. George Bernard Shaw, in the *Labor Annual*, refers to "those old-fashioned Secularists who have not yet found out that about half the Congregationalist body by this time takes a far more dispassionately Secularist view of the Bible than Colonel Ingersoll or Charles Bradlaugh did." We were not aware that Mr. Shaw had such an extensive knowledge of Congregationalists. Even now we venture to doubt his accuracy. Dr. Horton, for instance, is a very advanced Congregationalist. We have read what he has to say about the Bible—which is, perhaps, more than Mr. Shaw can affirm; and we have no hesitation in declaring that his view of it may be "dispassionately" something, but is not "Secularist." The Secularist view is that the Bible is not in any sense the Word of God. Is there a single Christian who holds this view, dispassionately or otherwise? And why does Mr. Shaw single out the Congregationalists? The principal leaders of the so-called Higher Criticism belong to the Church of England. On the whole, we fancy that Mr. Shaw is merely indulging his cleverness, and perhaps his fondness, for being smart at the expense of persons of his own way of thinking.

The *Church Times* seems painfully impressed by the fact that Professor Cheyne, who holds a canonry of Rochester, should have set himself the task of dispelling so many old delusions in regard to the Psalms. It quotes with something like horror the following observation of his on Psalms liv., lvii.: "The doctrine that David is, in the theological sense, a type of our Lord is one of those heavy burdens on sensitive consciences which we of this generation are solemnly called upon to remove. David a type of Jesus Christ? As well might we say that Charlemagne was a perfect Christian" (p. 182).

A decrease of nearly 22,000 members and probationers is recorded by the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. It does not appear that this wholesale defection has been brought about by the superior attractions of any other religious sect. The explanation is a little deeper.

Considerable damage has been sustained by the Moseley Road Church, Birmingham, as the result of an explosion of the heating apparatus. The caretaker and his family were injured. Another example of providential care.

Here is an extract from an editorial soliloquy on the front page of the *British Weekly*: "It has been a dream—is it a dream after all?—that the meaning of Christ's life and message shall be made plain to all who love Him." Well, whether it is a dream or not, it is surely about time that the meaning of Christ's life and message should be made plain somehow or other. There have been a sufficient number of centuries, one would think, in which the right interpretation might have been arrived at, if the life and message have any meaning at all. How much longer are we to wait before we can definitely know what Christ really came to teach? The *B. W.* seems to suggest that the expectation, after all, may be hopeless.

At the half-yearly general meeting of the shareholders of the Great Western Railway Company, held at Paddington Station on Thursday, February 15, the Rev. D. Lewis, of Merthyr Tydvil, presented a petition against Sunday railway travelling. He was particularly hot against special trains, and he severely censured the bold bad Sunday League. Lord Cawdor, the Chairman, blandly told the indignant man of God that theirs was a commercial undertaking, and "they did not hold the conscience of the country." Moreover, it was just as well to recollect that Sunday excursions "gave thousands of persons reasonable facilities to get out of uncomfortable surroundings in large towns and enjoy the fresh air of the country." According to the newspaper, reports, the reverend petitioner spoke amidst "interruption," while the Chairman's remarks were greeted with "applause." A gratifying sign of the times.

Lord Kitchener would have nothing to do with the missionaries, or British men of God of any kind, in connection with his Gordon College at Khartoum. This policy was condemned by most of the clerical species, but the Sirdar was inflexible, as he is about most things. Lord Kitchener has now gone to South Africa, a new Sirdar is ruling in the Soudan, and the professional soul-savers perceive their opportunity. One of them, the Rev. T. E. Wilkinson, who lives in the vicinity of Hyde Park, and calls himself Anglican Bishop for North and Central Europe—a remarkably large order!—writes to the newspapers on the subject of "A Bishopric for Egypt." He points out that the Mahdi and the Khalifa raised "rebellions" in the name of "a false religion." But their power was shattered, and "God was evidently opening the way for his message by our arms." Accordingly there must be "a chain of Bishoprics" from North to South Africa, and a beginning should be made with Egypt. In due course the Cross will quite extinguish the Crescent, by the aid of God and our arms; but the great thing is to start with that Bishop, who seems the most important thing after all; and this "God-given" job cannot possibly make any progress without £20,000, which Bishop Wilkinson invites the British public to shell out promptly. Poor British public! Old John Bull needs a long purse to keep pace with the exactions of all his parasite friends, of whom the Black Army are the worst and greediest.

Dr. Ryle, the old Bishop of Liverpool, according to a writer in the *Home Magazine*, is fond of watching wild animals, especially monkeys. Apparently he watches their mischievous antics as a kind of whet for his dinner. They give him great amusement. No doubt it is the monkey in him which sympathises with the monkey in them; for, Bible or no Bible, man is demonstrably of simian origin, and even bishops are no exception.

### A Terrible Experience.

THE Preacher (*delivering impromptu address to back-blocks audience*)—"Above all things, never lose faith or abandon hope."

Listener (*unable any longer to contain his feelings*)—"Them's my sentiments. Why, look 'ere. I was once in the water for half an hour off Cape Horn—rough place in the world—midwinter—forty miles from land—not a human being in sight—an' yet 'ere I am, alive an' well!"

THE Preacher—"That was indeed a thrilling experience. Yet you never lost hope, and your faith was rewarded, for you were rescued."

