

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Difficulty of Progress.

THE slowness of progress is a common lament with reformers and a familiar cry in the ears of those to whom they appeal. Young enthusiasts, convinced of the soundness of their views, and burning to convert others to their view, rush into the theatre of active propaganda certain that the mere enunciation of their opinions will command assent, and that the inauguration of the millennium is a mere matter of a few years of active teaching, and are naturally disheartened that its advent is postponed indefinitely. Then comes the reaction. Enthusiasm is replaced by despair, and many drop out of the ranks of active workers, determined to let the world, as Heine said of individuals, "go to hell in its own fashion."

Such a condition of things is both natural and inevitable. Progress is bound to be difficult, because the very people who should be most interested in it, and who would be most benefited by the suggested reforms, are exactly those who show least interest in the movement. It is the ill-educated who take least interest in the matter of education; the dwellers in slum property who show least concern in the housing question; the man who is hide-bound by the narrow dogmatism of his religious beliefs who is the greatest opponent to intellectual freedom. And it is inevitable, because one cannot hope, in the course of a year or two, to overturn the feelings and instincts that have been built up by centuries of training of a contrary character. We can only hope, at best, to elevate one generation a little above its immediate predecessor; and although the amount of elevation secured during a single generation becomes greater as we acquire a more complete control over natural forces, still it must always be small compared to the heredity that lies behind each individual.

Yet the complaint that progress is very slow is, in itself, a sign of improvement. In looking over past human history nothing is more striking than the fact that the idea of progress, as a conception running throughout the whole of society, is essentially a modern phenomenon. In earlier times the conception of progress was limited to a select few. The mass of the people looked upon the prevailing conditions and institutions as being fixed and irremovable, and acquiesced in the teachings of their religious leaders to be content in that state in which God and the landlord had been pleased to place them. Now-a-days this state of things is changed. The idea of progress is present with people of all ranks and all conditions; and, although with many it is not so strong as one would wish, still it is there, and that is at least something. What has to be done is by some means to quicken the dormant activities of the mass of the population, to brighten their intelligence so that they may be no longer easily led after false issues, and remain blind to their real and permanent interests.

It is not that the chief difficulty, in the way of more rapid development, is either a want of thinking or a want of materials for thinking. There is probably more individual thinking going on now than at any other period of human history. Men's eyes are constantly being opened to new issues, and their minds filled with fresh knowledge. The chief difficulty is that of want of definiteness of thought and want of courage in its expression. All along the line there is a cowardly hesitancy in speaking out what one believes to be true, and an equally cowardly or indolent fear of arousing

unpleasant consequences by so doing. It is to-day as W. R. Greg declared nearly thirty years ago:—

"Our social atmosphere is thick and hazy with insincerities and unrealities. We bow down before false gods, and we profess ignoble creeds; and, what is almost worse, we neither heartily worship the one nor honestly believe the other. We are not exactly bad, but neither are we strong nor true. The religion we profess has for one of its most significant and salient features the denunciation of wealth as a trust or a pursuit. Yet in England and America, perhaps the two most sincerely Christian nations in the world—one the cradle, the other the offspring of Puritanism—the passion likeliest to a national one is money-getting; not the effort after competence or comfort, but the pushing, jostling, trampling struggle for vast possessions or redundant affluence."

We are so afraid of following out our opinions to their logical conclusions, so fearful of offending this party or not pleasing the other, so anxious to conciliate interests that ought not to be conciliated, or smooth down feelings that do not deserve consideration, that a good deal of the thinking actually done altogether fails to produce its proper fruits. On the one side, professing Christians believe in Jesus without feeling quite certain what it was that he taught, how it was that he taught it, or even if he ever lived to teach anything at all. And, on the other side, one meets with numbers of professing Rationalists who reject religious beliefs, and yet talk vaguely about the "sublime figure of Jesus," the "valuable influence of Christianity," or the necessity of examining religious beliefs in a thoroughly reverential spirit.

It is this indecision and timidity that makes progress so extremely slow and so extremely difficult. Definiteness of thought and action is the essential condition of steady development, and it is precisely the quality in which we are most wanting. And here, again, the growth of knowledge tends to defeat itself. A man who only looks at the world from one standpoint is not likely to have his mind disturbed by conflicting views, and therefore, when he does act, is likely to proceed much more confidently than one whose breadth of knowledge gives him a perception of the world's many-sidedness. His very knowledge is apt to give him pause, to dull the "native hue of resolution," and teach that the world is not to be won in a day, or human nature changed in the twinkling of an eye.

Take only one illustration out of many that might be given. The problem of crime appears an easy one to solve to the man in the street. To lock up the wrongdoer, to subject him to a certain unpleasant discipline for a given period, and then once more turn him loose, appears to be the average man's philosophy on the subject. The delightful simplicity of the theory is only equalled by the emphasis of its enunciation. But, alas! the great difficulty is not to lock up the criminal, but how to deal with him afterwards, and how to deal with his associates, defective education and a bad social environment. And here, again, it is the man who realises what a complex thing human nature is—how varied and involved are the forces of which the criminal is the product, who will often pause where others, less wise, will rush on. The world seems a simple place to the child—not quite so simple to the youth who has learned a little geography, chemistry, and biology—hardest and most complex of all to the man who has grown grey in its study and old in its service. Wise men tread carefully where fools rush headlong; and if the latter class arrests first attention we may console ourselves with the reflection that, after all, it is the slow, cautious footsteps of the wise man that leave the most permanent

impress on life's path—not the bounding, rapid steps of unthinking childhood.

But, although the world improves slowly, still it improves. We may commit the same kind of errors and indiscretions as of old; but it is upon a somewhat weaker scale. Bigotry exists now as it has always existed, and many people are made to feel its influence. But bigotry no longer stands naked and unashamed. It apologises for its existence, and surrounds its action with a number of excuses of a more or less satisfactory character. And this is a clear gain. The very necessity for justification shows the presence of an opposing spirit; and that this opposite temper gains ground is plain to all. And, as I have already said, when one bears in mind the nature of the forces that must, even under the most favorable circumstances, be against advanced ideas—the unfamiliarity of the doctrines preached, the ancestral influences that have made man what he is; when we place the infinitesimal present against the almost infinite past, and when we finally bear in mind that the permanence of certain ideas and feelings means a modification of the actual nervous structure of man, then there need be little surprise that we cannot transform human nature in the course of a single generation.

It is enough that *something* can be done. It is enough to realise that, if the acquisition of knowledge bids us pause, fuller knowledge shows us when and how to act, and that our action becomes all the more conclusive because of the knowledge of which it is the expression. There is, too, the important consideration that the *rate* of progress is not constant—that it is being constantly accelerated. We traverse in a generation a distance it would once have taken a century to cross. There is a greater distance between ourselves and the people of the eighteenth century than there was between them and the contemporaries of Shakespeare. Our rate of progress is dependent upon the knowledge at our disposal, and the sum-total of available knowledge increases with the labors of each generation.

It is essential, however, that we do not delude ourselves with the belief that the mere getting of knowledge is equal to an increase of intellectual power. The value of knowledge lies in its assimilation by a properly disciplined mind, and its effective application to the affairs of life. Let each one do what lies in his or her power to produce definiteness of thought based upon adequate knowledge of facts, cultivate fearlessness and courtesy in the expression of such thought, and we may await in calm confidence whatever the future may bring forth.

C. COHEN.

A Pious Beast.

A HISTORY: WITH A MORAL.

BEFORE I visited America, in the winter of 1896, I had engaged a suitable and respectable office for the National Secular Society, and paid the first quarter's rent out of a Fund for that and other purposes which I had raised through the *Freethinker*. It was at 377 Strand, over Messrs. Manfield and Sons' handsome boot-shop, at the corner of Exeter-street, quite near to the great centre of Evangelical Christianity known all over the English-speaking world as Exeter Hall. Miss Vance was duly installed there as Secretary, and has been there ever since, the N. S. S. paying the rent through its Treasurer, although I was the legal tenant by agreement with the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, who represented the Land Restoration League as primary tenant (under Manfield and Sons) of the whole floor. We have been located there for nearly four years, but now we are going to move, and this is how it happens.

Mr. Headlam, as everybody knows who knows him at all, is a high-minded gentleman. Besides being a clergyman, in no good odor with the Church authorities, for reasons entirely creditable to himself, he is an ardent social reformer, and, amongst other things, President of the Land Restoration League. Mr. Verinder, also a Churchman, but of the Headlam school, is Secretary of the League. He is a pleasant gentleman, and easy enough to get on with. Neither he, nor his President,

nor any member of the League, has had the slightest shadow of difference with me, or Miss Vance, or any member of the N. S. S. Each body could have attended to its own business, with a casual exchange of civilities between its servants, and got along together admirably, as far as contiguity in space went, until the Day of Judgment. Why, then, is the N. S. S. going to leave? Well, for this reason. There is another tenant on the building called Humphreys, and, as luck would have it, he is a perfect, and consequently disgusting, bigot. He occupies the basement and the top floor. By trade he is a dealer in back numbers (of periodicals), and he is a back number himself. He is, apparently, well known in the lowest circles of what is called Christian Evidences. He is ignorant, vulgar, fanatical, and malicious. He may have his good points in private; I do not know, and I do not care; but when he hears the word "Secularist" or "Freethinker," or, as he understands it best, "Infidel," he pricks up his ears and runs amuck—in short, he becomes a mere orthodox brute, mad with bigotry, who gratifies all the worst of his inherited instincts under the cloak of religion.

Directly we entered our office, this fellow Humphreys began his tricks by writing a beastly letter about us to Mr. Verinder. This gentleman showed it to me. I shook my head over it and laughed, recognising it as a familiar case of atavism. Still, I consented to write its author a civil, tolerant note on the subject, venturing to suggest that he was under a mistake as to the character of Secularists in general and of the N. S. S. in particular, and even offering to see him on the matter. But this only excited the fellow's malignity. He replied to me in a still beastlier vein, and I showed his brutal, illiterate scrawl to Mr. Verinder in proof that the case was a hopeless one. I have never exchanged a word with him. I do not know that I have seen him. Miss Vance has never exchanged a word with him. We should all have been pleased to ignore his existence. But he was bent on making that impossible. He resorted to every paltry form of annoyance. Whenever we had an Executive meeting one of his daughters was set caterwauling on the stairhead, or in one of their rooms with the door wide open. She sang nothing in particular, but just made a noise. It was the most abominable sound I ever heard. It made your very teeth grate. The sharpening of a handsaw, or the creaking of a rusty old hinge, was music in comparison. And she kept it up by the hour. Then, in sweeping their stairs, they would playfully leave the refuse on Miss Vance's doormat. But she took no notice, being resolved on avoiding a quarrel. Indeed, on one occasion, she did this Humphreys a good turn. He wanted a piano brought up to his top floor, and the only way of getting it in was through one of her windows. The agent asked, on behalf of Humphreys, if it might come that way; and she replied ironically that she would be very happy to oblige him since he had been so agreeable.

