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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

“B.-P.”

If your boy is in a race with other boys you want your boy to win. The man who says he doesn't is not an altruist, but a liar. There is enough human nature in all of us to prompt us to get as near to the front as we can in a race, to come out as near first as we can in a competition, and to prove the victor, if we can, in a struggle. Some people think, or affect to think, that this spirit of rivalry will die out in the dim and distant future. Perhaps it will. Who knows? But in that case human nature will have radically changed, and we shall all be living in quite another world. Candidates for office will all try to get as many votes as possible, and the bottom man at the poll will be declared “in” by the returning officer. Two fellows in love with the same girl will see which can yield her to the other; and, both of them being obstinate altruists, she will be obliged to get another fellow to fall in love with her, and keep it dark from the other two, in order to get married. What a funny world it would be, according to our present notions. But, after all, when you look at the matter more closely, you will perceive that rivalry has not disappeared. It has simply been transformed. There would be rivalry in altruism as well as in egoism. Indeed, if you could get rid of rivalry altogether you would reduce our life to stagnation; and, by the universal law of organic existence, that would soon lead to decay and death. On the whole, it seems probable, from what we know of nature's methods, that altruism will never abolish egoism. Our social and our personal instincts are likely to persist together. Nature begins animal life with a stomach, but in progressing to other organs she does not abolish the passions. In the same way, she gives us passions before she gives us reason. But reason does not abolish the passions. That would extinguish us altogether. Reason disciplines the passions, enlightens them, and brings them into harmony. Speaking phrenologically, we may say that man will, in the course of ages, get more front and top to his head; but if he were to lose the back of his head, the front and top would be useless.

This is a longish exordium to a rather brief article, but it was necessary to indicate our point of view. We are not going to discuss the vexed question of the politics of the war in South Africa; not, at least, in the *Freethinker*. Most people have taken sides, many of them are pretty mad, and few of them are open to conversion. What we mean to write about is the relief of Mafeking in general and the personality of Colonel (now Major-General) Baden-Powell in particular. Without discussing politics, therefore, we may state that we are delighted to know that Mafeking held out to the end against what ought to have been overwhelming forces of the enemy. The besieged were English, and that is one good reason for rejoicing. There is another reason in the fact that it is difficult to see what legitimate business the Boers had at Mafeking at all. The place was of no strategic value to either side, and we can only conclude

No. 983.

that the object of the Boers was simply to do as much mischief as possible. But when they threw down the glove there, so far away from the natural field of hostilities, and the challenge was accepted by the British, we hoped the little town—it was hardly more than a village—would keep the Union Jack flying to the finish. And it did hold out month after month, in a manner that fairly astonished the world. Even an English pro-Boer, in this particular instance, might well be glad that a perfectly scratch collection of the men and women of his own blood were capable of such fortitude and endurance.

It is very doubtful, however, if that devoted little band of Britishers could have held out so long, or for any considerable length of time, without the inspiring and commanding presence of the leader who is now familiarly and lovingly known as “B.-P.” His imperturbable courage, his high, bright spirits, his inexhaustible resourcefulness, his sleepless vigilance, his very gaiety, all conspired to make him the ideal leader of such a forlorn hope. Once again it has been demonstrated, in the most striking fashion, that leadership is an indestructible natural fact. This will have to be taken into account in all social schemes for the future. The mass of us may vote as we please, but nature will always appoint our leaders; and it is not rational subordination, but irrational insubordination, that is really dangerous to human society. “One man's as good as another,” cried an orator. “Yes,” bawled an Irishman in the audience, “and a damned sight better.” But the truth is that one man is only as good as another in the sense that he is equally entitled to justice and civic opportunity.

English character has so altered that the solemn type of leader is no longer the power it was. Even the clergy find themselves driven to joking. “B.-P.” endeared himself to the whole nation, not only by his gallant defence of Mafeking, but also by the way in which he mingled jest with earnest. His wit flashed out like lightning in a thunderstorm. His eye was full of courage, but there was a humorous twinkle in its depths. His purpose was stern enough, but he faced the foe with a smile. This is the kind of man we like; one who displays not only serenity, but cheerfulness, in the presence of danger and death. Men of that type will be invaluable in the coming civilisation of the world.

“B.-P.” resembles so many distinguished men in this, that he had (and happily still has) a remarkable mother—one of the true Spartan breed. She looked after her children's training herself. And the one thing she would never allow in any form whatever was punishment. We commend that noble principle to the attention of other mothers. Praise much, blame little; reward if you can, but never punish; lead, but don't drive; and you will find your reward when your children grow up to be men and women.

We may observe, finally, that “B.-P.” has done more than anyone else in this war to disprove President Kruger's theory of providence. If the Boers could obtain *any* answer to prayer, they should have got it at Mafeking. They were quite strong enough to carry the place, and they had God with them; but “B.-P.” was inside, and he was too much for the Boers and Providence together. Henceforth it will be sheer nonsense for the Boers to talk about prayer, and what is nonsense for them is nonsense for everybody else.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christianity a Failure.

If there is one truth more self-evident than another in connection with Christianity, it is its complete failure to be of any practical service to the human family in their performance of secular duties. Even its own avowed object, the salvation of the world, has not been accomplished. For, according to orthodox teaching, the majority of the dead died unsaved, and a similar fate awaits most of us who are still living. "Because," says the New Testament, "strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." But its failure has been equally conspicuous in other respects. As a remedy for the many ills "that flesh is heir to," as a power capable of promoting unity within the Churches, and as a means of securing peace, love, and justice among men in general, the Christian faith has proved itself utterly useless. It has had ample time, as well as opportunity, to manifest any vitality for good (if it possessed it); but such manifestation has not been apparent. When we say "for good" in this instance, we mean for the initiation and carrying out of intellectual, political, and social reforms. The many confessions of its friends as to its shortcomings, the various changes which have occurred in the internal government of the Churches, and the fresh and conflicting interpretations that have so frequently been given as to what Christianity really is, all tend to show its inherent weakness as a reforming agency. Still, notwithstanding these well-known facts, professed Christians have the effrontery to claim for their faith a unique regenerating force.