Listener—"Rescued be blowed! I 'eard the bell go for the steerage dinner, so I got out of the bath and dried myself. The reason why there was nobody in sight was that I 'ad the bath-room door shut to keep the wimmin passengers from seein' in while I 'ad my wash. They giv' us warm water in the bath, or I wouldn't 'ave had one at all."

—*Sydney Bulletin.*

**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

Sunday, February 25, The Athenæum Hall, London, W.; 7.30, "The Churches' Call to England."

**To Correspondents.**

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 25, Glasgow; 26, 27, and 28, Glasgow districts. March 4, Dundee; 11, Huddersfield. April 8, Camberwell.—All communications for Mr. Charles Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome cuttings.  
H. PERCY WARD.—We are obliged for the cuttings. In the absence of fuller details we do not feel able to comment on the case of "Professor Wells." Pleased to see the resolution of the Social Democratic Federation.

J. BUCKLER.—No doubt the decisive title of the *Freethinker* is a disadvantage on one side, but it is a distinct advantage on the other side. Even if it were desirable, a change would be very difficult now. A new title really means a new paper, as far as the public is concerned. Pleased to hear that you highly appreciate our last week's article, in which we dealt to some extent with Comte. You wish we would always write on subjects "worthy of our literary powers and knowledge." Well, we would rather do that constantly, but this is a fighting organ of Freethought, and we are obliged at times to indulge in what you call "belaboring nonentities." That they are nonentities is not our fault, but the fault of the Churches who put them forward as spokesmen. With regard to the quotation you refer to, we had noted the blunder. For the rest, there is much in your letter with which we agree, and you owe no sort of apology for writing us.

WEEKLY READER.—Thanks for the little seal. We don't use such a thing, but we will keep it. Dr. Parker's mannerism (or manners) is noted elsewhere.

B. KENNEDY.—Thanks for the cutting from *Reynolds'*, though we had already seen the paragraph. The *Secularist* referred to has our respect as an old servant of the cause. We regret, however, that he seems to think it a sign of manly independence—as a few *Secularists* always do—to criticise the President without superfluous civility. Mr. Foote, by the way, never undertook, and never will undertake, the asinine duty of pleasing all *Secularists* with his political opinions; and while he is President the N. S. S. will never be used as a political machine, not even by a majority. Such a policy would split the Society up every time a vote was taken, for *Secularists* think variously on political and social questions. We note your shrewd observation that a handful of *Secularists* who talk a great deal about their right to think for themselves, as though it were disputed, appear to fancy that the President is the one person to whom this right does not belong.

W. B. THOMPSON.—Glad to hear that Mr. Watts was in such good form on Sunday, and had a better meeting than you have been used to lately. You must expect to suffer—all intellectual movements do—during the war. Better times will come, if you only hold on in good hope.

L. MARSHALL.—Your recollection is not accurate. Mr. Foote did not say, in the lecture you refer to, that the Boers invoked British aid against the Zulus. What he said was that the Zulus wanted to "sweep away" the Boers, and had no wish to attack the British. The latter, however, interfered and broke the power of Cetewayo, without the slightest assistance from the Boers, who profited the most, at least immediately, by our intervention, which cost us the lives of many gallant soldiers. It is easy enough to say that the Boers, if left alone, would have annihilated the Zulus; but it is just as easy to say the opposite. Nobody can tell what would have been; we know what was. Thanks for your personal inquiry. Mr. Foote is in excellent health at present.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Yerkshire Post—Isle of Man Times—Open Court—Sydney Bulletin—Family Churchman—St Andrew—Boston Investigator—Truthseeker (New York)—Ethical World—Progressive Thinker—Leeds Daily News—Blue Grass Blade—Secular Thought—Torch of Reason—Freidenker—Liberator—Two Worlds—De Vrije Gedachte—People's Newspaper.

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.

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

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

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

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

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**Sugar Plums.**

ANOTHER marked improvement was shown in the audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote lectured on "The Greatest of Freethought Martyrs"—Giordano Bruno, who was burnt alive just three hundred years ago, on February 17, 1600. For considerably over an hour the audience followed with the closest interest the lecturer's account of Bruno's career, martyrdom, and teachings; the hushed silence being often more eloquent than the loudest applause.

Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (Feb. 25). His subject will be "The Churches' Call to England," with special reference to the Ash-Wednesday farce of humiliation and repentance, an account of which will be found elsewhere in our columns.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Charles Watts lectured in the Secular Hall, New Brompton, to a large and highly enthusiastic audience. Mr. Swan made an excellent chairman. To-day, Sunday, February 25, Mr. Watts lectures three times in the Secular Hall, 110 Brunswick-street, Glasgow; and on the following Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday he speaks at Paisley, Cambuslang, and Motherwell. We hope the weather will be more favorable for Mr. Watts than it has been of late. For the past five weeks he has not had a Sunday free from either heavy rain or snow.

"The Democratic Show" in last week's *Reynolds'* was headed with a quotation from Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword*. This pamphlet can still be obtained at our publishing office. The Humanitarian League publishes a special edition of it, the author having given this right to the League gratuitously. Strange as it may seem to some hasty or superficial partisans, Mr. Foote does not retract a single sentence of this little publication, in which he put both head and heart. He hates war as much as ever, and only regrets that existing human nature on all sides renders it unavoidable.

The last number of the *Weekly Times and Echo* printed two striking sceptical extracts from Conan Doyle and William Black, entitled respectively "The Puzzle of the World" and "The Mystery of Pain." We are glad to see such things in widely circulated newspapers.