The side street-door in Exeter-street was common to all the tenants of the building. On the evening of our Executive meetings, and similar occasions, it was one of the games of the Humphreys family to get this street-door closed, so that it had to be specially unlocked for every comer and goer. This little game was rendered easy by their occupancy of the basement. In this way they sometimes imprisoned a late goer on the staircase. My dear friend and colleague, Joseph Mazzini Wheeler, was once caught in this way. His gentle character, and pathetic sufferings, might have softened the hardest heart. But the wretched Humphreys refused to unlock the street-door for him. For three mortal hours—and how trying they must have been to that delicate, susceptible nature!—my poor friend begged and beseeched an act of common civility—in the circumstances, an act of common decency. But he might have remained there till now for all the impression he could make on that good Christian. It was Mrs. Humphreys who relented finally at the thought of his wife being ill in bed at home with no one to attend her. Mother Nature having somehow provided that a woman can never be quite as cruel a bigot as a man.

One night a number of persons were caught in this

trap. Miss Vance was working late, and Mr. Verinder was engaged till late with some members of his committee. This time Mr. Verinder's key would not unlock the street-door. No one had tampered with the lock—of course! Anyhow there was no egress. Humphreys saw them on the stairs, and grinned with delight; and, having to go out himself, he avoided opening the street-door by descending into the basement and making his exit through the cellar-trap. To spite an "infidel" he would annoy and injure his fellow Christians. At length, after all sorts of efforts, including an appeal to the police, the whole party were obliged to climb through a back window, crawl across a neighboring roof, and climb through another window belonging to a restaurant. And the fellow who let a woman do that, sooner than open a door, calls himself—and, for all I know, is—a Christian!

The climax of this story was reached a few weeks ago. Miss Vance was occupied late at the office, having to prepare her papers relating to the Freethought Publishing Company for deposit at Somerset House in the morning. A lot of trouble was given by a mistake she could not discover, and she had to seek assistance. This was rendered by Mr. Lock, who had been stock-taking for the Company. He was not a member of the N. S. S., but a member of the Land Restoration League, and had been recommended by Mr. Shore. Soon after nine o'clock he went out to get something to eat, and Miss Vance went out for a little air during his absence. When he returned the door was shut, and he rang the bell. In his ignorance, he rang the wrong bell. Humphreys came down and asked him what he wanted. He said he wanted to see Miss Vance, and apologised for his mistake. But as he entered the passage Humphreys fell upon him brutally. The attack was utterly unexpected, and the victim was down before he could defend himself. He was much shaken and bruised, and his clothes had to be mended before he could go home. This assault led to a case at Bow-street Police Court. Humphreys was there supported by the scum of the Christian Evidence and Anti-Infidel parties. The upshot was that the magistrate said it was a case for a civil action, and each side had to pay its own costs. Of course it has not been carried further, as justice is hardly to be expected where "infidels" are concerned.

Humphreys has allowed one of his friends to print the statement that Mr. Lock was there for an illegitimate purpose. The only answer that need be made to this Christian suggestion is that the N. S. S. office has two big windows, that the windows are without blinds, and that the whole interior is commanded by the windows of Haxell's Hotel right opposite.

So much for Humphreys. And now for Manfield and Sons. Their London manager, Mr. Frank Abbott, has been pestered with this fellow's complaints. Their solicitors received one letter from him which they described as "filthy." They said the writer seemed insane. Clearly the duty of Manfield and Sons was to warn Humphreys against disturbing the other tenants in the building. They did not do this, however; on the contrary, they put pressure on Mr. Headlam to get rid of his sub-tenant. Finally, they informed him that his tenancy would have to be determined unless the N. S. S. was "removed." Mr. Headlam sent their letter to me to read, and I took a copy of it. I will print it if necessary. Meanwhile I say it was disingenuous and disgraceful. Anyone who read it, in ignorance of the circumstances, would imagine that Miss Vance had been the aggressor, and had even assaulted Humphreys. Nevertheless, I felt it was unfair to let Mr. Headlam and the Land Restoration League suffer, so I told them that they should be released from their painful position, and that the N. S. S. would go as soon as convenient, and if possible by Lady Day. Mr. Headlam had not sought this decision, but he thanked me for my considerateness, and told Manfield and Sons that their action, while strictly legal, was morally a playing into the hands of religious bigotry and uncharitableness. Mr. Headlam is perfectly aware, and

Mr. Verinder emphasises the fact, that Humphreys had absolutely no reasonable ground of complaint. Mr. Verinder, as Secretary of the Land Restoration League, is constantly on the premises, often until late at night, and he is prepared to testify that our business has been conducted with order, quiet, and decorum, and that no kind of actual annoyance has been occasioned by Miss Vance to Humphreys or to anyone else on the premises. We simply annoyed the fellow by being there; although it must have given him a certain pleasure to air his bigotry and indulge in foul language.

I am well aware that this Humphreys is not, in himself, worth the space I have given him. But the spirit he embodies becomes of greater importance when he is assisted, however indirectly, by a firm like Manfield and Sons. Their London manager, Mr. Frank Abbott, appears to sympathise with this contemptible bigot merely because he is a Christian and we are Freethinkers. Nor can it be said that the firm itself is free from direct responsibility in the matter, for it was brought to the personal attention of the late Sir Moses Manfield by Mr. Headlam. I believe the founder of the firm was a Unitarian, and one has a right to expect something more than the average share of religious tolerance from a member of that body.

What I have written up to the present point was necessary as an introduction to what I have to say about far more important matters, which will be dealt with in next week's *Freethinker*. Many of my readers will recollect my announcement that the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, would endeavor to take a bold step forward in the new year. Nothing could be done, however, without securing suitable premises for the Company's operations; and it may now be added that recent circumstances, into which I cannot enter at this moment, have rendered this absolutely imperative; indeed, it is almost a matter of life and death to the enterprise. Well, we have been strenuously trying to obtain premises; and we have constantly been foiled by the passive bigotry of those who had them to let. Sometimes they shrank from a flat refusal, and resorted to subterfuges. In one case a clergyman was mixed up with a trusteeship, and after we were accepted as tenants by letter we were informed that another tenant had taken the premises; but that was a falsehood, for the place is to let still. However, we are now negotiating for premises in every way suitable, and there is a fair prospect of our taking possession of them shortly. But for very obvious reasons I cannot enter into details at present. There are too many slips between the cup and the lip—especially in a case like this. So my readers must wait, at least until next week.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Value of Opinions.

OPINIONS may be defined, for all practical purposes, as representing notions which persons may entertain at any given time upon topics presented to their minds. It has been said that opinions are the result of experience, which to a certain extent is true, if the term experience is taken in its most comprehensive sense. Hence, how futile it is to censure an individual for holding any particular opinions—say, for instance, in reference to religious subjects. Take three children whose parents entertain diverse views pertaining to theology, such as Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Secularists. The early experience of those children will, as a rule, be limited by the views of their respective parents. And even where no direct attempt is made to impose the parental opinions upon the young minds, they will become impressed more or less with the ideas in the midst of which they have been trained. Thus early experience often culminates in the holding of opinions which may or may not be correct; but, whatever they are, they are not the outcome of any process of reasoning, but are simply inherited, and therefore should not incur upon the holder any odium. Secularists recognise the importance of this fact, and consequently their aim is to keep the rising generation free from the snares of superstition, so that when their minds are matured

reason shall have full scope to play its legitimate part in the formation of opinions.

Mistakes are frequently made as to the intrinsic value of an opinion. Of course, its real worth will depend to a large extent upon the knowledge and general education of its possessor. Besides, individual adaptability must not be overlooked. A man may be accepted as an authority upon one subject, while his training and mental character may render his opinion upon others comparatively worthless. As an illustration of this general truth we may refer to Newton, who is acknowledged to have been great on the law of gravitation; but who to-day would accept his views upon prophecy? We may also mention Faraday, who in chemistry was an authority, while upon religious questions he was exceedingly crude. Gladstone was, in the estimation of many, a good statesman; but upon theology, as Colonel Ingersoll proved, he could not be regarded by intelligent persons as an authority. These are considerations which Christian disputants should bear in mind when they refer to "great men" as being in favor of their decaying faith.

It is quite a common error with some to confound opinion with belief. When, however, the two are supposed to signify the same thing it can only mean that belief is founded upon partial or insufficient evidence; that is, it may be only an imaginary notion, supposed to be based on reality. No claim should be put forward for any opinion as being a substantiated truth until the evidence for and against it is duly considered. The astronomer tells us that some planets revolve around the sun. To him this is knowledge based upon observation; but those who have not seen the revolutions can only believe the fact which, to them, appears to be supported by trustworthy testimony. If, however, a person allege that these planets are inhabited like this earth, that should be denominated only as an opinion. For ages the Christian world has been divided in opinion—the one being known as orthodox and the other as heterodox, which simply means right and wrong opinions. But the Christian method of appealing to the Bible or to the Church to decide which is the correct view precludes the possibility of a reasonable belief being attributed to either. Hence all dogmatic denunciations of belief or disbelief should be avoided. At several periods in English history the two terms—orthodox and heterodox—have changed places, the former at one time predominating, and at another time the latter. In both cases the Court or the Church—or both—decided which should be the fashionable opinion of the time.

It should be remembered that it is not only the conflict of opinion that we have to consider, for that in itself may be beneficial, and probably will continue through all time. The serious aspect of these contending orthodox and heterodox parties is that the possession of power enables them to declare some opinions legal and others illegal, and that some shall be tolerated, whilst persons holding different views shall be persecuted. Not only is this so, but, further, this very power has been repeatedly exercised, to the detriment of the dissenting party for the time being. And this has happened, not only upon religious topics, but also in reference to social and political questions. What is required to prevent this injustice is freedom in its truest sense. The evils arising from variety of opinion can only be prevented or removed by free and fair discussion. No subject ought to be deemed too sacred for debate, and no opinion too secure for honest criticism. Calm debate will often show that what are called mysteries (which we are asked to believe without question) should be described as absurdities. The ingenuity of some persons in dealing with well-known terms is simply marvellous. For instance, a bishop recently criticised the position taken by Agnostics in reference to the existence of God. He said that it is true we cannot comprehend the Deity, but we could apprehend him. Now this is merely theological jugglery, for there is no real difference in the meaning of the two words. To apprehend is to seize, as it were, upon a given point; to comprehend is to grasp in your mind several points together. Where is the difference so far as the bishop's God is concerned? He is said to be one or three incomprehensibles, equalling only one incomprehensible, which is beyond the power of the

human mind either to apprehend or to comprehend. A great portion of the intellectual work of the present century has been to criticise and correct the opinions of former ages. "The wisdom of our ancestors" upon scientific and legal questions has been almost entirely discarded. Legislation affecting the right to hold and publish heretical opinions is of quite modern date; and the old notions as to the alleged Bible teaching on science have, within the last few decades, received shocks from which they can never recover. The ignorant past had been allowed too long to dominate the increased, and increasing, knowledge of the present. Ancient opinions, once deemed too sacred to be even questioned, have been put through the fire of modern critical tests, with the result that Bacon's words, "No man is omniscient," have been verified. To us, as Freethinkers, it is a gratifying fact that this intellectual improvement is largely due to the Secular philosophy of the age. It is the glory of this philosophy to have discovered and taught that uniformity of opinion upon speculative subjects is impossible, and that variety of opinion is the result of the activity of the human mind. Here is another achievement of Secularism in modern times. Wherever the circumstances of life vary to any considerable extent, we find that variety of opinions abounds. And it is inevitable that it should be so, since the influence of education, social position, family relations, and the prevailing opinions are most felt by those who are the better capable of forming rational opinions. A remarkable confirmation of this truth may be found in the lives of Lyell and Darwin as related by themselves.