It is true that during the last twenty-five years the number of the more intelligent exponents of Christianity who have recognised to some extent the truth of what is here stated has largely increased. Throughout Christendom dissatisfaction at Christianity, as hitherto understood and taught, is openly expressed, and demands are urgently made for a reformed faith—one that is more in harmony with the requirements of the age. It has been found that the teachings of the Church are impotent to grapple successfully with the evils of our time, and that the Church itself has become a fossilised institution, unable to command the honest and frank adherence of the highest intellects of the day. As the *New York Sun* recently stated, the Biblical critics have assailed the authoritative and dogmatic foundations of Christianity, and have destroyed all the evidence on which its supernatural claims are based. Hence, remarks the *Sun*,

"Men will not believe that a book is the special word of God when they are taught to distrust it as full of human error, and limited by the capacity of the human mind to discover truth; when they are told by scholars in whose authority they repose confidence that the documents of which it is composed are of doubtful authenticity or authorship. Of course not. The greatest battle in the history of supernatural religion is before us, unless the Churches are prepared to surrender to the enemy in advance of hostilities."

It will not be difficult to show that such surrender has already taken place, and that the religion of the Churches is irretrievably doomed.

Dr. Washington Gladden has recently issued a work entitled "How Much is Left of the Old Doctrines," in which he says: "The time has come for some of us who call ourselves Christians to take an inventory of the beliefs of which we find ourselves in possession." Yes, the time has come truly for Christianity to be redressed; its old garments are not up to date, and, therefore, not suited to the tastes of the present inquiring and intellectual age. They served the purpose when the masses accepted, without examination, whatever the Church gave them. It is different now, when scepticism is an important factor even in matters of religious belief. What satisfied a comparatively thoughtless and ready-to-believe multitude will not suit those who reason and investigate. In telling us what he meant by the "Old Doctrines," the Doctor says:—

"I shall not go back very far; I shall consider only the doctrines that were generally believed in our evangelical churches in England and America from fifty to one hundred years ago, in days which some of us can well remember. Within the last half of this century some

important changes have been taking place. It was in 1838 that the New School Presbyterians in America separated from the Old School; it was in 1831 that McLeod Campbell was excommunicated from the Scottish Church; it was in 1850-51 that Dr. Horace Bushnell, in Hartford, was on trial for heresy; it was in 1859 that Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published; and in the rapid movement of thought in the theological and in the scientific world since those days has resulted in the modification of belief."

It is quite true "modification of belief" has been going on, and still further changes in Christian doctrines are called for. Take the New School Presbyterians of America referred to by Dr. Gladden. They are now agitating for more reforms in their creed. The Rev. Dr. Parkhurst seems to have hit the nail on the head, for, in a recent sermon, he boldly stated:—

"We need a new creed. Amending this one does not meet the necessities of the case. Better give it a dignified place in the museum than hack it to pieces and revamp it. If we are thorough Presbyterians, and believe what our doctrinal prospectus advertises us as believing, we believe it probable that some of the children in your homes, little children, perhaps the babe of your bosom, is damned, already damned, damned before it was born, damned from everlasting to everlasting."

This barbarous and revolting teaching still forms a part of the doctrines of one of the prominent Christian sects. Is it to be wondered at that Christianity has failed as a humanising influence?

Coming nearer home, we have striking evidence of the failure of Christianity, and that in pious Scotland. The following is from the *Glasgow Herald*, of the 3rd of this month:—

"The Churches are once more boldly proclaiming to the world their sad plight. Ministers cannot get hearers, and theological colleges cannot procure students. So far, the Roman Catholic Church in these islands has not joined in the complaint, nor does the Anglican Church openly lament that its cane chairs are deserted, or that the ranks of the curacy are depleted. But both the free and the creed-bound Churches in Scotland are suffering badly from a decline of interest in their work, and do not seek to disguise the fact. Nothing could be more significant than the revelations that have been made at the meetings of the Congregational Union of Scotland as to the dearth of candidates for the ministry.....The Congregational divinity hall is as empty as the halls of the Universities and the dissenting Presbyterian Churches. The freest of all ecclesiastical bodies is as unattractive to the intelligent youth of Scotland as the Churches which are weighted with the Westminster Confession of Faith."

This is a good and an encouraging sign of the progress of Freethought. In the same paper an excellent letter appears under the heading of "A New Church," from which we learn that a site has already been purchased in Glasgow, upon which a building will shortly be erected, seated for about 1,000 persons, and capable of extension. It will be started free of debt, will be handsomely endowed, and there will be no collections for a "building fund." It is proposed to style the church after Lord Tennyson, and its full title will be "The Tennysonian Church of Common Sense." The writer of the letter says:—

"It has long been felt by thinking men in this city of Glasgow that there is now not only room, but really a clamant need, for a Church which shall voice their views. The existing Churches are trammelled by creeds and doctrines, by a Bible worship which drives their clergy into casuistry in their endeavors to square facts with preconceived theories, and into persuading the laity to the reconciling of things irreconcilable. The Churches are therefore, unsatisfying.....Now, what is wanted is a Church which shall teach as truth only that which has a sound scientific basis shall give grounds for believing to be true. The Church which is wanted is one which shall claim no special revelation, which shall have facts for its groundwork and knowledge for its development in a Church which may adopt as its watchword:—

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But mere of reverence in us dwell."

Now, what are the real causes of this palpable failure of Christianity? It cannot be through the want of patronage (of a kind), for it has had that in abundance. Fashion, wealth, and family claims have all been upon its side. The requirements of business with many persons have been thought to make it necessary for them to, at least, show a profession, whatever their private opinions may be. Perhaps here

we get the key to the principal cause of the failure of Christianity as an operating force in society, which is its non-adaptability to human needs, and the utter impossibility of its inculcations successfully withstanding the ordeal of honest and impartial criticism. What goes by the name of Christianity has proved a sham and a delusion, born of ignorance and credulity, fostered by emotions uncontrolled by reason, and perpetuated by priestly machinations. It is a faith that appeals to the heart, not to the intellect; therefore but few persons ever make a serious effort to regulate their conduct by its injunctions. The entire faith is composed of improbable and conflicting dogmas, of promises which time and experience have proved to be delusions, of rewards that are fantastic, and of punishments that are revolting. Hence it has failed to obtain any *solid* hold of the human mind, and to prove itself an active factor in the regulation of such conduct as is necessary to the wise and useful regulation of human affairs. It is a faith that pertains to the conjectures of some other existence, of which we know nothing; not of the realities of the present, with which we, as Secularists, are alone concerned.