The late Marquis of Queensberry's will has been lodged at Edinburgh. The following extract is from the codicil: "At my death I wish to be cremated, and my ashes put into the earth enclosed in nothing—earth to earth, ashes to ashes—in any spot most convenient I have loved. Will mention places to my son—Harleyford for choice. I particularly request no Christian mummeries or tomfooleries to be performed over my grave, but that I be buried as a *Secularist* and an *Agnostic*. If it will comfort anyone, there are plenty of those of my friends who would come and say a few words of common sense over the spot where my ashes may lie. Places to lay ashes—the summit of Criffle or Queensberry in Dumfriesshire, the end of the terrace overlooking New Loch, Harleyford, Bucks. No monument or stone necessary or required, or procession, as ashes can be carried in one person's hand. Failing these places, any place where the stars shall ever shed their light, and the sun shall gild each rising morn."

The Archbishop of Canterbury has decided to hand over to the London County Council the grounds of Lambeth Palace as a public recreation ground. "It is a curious circumstance," the *Star* says, "that Mr. Victor Roger, the Lambeth vestryman who reported the Archbishop's decision to his colleagues, is a militant *Secularist*." We note, by the way, that Mr. Roger has been elected as chairman of the Sanitary Committee. Mr. Roger is one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents.

Hull is setting up a Crematorium, which is a sign of progress and creditable to the Corporation. The City Engineer's report to the Burial Committee suggests that the charge to residents in the city for an ordinary cremation should not be more than one guinea, as a higher fee might discourage cremation and operate in favor of interment. The charge to other than residents should be three guineas, which is two guineas less than the fee charged at Woking, Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow.

The *Boston Investigator* is the oldest Freethought paper in America, and we are always glad to receive it. The last number to hand contains an eloquent address by the editor, Mr. L. K. Washburn, on "A Religious Crisis."

Mr. Joseph Cowen, of Newcastle, whose death is just announced, was reputed to be a Freethinker. He entered Parliament in 1874, and that was the great mistake of his life. He was a Liberal, but while he was prepared to wear the uniform of the Liberal party he would not (as he himself said) wear its livery. He had a way of thinking for himself,

and that brought him into conflict with Mr. Gladstone and the Caucus. The result was his retirement from political life, soured and embittered, and animated too largely by antipathy. He would have been a greater figure outside Parliament. He was a man of striking individuality, and an orator in the old classic sense of the word. Such oratory is out of place in the House of Commons, where no speech ever affects the voting; though it is still valuable in public meetings, where opinion is influenced and even moulded. Mr. Cowen was the proprietor of the *Daily Chronicle* and the *Weekly Chronicle* at Newcastle. The latter gave publicity to much Radical writing. Mr. Holyoake's *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, for instance, appeared in its columns. It was also a steadfast supporter of Charles Bradlaugh during his parliamentary struggle.

One saying of Joseph Cowen's always struck us as being greatly to his credit. In his young days he was a practical friend of many revolutionists, including the incomparable Mazzini. To the poor exiled Poles he was intensely devoted, and when he was asked—by Mr. Morrison Davidson, we believe—why he took such an interest in them, he replied, "Because they were the most forlorn." A noble sentiment of this kind is now too unusual.

Mr. Herbert Spencer's followers in Australasia are actively preparing an address, which they intend to send the venerable philosopher so that it will reach him on April 27 next, the date on which Mr. Spencer will complete his eightieth year.

Mr. G. J. Warren has been honorary secretary of the East London Branch of the National Secular Society for fifteen years. He thinks it is high time that someone else took a turn, so he has definitely retired, and Mr. D. Frankel, 25 Osborne-street, Whitechapel, has been elected in his place. The Branch has accorded him a very hearty vote of thanks for his long and loyal service. Mr. Warren hopes now to resume attendance at the N. S. S. Executive meetings and the Board meetings of the Secular Society, Limited.

The veteran Mr. J. F. Haines has been elected president of the East London Branch. We have known him as a sturdy and steadfast Freethinker for more years than we care to recollect.

The clerk of the Birmingham School Board, acknowledging the N. S. S. Branch's decision to decline the use of the Bristol-street School on the condition that no literature is sold or distributed, says that the matter cannot at present be reopened. Well, that is a matter which concerns the School Board a great deal more than it does the Branch. Nemesis is slow but sure, and the Branch can wait.

The Birmingham Social Democrats "view with disgust the mean, unfair, and absurdly illogical action of the Birmingham School Board." We are pleased to hear it, and we hope the local Branch of the Democratic Federation will help to raise the question at the next School Board elections.

### Poor Humanity.

Most men eddy about  
Here and there—eat and drink,  
Chatter and love and hate,  
Gather and squander, are raised  
Aloft, are hurled in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving  
Nothing; and then they die—  
Perish;—and no one asks  
Who or what they have been,  
More than he asks what waves,  
In the moonlit solitudes mild  
Of the midmost ocean, have swell'd,  
Foam'd for a moment, and gone.  
—Matthew Arnold.

### Obituary.

THE Leicester Secular Society has lost a well-known and loyal member by the death of Mr. Philip Wright, of Quorn, at the age of fifty-six. The deceased was the son of the staunch Freethinker, Mr. Michael Wright. He was prominent in public activities, being a member of the County Council, the Barrow Board of Guardians, etc. On Tuesday, the 13th inst., the chapel of the Leicester Cemetery was filled with relatives, friends, and employees on the occasion of Mr. Wright's funeral. The discourse, which was pronounced by Mr. J. H. Levy, of London, temperately stated the Secular view of life and death, and praised the sterling character of the deceased.—F. J. GOULD.