One important fact which should be kept in view by public instructors of the young is that, as a rule, the most popular opinions are those which have not been properly examined, while other and truer opinions, which have been formed after extended inquiry, are ignored or condemned. The truth should be proclaimed that no external power can alter the laws of thought; it can only affect the thinker personally. Let it be further known that, in the view of those who are thoroughly competent to express an opinion, the attempt to control thought by law, or by the infliction of suffering on mind or body, is foolish, cruel, and unjust. Yet these have been the means employed for ages by Christians to convert heretics to a "religion of love."

CHARLES WATTS.

Art, Money, and Life.

THE Irish Literary Theatre, founded by some literary Irishmen, for the fostering of a serious Irish drama, has produced its second series of performances in Dublin. And if it has done nothing else, it has, at least, stimulated thought and excited discussion. That is one enormous gain. It scarcely matters how the result be achieved—the great service to-day is to get men to think. And the Irish Literary Theatre, so far, has been singularly fortunate in this respect. This fact would, therefore, be almost sufficient proof of the seriousness of aim of those who have hitherto supplied it with its materials. For the moment, however, I do not propose to deal with these materials, but with an essay of Mr. George Moore's heralding the performances.

Mr. Moore, who seems to have lent his influence unreservedly to the Irish Literary movement, wrote a "preface" in one of the reviews, since reprinted at the beginning of his play, *The Bending of the Bough*, setting forth the reason why he and his friends turned their backs on London, and also arguing and propounding various theses about art in general and dramatic art in particular. Personally, I must say I agree with Mr. William Archer that in this "preface" Mr. Moore rather dangerously commits himself to a number of vague generalities which do not impress an unbiassed reader as being much more than half-truths. Whether, for instance, art is never produced but in the "youth" of nations, with the subsidiary question what exactly is the youth of a nation; whether art "never returns to where she has once been"; whether the world really cares little about the lives of its statesmen, compared with the lives of its artists—on these risky questions

Mr. Moore lays down the law with what seems a reckless one would not care to emulate. Take this paragraph as a sample:—

"Why should we be so eager to know why Shelley left his first wife, why Sir Joshua never married, and be so little curious about the lives of the politicians who sat at Westminster in the supreme moments of the eighteenth century?"

Are we thus eager and thus incurious? Do we really care a vast deal about the Shelleys, and little or nothing about, say, the Grattans and Pitts? Some, of course, may; but, on the other hand, many would rather discuss the domesticities of Napoleon—do, indeed, discuss them *ad nauseam*—than those of a hundred Shelleys. What Mr. Moore lays down as an axiom for the mass really seems only a matter of individual taste. And even on the point of taste I cannot see that the people who revel in Napoleon biographies have a vitiated or perverted appetite compared with those who revel in the private details of the life of Sir Joshua.

There are many other propositions, thrown up, as it were, in Mr. Moore's essay, with which it is not necessary now to deal. But in the main it is a legitimate plea against the thralldom of art to money, and an emphasis of the impossibility of an artist working or creating at his best, for mere gain. "The Greeks did not build the Parthenon for money," says Mr. Moore, "nor did the French build Chartres Cathedral for money." And he significantly adds: "We remember a nation for its art rather than its colonies."

Because, therefore, Mr. Moore thinks that money and the greed for money are eating out the vitals of English art, he preaches his homily. This is his picture of the current English drama, and few impartial observers will say that it is much overdrawn:—

"So it is to dramatic writing we must look to discover the depths to which an art can sink when it is written and produced at the mutual dictation of the gallery boy, who, for a shilling, demands oblivion of his day's work, and the stockbroker who, for 10s. 6d., demands such amusement as will enable him safely to digest his dinner. All who write for the English stage must write practically at the dictation of these two."

Whether this description might not be applied to other nations besides England is also questionable, though the subserviency of the theatre to unintelligent commercialism is perhaps more marked in England than elsewhere. The bulk of current English drama consists of mediocre adaptations of French farces, in which, as someone has said, the meaning is eliminated with the "immorality," and the result is a violent hurly-burly about nothing at all, and scarcely disguised music-hall displays in which slang ditties and dresses (or the absence of them) form the chief attraction. Moreover, in England scenic display and lavish mounting have been carried to such a point—thanks largely to Sir Henry Irving's lead—that the risk a manager now runs in putting on a new piece is so enormous as to check enterprise; and the audience go as much to see the upholstery as the acting. In France this evil has not reached such a pass, with the result that there is more mobility of even the classic French drama would be considered tawdry in a second-rate English theatre. In England Shakespeare is now put on in a fashion that would have dazzled Shakespeare himself. Mr. Tree's *Julius Cæsar*, though the bulk of the actors were admirable, was largely a spectacular display, and many went, not so much to hear Shakespeare's splendid poetry, as to see Mr. Tree's stage-effects. And in the present production of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* at Her Majesty's it seems that an artificial rabbit hops across the stage to the bewilderment and delight of the audience.

All this, of course, is not art, but money—a matter of pounds, shillings, and pence. The appeal is to the senses, not the intellect; indeed, intellect is at a discount on the modern English stage. Even the most ambitious plays to-day consist of little more than society

* Since this article was written there has come the sad news of the destruction by fire of the *Comédie*. The building itself perhaps could be spared, but the loss or injury of the art treasures it contained must be irreparable. Freethinkers will remember, with other things, the fine statue of Voltaire at one end of the *foyer* amongst the busts of the princes of the French drama. Some of these busts appear to have been saved. One reflection is that it was unwise to house such art works in so naturally inflammable a building as a theatre.

chatter, sometimes smart, sometimes insipid, drawled out by actors and actresses who have to play the languid, in luxuriously-appointed drawing-rooms and boudoirs, the cost of furnishing which is incidentally puffed by the theatrical paragraphist. Even when, by accident, a modern English playwright stumbles across a real live issue, he immediately shelves it, lest anybody should suspect him for a moment of being in touch with reality. So we have a stage whose most recent triumphs include *The Degenerates* and *A Runaway Girl*.

Whether or not all this decline in art is the effect of Empire and material success need not be minutely discussed. Mr. George Moore contends that it is, and there is doubtless considerable truth in his generalisation. Abundant riches tend to blunt the edge of feeling, and the world's greatest artists and thinkers have generally either been poor men or have cared little for money. The boast of power and of possession which represents the prevailing English ideal is perhaps the most vulgar pride which a man or a people can exhibit. And there would certainly seem to be something rotten in the heart or the brain of a nation in whose capital there swarms a population on the verge of starvation and misery, actually larger than the combined populations of two little states thousands of miles away, which it is spending millions to "civilise" by the sword. Herbert Spencer and Charles Bradlaugh between them probably handled as much money in their lives as Cecil Rhodes in a couple of years. And Mr. Cecil Rhodes represents, or is supposed to represent, the type of hero, for the moment, of the majority of the English people.

But whatever may be thought of Mr. Moore's generalisations—and, like most generalisations, they require an amount of discount—they yet raise a real and vital question. This abnormal money-greed, which is so much in evidence at the present day, must really be checked if there is ever to be anything like advance, though to indicate this one must not be supposed to be harking back to the worn-out injunction, "Blessed be ye poor." Poverty is bad, and so is the mad rush for wealth, acquired somehow or anyhow, which is almost in the nature of a disease. And it is a disease that grows. The man with £500 a year is generally much more grasping than the man with £100, and it is your millionaires who will bring about a bloody and iniquitous war to grab more millions still. Indeed, the millionaire madly heaping million on million is assuredly a diseased type; but the misfortune is that he tends to spread the infection.

Back, then, of all political and social reconstructions must lie the setting for the individual of a higher, a more intellectual, a cleaner, a more beautiful life. On the foundation of unchecked personal greed no lasting social fabric can ever be raised, and every social fabric must tend to go to pieces. And the paradox is that the higher pleasures are the cheapest. The books of literature, of art, of philosophy, of science, may be read, if not by the poorest, at any rate by those who have little money. The gate of intellectual joy lies practically open to him who will enter. And if our civilisation is not to utterly fade away, each one of us must strive to enter that gateway, even if we but travel only a little along the path.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Abraham Lincoln.

The colour of the ground was in him, the red Earth,
The tang and odour of the primal things—
The rectitude and patience of the rocks;
The gladness of the wind that shakes the corn;
The courage of the bird that dares the sea;
The justice of the rain that loves all leaves;
The pity of the snow that hides all scars;
The loving kindness of the wayside well;
The tolerance and equity of light
That gives as freely to the shrinking weed
As to the great oak flaring to the wind—
To the grave's low hill as to the Matterhorn
That shoulders out the sky.

—Edwin Markham.

It is said that, when Henry D. Thoreau lay dying in Concord, his friend Parker Pillsbury sat by his bedside; and he leaned over and took him by the hand, and said: "Henry, you are so near to the border now, can you see anything on the other side?" And Thoreau answered: "One world at a time, Parker."

Acid Drops.

THE National Sunday League is taking another downward step. A new feature is being introduced at its Alhambra show on Sunday evenings, in the shape of War Pictures provided by the Chronoscope Company. War at the very best is a hateful necessity. To mix it up with an evening's entertainment, as the Sunday League is doing, is to play down to the lowest and most barbarous taste. But perhaps this might be expected of "Recreative Religionists."

The London County Council has given its permission to this new departure. So says a Sunday League official. But the County Council's permission is a surreptitious thing; it is utterly illegal, and is, indeed, a defiance of the law of the land. In any case, it is the League that must bear the moral responsibility of these War Pictures; and the weight of which it does not seem to apprehend, for the League official already referred to says, "We aim at a high standard." If they aim at a high standard, they seem very poor marksmen—at least in this instance.

President Kruger keeps up his touching faith in "Providence." "God was trying the Boer people," he said, at Bloemfontein, "but his personal opinion was that the limit of the test had been nearly reached. If the people adhered to their faith in the time of adversity, God would soon again turn the tide in their favor. If their faith was strong, God would surely deliver them. The God of deliverance of olden times was the same God still." President Kruger's hearers wept. And well they might.

It is extremely regrettable to hear of "Peace Meetings" being broken up or rendered impossible in various parts of the country. Liberty of thought and speech is a prime condition of progress, and those who interfere with it are fighting against civilisation. Those who object to hearing what a speaker has to say have their own remedy. All they have to do is to refrain from attending his meetings. But they have no sort of right to prevent other persons from attending, or to prevent them from hearing him when they do attend. At the same time, it must be admitted that the attitude and the language of some of these "Peace" advocates are indiscreet and even provocative in the present temper of the British public. Take the Rev. J. Page Hopps, for instance. This gentleman uses the hottest adjectives and adverbs towards all who differ from him in this crisis. He treats them all as liars, thieves, and scoundrels. But how gingerly he deals with the law against public meetings in the Transvaal. Under that law any assembly of more than seven persons, even within doors, could be summarily stopped by a policeman. Mr. Hopps says that this was only "regulation," and that such meetings were "dangerous." Well, a man who talks in this way ought not to wonder if he gets scant justice himself in the matter of public meetings in his own country. For our part, we are in favor of freedom all round. That is the only just and sensible policy.