CHARLES WATTS.

Science and the Supernatural.

To the many useful series of books published by Messrs. Dent & Co. there has just been added a series of Encyclopædic Primers. True to their name, they range over a wide variety of subjects, and the first bears the appropriate title of *An Introduction to Science*, from the pen of Alexander Hill, M.D. Of the purely scientific portion of the volume I have nothing to say, except to offer a word of praise on the exceedingly clear and instructive manner in which Dr. Hill describes our present knowledge concerning such interesting and important questions as the age of the earth, the ultimate constitution of matter, the origin of species, the function of nerve fibres, and kindred subjects. They are all admirably and accurately sketched, and the writer shows an enviable capacity for making difficult subjects "understood of the people."

With the introductory portion of the book I am not so satisfied. Here Dr. Hill not only plays fast and loose with the scope and meaning of science, but lays down a number of propositions which, however attractive they may be as speculations, can hardly lay claim to scientific accuracy. I do not know anything of the author beyond this little book; but it is evident that he is of a religious turn of mind, and, like many religious men, is much concerned to show that his beliefs in this direction harmonise with his scientific knowledge. This is, of course, a perfectly legitimate object, if it can be achieved; the question is, Can it? Personally, I believe that all such attempts are foredoomed to failure; and, after reading the present one, that opinion is, if possible, strengthened.

There are two methods by which apologists seek to ward off the encroachments of science on the domain of religion. One is by tacitly limiting the meaning of science to the study of *physical* phenomena; the other by assuming the existence of an unknown and unknowable universe, and then asserting that the ignorance of science concerning this assumed existence leaves the ground quite clear for religious beliefs on the subject. Dr. Hill uses in turn both methods, and, as they play a very large part in "advanced" religious apologetics and in pseudo-scientific defences of religious beliefs, an examination of their relevancy or value is far from unimportant.

Let us commence with Dr. Hill's statements concerning the limitations of science. "The aim of science," we are told, "is to know nature, and to know for the sake of knowing.....Science never seeks to determine the relative value of phenomena in the scheme of the universe.....Still less does science venture to suppose that she can throw light into the world above the world, the all-intelligent of which our intelligence is but a dependence.....It has no traffic with the unknowable; nor can it cross the border-line which separates the world of the senses from the world of consciousness."

.....Science cannot penetrate into the world of consciousness."

I might quote several other passages to the same effect, but the above are ample to illustrate the author's drift. And it is impossible to discern any reason for this arbitrary limitation of science, except that of a desire to retain some portion of the universe for the benefit of religion. For every one of the above statements are either inaccurate or meaningless. The first two statements are distinctly false. Science no more seeks to "know for the sake of knowing" than an animal eats for the sake of eating. True, many seek knowledge with no conscious motive of its value in application, as many a one eats with no other conscious motive than that of experiencing a pleasant sensation; but just as the justification for eating lies in the fact that the waste of organic tissue is made good by the food digested, so the ultimate justification for seeking knowledge lies in its value when applied to the affairs of life. Science is intensely practical. It seeks to know, but to know for the definite object of increasing the comfort and duration of life. Apart from this object, the man who amasses information and the man who hoards up gold are pretty much on a level. And far from it being true that science never seeks to determine the relative value of phenomena, it is only in doing this that it completes its work. It is by showing the relation of one fact to other facts, the relation of various organs to the body, of the individual to society, of mankind to the animal world, of the earth to the remaining members of the planetary system, and so forth, that science reaches any degree of accuracy and justifies its existence.

The statement concerning a world "above the world, the all-intelligent of which our intelligence is but a dependence," is sadly out of place in an "Introduction to Science." It is exactly this kind of verbal moonshine that the beginner in science needs to be specially guarded against. That there is an all-intelligence of which human intelligence is the result is a perfectly gratuitous hypothesis for anyone to hold. There is not a fact known to science that would support such a belief; nor is it even a reasonable deduction from existing scientific knowledge. Dr. Hill is simply stating his own religious opinions as part and parcel of accepted scientific truth. And it is certainly startling to be told that science cannot penetrate into the world of consciousness. If this is so, what becomes of a science of psychology or a science of ethics? Dr. Hill, in his saner moments, defines science as "the observation of phenomena and the colligation of the results of observation into groups." Well, is not consciousness as much a phenomenon to be studied, its states classified, and the conditions of its existence determined, as any group of physical objects that may be selected? Dr. Hill's expressed reason for such a curious statement is: "We cannot measure love or hate or duty in calories or foot-pounds.....and when we enter the realm in which emotions hold sway we have to leave our science behind." Dr. Hill *may*, and from the expressions I have quoted evidently does; but to others it will be plain that the classification of mental states is as legitimate an object of scientific study as the classification of species of animals or of groups of minerals. Let it be granted that we cannot calculate love or envy in foot-pounds; we can and do estimate the force of various mental conditions, as love, anger, duty, etc., in inducing action, and in so doing science *has* "crossed the border line which separates the world of the senses from the world of consciousness," and has thus demonstrated its ability to penetrate a region into which Dr. Hill declares it cannot enter. The author makes a feeble attempt to evade this obvious criticism by remarking that, although "the methods of science may be used in investigating the phenomena of consciousness.....the use of her methods does not entitle science to claim the results"—a statement so cryptic that I leave it to the judgment of my readers.

Dr. Hill's further device to secure a place for supernaturalism in a scientific text-book is the familiar one of insisting that science is unable to deal with things as they are; it must confine itself to their manifestations. Concerning the nature of life we are told that, although the scientist may learn something "of the way in which life manifests itself," it is impossible to find a "form of words which will define what life *is*." A most excellent

begging of the question at issue, since whether there is anything or not to be explained, after we have removed the conditions that connote life, is the very question upon which naturalist and supernaturalist join issue. In the same way the reader is informed that, although we may define the law of gravitation as a universal property of matter in virtue of which every body attracts every other body with a force proportional to mass and the inverse square of the distance, yet "this is not an explanation of the nature of gravitation." How so? On the contrary, I assert that when we have given the above definition of gravitation, we have really explained all that is properly meant by the phrase. To assume that gravitation is something apart from the observed motions of matter is, to use a mild term, unscientific. Gravitation is simply a term for summarising the fact that matter behaves in such and such a manner. Any further meaning that may be attached to it is simply a relic of the time when a scientific "law" was thought of as something external to the objects classified, operating upon them as the law of a country controls the movements of its people.