## The Venture of Reason.

MISS EMMA MARIE CAILLARD puts forward in the *Contemporary Review* for December a pretty old idea in a somewhat fresh form; it is nothing more or less than to test or experiment, as it were, with her hypothesised deity, to see if the hypothesis be true. Miss Caillard, who occasionally contributes such articles to the *Contemporary*, always writes in a courteous and cultured way, though it must be said that her writing at times partakes of that vague, cloudy, metaphysico-religious order which, whilst it doubtless means much to the people who produce it, is admittedly rather meaningless to anybody else.

Miss Caillard, in this paper, sets out by showing that science has to make certain postulates, without which it cannot get on—in other words, in all our thinking we have to begin at *some* starting-point which is either self-evident or necessary. And on this Miss Caillard proceeds to build a parallel. "Developed religion has also its postulates," she says, "and it may equally be said that, unless we can make them, the spirit of religion is not in us." She goes on to argue:—

"The great special postulates of science are for the satisfaction of the intellect. The great special postulates of religion (and we shall refer to both sets more particularly before long) are for the satisfaction of what Scripture calls the 'heart'; and it is mere cant, and very mischievous cant, to say that either heart or intellect has more right to satisfaction than the other."

Now this passage, in so far as it is at all intelligible, might be described in its own language as "mere cant, and very mischievous cant." What is exactly meant by "satisfying" the heart it is, of course, not easy to say. But we are dealing in Miss Caillard's paper with certain propositions or "postulates" which, in so far as they are cognisable by the intellect, are either true or false. For instance, Miss Caillard's god-hypothesis either represents a truth, a fact, or it does not. If it does represent a truth, well and good; that truth must be cognised by the reason; and if it does not represent a truth, is Miss Caillard's proposition anything more than a roundabout and "literary" way of saying that a pleasant lie ought not to be challenged, and that if one's "heart" finds a "satisfaction" in lies, it has as good a claim as the head? Indeed, that very conflict between "heart" and brain, which the religionist generally scents, is wonderfully enlightening. Under pressure, nine out of ten religionists will throw discredit on the "intellect" (that is, after unsuccessfully appealing to it), and will take refuge in the "heart." It only means that they feel religion cannot be defended as true.

There is, however, another point which Miss Caillard, in the above passage, overlooks. Whatever may be said about "heart" and intellect, it is impossible that they could be permanently at variance, or that a "postulate" of religion, if true, should be irreconcilable with a postulate of science. If the postulates are both true, they must harmonise. Yet Miss Caillard surely knows—and her paper is an indication of the knowledge—that they do *not* harmonise, that the truths of science constantly come in conflict with the assumptions of religion—that is, of Theism. Evidently that fact proves that one set or the other are not axioms at all, but falsehoods. You cannot manifestly have rival postulates hostile to each other, and yet both true; and no amount of word-spinning about hearts and heads will enable you to accept both sets at the same time. For, with all the talk of religionists about the claims of the heart, they constantly overlook the strongest and most imperative claim of all—namely, the aspiration of the "heart" for truth, and the desire to regulate itself by what the intellect or reason perceives as fact.

What, however, is the chief postulate of religion, according to Miss Caillard? "The most fundamental," we are told, "in the case of religion, is that universal goodness lies at the heart of things also, *despite all appearances to the contrary.*" Again, we are met with the vagueness of the language. We can, for instance, conceive a meaning attached to this statement which would be accepted as true by most Atheists. If it means that goodness—i.e., right conduct—notwithstanding stray individual and partial appearances to the contrary, is the only road to universal well-being and

happiness, no one need cavil. The authoress evidently means more. She means it as an enunciation of some form of Theism. In so far, therefore, the "postulate" is not a postulate at all, but a disputed and disputable proposition. And Miss Caillard unconsciously or consciously recognises this, because we do not write long papers to establish axioms, of which the very nature is that they are self-evident and cannot be proved by any simpler truth.

There is another serious difference between the axioms of science and the propositions which the Theist would wish to have accepted as axioms also. We can verify the postulates of science, we can go our way and never find our knowledge or our discoveries in conflict with them—nay, find ourselves unable to conceive of their antitheses being true. Obviously, no such statements can be made of the Theistic propositions. Indeed, Miss Caillard admits that, "though the postulate of a supreme and eternal righteousness may well be capable of verification, it is exceedingly doubtful whether by us, as we are, under our actual conditions, with our present limitations, the method of such verification is discoverable. In other words, it is exceedingly doubtful whether the problem of evil admits of earthly solution." And as we know nothing of any *unearthly* solutions, that surely quashes the whole business. It may be, for instance, that in unearthly regions the angle inscribed in a semi-circle is not a right-angle, but "under our actual conditions," and "with our present limitations," we certainly find it to be so; and it surely seems the most barren of occupations to speculate as to what we might find true with powers which we do not possess or understand, and in conditions so far removed from the "actual" that we can form no idea of what they are like. Verily, with the Theistic apologist, in nine cases out of ten we always come back to that. If we were somebody else and everything was totally different, we *might* find such and such. Perhaps—and perhaps not.

And now as to Miss Caillard's proposal:—

"Granting that we recognise the implication, and are willing to bring the hypothesis of the Divine Personality to the test of experiment, how is it to be done? Surely—and here is the second great venture of faith—by an attempt at personal communion. It can matter little in what way the attempt is made, so long as it is to our own souls the most simple, the most direct, the most satisfying, and the most single-hearted."