The riot at Scarborough on Monday night was most disgraceful. The police were powerless to control the mob, and soldiers had to be brought from the Artillery Barracks to preserve order. Meanwhile damage had been done to the extent of considerably over £1,000. Fortunately there was no loss of life, nor was anyone seriously hurt, although Mr. Schreiner had to escape violence by flight. Mr. Hobson does not seem to have been injured.

It will be difficult to hold any meetings of this kind anywhere, even with the amplest police protection. The blood of the mob, the multiplied man in the street, is thoroughly up. And it will not be cooled by Lord Roberts's official telegrams as to the abuse of the white flag by the Boers and their free use of expanding bullets. A great many people in this country are anxiously looking for the reply of Presidents Steyn and Kruger to Lord Roberts's strongly-worded message on this matter. It is an infinite pity that bitterness should be aggravated by a breach of the rules of civilised warfare.

On Saturday afternoon, March 10, the British and Foreign Bible Society celebrated its ninety-sixth birthday. A large meeting was held at the Guildhall, and addressed by the Lord Mayor of London. This pious gentleman referred in glowing language to the "good work" of the Society. It had dispatched no less than 110,000 copies of the New Testament and St. John's Gospel [isn't this a part of the New Testament?] to the British soldiers in South Africa. It had also sent £100 worth of volumes in Dutch for the use of the Boer prisoners and wounded. (Rapturous applause.) But what touched the Lord Mayor more immediately than anything else was the fact that the Society had presented 1,500 copies of the Bible to the City of London Imperial Volunteers. (Extra rapturous applause.) It was not stated, though, how many of those 1,500 copies had been read, or what uses some of them may have been put to in emergencies. It was enough

that the Society's policy in regard to the Bible was "give, give, give!" And surely the duty of the Bible-loving public was to "pay, pay, pay!"

Freethinkers should think for a moment of the *serious* side of all this Bible distribution. Is it not their duty to counteract it by the distribution of Freethought literature? They will soon have an opportunity of assisting in this "good work," when the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, enters its own premises and attacks the literature problem scientifically.

The *Sterling Herald* tells the following little story: "In a neighboring town a Salvation Army advertiser wrote on a bill-board, 'What shall I do to be saved?' A patent medicine man came along next day and wrote underneath, 'Take Carter's Little Liver Pills.' Shortly afterwards the Salvation Army man noticed the sacrilegious work of the medicine man, and printed below, 'And prepare to meet thy God.'"

The Manchester School Board, after a stormy discussion, accepted from Mr. J. H. Reynolds a photograph of a Raphael Madonna for the new Central Board school. Since then, however, the Board has gone back upon its vote. Clerical and other Protestants contended that such a picture would exercise a shocking influence upon the minds of the children; it would tend to make them superstitious, or rather Roman Catholic; and so the picture was declined without thanks. What a characteristic bit of cold, hard, Protestant humbug! On the face of it, any one of Raphael's Madonnas is simply a picture of a beautiful young mother holding a lovely child in her arms. If Protestants object to it because of its religious character, we beg to ask them why they put into the hands of boys and girls the New Testament story of that mother and child? The noble picture is "shocking," but the story which it but ostensibly illustrates—yes, that story, with all its gross superstition and collateral indecency—is considered quite fit for the reading of little children. What taste! And what hypocrisy!

We have some God Almighty ministers in England, but a certain American man of God quite takes the cake in this competition. His name is Lucian Clark, but there is more Clark than Lucian about him. "All books that antagonise the Bible and the Christian religion," he says, "should be consigned to the flames." Humanity forbids us to suggest that this bonfire bigot should be consigned after them—or before.

Drumont's paper, *La Libre Parole*, the mouthpiece of the clerico-military party in Paris, has discovered why the "House of Moliere" was burnt down. It was because its manager, M. Claretie, sympathised with Dreyfus. The burning of the famous Theatre was an act of Providence, a kind of judgment. This is very interesting. But it suggests the question, Why was not M. Claretie burnt to death instead of a poor little actress who was a universal favorite? Perhaps the great Drumont, who is on such intimate terms with Providence, will answer this simple question.

The "Purity" people in America have been securing good business for Miss Olga Nethersole and Mrs. Langtry by carrying on a fierce crusade against them on account of the "immoral" plays in which they are acting. Everybody wants to see these wicked plays, if only to condemn them with adequate information; and crowded houses are the result every evening.

Mr. Roberts, member for Utah, has been refused admission to Congress as a polygamist. Speaking in his own defence, he asked where polygamy was condemned in the Bible. All the favorites of God in the Old Testament were polygamists. As to the New Testament, Mr. Roberts said: "If you go to the teaching of the Great Master, whom I take it we all revere, although he denounced every crime, every sin that man can commit, you shall find no word of his in condemnation of the conduct of the patriarchs or of the law as it was given to Moses and ancient Israel." This is unanswerable, and no member of Congress tried to answer it. Monogamy did not come to us from the Jews—including Jesus Christ and his Apostles. It came to us from the civilisation of Greece and Rome. Christians simply read into the Bible what they learn from other sources.

"The ministry is no place for a young man who wants his personal liberty. He must use too much hypocrisy, and overlook too much hypocrisy in others." The man who says this is an expert. It is the Rev. James S. MacInnes, who has just left the pastorate of the Oak Leaf Congregational Chapel, at Oakland, California.

Rev. L. D. Broughton, of New York, gives his ideas (presumably satirical, though possibly serious) on how to fill the churches. He suggests that the biograph should be introduced with Biblical and other pictures. There might be

a few boxing rounds (not with the collection box, but with the gloves) before each service. A one-act comedy might hold together those who are tired of the sermon. Finally, the reverend gentleman says that the church might be turned into a temporary café, and "we might serve drinks between prayers." No doubt these suggestions are all excellent. But why are smoking-pews forgotten?

Here is a new American phrase for revivalism—"The snapshot conversion process." Its author is a Presbyterian minister at Philadelphia.

In spite of his acceptance of a mass of theological nonsense, Spurgeon held sane views on some points, as his now completed Autobiography shows. For instance, in a letter on the marriage law he wrote: "I regard marriage as a civil contract which ought to be made before a magistrate or registrar. I should be glad to be rid of marrying and burying altogether as religious matters, save only where there is a sincere desire for the Divine blessing or consolation. In these cases let the minister hold a service at the house or meeting-house."

There is something rather touching in the following story, related by the *Christian World*, of a kindly grave-digger in one of the Eastern counties. He is in charge of the whole of the burying ground of the parish, part of which is consecrated and part unconsecrated. Busy at work a few days ago, a friend went to the spot and got into conversation with him. Noticing some graves quite away in another part of the enclosure, he asked the digger what they were, and how was it they were away from the others. 'Oh, them's Dissenters,' said the old man. 'That part ain't consecrated, d'ye see. They are put apart from the others, poor things, in unconsecrated ground. But when I digs a grave there, and ha' got it all ready, I comes over to this side and takes a shovelful o' soil, and just shakes it over the bottom o' the grave, and nobody knows nothin' about it.' Poor man, he thought he was doing a kindly act. But what shall be said of his superiors in education and intelligence who adhere to the absurd notion of "consecrated" ground?

A Salvationist has been committed for trial on a charge of burglary at the house of the local Salvation Army captain. He was also charged with picking the pocket of a domestic servant whom he was courting.

It was rather too bad of Providence to send a violent shock of earthquake throughout Northern Italy on a recent Sunday, just at the time that his worshippers were assembled in the churches. Needless to say, the devotees did not remain to pray to him for safety, but made a general stampede into the open air, lest Providence should, in his recklessness, bring the buildings tumbling down about their ears.

More Providence. An explosion of gas near the belfry of St. Edmund's Church, Exeter, had serious results. Flames shot through the floor of the belfry, the tower was shaken severely, the sexton was blown into the street, two heavy doors were blown to pieces, a third door was shattered, and the belfry floor was demolished.

The Sabbatarians have scored once more. The Penge magistrates have been induced to refuse the renewal of the seven days' licence for the sale of intoxicating drink at the Crystal Palace. The Lord's Day Act (1780-81) was quoted to show that any house or place wherein public entertainment or amusement is provided on Sundays is a disorderly house or place, and those who carry it on, or assist in carrying it on, render themselves liable to heavy penalties. One of the witnesses, called on behalf of the opposition to the renewal, admitted that he had been sent to the Palace on Sundays by the Lord's Day Rest Association, and that they had paid him to give evidence.

Very properly the Crystal Palace authorities refused to accept a six days' licence. The effect will therefore be that, if the decision is not upset on appeal, a place of amusement resorted to by millions of people every year will be prevented from selling a single glass of beer even on a Bank Holiday. The *Standard*, in a leaderette, contemptuously refers to "the Lord's Day Observance Association, and other Societies whose business is to prevent other people enjoying themselves in a rational way," and is strongly of opinion that the time has come for the whole question of Sunday observance law to be considered systematically by Parliament.

Colonel Hay relates the following story of President Abraham Lincoln: "A Buffalo man presented himself at the White House, and, when his turn came to shake hands, he said: 'We in Buffalo put our trust in God and in Abraham Lincoln.' 'Well, my friend,' said the second in the partnership, as he passed his visitor on, 'you are more than half right.'"

Here are some admissions from the *British Weekly's* front-page article as to the growing disuse of prayer: "We are afraid that prayer has largely ceased to be believed in as a method of deliverance. Much has been said and written during the present war which shows to how great an extent the miracle of prayer has become incredible to many. It has shown that multitudes have lost, or more than half lost, the belief in God's presence and in God's judgment that controls and nerves and calms. The silence about God proves that the glorious vision of the Divine, the faith that enters into the daily life, has passed away for many of our people."

The Sheldonian association of Jesus with journalism recalls the following story by Max O'Rell in his *Frenchman in America*: "Colonel Elliott F. Shepherd, proprietor of the *New York Mail and Express*, every morning sends to the editor a fresh text from the Bible for publication at the top of the editorials. One day that text was not received, but somehow got lost, and by noon was still unfound. I was told that you should have heard the composers' room ring with 'where can that d—d text be?' Finally, the text was wired, and duly inserted."

Here is a good thumping Roman Catholic lie. The Bishop of Salford in his Lenten pastoral says: "The Catholic Church, so far from being opposed to the progress of science, has ever fostered and blessed its growth, and the more secrets she extracts from the bosom of Nature the more she rejoices." After this, we may as well regard all history as fable, and the present Mivart episode as a dream.

Some readers of the *Vossische Zeitung* appear to have been studying the Bible too attentively. Fancying that the Hotel Cecil is named after Cecil Rhodes, they have written to the manager asking him whether he really thinks that any German would live in an hotel that bears the name of "the most meanest and bloodiest man in the world." They wind up by exclaiming, "Damned be he, damned by the whole English people." Let us pray!

Some of our readers, though perhaps a minority, will remember the story of the old officer who paraded his men for church. "Church of England," he cried, "to the right—Roman Catholics to the left—Fancy Religions to the rear." A somewhat similar story is told by the Rev. E. J. Hardy, an army chaplain, who has just published a book called *Mr. Thomas Atkins*. "An officer," he says, "who was present when a Militia regiment was about to be inspected before marching off to divine service told me the following: One man was loitering about, and the sergeant asked him in forcible terms why he did not fall in. He replied that he was a Unitarian. 'Unitarians?' asked the sergeant. 'What's that? There are only three religions; fall in with the Roman Catholics.'"