In the same manner we get the surprising statement that "consciousness is not force." Now whatever else it may be, consciousness is *certainly* a force; it may be that it is different to any other known force, or that it cannot be affiliated to any other known force; but that it is a force does not admit of a shadow of a doubt. And here, again, Dr. Hill assumes the whole point in dispute by calmly asserting that, "as we know matter is indestructible, it seems impossible to escape the conclusion that consciousness is indestructible also." Surely any man of ordinary common sense must see the illogical nature of such a statement. Consciousness we do not know of apart from a definite combination of material substances; matter we do know persists, in spite of the many changes of form it may be subjected to; and there is certainly a wide difference between asserting indestructibility of something that defies all attempts at its annihilation, and asserting the same thing of a phenomenon that, so far as we can see, disappears absolutely with the destruction of the organism.

It is sincerely to be regretted that Dr. Hill has marred a most useful little volume by such unscientific expressions as those I have been criticising—all the more so that their introduction was entirely gratuitous. He might have well contented himself with a simple outline of scientific method and results, and thus have produced an essay that all might have read with profit, and without any of the sense of uneasiness at finding an effete metaphysic introduced under the cloak of positive science. In his wisdom he has thought and acted otherwise; and as such statements form the stock-in-trade of a whole school of present-day theologians, the time has not, perhaps, been ill-spent in pointing out their fallacious nature.

C. COHEN.

Antichrist.

AN ugly dragon, with beak and claws, figured in the ancient Babylonian religion as the spirit of chaos or disorder, and the enemy of order and light. In its earliest form the spirit appears to have been represented by a female deity, the ferocious Tiamat, mother of the gods and genius of the restless sea. Babylonian fancy wove the story of the war between Bel (or Merodach), the glorious sun-god, and Tiamat, monster of night and ocean. She shrieked her spells, he flung about her his magic net; she swallowed the wind which he flung at her repulsive form, and the blast tortured her entrails and shattered her to fragments; and Merodach, his nostril swelling in pride, stood on the corpse of the damned ogress. Then he divided her body, and ripped joint from joint, and moulded the quivering pieces into the spangled dome of midnight, and the rugged hills of the earth, and the plains and streams. And we, the men and the women, who live and love and sin and die, play our little parts on the stage which Bel constructed out of the mangled dragon. Just as in a musical fugue the theme, once begun, recurs and recurs, and climbs and falls in a melodious race through the whole composition, so this myth of the great conflict is repeated over and over again in the world's religious and ethical

thought. Ages ago God and the Devil faced each other like terrific Titans, and the sound of their duel is only now growing faint because modern thought prefers new symbols. But the dualism still runs on in our political systems (Tory and Radical), our economic system (Capitalist and Socialist), and even literature echoes the eternal battle in Matthew Arnold's struggle between Philistinism and Sweetness and Light.

However, I am not going to follow the myth into all its historical branches. I propose to trace its development in the legend of the Antichrist.

In the prophecy of Ezekiel there is a mysterious power named Gog, against whom the Son of Man is told to hurl dreadful menaces—Gog shall be permitted for a time to harry the land of the Chosen People, but ultimately he shall be given as food to ravenous birds. Who was Gog? Commentators have invented many answers to the riddle; but I rather think the best solution has been offered by a German critic, who thinks Ezekiel meant Babylon. Being an exile in the land of Babylon, the prophet might have found it inconvenient to denounce the enemy by his real name, and so he disguised his threat and cursed Gog. Perhaps the very oddity and fogginess of the name made it popular with religious dreamers. Gog gradually became allied with the Satanic opposition to the plans of God. In the Book of Revelation, when Satan prepares for a last assault on the Divine monarchy, he gathers the nations of Gog and Magog into a grand army of invasion. Later on Jewish legend transformed Gog into the Antichrist—that is to say, it made Gog into the chief hostile force against the kingdom of the Messiah, or anointed messenger of heaven. But Antichrist took other forms—one of the most notable being Belial or Beliar, the Spirit of the Air. Some scholars believe that this Belial is another form of the old Babylonian dragon, and is rather a prince of the abyss or underworld of the dead. Belial is pitted against heaven in Paul's well-known question, "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" (*i.e.*, light with darkness, virtue with vice). In the last days, so said tradition, Messiah and Belial would engage in mortal combat. It is very curious that the wicked Belial should have been specially associated with the Jewish tribe of Dan. Dan was the black sheep of the twelve tribes, and pious folk used confidently to affirm that when Antichrist arose he would come of a Danite family. For this reason, so some surmise, the writer of the Book of Revelation omits the name of Dan when describing the sealing of the faithful members of the tribes (Rev. vii.).

Another guise in which Antichrist was dressed was that of the profaner of the holy Temple. When King Antiochus, the Syrian tyrant, desired to throw scorn on the Hebrew worship he set up in the Temple an image of Zeus and a small Greek altar. The sacrilege thrilled all the Hebrew people with horror. Even after Judas Maccabeus had wiped out the insult on the battle-field the Jews never forgot the "abomination of desolation." When they wanted to draw an awful picture of evil times to come they knew of nothing more terrible than to foretell that Antichrist would come and set up again his "abomination of desolation"—that is, a pagan altar or statue—in the temple of the Jewish God. This terror is expressed in the passage Matthew xxiv. 15-28. I may mention, in passing, that the passage is regarded by good critics as having been slipped into the Gospel of Matthew from some foreign source. It is supposed to be part of a speech uttered by Jesus; but anybody can see, on close inspection, that it breaks the thread of the discourse, and that it is a written, and not a spoken, composition. For, after referring to the "abomination," the text adds, "Let him that readeth understand." That is the footnote of a literary man, not the remark of a speaker.