So that the Atheist or the "non-believer" is invited (for, of course, the invitation would be superfluous to those who are already satisfied) to "experiment." We have not the least doubt that certain of Miss Caillard's fellow religionists would vigorously condemn her suggestion as blasphemous. For on the religious side you never know where you are in this sort of thing.

As far as it goes, however, we suggest that the invitation is a little questionable. A man or woman in the habit of constantly taking drugs—and religion is but a mental or emotional drug—invites people, who do not experience the necessity for their use to, cultivate them. The persons so invited may well ask, Why? Why should those who get along very well without drugs take to indulging in them, just to see if the taste might not grow? If it be replied that those who use them obtain better health than those who do not, we answer that that proposition has been absolutely refuted in a hundred forms before now. Miss Caillard, for instance, must show us that Atheists cannot be as well-conducted, as sympathetic, and as humane as the religious opium-eaters. Obviously, she can show nothing of the kind. Why, in common sense, then, should anyone gratuitously take to a regimen for which there is no necessity, and in support of which no reason is offered?

To all such invitations—and they are frequently being made in one shape or another from the Christian side, in many cases quite honestly and sincerely—we always feel inclined to reply with a counter-invitation and ask for a counter-experiment. Let the religionist just try resolutely to live without the drugs, and see if he suffers any serious deterioration. Or, better still, let him take a child and train it without religion, train it up to the rational life, and see if it grows up any the worse for the system of culture. If it does not, manifestly, the religious drug was not a necessity—it was, at best, a superfluity; perhaps, when the experiment is closely studied, it will be found that the superfluity, like most superfluities, was

not quite harmless. So, as Miss Caillard asks us to make what she calls "the venture of faith," we, on our side, extend to her a like courtesy, and ask her seriously and fairly to make the venture of reason.

FREDERICK RYAN.

## The Sanctimonious Melodrama.

THIS is a subject not devoid of interest to Freethinkers, inasmuch as it gives us an insight into the religious tendencies of the day, and, on the other hand, serves as another proof that Christianity is a doomed creed. Let us first of all examine the question from the theatrical point of view.

Ever since the days when George Eliot wrote *Scenes of Clerical Life*, and Mrs. Lynn Linton her *Joshua Davidson*, works dealing with the life of the religious reformer have made their appearance in the press with the regularity of clockwork. It seems but yesterday since we read the late Mr. Gladstone's puffed-up eulogy of *Robert Elsmere*. Induced, no doubt, by the repute that Mrs. Humphry Ward's novel achieved, Mr. Wilson Barrett thought he would work the oracle by appealing in a less refined manner to the religious feelings of the masses. Who says masses means asses. *The Sign of the Cross* was the result, and may be described as a hotch-potch of farce, torture, and psalm-singing. Mr. Hall Caine likewise, with his eye on the pay-box, dramatised his novel, *The Christian*. The dramatic version was first produced in the States, where it seemed to take; but on the piece being brought over to this country, some months later, it met with an indifferent reception in London—let it be said to London's credit. The most recent attempt to make us swallow religion in a palatable form is *In His Steps*, a trashy tract written by Charles M. Sheldon, a sky-pilot from Yankee-land, that wonderful country of faddists, new creeds, and tinned goods. *In His Steps* has gained a popularity it never merited, but he who writes for fools is always sure to command a large public. About a fortnight ago a dramatised version of that reverend gentleman's tract was produced at the Adelphi Theatre, London, under the title *The Better Life*. The first night's reception was not exactly an enthusiastic one, and, after a brief career, *The Better Life* has had to make room for a better play.

The list of religious melodramas does not end here. We are, further, to have a dramatised version of *Ben Hur* and *Quo Vadis*, whilst the *Scarlet Letter*, with its hyper-sensitive cleric, will likewise be seen in a theatrical atmosphere. I am anxious to see how the general public will receive these pieces, and if one and all were to fall like nine-pins it would not surprise me in the least, and my gratification at their failure would be great; but let this be understood without malice.

This taste for religious dramas is not a production of modern times. The old Spanish dramatists of the sixteenth century, such as Lope de Vega, Calderon, Molina, to mention but a few only, devoted their talent to the writing of *autos sacramentales*, which may be considered as the forerunners of the passion-play. The processions in Roman Catholic countries during Holy Week are a kind of religious panoramic display, and it is one of the most gruesome spectacles to see a number of men and women barefooted, bareheaded, dressed in sackcloth, and slashing their bodies most unmercifully with cords. These fanatics, as a rule, form the rear-guard of the procession, and serve as a living example to illustrate to how low a degree religion can degrade mankind. When a school-boy, I witnessed a passion-play called the *Seven Sorrows of Mary*. The piece was as pretentiously mounted as the yearly performances of similar spectacles at Oberammergau, and the play left on my youthful mind an impression that it took years to eradicate. In Spain and South America it is still the fashion to represent these passion-plays; is it to be wondered at then if those countries are, up to the present day, enveloped in a fog of ignorance and superstition?