Poor men of God! Some of them have a very hard time. We see in the newspapers that "the delightful living" of Norham-on-Tweed has become vacant through the resignation of Canon Waite, and has been given to the Very Rev. G. H. Caswell. It is worth about £500 a year, with a fine residence and garden.

Dr. Ryle's resignation of the Bishopric of Liverpool makes a vacancy in the House of Lords, which will be filled by the Bishop of Hereford, who is said to be "the only Liberal prelate"—probably for the same reason that the one-eyed man is king amongst the blind.

Mr. Rudyard Kipling visited Chicago several years ago, and penned a vivid description of a fashionable service in a fashionable church. It is reprinted in his new book, *From Sea to Sea*:—"It was a circus, really; but that the worshippers did not know. There were flowers all about the building, which was fitted up with plush and stained oak and much luxury, including twisted brass candlesticks of severest Gothic design. To these things, and a congregation of savages, entered suddenly a wonderful man completely in the confidence of their God, whom he treated colloquially and exploited very much as a newspaper reporter would exploit a foreign potentate. But, unlike the newspaper reporter, he never allowed his listeners to forget that he, and not He, was the centre of attraction. With a voice of silver, and with imagery borrowed from the auction-room, he built up for his hearers a heaven on the lines of the Palmer House (but with all the gilding real gold and all the plate-glass diamond), and set in the centre of it a loud-mouthed, argumentative, and very shrewd creation that he called God. One sentence at this point caught my delighted ear. It was *apropos* of some question of the Judgment Day, and ran: 'No! I tell you God doesn't do business that way.'"

The late Marquis of Queensberry ordered in his will that no Christian tomfoolery should be uttered at his funeral. We understand, however, that this order was disregarded. It is generally held that religion sanctifies the worst violations of private or public confidence. In this case, we presume, there was no person interested in Lord Queensberry's will

who was prepared to insist on the strict fulfilment of its conditions. No outsider, of course, had any right to interfere.

"What is your religious profession?" is one of the questions which will be asked in the approaching Government census, if the proposed extension of the Act is carried. To a large number of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom the query may not appear inquisitorial, and therefore offensive. One can easily imagine a Primitive Methodist or a Particular Baptist or a Plymouth Brother or a Salvationist proudly writing himself down what he is in the matter of religious belief. He may even insist on describing himself from that point of view, as Dogberry insisted upon being written down an ass. But to independent thinkers who do not care, or perhaps are not quite able to specifically label themselves, the interrogation may appear not only uncalled for, but positively annoying and impertinent.

A return of the number of people who hold this or that particular religious belief might be interesting, perhaps even useful. But then, to be one or the other, it must be accurate. And that is what no religious census ever was, or is ever likely to be. The great army of "Nothingarians," not to appear absolutely ignorant as to what they believe, may be too apt to jot down any definite description that occurs to them on the spur of the moment. It may be that of the Sunday-school which they attended in childhood, the church or chapel to which they were then dragged or driven, but which has never seen them since; or more likely, in default of any other suggestive idea, they pop themselves down as "Church of England."

It is the latter possibility that has aroused an amusing apprehension on the part of Nonconformists. They fear, and not without good reason, that the Established Church will come out with a greater strength than it is entitled to claim. Hence we find the *Liberator* asking: "What right has the Government of the day to knock at the door of every house in this kingdom, and to put the question, What is your religious profession?" On the other hand, the *Record*, as a Church paper that believes it will be on the right side in the result, scouts the complaint as unfounded, and argues that, as the interrogation is authorised by Parliament, the right is established. This, of course, does not dispose of the grievance, but simply raises the question, Why should Parliament authorise the inquiry? If a reply were purely optional, there would be no great cause for complaint; but, according to law, a refusal to answer, or to answer correctly, is punishable by a penalty of £5. That makes it look like a serious matter. The penalty, however, is not likely to be enforced. If it were in all the cases of misdescription, there would be an astounding accession to the national revenue.

In default of Parliamentary remedy, the course naturally open to those who would resent the penalty-enforced inquiry is to make any caustic or nonsensical reply that occurs to them, and leave the enumerators to make the best of it.

That some of the Churches are really anxious for the proposed extension of the census to religious profession is shown by the following extract from a letter in the *Catholic Times*: "You say, 'We see no objection to taking a religious census.' Now I think that is not going far enough, and that, instead of being satisfied with not objecting, Catholics ought to ask, demand, require, and insist upon having such a census taken." In Germany and the United States a religious census is taken, but not with very reliable results, and there was a proposition made ten years ago to extend to religious returns the Census (England) Act and the Census (Scotland) Act, but without meeting with general approval. The truth is the Briton's love of following his own sweet will in matters of religion takes offence even at an inquiry as to the direction in which it has pleased him to go.

The *Christian*, with pious horror, quotes the following sentence from an article by a "well-known American preacher" whom it will not condescend to name: "The task now is to remove the Bible from the unwarranted place assigned to it, and to do this in such a manner that it will not suffer diminution of the honor which belongs to it of right and in its own place." The *Christian* indignantly demands: "What is the 'unwarranted place' assigned to the Bible?" In the course of its tirade against the growing heresy of the day, the *Christian* makes the rather shrewd remark that "it is strange that clerical critics do not see that every step they take in belittling the authority of scriptures is undermining their own authority as preachers." Of course it is, and the more that is done the better for human sanity.

The latest issue of the *Church Gazette* is an improvement on that which we noticed last week. This is, in part, due to the re-appearance of that interesting and extremely liberal-minded contributor, "Martin West." This week he has some

gossip on "Retired Parsons," which will be hardly palatable to many Church people. He says: "It is quite true that our bishops (other than colonial) continue to work until very advanced ages, and that deans and canons usually hold their offices till death overtakes them; but the undignified clergy, who do not hold rich livings, and are not obliged from utter lack of private means to remain in harness to the last, are apt to retire at an age when, were they in other professions, they would be expected to have a good many years of active life before them. A man with whom I discussed this phenomenon the other day remarked that the reason would be found in the fact that, whereas lawyers and medics generally loved their profession, parsons do not. For the honor of the cloth one would like to scout such a notion, but I fear there is something in it."

He mentions the case of one parson he knew who had a charge in London, and while in the prime of life decided to retire. "I saw him after he had preached his last sermon. 'There,' he said, as he came away, 'I've done with the church. I never intend to enter another so long as I live.' This took place about fifteen years ago, and, except to attend a wedding or a funeral, I believe the gentleman in question has kept his word. Yet it would be unjust to term him an irreligious man; he has simply a profound contempt for church. I know two other men who have retired who make it, so to speak, a point of honor not to go to church. They have both told me that they 'have had enough of it.'"

Ambrose Bierce thanks the Lord "that for the good thou hast provided folly, for the wicked the good, for the dunce hope, for the cheerful tears, for the wise indifference, and death for all." Also "that for those denied brains there is the consolation of religion."

"You cannot tell a Christian of to-day from anybody else. He goes to the bar-room and the ball-room just like the average man of the world." So says the Rev. L. G. Broughton, of Atlanta, Georgia. We daresay he is right. It is pretty much the same over here.

Mrs. Caroline Kirkland, daughter of the late Major Kirkland, who has recently returned to the United States after a lengthy sojourn amongst the Boers in South Africa, has a poor opinion of the converted Kaffir. "A Kaffir in his natural state," she says, "has a strong sense of justice. I never want to hire any more Christian Kaffirs for servants. The minute a Kaffir becomes a Christian he will swear, lie, and steal. I don't mean that the Christian Kaffirs are not safe to live with, but they are untrustworthy. The heathen Kaffir may be depended upon."

The War Office seems to have had its own notion as to the antecedents of men of God who might apply for the post of army chaplains at the front. This is one of the questions put to nominators: "Has the applicant ever been in prison, and, if so, for what offence?" The *Westminster Gazette* says that a colonel of Oxford Yeomanry nominated as chaplain the head of one of the largest and most fashionable colleges of Oxford. He filled up the preliminary inquiries with "Dean of Ch— Ch—, Professor of Theology," etc., but when he came to the above-mentioned question he left a blank. The War Office is nothing if not careful, and next day came the memorandum: "We note you gave no answer to question No. 6. We hope that this does not imply that the applicant has been convicted. We shall be glad of a definite reply on this point."

Rev. David Watson, preaching before the Young Men's Christian Association at Paisley, made the following admission:—"The great, the wise, the mighty, are not with us..... The best thought, the widest knowledge, and the deepest philosophy have discarded our Church. They detest what they call the inhumanities of our creed..... They are big with a faith in the ultimate salvation of man—a faith that inspires them to toil, and shames our whining cant." We may add that we take this extract from the *Paisley and Renfrewshire Gazette*.

There is some consolation in knowing that Isaac Gordon, the wretched money-lender, who died and was buried so squalidly at Birmingham, in spite of all his wealth, was, after all, not an Englishman. He tried to get naturalised, but the Home Secretary would not let him pass. It is said that this preyed upon his mind, and helped to hasten his decease from consumption. He was really a Polish Jew.

Mr. R. D. Blackmore, the novelist, whose *Lorna Doone* achieved such wide and deserved success, was also a market gardener. His estate has been sworn at £16,963 10s. 10d. Rev. Canon Henry Twells, the hymn writer, who died at Bournemouth in January, has left an estate worth £85,289 17s. 10d. What a big difference between the great writer and the little one! What a vast difference between the estates of the novelist and market gardener and that of the preacher of "Blessed be ye poor!"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

April 1 and 8, Athenæum Hall, London, W.C.; 22, Camberwell.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 1, Birmingham. 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.

G. P. BLAVER (Durban).—Cuttings received with thanks. We always acknowledge the papers, etc., that reach us. Such things are sometimes lost in the post. Perhaps the wrapper gets torn away, or there is some other accident. We are obliged to you for your good wishes. When the present trouble is over, there ought to be a good field for Freethought propaganda in South Africa.

H. W. L.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

W. W. CLARKSON.—Pleased to know you think so highly of *Flowers of Freethought*, and are anxious to have the third volume. It has not been promised, however, though it may appear some day. Mr. Foote is preparing for publication a collection of his longer pieces that have appeared since the second volume of *Flowers* was issued.

C. E. KITCHENER.—Your letter is not really an answer to Mr. Watts's article on "Life and Mind." Assertion is not argument, and calling another man's position the "wildest folly" is not legitimate controversy. We are always pleased to insert a reasonably polite and well-written letter from an opponent, but we are not willing to waste our own space and our readers' time.

J. T.—You have borrowed too much from Ingoldsby.

W. GREIG.—Robert Taylor, author of the *Diagnosis* and the *Devil's Pulpit*, was badly treated during his two years' imprisonment, and his health seems to have been affected. Soon after his release, in 1833, he married a wealthy lady and retired from public work, but there was no change in his opinions. He died at Jersey, on June 5, 1844.