But not only would Antichrist raise heathen altars in the Temple; he would sit in the sacred place and claim to be God. The second chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians contains a peculiar forecast of the coming of the Man of Sin, or the Lawless One, who would "oppose and exalt himself against all that is called God or is worshipped; so that he sitteth in the Temple of God, setting himself forth as God." The early Christians seem to have regarded the Roman Empire as the embodiment of this profane Antichrist. Connected with this superstition was the singular idea

that Antichrist would assume the shape of the Emperor Nero. It is true Nero had cut his own throat, and had been buried in a coffin of porphyry. But the people who crowded to lay wreaths on his tomb believed he would rise from the dead and lead victorious armies. This extraordinary idea is repeated in the Book of Revelation (xiii.), which tells how the Six-hundred-and-sixty-six Beast (this means Cæsar Nero) had been wounded in one of its heads, "as though it had been smitten unto death, and his death-stroke was healed; and the whole earth wondered after the Beast."

But we are not at the end of this solemn credulity. According to some prophets, the Antichrist would have a Jewish, not a Roman, origin. After the destruction of Jerusalem he was to rebuild the Temple, show marked favor to the Jews, receive the rite of circumcision, and work miracles. When the forces of Messiah assemble against him, the desperate Antichrist will stamp all his followers with a brand, and only those who carry this passport on their foreheads will be permitted to buy bread. Then things reach a climax in the confusion of thunder, lightning, and blood which is described at length in the Apocalypse.

It is plain enough that all these fictions are variations of the venerable myth of Bel and the Dragon, or the conflict of night and storm with sunshine and law. First we have a fable which, in a simple, primitive way, depicts the succession and contrast of anarchy and order in nature. Then the myth is expanded so as to cover the facts of the moral life. God, or Merodach, or Christ, on the one side, stand for the Higher Life, and the Dragon, Belial, or Antichrist for the Lower. It is crude psychology. It is a rough and ignorant attempt to account for the difficulty experienced in setting up a nobler type of culture in place of an older and more brutal type. There must necessarily be pain and stress until the better habit is established, and the old habit suppressed. Unfortunately, one age will persist in preserving the useless symbols of a previous age. We are slaves to the poetry of our fathers. We are too dull and wooden-headed to see that the Christ and Antichrist of our ancestors have served their turn, and no longer convey useful meanings. Pen and pulpit still go on repeating, expounding, and analysing legends that were once alive with interest and significance to barbaric minds, but are now mere mummies and relics. Christ and Antichrist may be despatched to the shades with Merodach and Tiamat. The duel now is between Reason and Unreason.

F. J. GOULD.

A Portentous Prophet.

"Your religious rites!
Oh! call them rather juggling mysteries."
—MASSINGER (*The Virgin Martyr*).

The infatuated followers of Joanna Southcott continued to believe in her even after she died of dropsy, instead of giving birth to Master Southcott, the promised Messiah. Similarly, there were pious people who revered the utterances of that portentous prophet, the Rev. Dr. Cumming, with unimpaired devotion, although the fraud of his pretensions to be regarded as a seer were proved again and again by the irresistible logic of facts, to the satisfaction of all reasonable men and women.

The phenomenon is not unknown at the present time, but we can estimate more correctly the case of Dr. Cumming than that of the lesser luminary who is at present rivalling Old Moore and Zadkiel. Less than forty years ago Dr. Cumming's name was a household word. His announcements were on almost every wall and in nearly every journal. His publications seemed innumerable, "like leaves in Valambrosa." They lay on every table, they were exposed in every shop. In one way or another his figure was as familiar to his generation as Ally Sloper's is to ours. To multitudes, not of the poor and ignorant, but of the so-called "cultured," he was the heaven-sent seer, commissioned by Deity to receive the light of prophecy and throw it over a wicked world. No prophet or fortune-teller of the professional class ever achieved such a hold upon the frequenters of his shrine. Few prophets would find it easy to go on for a whole generation, delivering a rapid

succession of new prophecies purporting to seriously affect the course of human affairs. This nineteenth-century Jeremiah preached twice before the Queen, and people were charmed to read, in tastefully-bound, gilt-edged volumes, the clotted bosh which he was privileged to preach to her Majesty.

For many years Dr. Cumming had a body of believers and devotees that a man of the highest genius and the most undoubted probity might have envied. In at least half the religious households of this country a guest would have had to consider well before he intimated the least misgiving of the reverend prophet's piety or sagacity. The avenues of his church were as crowded as the passages to the opera. Thousands flocked to hear the prophet, and listened with becoming gravity the while he demonstrated that the prophecy of the locusts, whose sting is in their tail, was fulfilled by the fact of the Turkish general having taken a horse's tail for his standard; that the Pope was "Antichrist," and that the French were the very frogs predicted in the Revelation of St. John the Divine—a literary effort which, to a sane man, is as coherent and intelligible as the ravings of a certificated lunatic.

Goody-goody people reserved a special corner in their hearts, over and above their strictly loyal obligation to the House of Hanover, for a spiritual guide who taught them precisely to whom they might point as the "horn that had eyes," "the lying prophet," the "unclean spirits," "the whore of Babylon," and "the Beast." Appetite grows by what it feeds on. Dr. Cumming educated his crowd of dupes not only to credulity, but to greediness. Every fresh prophecy gratified them one day, only to make them more hungry for the like food the next. When Dr. Cumming first assumed the prophet's mantle he was content to place his terrible prophecies a long way off. This ceased to satisfy his audiences, and it seems that his own mind underwent the same development, and that he became his own dupe. He grew more positive and more definite. Dr. Cumming was then compelled to employ an immense amount of ingenuity to prove that what he had prophesied had come to pass. For a considerable time he managed to satisfy the voracious appetites of his followers. But Nemesis came at last, and he fell from his pinnacle of popularity. In a moment of religious recklessness he named the year 1861 as that in which very terrible events were to take place. The year was not without events, but they failed to fill the prophet's awful program. From that time his fame declined. Then followed blow after blow. Family troubles supervened, and the golden rewards of divination had to be spent in the discharge of financial obligations. It came out at last that the prophet was penniless. His admirers subscribed handsomely to place him above difficulty and want, and he passed his last years in peace and comfort, "basking in the sunshine of the countenance of God."