We go to the theatre to be amused and entertained, not to hear sermons. The taste for amusements may vary; some delight in music-halls and musical farces, whilst others prefer problem plays and tragedies. Well, everybody to his taste, but let us keep religion from the

footlights. The religious drama only appeals to the sentimental and unsophisticated playgoer, the old fogies of both sexes, and the parsons. These latter gentlemen look askance as a rule at the stage and its exponents, but they back up such pieces as *The Sign of the Cross*, because they are a cheap advertisement for Christianity. The critical eye, however, can discern in all these clap-trap productions the hysterical cry of Christianity. In its attempt to keep afloat, it clings to a seaweed, and it is throwing all its original cargo overboard; it must keep its head above water at any cost. The parsons, seeing that the gospel shops grow emptier from Sunday to Sunday, are actively endeavoring to induce their parishioners to return. They engage first-class musicians and vocalists, they organise church bazaars, and amuse the youngsters with magic-lantern lectures on the Holy Land. Their efforts may be successful for a while, but they must collapse in the long run. Christianity must retire and surrender to Reason and Free-thought the throne it has usurped so long. The day is not far distant when the deeds of Moses, Mary's interview with Gabriel, and the miracles of Jesus of Nazareth will be placed on the same level as the labors of Hercules, Leda's adventure with the swan, and the wonderful cures of Æsculapius. This may be for the parsons a very unsavory truth, but then the truth is seldom pleasant.

F. MALIBRAN.

### Ingersoll the Man.

THE GREAT ORATOR AS HE WAS KNOWN BY THOSE WHO LIVED NEAR TO HIM.

THE world knew him as the orator, the lawyer, the lecturer. It saw him only in active combat—ever an assailant, always attacking what he believed to be unjust or wrong, whether in the forum, the court, or on the platform. To comparatively few was it given to know the real man. To those, no matter what may have been their previous opinion of him, no matter how hostile to his beliefs, when they once came under the influence of that loving, noble nature, only affection and admiration remained. Great as was Colonel Ingersoll intellectually, he was still greater morally.

BOUNDLESS PITY, AND CHARITY THAT EXCLUDED NONE.

Charity in its broadest sense was the keynote to his character; not only the charity that gave liberally to the poor and needy, but the charity that found an excuse for the erring, pity for the weak. For example, a certain employee caused him pecuniary loss and annoyed him beyond measure by constantly getting intoxicated and then attempting to attend to the Colonel's business. One may imagine the results, and yet all he would say was: "Poor fellow! I am sorry for him. He can't help it. I don't know what to do about him. If I discharge him, I don't know what would become of him." So he kept him month after month. On one occasion it is said he actually closed his office and temporarily stopped the practice of law, in order to get rid of an inefficient assistant whom he did not have the heart to discharge. Voluntarily to give pain to another was something he could not do. He shrank from it far more than the average man does from inflicting pain on himself. No matter how he had been imposed upon, how his confidence had been violated, with what black ingratitude he had been treated, he seemed incapable of bearing any malice against the individual. To forgive his enemies was a part of his nature. Not only in this, but in many other respects, this arch-enemy of the Christian religion lived up to its best moral precepts. The wrong, the abuse, the injustice he hated with the full force of his nature; a class, too, he might denounce, but for the individual wrong-doer he had only pity. One reason for this was his belief that we are creatures of heredity and surroundings. He has often said to me: "A man does as he must." Everything possible happens, and nothing that does not happen is possible. Should a man be a drunkard or a thief, it was because the nature he was born with and the circumstances surrounding him through life were such that he had not the moral power to resist. A man is not to be blamed for what he cannot help, only pitied. So he pitied the failures in

life. That, too, in part accounted for the unflinching generosity with which he gave to all who asked, even when in ordinary parlance they were unworthy. Never have I known him to refuse anyone. The ordinary beggar, without the slightest claim on, or acquaintance with, him could get a dollar or more. To those who had some fancied claim due to acquaintanceship his generosity was unflinching. I have in mind one family that has been supported by him in comparative luxury for the last twenty years. One man, whose name ranks among the first of American poets, was supported by him during all his declining years. No one knows, or ever will, the wide extent of his benefactions. When such were his actions to acquaintances, can one imagine the wealth of love and affection he lavished on his own kith and kin—on those naturally near and dear to him? If to pity and help the unfortunate and the downtrodden, if to have charity towards all, if to forgive those who injure you, if to live out the Golden Rule to the very uttermost—if these are Christianity, then no truer Christian ever lived than Robert G. Ingersoll.

KINDLINESS, SIMPLICITY, AND WIT.

Another marked trait in his character born of his good heart was his kindness, his good fellowship with all he came in contact with. This at once impressed all. He never evinced, nor do I think he felt, his superiority over others. He treated the elevator man, the waiter in the restaurant, the porter in the car, and the policeman on the street as his equals, and it would be hard to find one of these who did not appreciate this. It was the democratic simplicity of true greatness.

Possessed of almost unlimited powers of turning others to ridicule, it was rarely, very rarely, that he ever said anything to leave a sting behind. It was said in such a kindly spirit that the object of the joke always joined in the laugh himself. For instance, the last time he appeared in any court, or, in fact, made any public appearance, was in Camden, in the case of Russell v. Russell. Replying to Mr. Pancoast, who was on the other side, the Colonel soon had the whole court-room laughing; but Mr. Pancoast, who was the object of it all, joined in as heartily as anybody. Once in a long while, however, the victim brought something sharper on his devoted head. He once took refuge from a thunderstorm under a tree in company with a Baptist deacon. The lightning being unusually near, the Colonel shrugged his shoulders, and said: "I don't like that." "Oh," answered the deacon, "I thought you did not believe in any god." "I don't," the Colonel replied. "If I thought that lightning was guided by any intelligent power, I should not be afraid; but I know it is not, and that it is just as likely to hit me as an old fool like you."