LONDON SECULARIST.—It is not surprising. Freethought meetings are sure to fall off to some extent during the war excitement. The diminution is not confined to our meetings. Others seem to suffer still more. An official statement is before us that "Ethical Societies are just now under a cloud, so far as the size of the audiences attending the lectures is concerned." No doubt there will be a gratifying reaction when the war is over.

R. HUNT.—It was a gross misuse of Mr. Lecky's name. His view of the South African War was given over his own signature in the *Daily News* of Saturday, March 10, and is substantially the same as that we advanced in a series of articles some months ago. After all, the only practical question now is, What shall be done when the war is over?

S. HOLMAN.—See "Sugar Plums."

W. H. SPIVEY.—Pleased to hear that you think Mr. Watts's lectures on Sunday at Huddersfield were the best he has ever delivered there. Mr. Foote will try to offer you a date shortly. With regard to a complete edition of Colonel Ingersoll's works, we are naturally waiting to see the full contents of the promised American edition, which is due in April.

J. O. BATES.—Yes, the Evangelist who has just been soul-saving at Gloucester is a brother of the late Charles Bradlaugh, who lifted the name out of obscurity and made it illustrious. You will find some interesting items about this "brother" in Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's life of her father. Thanks for your efforts to promote our circulation.

E. STEPHENS.—Frazer's *Golden Bough* is a splendid book, but rather expensive. A new edition is promised at an early date, so you had better, perhaps, wait for that, if you can afford to make the purchase.

STUDENT.—Thanks for the reference. We had already noted the passage, though; and it will serve as the basis of an article.

E. H. MARSH.—It arrives as we are going to press. Shall be noticed in our next.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Torch of Reason—Crescent—Freidenker—Sun—Two Worlds—English Mechanic—Independent Pulpit—New Century—Secular Thought—Blackpool Times—Ethical World—Freethought Magazine—Truthseeker (New York)—Postal Record.

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.

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

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

THE Athenæum Hall will be closed, as far as Freethought lectures are concerned, this evening (Mar. 18), the proprietor having desired the use of it all day for a private function. Mr. Cohen will lecture there next Sunday evening (Mar. 25). His subject will be duly announced in our next issue.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts lectured twice in Huddersfield to large and enthusiastic audiences. Friends were present from Bradford, Doncaster, Dewsbury, and Marsden. An interesting debate followed the afternoon lecture.

Mr. Cohen's debate at Pontypridd with Mr. Mayo, a Spiritualist, on the question of a future life, seems to have given him a good opportunity for what a correspondent calls his "common-sense appeals." We are informed that "a good Rationalist impression was made."

Our ever-welcome contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, in the March 3 number just to hand, gives a full report of an address by Dr. J. E. Roberts, which we shall reproduce for the benefit of our own readers. It is an eloquent comparison of Moody and Ingersoll. Dr. Roberts speaks to large audiences in the Church of this World, in Kansas City.

Tennyson's "large infidel," Omar Khayyam, so magnificently translated or transfused by Edward Fitzgerald—who seems also to have been a Freethinker—is finding an ever-widening appreciation. Macmillan's firm have sold some 30,000 copies of their new half-crown edition, and Mosher has sold 20,000 copies of his shilling edition in America. Several special and private editions are also being published at high prices—one as high as £20.

Friends of the Humanitarian League are apprised that a *Conversazione* will be held next Wednesday evening (Mar. 21) at St. Martin's Town Hall, near Trafalgar-square. A performance is to be given of a short anti-divisionist Play by Mr. H. S. Salt, entitled *A Lover of Animals*. There is also to be a brief musical program, but most of the time is to be available for conversation. The object of the gathering is to "enable friends of the Humanitarian League to become better acquainted with one another." Tickets, one shilling each, can be obtained from the League Secretary, 53 Chancery-lane, W.C.

The *Freethought Magazine* (Chicago) for March edited by H. L. Green, has for frontispiece a good portrait of the Rev. Thomas B. Gregory, who addressed the Chicago Liberal Society on Sunday, January 7, on "The Universalism of Reason and Science." The full text of this address is given further on. Mr. Gregory advocates the New Universalism, which hardly appears to have a God, though it has the hope of a future life. We are glad to see that Editor Green is maintaining the excellent character of this publication. Unfortunately it is not self-sustaining. We note that pecuniary aid is being sought, and that April 12 is "Donation Day." We hope it will recruit Editor Green's exchequer.

At the Manhattan Liberal Club, New York, the weekly home of thinkers and cranks, they have been discussing the great question of the Twentieth Century. Most of the Liberals over there hold that it doesn't begin until 1900 is over, but Professor Eccles and Mr. Horr stood up, in a small minority, for the view of Lord Kelvin. Our readers may recollect that we are with the Transatlantic Liberal majority on this question.

Mr. George Anderson sends us an extract from the letter of a young lady of twenty-one, whom he has been "trying to make an Agnostic of." He lent her a copy of Father Furniss's well-known *Sight of Hell*. Her indignation at this monstrous "Book for Children" is very natural. "It is punishable by law," she observes, "for a nurse to frighten her charge to the deterioration of its health; why, then, not stop the teaching of such horrible nonsense—for that is what it is?" Why not?

Captain Otto Thomson, of Stockholm, writes thanking us

for his weekly copy of the *Freethinker*, and gives us a more hopeful account of the Freethought Movement in Sweden. Lectures and even debates are attracting good audiences. One lecturer appears to be quite popular, but we cannot quite make out his name. Captain Thomson himself is as stalwart as ever. When he wrote to us he had just attended a successful Bruno celebration.

The Editorial Christ.

FROM the murky atmosphere that hung above and along a certain side street in the crowded area sacred to metropolitan journalism a figure, hardly distinguishable in the prevailing gloom, glided rapidly through one of the portals of a great daily newspaper office. The figure had the semblance of a man, despite a mysterious imperceptibility of outline and substance and attire, which might have suggested a ghost, a wraith, a semi-materialised spirit, essence, or influence, rather than a full and actual embodiment in the human form. Looking neither to the right nor the left, it passed up the first short flight of steps, and, regardless of a glass-fronted box at the side of the entrance, made for the door immediately in front.

The glass window rose with an angry jerk, and a gruff voice exclaimed: "Stop! you can't go up there. Who are you?" The challenge came from the porter in the box, who now thrust out his head.

"I am that I am," was the grave and simple reply. "I go on my father's business to seek the manager."

"Then you may go away, for he ain't in."

"Thou liest; he is within. He is in his room at this moment, smoking a cigarette, and saying to himself: 'Would that this war would go on for at least another year.'"

"Well, I'm damned!"

"That you certainly will be, John Jones. It is so written."

The porter gasped, opened his eyes wide, and shut them as if doubtful that he was awake. When instantly afterwards he looked again, the figure had vanished.

Two minutes later the manager—who was, indeed, leisurely smoking a cigarette, and mentally calculating, with eyes cast upwards, the tens and hundreds of thousands of golden shekels that the present-time carnage might yet add to the proprietorial coffers—felt himself impressed with the influence of some mysterious presence. Glancing forward, his eyes met those of the visitor who had so disturbed the porter, and who now stood immediately before him. The door, which he could have sworn had never been opened, still remained closed.

"What the Devil!"—he began to exclaim.

"Peace, man. Mention not that name in my presence. This night thy erstwhile editor is in the arch-fiend's clutches. I am he that, till break of day, will rule the newspaper you manage, which for so long has been an eyesore to Heaven."

"Oh, indeed!" said the manager sarcastically. "So you shall—outside, in some Fleet-street pub., whence, I suppose, you have come."

And the manager stretched out his hand to touch an electric button. Strange, but too painfully true, his arm was instantly transfixed—paralysed.

Unheeding, the apparition, as it now seemed to be—stern and wrathful in voice and visage—continued: "All here have betrayed their trust, have forsaken God and sold themselves to Mammon, have become false leaders of men; fools, knaves, vipers, whited sepulchres. This place," he added, "has become a den of thieves."

And he laid upon the table a whip of cords which he drew from beneath his long, loose robe.

Never man spake as this man, and the manager—haughty and insolent for many a year before—became instantly humble, and as docile as a child.

"We will examine a copy of the issue of this morning." The manager, with no volition of his own, looked around for one. But the stranger already had one in his hand, and, laying it out on the table, pointed to the name on the top of the front page. "That title," he said, "must be altered, as well as the contents."

"But the trade and our readers will not then know it," the manager tremulously ventured to say.

"Ah, fools and knaves! The people prefer such papers as the *Morning Liar*, the *Evening Reptile*, or the *Daily Devil's Own*. But this one shall be altered to-night in everything, from title to imprint. Say no more. The date, too, shall be 'All Saints' Day.' All these advertisements on the front page must come out—"

"O spare me that!" was the instant cry of the manager in heart-broken accents. "O leave me, O leave me my front-page ads.!" As he realised the full effect of the command, his hair seemed actually to stand on end, and beads of cold perspiration broke out on his brow.

"These advertisements of births must come out," pursued the implacable dictator; "they are mere vanity. These 'marriages' take space that would be better filled by a hymn—say such a one as 'Safe in the arms of Jesus.' The

deaths may remain; they serve to remind mankind of its mortality. On no account will I have these announcements of public amusements. To-night they will be replaced by extracts from 'Young's Night Thoughts' and Harvey's 'Meditations amongst the Tombs.' These tradesmen's vulgar puffs of their shoddy goods will be omitted. This vile huckstering, displayed with so much effrontery, is worse than that driven out of the Temple—albeit, this newspaper sheet is not the House of God, but for the nonce it is a journal edited by Jesus. The apostles never wanted any of these expensive and luxurious articles here advertised, for they loved not the world nor the things of the world, and were content with the barest necessities of existence."

The manager, as well he might, sank back in his chair, and gasped in speechless amaze. *Entre nous*, he wouldn't have minded some little interference with the news contents, but the advertisements!—"O Lord, O Lord," he could but faintly sigh.

"Now we will turn to all these pages of war intelligence. Did ever a Prince of Peace gaze on such a monstrous and sickening exhibition in print of the horrors of warfare—such an evident lingering and gloating over, and elaboration of, the details of wholesale human slaughter? The sun and moon are compelled to look down on the death-dealing efforts of the combating fiends. But that Christian people, far removed from the scene of the realities, should hunger and thirst for detailed narratives—instead of turning with shuddering abhorrence even from the imagination of what is taking place—is utterly and absolutely horrible. All this must come out—the more especially as much of it is exaggeration and conjecture—is twisted, expanded, dressed up, and served out over and over again, sometimes on the very same page by dint of sub-editorial repetition. Out it all goes."

Thereupon, taking up a blue pencil, the editor from on high indignantly struck out column after column.

"We will now turn to the general news. Divorce cases, breach of promise cases, murders, police news, records of flaunting vice—O horrors upon horrors! But we will have none of these, if only because they carry with them the vice of suggestion and pander to morbid appetites. Money article, stock exchange lists, dividends, company meetings—what are all these but part of the worship of Mammon? Trade news and markets—they concern not the godly, who labor not for the meat that perisheth, but that which gives eternal life. We will have none of them, nor any of these criticisms of play-acting people, who air themselves before high Heaven with their petty mimicry and idle clowning in a world full of sin and sorrow, where every moment devoted to amusement is diverted from the never-ceasing task of preparing for the everlasting existence hereafter. Sporting—latest betting—faugh! Not a line—not a line shall go in."