This is a notorious case. Dr. Cumming was as much an impostor as Madame Zuleika, of Bond-street fame, or a race-course fortune-teller. They all pretend to powers which neither they nor other people possess. So are thought-readers, "clairvoyants," spiritualistic "mediums," and the whole troublous tribe of dabblers in the alleged "super"-natural. But whereas a poor gipsy who tells fortunes is sent to prison, the same fraud may be practised with impunity in well-furnished apartments, or if one uses the jargon of the Christian religion. The Vagrancy Act provides that *all* persons professing to tell fortunes shall be liable to a fine, or to imprisonment with hard labor. Such is the modern and merciful form of the Divine Commandment, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Selden, in his *Table Talk*, says that the old laws against witchcraft do not prove witchcraft to have existed. That is so, for it never did exist. As a simple fact, thousands of old women, perfectly harmless and innocent, were legally murdered on fantastic evidence which ought to have been incredible, for doing what was physically impossible, in supposed obedience to an imaginary command of an alleged deity. Dr. Cumming found fortune-telling a pleasant and an exceedingly profitable hobby. He did not, perhaps, advise a lady how her lover might be made to propose. He did not, maybe, furnish any of his congregation with the name of a "winner." He made bolder dashes into the darkness of futurity. A fortune-teller is a false prophet, no doubt. But, then,

it has been well said that the very phrase "false prophet" is tautology, saying the same thing twice over. Fortune-telling means imprisonment for a poor vagrant. Dr. Cumming's career shows how it may be turned to the best account by a Christian gentleman, whose perception of truth and honesty is misty and confused.

MIMNERMUS.

Acid Drops.

MR. W. T. STEAD, who is understood to be God's chief representative on earth, has played out his little game of prophecy in connection with the war in South Africa. He declared most peremptorily that Great Britain could not possibly beat the Boers, because they were perfectly in the right, and God Almighty was on their side. This position looked plausible enough at first, but Lord Roberts and his army have completely altered the situation. Mr. Stead has therefore turned his attention to a fresh bit of sensationalism. He is now telling us how the French will invade England, and also how the Germans would perform the same feat. On the whole, it seems perfectly clear that this country will never be safe until Mr. Stead is made Dictator; and his title to that function can hardly be disputed by anyone who believes in God. Keeping this gentleman out of that high office is an act of rebellion which has only one parallel in human history—namely, the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The clergy always get their share of the good things going. They worked the relief of Mafeking for all it was worth. Lots of congregations were singing "God Save the Queen" on Sunday. The clever gentlemen who run St. Paul's Cathedral had a special performance on Saturday afternoon, and there was such a crush that the Lord Mayor and the Common Council couldn't get in.

What a lot of fuss to find out whether Lord Roberts is a "strict Baptist." We are told that amongst London Baptists the report that the Commander-in-Chief was one of themselves caused "quite a sensation." Then a press gentleman, on hearing that Lord Roberts worshipped at Gower Street, went on the hunt for precise information. He seems to have gone here, there, and everywhere. He called at the Baptist Mission, and a "highly-placed official" there sent him off to Keppel Street. But no information was to be obtained in Keppel Street, and, after a long pursuit, he failed to find any evidence that Lord Roberts had worshipped at any Baptist chapel in London. One wouldn't think of mentioning this pursuit, except for the way in which religion is specially associated with the war. The persevering gentleman who went on the quest says he was fortunate enough to catch a chapel-keeper. "He smiled when I mentioned my errand." As well he might! What does it all matter?

Dutch Christians and British Christians are at loggerheads over the South African war, and Jesus Christ does not intervene. "The spectacle," says the Rev. Dr. J. Guinness Rogers, "of two sets of Churches set in deadly array against each other is one which no Christian can regard with complacency." Perhaps not, but no Christian in the least degree acquainted with history should regard it with surprise.

Among the list of contributors to the fund being raised for the new diocese of Southwark we notice the well-known firm of Messrs. Barclay, Perkins, & Co., Limited, for £5,000. After this we shall not be surprised to hear that beer is to be substituted for one-and-threepenny port in the administration of Holy Communion. Temperance papers please note.

The first list of subscriptions to this Southwark Diocese Fund amounts to over £33,000. The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths contributes £1,000. This is how the City Corporations spend their money.

According to the advertisement, the projected Southwark Diocese is to extend from Woolwich to Putney, and to include "a population of two millions of people." This is how the English language is written by clerical gentlemen who have had a university training. "Population of people" is a wonderful expression. Did the clerical gentlemen in question imagine that, without the word "people," the reader might be led to think that the "population" only included cats and dogs, or possibly rats and mice?

The unveiling of the Huxley statue suggested some extraordinary reflections to the gentleman who writes over the signature of "Symbol" in the *Church Gazette*. According to this writer, the "Huxley of the 'sixties" was "not merely a vehement Atheist," but a "propagator of the crass pessimism of a hope-slaughtering materialism." This cacophonous sentence is also a "crass" absurdity, for Huxley never was an Atheist, vehement or otherwise; and, so far from being a pessimist, he was one of the most cheerful of men, both in private and in his writings and addresses. Moreover, he

always disclaimed "materialism." Evidently, therefore, it would be difficult to beat "Symbol" in compressing a large number of inaccuracies into the space between two full stops.

It appears that "the Huxley of the 'eighties" had mellowed, and was "almost persuaded to be a Christian." Yes, he was as much "almost persuaded" as King Agrippa was in the *accurate* rendering of the famous passage in Acts. What that monarch said to Paul was not, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," but, "Do you think you are going to make me a Christian with stuff like that?" And this was Huxley's attitude, right up to the very end, towards Christian champions like the Duke of Argyll, Professor Mivart, and Mr. Gladstone.

"At his highest and best," this *Church Gazette* writer says, Huxley was but "Darwin's jackal." We suppose this is a polite, and Christian, way of saying that Huxley was the fighting champion of Darwinism when it was making its way in the world—principally in spite of the opposition of the clergy. It is perfectly true that Huxley did play that part, and play it magnificently.