SOME EPIGRAMS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

The simplest and homeliest illustrations are often the best. This power of lighting up the whole situation by a homely illustration he possessed in a remarkable degree. The last time he was in his office—the second day before his death—we were discussing the advisability of bringing a certain libel suit. Our client had been charged with a number of faults by a prominent periodical, of all of which he was guiltless with one rather trivial exception. "Well," said the Colonel, rising from his chair, "I don't think he would better bring that suit. You know, if a man has a patch on his coat, you see that more than you do all the rest of the coat." That expressed it in a nutshell. Again, some what to the same point: "There is no use trying to seal a pup to a man who has just been bitten by a dog."

He was always ready to turn the conversation from law, for which he had no love, to some topic of general interest—particularly some religious question. It might be anything, however, in the domain of history, literature, or art that he would suddenly commence talking about. For instance, on the day just mentioned, July 19, he turned from the subject of the libel suit and commenced talking about orators. He said in effect (I don't pretend to give his words): "Cicero was the greatest of orators. Demosthenes has left nothing particularly striking. Still, he must have been a great orator in order to have achieved such a reputation. Only three names among the Romans have any particular interest for me—Cicero, Cæsar, and Lucretius.

Marcus Aurelius was a great man, the greatest of the Stoics, but he had a little too much superstition for me. Rome was a magnificent city. It must have been full of rich men. The contractors of public works were no more honest then than now. How many of them are remembered? Crassus is the only one I can recall, whereas the name of some poor devil of a writer lives on."

The above is simply the gist of his remarks as I remember them. It is impossible to reproduce the charm and brilliancy of his conversation. What is a very severe test—the young men were drawn from the sides of the pretty girls they admired to listen to it. I have sometimes thought if what he said in conversation could have been preserved, and the world could have the choice between that and his writings, it would be better to let the writings go. But, alas! those wonderful words of thought and humor, of wisdom and of wit, were breathed into thin air, and are gone beyond the power of recall.

CLARENCE S. BROWN.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be concluded.)

### A New Day of Humiliation.

The following circular was issued on Thursday, February 15, and we put it on record *in extenso*, as one of the most extraordinary documents of this extraordinary age:—

#### GOD'S CALL TO REPENTANCE.

In the midst of all the trouble and anxiety around us, many hear the call of the Lord to repentance.

In our nation the prevalence of the sins of drunkenness, gambling, covetousness, pride, and disregard of His law, bring dishonor to the holy name of Christ which we bear, and are evidences that masses of our population are "departing from the living God."

Worse still, in the Church of God itself, of which He said, "Ye are the Light of the World, ye are the Salt of the Earth," self-indulgence, worldliness, harsh judgment of others, dissensions, disobedience to our Lord and His Word, have too often terribly marred the testimony which the Church was entrusted to give.

The voice of the Lord, by the lonely Saint in Patmos, seems to come down through the ages to us to-day: "I know thy works." "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

Many who desire to respond to our Lord's call have expressed their intention to observe February 28 (Ash Wednesday) as a day on which they will humble themselves before Him, and seek His teaching and His grace to do His holy will.

All servants of our Lord, who are in sympathy with this proposal, are invited to make it known, *without delay*, in their own neighborhood, and as far as possible to unite with their "fellow servants" "to seek of Him a right way for us" and our nation.

The following have given their adhesion to the suggestion: Earl Nelson, Lord Polworth, Viscount Halifax, Lord Radstock, Right Hon. Sir John Kennaway, M.P.; Right Hon. J. G. Talbot, M.P., University of Oxford; Col. Morton, Mildmay; Rev. Professor Handley Moule, D.D., Cambridge; Rev. Prebendary Webb Peplow, Rev. Professor Charteris, D.D., University of Edinburgh; The Ven. Archdeacon Sinclair, The Dean of Ripon, Mr. Sydney Gedge, M.P.; Canon Fleming, Rev. Evan Hopkins, Editor *Life of Faith*; Mr. J. Howard, M.P.; Rev. F. B. Meyer, Mr. Samuel Smith, M.P.; Rev. E. W. Moore, Mr. J. Cory, Cardiff; Col. L. G. Fawkes, R.A., Woolwich; Mr. J. H. Tritton, General Tate, Rev. Mark Guy Pearce, Canon Blake, Southsea; Admiral Campion, Rev. E. A. Stuart, Mr. B. Broomhall, editor *National Righteousness*; Mr. T. A. Denny, Rev. W. H. Aitken, Mr. J. K. Digby, M.P.; Rev. J. T. Parr, Rev. G. Hanson, D.D., Marylebone Presbyterian Church; Rev. Thomas Spurgeon, Metropolitan Tabernacle; Rev. F. S. Webster, rector of All Souls', Langham-place; Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. E. Legge, House of Commons; Rev. A. Maclaren, D.D., Manchester; Canon Robinson, Birmingham; Rev. G. H. Macgregor, Rev. C. A. Fox, Lieut.-Colonel R. Williams, M.P.; Sir Mark Stewart, M.P.; Rev. J. Grose Hodge, Rev. E. Thwaites, Salisbury; Rev. J. Monro Gibson, D.D.; Mr. Edward Clifford, hon. secretary Church Army; Mr. Robinson Souttar, M.P.; Rev. G. Clifford, D.D.; Rev. W. Carlile, hon. secretary Church Army; Canon Christopher, Oxford; Rev. J. T. Wrenford, St. Paul's, Newport, Mon.; Rev. H. E. Fox, hon. secretary C.M.S.; Mr. J. Colville, M.P.; Rev. J. B. Figgis, Brighton; Hon. and Rev. G.