The manager was fast approaching asphyxiation. Still moved by an impulse not his own, he mechanically nodded assent.

"You will now," pursued the dictator, "send this marbled paper to the sub-editors as a guide to the omissions for tomorrow."

"But it will mean ruin!" moaned the manager. "Unless, indeed," he added, brightening up, "it had all been boomed the world over for three or four months previously, and the price of the special issue could be trebled. Do, pray, let us postpone this till later on. I see business and immense profit in it."

"No, it must be done now. What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

The manager was silent. He thought he had heard those words before, but was too agitated to decide whether or not to acquiesce in their application.

Then a thought flashed across his mind. "If all these pages are wiped out, what is to go in their place?" He said this as if it were a poser.

A serene and ineffably sweet smile illumined the new editor's countenance, and from it scintillating rays seemed to spread around the apartment. Then came the words: "Print in their place the Book of the prophet Isaiah. For he spake of me."

The manager stared. He had but a dim recollection of Isaiah and the length of his book; but, as a random shot, he ventured to suggest that it would not be enough.

"If I say it is enough, will not that make it so? O thou of little faith, hast thou not heard of the miracle of the loaves and fishes?"

The manager judged it expedient to say no more on that point. His mind wandering off into a speculation on what his wife would say when he got home and told her all this, he haply bethought him that the column of "Fashions of the Day" would come in that night.

His thought was instantly divined. Its expression was anticipated by these words which fell on his ears: "Those tawdry gewgaws of women! Fill up that column with the admonition: Consider the lilies of the valley; they toil not neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like unto these."

A pause. "Have you any orders in regard to the leading articles?" timidly inquired the manager at length. "Perhaps you don't quite approve of their style and tone?"

The Deistic Movement.

BY THE LATE J. M. WHEELER.

(Continued from page 155.)

IN the last decade of the seventeenth century Henry Layton, a barrister, put forward several pamphlets arguing against the immateriality and natural immortality of the soul. This position was taken up by Dr. William Coward, whose *Second Thoughts concerning the Human Soul*, published in 1702 under the pseudonym of Estibus Psychalethes, occasioned some stir. Although the work was dedicated to the clergy, founded on scripture, and only adopted the views now held by Christadelphians and believers in conditional immortality, it was ordered by the House of Commons to be burnt by the common hangman, which order was carried into execution, 1704. This, however, only made the author more notorious, and helped the sale. Coward's view was defended by the learned Dodwell the elder. The House of Commons further proved its orthodoxy by expelling John Asgill, member for the pocket borough of Bramber, in Sussex, for publishing a tract in which he took the words of Jesus, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," in their literal sense. His work was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman as profane and blasphemous. Asgill and Coward are both classed by Swift and others among the unbelievers of the period.

Convocation attempted proceedings against Toland as well as against Whiston, but the effort broke down. In attempting to silence Hoadly, Convocation was silenced itself. From 1717, when, as Buckle remarks, it was justly considered that the country had no further occasion for its services, till 1850, when a feeble Government thought the Church needed a safety-valve, its croak was heard no more.

In the reign of Queen Anne foreign scepticism began to attract attention. Bayle's great dictionary, the precursor of Diderot's *Encyclopaedia*, was translated into English, and No. 389 of the *Spectator* relates how Bruno's *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante*, which a few years before had been sold with five others by the same author for twenty-five pence, fetched fifty pounds. A translation of this work of Bruno's, of which only fifty copies were printed, appeared in 1713.

Shaftesbury is to be noted for his defence of ridicule as the proper remedy for fanaticism. The French prophets, whose convulsions had been intensified by their cruel persecution in their own country, occasioned so much disturbance that steps were proposed for suppressing them. This occasioned Lord Shaftesbury's *Letter on Enthusiasm*. These fanatics, he argues, glory in persecution—how much better to laugh at them. He even ventures to suggest that the Jews would have done more harm by ridicule than by crucifixion. He was, however, in favor rather of good humor than mockery. "Good humor is not only the best security against enthusiasm, but the best foundation of piety and true religion." "Our Savior's style is sharp, humorous, and witty in his repartees.....his miracles carry with them a certain festivity, alacrity, and good humor, so that it is impossible not to be moved in a pleasant manner at their recital"—i.e., as Leland kindly explains, not to laugh at them. "Sacred Scripture has been so miraculously preserved in its successive copies and transcription under the eye (as we must needs suppose) of holy and learned critics." (Mill's *New Testament*, with thirty thousand various readings, first published in 1707, passed through several editions and made some stir.) "David was a hearty espouser of the merry devotion. The high dance performed by him in the procession of the sacred coffer shows he was not ashamed of expressing any ecstasy of playful humor." "The Christian theology, the birth, procedure, generation, and personal distinctions of the divinity, are mysteries only to be determined by the initiated or ordained to whom the State has assigned the guardianship and promulgation of the divine oracles. It becomes not those who are uninspired from heaven and uncommissioned from earth to search with curiosity into the original of these holy rites and records by law established." It is evident Shaftesbury's profession of "steady orthodoxy, resignation, and entire submission

"I don't."
"Neither do I," the other hastened to say, glad, indeed, to find some point of agreement. "Too slabby, you think, as a rule; though sometimes so strong as to be calculated to give offence in high quarters. Oh, yes, I have often said so, but have been told to attend to my own department and leave such matters alone."

"Yes, they are slabby, and often illogical, ill-conceived, full of prejudice, perversion of fact, and in their effect misleading; but their main condemnation is that they deal with things of time instead of things of eternity."

"Have you any suggestion to make as to improvement?"
"None, except that for literary charm and grace, high tone, lucidity of statement, cogency of argument, and general effectiveness, the writers might study the *Freethinker*. I mention that journal, though it is sometimes opposed to me, but in reality not half so much as are the majority of so-called Christian prints."

"As regards the Parliamentary and other reports?"
"Not a line of Parliament twaddle is going in. Fill up the space with genealogies from the Old Testament. Throw all the other reports away. No reporter shall ever enter the kingdom of heaven. I have myself suffered too much from four of them—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They have made such a hash of their work with their inaccuracies, contradictions, interpolations, and puerilities, that I now wish I had ordered the phonograph and Kodak to have been invented in their time instead of centuries afterwards. The mutoscope too would have made clear and indisputable much that now constitutes blocks to belief."

"There is another point," he added, "and that is the shocking profanity in the sub-editorial and composing rooms, especially when a volume of important news comes in at the last moment and there is insufficient time to set it. There now, I have given orders enough for the next few hours. Kruger is calling to me at this moment. Later on I may have an exclusive item of information about him for our paper which to-morrow will drive all the rival rags mad with envious rage."

A little later the manager opened his eyes. Apparently, he thought, he had been dozing. He looked around. The new editor had gone. Not a trace of him was left behind—not even that blue-pencilled paper. He instantly called for the porter and interrogated him. That functionary said it was true that some religious maniac had inquired for the manager, but he could swear that he had not allowed him to go upstairs.
The manager mused over the matter, and wondered if he had been dreaming. He thought that if the dream were intended as a spiritual admonition, he might consider the question raised as to many of the advertisements. Of course, he wouldn't reject them. That would never do. But what he would do was this—he would raise their price.

FRANCIS NEALE.

"Slim."

A CORRESPONDENT asks us whether we have not been struck by the similarity between the characteristic traits of the Boer and a not uncommon type of Scot. Without expressing an opinion on the point, we give our correspondent's observations for what they are worth. He says: "The kind of Scot I mean is rarely found outside of Scotland. He flourishes best there, and therefore remains at home. He is a great reader of the Bible, and can quote it liberally and literally for his own benefit and his enemies' discomfiture. His interests are confined to his house, his parish, his country. His practical morality consists in severe condemnation of others' failings, and the practice of as few virtues as will support a reputation. He is an elder of some kirk, stands at the collection-plate, and cross-questions intending applicants for membership. In business he is as hard as a flint, in private intercourse as inexorable as the Old Testament. In his real privacy, shared by a conspiracy of acquaintances like himself, he reveals a weakness for the 'dram.' He is careless of dress, concentrating all his care upon the proper composure of his countenance. 'Canny' he is, as the Boer is 'slim'; brave with the tenacity of unenlightenment; and in dogma inexpugnable. He talks of the Deity as if they were neighbors, and of his neighbor as if he were the Devil. He rarely laughs, but often sneers, with a caustic wit perfected by a constant inquiry into human failings. In all bargaining he is as wily as he appears simple, and though he does not appear in Thrums, nor live near the Brier Bush, there is no Scot but knows him: his name is 'Holy Willie.' When the war is over and it comes to arrangements, let the British officials beware of his brother in the Transvaal."

—The Outlook.

As the sword of the best-tempered steel metal is most flexible, so the truly generous are the most pliant and courteous in their behavior to their inferiors.—Fuller.

to the truly Christian and Catholic doctrines of our holy Church, as by law established," may have had a political, but certainly had no religious value.

Scepticism was slowly but surely gaining foothold. Swift, the greatest intellect of the time, believed rather in High Churchism than in Christianity. In his *Tale of a Tub* sacred things were most freely handled, and he did not scruple to write a profane poem on the Day of Judgment. Pope, though by profession a Roman Catholic, in his most famous poem, the *Essay on Man*, if not directly inspired by Bolingbroke, the guide, philosopher, and friend to whom it is addressed, considers man without any reference to Christian dogmas. Every line in the poem might, as far as the sentiments are concerned, have been written by any Deist of the period. Even bully Warburton loved a fair fight, and was greatly in advance of his age in the matter of toleration. Of that shapeless mass of erudition and hard-hitting which he called *A Demonstration of the Divine Legation of Moses*, Churchill writes:—

To make himself a man of note
He in defence of Scripture wrote:
So long he wrote and long about it
That e'en believers 'gan to doubt it.

The opponents of the Deists, in striving to reconcile Christianity to reason, virtually hoisted down the old flag and run up a new one. What had been gained cannot be better stated than in the admission of Butler:

"I express myself with caution lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is, indeed, the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself, or be misunderstood to assert that a supposed revelation cannot be proved false from internal characters. For it might contain clear immoralities or contradictions, and either of them would prove it false" (*Analogy*, part ii., chap. 3).

The old positions were being abandoned, and the tide, while driving the Deists towards anti-supernaturalism, drove even Churchmen further and further from the old citadel of faith towards the very frontiers of Free-thought.

Anthony Collins had projected following up his attack on prophecy by an investigation of the Christian miracles. The design was executed by Thomas Woolston, of Sidney College, Cambridge, who had proposed to Collins to make a collection of the ridiculous opinions that have the sanction of the primitive Church as a means of attack, both on that Church and its modern defenders. This proposal is the key to much that seems strange in Woolston's discourses, in which he attacks the Gospels under cover of the Fathers. Born at Northampton in 1699, he was distinguished at college for his study of Origen and the patristic writers whom he followed in placing an allegorical interpretation upon scripture.

His first appearance as an author was in 1705, when he had printed at Cambridge a work on the evidences in which he adopted the allegorical method of interpreting the old Jew-books. This work excited little remark, and he continued at Cambridge until 1720, when he published a Latin treatise, challenging as a forgery the letter said to have been addressed by Pontius Pilate to Tiberius Cæsar. About this time he also wrote an epistle to prove that the Quakers were nearest like the primitive Christians. Shortly after these evidences of heterodoxy he was deprived of his fellowship at Sidney College, Cambridge.