We have not yet quite done with "Symbol." He goes out of his way to fall foul of Winwood Reade, whom he calls "a shallow undergraduate," and the writer of "a flashy, clever volume" called *The Martyrdom of Man*. Now it is quite open for anyone to maintain that Winwood Reade's philosophy was mistaken. That is perfectly legitimate criticism. But to call him "shallow" is a very shallow absurdity. Darwin took a much juster view of the value of Winwood Reade's work as an African traveller and explorer. Nor was his masterpiece "flashy." Call it anything but that. Find fault, if you will, with its point of view; but if you don't see that it is a strong and able piece of work, you simply write yourself down an ignoramus, if not an absolute copy of the animal selected as typical of himself by the worthy Dogberry.

A notable clergyman died on Sunday—the Rev. William Fleming, secretary of the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews. This Society doesn't convert many Jews. God Almighty himself couldn't do that, when he tried it, some nineteen hundred years ago. But the Society spends some £40,000 a year on the job. We presume, therefore, that its secretary is pretty well paid; and Parson Fleming was unlucky in having to leave such a situation. He will probably find it difficult to get an equally good post in heaven.

We drew attention last week to the Church of England wail over the decreasing number of candidates for Holy Orders. We have now to observe that the same spiritual malady prevails in Scotland. The Free Church Assembly is apprised by its Commissioners of "the remarkable, and even alarming, diminution in the number of those who are preparing for the ministry." This announcement is made the subject of a letter by "K."—probably a minister—in the *Glasgow Herald*. According to this gentleman, it is not to be expected that young men will invest time and money in preparing for a post which will bring them in "the meagre stipend of £100" at the age of thirty. Quite true, Sir, quite true. But, as the man in the street would say, are you not giving away the show? Are you not virtually admitting that the preacher's work is taken up as a mere profession, like a lawyer's, a doctor's, a dentist's, or even a chimney sweep's? In that case, the stipend of £100 at the age of thirty is indeed meagre and miserable. But is it not quite enough—is it not almost too much—for a sincere soul-saver, who is really called of the Lord as an emigration agent to heaven? No doubt a hundred a year is a small salary, but millions of men in this country get less, and no man who gets as much is really poor, in the proper sense of the word. Yet every minister of Christ ought to be poor, unless the Lord didn't know what he was talking about when he said "Blessed be ye poor," and "Woe unto you rich." On the whole, therefore, we think that ministerial stipends of £100 ought to be cut down, if only in order to give the preachers a chance of reaching the heaven to which they are always inviting their congregations.

Sabbatarians, of course, are just now jubilant. It is no use denying that they have grounds for self-glorification. They have scored from time to time, whilst the opposition has been either quiescent or weak. The so-called Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association have just held their annual meeting at the Holborn Restaurant. They were able to adopt a report which is a record of triumphs.

The seven-day newspaper movement and its results have become almost ancient history, but the Committee refer to it with satisfaction. Then we discover from the report that the music licence of the Crystal Palace was opposed by the Association before the London County Council at a cost of more than £200. It seems a pity that it didn't cost them more, for the opposition was absolutely irrational and illiberal.

Then there is a reference in the report to the resolution

carried at the London School Board by twenty-five votes against twenty-one to open Board schools on Sundays for public meetings. This was "vigorously" opposed by the Lord's Rest Day Association, and the resolution was rescinded by twenty-five votes to twenty-four. The Association is now doing its best to upset the arrangements at the Exhibition in Paris, where, of course, there is no particular recognition of the sanctity of Sunday.

The Society arranged for ninety-three lectures and addresses, and 250 sermons on Sunday observance, during the past year. Two hundred and eighteen thousand publications have been issued. The Society record, apparently with satisfaction, that by forty-eight votes against twelve the Glasgow Town Council has declined to open the People's Palace and Museum on Sundays. At Maidstone, we are told, the Council refused to open the museums on Sundays. "The Association had protested against the employment of military bands at illegal concerts on Sundays." The proposal to open the British Museum Library on Sundays had been successfully resisted. Generally the Lord's Day Association seem to have been "on the job." The common-sense public must have been exceptionally stupid to have allowed them to take these liberties in the name of "rest" as distinguished from "recreation."

"It was interesting to hear the chairman," says the *Rock*, "animadvert so strongly against the abuse of the seventh day for purposes of pleasure." Of what use is the day, except for pleasure? If folks cannot enjoy themselves, rationally of course, they might as well go on working the whole of the seven days.

The Queen continues to display a want of interest in Sabbatarianism, much to the disgust (we suspect) of the professional representatives of the Nonconformist Conscience. On Sunday afternoon the bands of the First Life Guards and Grenadier Guards played opposite Her Majesty's drawing-room on the East Terrace at Windsor Castle. Many residents of Windsor and Eton attended to hear the music.

The penny-in-the-slot principle has been extended to religious matters. In the centre of Vienna there is a microscope station, in a separate room of which is a specially fine apparatus, and twopence turns the handle. The living picture is that of the Pope giving his blessing. According to a printed announcement, in the name of Cardinal Sebastian Martinelli, "It is the express wish of his Holiness that all those who see his blessing in this picture, and receive it with a believing heart, shall participate in the happiness, the heatitude, and the welfare which would be theirs if the blessing had been personally given." This is a capital way of raising the wind. Who shall say now that the Church is not up to date?

A funny prosecution is reported from Belgrade. The editor of the local *Star* has been found guilty of insulting the ancient Greek gods, by satirising Jove, Venus, and Mercury in a poem. His sentence was five days' imprisonment. We did not think there was so much life left in those old deities. But you can never be sure of the species. It is a case in which the saying, "Let sleeping dogs lie," seems very applicable.

When the Duke of Connaught went down to Watford to lay the foundation stone of a Masonic Institute for Boys, he spoke "in the fear of God the great Architect of the Universe." Such is the jargon of English Freemasons. But the slightest reflection would enable them to see that there is absolutely no analogy between architecture and the constitution of the universe. We fancy, though, that most Freemasons know as much about architecture as they do about hydrostatics or meteorology.

The Oberammergau Passion Play is being enacted again, in a grand new theatre capable of holding five thousand people. Jaded sightseers from all parts of the Christian world will flock to that Bavarian village this summer, to see the old drama of the Crucifixion played upon a modern stage, but with archaeological accessories. The part of Jesus Christ is taken by Anton Lang, junior, a potter. He seems to play it even better than the Jewish gentleman in the original cast.