Hanbury-Tracy, St. Barnabas, Pimlico; Mr. W. H. Seagram, Canon Gore, Rev. R. F. Horton, D.D.; Rev. J. Paton, D.D., Nottingham; Mr. F. A. Channing, M.P.; Dean of Norwich, Rev. Professor Stanley Leathes, D.D.; Earl of Aberdeen, Master of Trinity, Cambridge.

Of these names some forty are those of members of the Church of England, and the rest Presbyterians or Nonconformists.

All persons wishing to join are invited to address their letter, "Humiliation," Conference Hall, Eccleston-street, S.W., and copies of the appeal can be obtained from Messrs. Hunt, Barnard, and Co., 20 Blandford-street, W.

### Board School Humor.

BITS FROM DR. MACNAMARA'S RECENT LECTURE.

HE began by telling a story against himself. He was recently at a prize distribution at Kennington Road Board School, and told the boys that he would not see them again for twelve months. He ventured to express a hope that in the meantime they would behave themselves and not get into mischief. One boy, evidently regarding him as wishing the company the compliments of the season, replied, "The same to you, sir." For precocity, however, the boy who was being examined in mental arithmetic in an East Lambeth school surpassed the Kennington scholar. "Supposing," asked the examiner, "there were six glasses of beer on this table, and your father drank one, how many would remain?" To this a boy replied, "None, sir." The inspector chided the pupil with the remark, "You don't know the simplest mental arithmetic," but the retort came promptly, "No; and you don't know my father, sir."

There was an element of frankness about the boy who was being questioned on a scientific subject. It was impossible, the budding student declared, for the sun to shine at night. "But," remarked the inspector, "supposing I said I saw it?" and he was startled to hear the rejoinder, "Well, sir, I should think you were very drunk." Natural history has, according to Dr. Macnamara, produced more than one unconscious wag in the ranks of Board-school pupils. One juvenile was asked to name the particular place in which the ostrich laid its eggs, and his questioner was solemnly informed that it was in the school museum. There was, too, an element of piquancy in the answer of the boy as to the definition of a pilgrim. "A pilgrim," said the boy, "is a man who travels from place to place." "I do that," said the inspector; "am I a pilgrim?" The answer came, "No, sir; a pilgrim is a good man."

Scripture examinations had also been productive of much dry wit. "With what weapon," asked a teacher, "did David slay the Philistines?" and one of the smallest boys in the class exclaimed, "With the axe of the Apostles." Another boy in the East-end would always persist in saying, when repeating the Lord's Prayer, "Lead us not into Thames Station" (temptation), while a third, under the same teacher, in reply to the question as to the means by which Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, replied, "With brimstone and treacle from Heaven."

That chivalry is not altogether extinct is shown by the declaration of the boy that he knew Moses was a gentleman because he rebuked the shepherds who drove Jethro's daughter from the well, and cried "Ladies first!"—*Daily News*.

### Courage and Prudence.

In regard to disagreeable and formidable things, prudence does not consist in evasion, or in flight, but in courage. He who wishes to walk in the most peaceful parts of life with any serenity must screw himself up to resolution. Let him front the object of his worst apprehension, and his stoutness will commonly make his fear groundless. The Latin proverb says that "in battles the eye is first overcome." Entire self-possession may make a battle very little more dangerous to life than a match at foils or at football. Examples are cited by soldiers of men who have seen the cannon pointed, and the fire given to it, and who have stepped aside from the path of the ball. The terrors of the storm are chiefly confined to the parlor and the cabin. The drover, the sailor, buffets it all day, and his health renews itself at as vigorous a pulse under the sleet, as under the sun of June.—*Emerson*.

### For Youth.

While the locks are yet brown on thy head,  
While the soul still looks through thine eyes,  
While the heart still pours  
The mantling blood to thy cheek,  
Sink, O youth, in thy soul!  
Yearn to the greatness of Nature;  
Rally the good in the depths of thyself!

—*Matthew Arnold*.

## 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 Churches' Call to England."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, A lecture.

NORTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Leighton Hall, Leighton-crescent, Kentish Town): 7, H. Snell, "Tennyson and Modern Thought"—II.

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

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Stanton Coit, "Thou shalt not covet."

WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, A lecture.

## COUNTRY.

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): C. Watts—11.30, "Peace and War: From a Secular Standpoint"; 2.30, "Can a Scientist be a Christian?" 6.30, "The Decay of Christianity: Its Claims Refuted."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): Touzeau Parris—11, "Freethinking"; 6.30, "The Doctrine of Second Birth."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): C. Cohen—11, "The Perils of Patriotism"; 3, "The Other Side of Religion"; 7, "Religion and War." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (1 Grainger-street): 3, Members' Monthly Meeting.

PORTH BRANCH (30 Middle-street, Pontypridd): 6, A Meeting to make final arrangements for Mr. Cohen's visit.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): George Palmer—3, "The Great Problem of our Great Towns"; 7, "Co-operation and the Land Question." Tea at 5.

## Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—February 25, Manchester. March 4, Pontypridd, South Wales.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—March 11, Sheffield; 18, Birmingham. April 1, Glasgow; 8, Birmingham; 15, Stockton-on-Tees; 29, Birmingham.

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