We next find him entering into the controversy which Collins had raised in his discourse on "The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion." He published *The Moderator between an Infidel and an Apostate* (1721). In this work Woolston maintained, among other matters, that the miracles were incredible. They must be taken as figurative. Saint Augustine had said that, if some of them were not figurative, they were foolish. A prosecution for blasphemy and profaneness was the result. To the honor of Whiston, he used his influence with the Attorney-General to drop the charge.

(To be continued.)

I differ with Moore in thinking Christianity useful to the world; no man of sense can think it true.—*Shelley*.

Two Crucified Saviors.

(Concluded from page 149.)

THERE are to-day six hundred warring sects in Christianity, and there were as many, or more, of the Hindoo religion.

Thus we see that the parallel between Chrishna and Christ is so complete that the most learned theologian in Christendom cannot demonstrate that one was a man and the other a god, for the reason that there is no positive proof that either Chrishna or Christ ever lived at all.

Certain it is no characters in all the range of history labor under such a deficiency of evidence as to their reality, or such a burden of proof that they are but creatures of imagination.

The oldest, yet the most rational, religion that ever possessed the human mind was Sun-worship.

The sun is the most wonderful and awe-inspiring object in nature. Was it at all wonderful that the imagination of an infant race should be paralysed before this wonderful mystery of nature, and should conceive that the sun was God, and worship it?

Humanity, groping amidst the mysteries of nature, has, through all the ages, inherited the religion of Sun-worship.

There are known to us but four stages of human thought—the pagan, philosophic, theologic, and rationalistic. It has taken all these ages for science to demonstrate the fact that the sun is the source of life, and that light and heat generate and sustain all life on our planet; yet what the sun is, or what light and heat as entities are, the most learned savant or priest knows no more to-day than the Egyptian who worshipped the "Sun god" on the banks of the Nile.

No one believes at this day that there ever was such a personage as Apollo, the last Egyptian deity. Apollo was the Sun, and the Egyptians worshipped "The Lord of Heaven," the "Source of Light."

This descended to the Greeks, whose legend was that Apollo was the god of eloquence, music, medicine, and poetry; that Apollo's father was Jupiter, whom the Greeks confounded with Osiris, which was the Sun.

Plutarch says that "the Egyptians believed that Osiris travelled to the plains of India, and a new god was worshipped there bearing a name in the language of that country—Chrishna, which means the Sun."

So the legends floated down through the ages, and this God, Chrishna, travelled from the plains of India along the tortuous highway of imagination to the barren land of Palestine; and this new Sun God, Jesus Christ, again took possession of the human mind, and the Christian Scripture describes him "as the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9). This is, in the severest sense, descriptive of the Sun.

St. Luke i. 78, 79, describes Christ as "The day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness."

There is no more positive proof that the gods of Sinai and Calvary are real personages, than were the gods and goddesses who met for conclave in Jupiter's palace on Mount Olympus.

Jupiter was the greatest of the Roman gods. He was believed to be all-powerful in directing human affairs. Jupiter was known to the Romans as the "Lord of Heaven" and the "Prince of Light." Jupiter was the Sun, and the Romans were nothing but sun-worshippers under a new dispensation, inheriting the ideals bequeathed to them by the worshippers of Chrishna.

The theologic age ascribed to the Christian God all the attributes of Jupiter. He is believed to be the supreme director and ruler of human affairs. He is known as "The Lord of Heaven and Earth," "Light of Light," "The Source of Light," and "The Light of the World."

Christians are nothing but sun-worshippers, with their system so shrouded in imagines of the priestly mind, and clothed in theologic mysteries, that they do not recognise that the Christians of the nineteenth century are religiously the lineal descendants of the worshippers of Jupiter, the sun-god of the Greeks and Romans. In all the religions that have possessed the

human mind sun-worship is the warp of the fabric, and the ideals of advancing races are the woof.

The Rev. Robert Taylor, in his *Diegesis*, says that "every line of the Old Testament is Pagan, and that there is not a line read in the Christian Churches that will not dove-tail into its original niche in the Pantheon."

The Savior idea has been prevalent in all ages, and is the symbol or figure in the human mind of its highest ideal.

The student will find that there is not a single phrase in the New Testament, or in the Catholic or Protestant liturgy descriptive of the Savior, God, Jesus Christ, that is not emphatically descriptive of the sun rather than a man.

Notice, reader, how the following Biblical or liturgical expressions describe the sun, and not a man:—

"I am the light of the world" (John ix. 5).

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness" (John xii. 46).

"A light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people" (Luk. ii. 32).

"God is light" (1 John i. 5).

"Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee" (Collect in Protestant Prayer-book).

"God of God, Light of Light" (Nicene Creed).

"Heaven and earth are full of thy glory" (Te Deum).

"Thou art the King of Glory" (Te Deum).

Examine, reader, the Christian hymn-books, and read the hymns of praise to the Sun which white-robed priests have metamorphosed into the man-god, Christ. (The white robe of the priest was copied from the worshippers of Jupiter, the "King of Heaven and of Light"; white was the sacred color of the Pagans; Jupiter's chariot was drawn by white horses; the Pagan priests wore robes of white; Christian priests wear robes of white, and spread the communion-table with snowy linen.)

The white-robed priests and white-robed choirs sing such hymns as these:—

O Day-spring of Eternal Light!

Predetermined Sun of Righteousness,
Haste with thy rising beams to bless.

To hail the rising Sun of Life
The gathering nations come.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid,
Star of the East, the horizon adorning.

The earth is with thy glory filled.

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom.

O worship the King
In His glory and grace,
Whose robe is the light,
Whose canopy space.

Again the Lord of life and light
Awakes the kindling ray,
Unseals the eyelids of the morn
And pours increasing day.

When, streaming from the Eastern skies,
The morning light salutes my eyes,
O Sun of Righteousness divine
On me with beams of mercy shine.

Rise, crowned with Light Imperial, Salem rise!

And thus could we fill pages with descriptions of the Sun, the "Lord of Heaven and Prince of Light."

To rise and to ascend into heaven and fill the earth with glory perfectly describes the Sun, and can, only by a contortion and misuse of language, be made to fit the theological idea of describing a man-god. On all other subjects, save on religion, we take words according to their meaning, and do not suffer our reason to be deceived by metaphors or strained similitudes.

The Egyptians symbolised their God Apollo by a radiated circle throwing out beams of light.

The Hindoos symbolised their God Chrishna by an all-seeing eye surrounded by a flood of sunbeams.

The Greeks symbolised their God Jupiter by a sceptre with an all-seeing eye above it surrounded by rays of light.

The Christians symbolise their God Jesus Christ by the head of the Son of God surrounded by an aura of sunbeams.

So striking is the similarity of sacred symbols and signs in all religions and all ages that humanity seems to have had the same religion and the same deity, under a different name.

It is claimed that Chrishna and Christ both died for the sins of humanity. Yet the burden of all the Christian

preaching is that the sinner must pay the penalty for his or her sins in a lake of everlasting fire. If this is so, what is the virtue of the atonement? Millions are destined to be cast into everlasting fire who never heard of the Christian scheme of salvation.

If "Jesus paid it all," and cancelled the sin of the sinner, why should there be a lake of fire if Jesus has already suffered for the sinner?

The idea that the race needs a savior has been inherited from age to age. This is not strange, as poor humanity, in its battle with the mysteries of pitiless nature, does need a Savior to save it from its sufferings and woes.

The Church, for its own power and profit, preaches the need of a Savior to save the race from its sins.

The Church ever pleads with its sin-atonement God for mercy; never for justice.

If justice ruled supreme throughout the earth, there would be no sin, and consequently no need for a sin-atonement Savior.

The gods of all ages and races have been deaf, dumb, and blind to the cries and sufferings of mankind, and it cannot be demonstrated that any good was ever bestowed on the race that struggling humanity was not at the working end of the line. Vain and worthless, indeed, is the religion that heals no human woe.

The Hindoo cries piteously to his Savior Chrishna, and the Christian pleads in anguish with his Savior Christ, to be saved from sin and suffering; but the silence has never been broken, and humanity has seen no Divine eye to pity or divine arm to save. Humanity is the sport or the victim of irrevocable law, and it fights a magnificent battle with Nature's mysteries.

What do we find the moral effect to be of the doctrine of a sin-atonement Savior after nineteen centuries of this teaching?

The Christian nations are armed with enough deadly weapons to wipe the human race from the face of the earth. Sanguinary wars are making brutes of men, and helpless victims of women and children.

Horrors, crimes, and miseries are on every hand. A desolation of moral principle is so widespread that political corruption is eating out the heart of Christian nations. Bitter feuds and implacable heart-burnings rage like volcanoes in the domestic system, and men, women, and children, starved, degenerate, drunken, and diseased, are crushed by the avarice of their fellows, and compelled to either smother their morals and consciences or perish from the earth.

For centuries from Christian altars such hymns as the following have been ascending:—

Jesus Savior, pilot me
Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treacherous shoal;
Chart and compass come from thee;
Jesus Savior, pilot me.

Let the condition of the human race to-day bear witness whether this prayer has been answered.

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A minister in one of the Scotch villages, being in want of a horse, bought one at a local fair, and, not being a judge of horseflesh, he sent for a farmer belonging to his congregation to give his opinion of the bargain.

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The minister named the price.

"Man, it's ower muckle," said the farmer, "the billie's cheatit ye."

"Well, if he has done so," said the minister, in righteous indignation, "he'll have to account for it at the last day."

"Oh, aye," said the farmer, reflectively; "but it's gey lang tick [credit] man—gey lang tick."—*Spare Moments*.

A Scotch parson said, in his canting prayer, "Lord, bless the Grand Council, the Parliament, and grant that they may all hang together." A country fellow standing by said: "Amen, with all my heart, and the sooner the better; and I am sure 'tis the prayer of all good people." "Friends," says the parson, "I don't mean as that fellow means; but pray that they may all hang together in accord and concord." "No matter what cord," answered the rustic, "so 'tis a strong cord.—Amen."

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.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, C. F. Newcombe, "Cardinal Newman."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Stanton Coit, "Thou shalt not bear false witness."
WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Royal Palace Hotel, High-street, Kensington, W.): 11, Stanton Coit, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."
WESTMINSTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Grosvenor Arms, Page-street): 7.30, Social meeting.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): H. Percy Ward—11, "The World's Religions"; 7, "Christianity before Christ; or, the Pagan Origin of the Christian Religion." Weather permitting, the morning lecture will be given outdoor. For place of meeting see *Daily Mail*, March 17.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Joseph McCabe, "The Old Testament in Board Schools."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Strathern; 6.30, A. G. Nostik, "Another Trip to Norway"—with lantern illustrations.
HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, No. 2 Room): 7, Mr. Bateman, "Education, or Path of Progress."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, J. M. Robertson, "Cromwell and Imperialism."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 7, Mark L. Sykes, F.R.M.S., "Vaccination and Vaccine Lymph." Lantern illustrations.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Hobson's *South Africa*: A Review."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—March 25, Athenæum Hall, London.

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

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