The Church and Stage Guild is dissolved, and curates and ballet girls will no longer assemble together to drink weak tea and talk weaker religion. The Rev. Stewart D. Headlam founded this League ever so many years ago, when he was inhibited from preaching by the Bishop of London for daring to hint that religious people might innocently take an interest in theatres and music-halls. Mr. Headlam is now licensed afresh by another Bishop of London; moreover, a great change has taken place of late years in the attitude of parsons and other public entertainers towards each other; and Mr. Headlam considers that there is no longer any reason for the Church and Stage Guild's existence.

With regard to Mr. Headlam himself, we desire to say (with our hat off to him) that we have always found him to

be an honorable gentleman. We have a quarrel with Christianity, but no quarrel with Mr. Headlam. He is a true friend of liberty, justice, and fair play. May he long continue to lighten up the Church with the contrast of his example.

Some caustic observations are made by the *Topical Times* on that "Church Parade" in Hyde Park, which has long been a fashionable promenade where choice specimens of the fair sex may walk in their new frocks, with their pretty hymn and prayer-books. The *T. T.* writer comments on the "humbug and nonsense" which prompt our womenkind of to-day to visit a place of worship as they would a matinée, and afterwards to demonstrate the fact by walking out in all their bravery of attire like so many peacocks.

It is not, however, quite so certain that "a place of worship" has been visited by many of these fair paraders, notwithstanding their ostentatious display of prayer-books. Still, in regard to a certain proportion of them, the lines applied by the *Topical Times* are, no doubt, sufficiently descriptive:—

"They eat and drink, and scheme and plod,
And go to church on Sunday,
And many are afraid of God—
But more of Mrs. Grundy."

A Salvationist "ensign" now at Wingate writes home: "I feel that God has put me here to work among my comrades. Our commanding officer is a Christian. One young man came to me to-day and asked me to talk to him, and, while I explained to him the way of salvation, the tears rolled down his face." This of a Tommy Atkins, possibly from White-chapel!

Alluding to a complaint by Mr. Isaac Myers that he and his co-religionists are practically included under the generic term "infidelity," the *Church Gazette* observes: "The only real infidelity consists in a man's not being true to his own convictions. The late Professor Huxley was certainly not afraid of his, and very rightly repudiated the epithet of 'infidel.'"

To this observation of the *Church Gazette* it may be added that Freethinkers, whilst repudiating the term as applicable to them, are easily able to show that it applied to Christians, scarcely any of whom adhere to the New Testament teachings which they accept, and are, therefore, "infidels" in the real sense.

Some orthodox believers have been taking the *Christian World* to task for its review of Dean Farrar's *Life of Lives*. One correspondent has calmly suggested that the paper publishing such a review must be infidel rather than Christian. Another states that the review conveys the impression that the *Christian World* has "arrived at the belief that the narratives of the birth of Jesus in two of the Gospels are but fabrications, involving, of course, that he was merely the son of Joseph."

The *Christian World*, while disclaiming responsibility for these attributed views, says of its review: "Its position is simply that, in view of the great and growing consensus of New Testament criticism which throws doubt on the authenticity of the early chapters of Matthew and Luke, it is most unwise to base the doctrine of the divinity of Christ on the evidence of those chapters."

It is open, we are told by this religious weekly, "for those who are satisfied with the evidence of the authenticity of the birth narratives to accept them, and to those who are in doubt to treat Christ's birth as a sacred mystery." A very kind permission; especially when there does not appear to be a mystery, sacred or otherwise, about the story at all, but every evidence that the two narratives are purely fiction.

The Marquis of Northampton has ventured upon a mild criticism of some notable remarks by the Countess of Warwick. Her ladyship deprecated the expenditure on foreign missions, when so much social reformation remained to be effected at home. The Marquis lamented that "the goddess were at their doors as well as afar off." He added that if he were asked where he would find the most heathen in this country, "he would have to acknowledge that it was mostly in the large towns, and more than all in the great capital of the country." This is a very unjustifiable reflection upon the capital and the big centres. What right has the Marquis to say that because so many of the inhabitants do not care to accept his theological views, or follow his religious practices or those of any Church, they are "heathen"?

Here is a letter which speaks for itself. It is addressed by M. Ernest Renault to a curé of Sens with reference to the withdrawal of M. L'Abbe Henri Bouvier from the Roman Church to civil employment:—"M. LE CURÉ,—I learn that M. L'Abbe Bouvier has just resigned, and has joined the revolted priests with M. Bourrier. I now ask you to be good enough to collect all the scandalous stories you can get hold

of about this gentleman, and to send them on to me. I am an amateur of these scandals; whether true or false matters little, provided I can make of them a big book, and so blacken these renegades."

Why doesn't Santa Lucia look after the safety of her devotees? A chapel in her honor is situated on the borders of a lake near Rome, and two boat-loads of young people, who were celebrating her feast, were thrown into the water by the capsizing of the boats three hundred yards from the landing-place. Only thirteen were rescued, and between thirty and forty were drowned.

The Rev. Hamilton Young, vicar of Alne, Yorkshire, seeks a divorce from his wife. The co-respondent is a churchwarden.

The *Daily News* maliciously prints a specimen of "The New Advertising," with only a slight omission, which spoils the value of the announcement: "We hear that Dr. Joseph Parker, of the City Temple, has been reading ———, and says that he 'found it most entrancing.'"

Count Tolstoi informs the world that suicide is immoral. Life, he says, has been granted to men to die a natural death. At the same time, he says that "Life is indestructible." But in that case suicide is impossible. All that a man who cuts his throat can do is to quicken the pace along one part of his eternal journey.

The Rev. J. H. Jowett has been inquiring "Where are the Secularist Societies?" He asked this question in the course of a West London Mission anniversary sermon which he preached, and, of course, answered his query in a way satisfactory to himself. Apparently he thinks, or more likely hopes, that there are no Secular, or as he calls them "Secularist," Societies in existence.

Singularly enough, this sapient Dissenting minister makes the inquiry at a most inopportune moment—for him. For the annual Conference of the National Secular Society is immediately at hand, and within quite recent times a new Secular agency has been established—viz., the Secular Society, Limited, not to mention the recent formation of the Free-thought Publishing Company. Evidently the Rev. J. H. Jowett did not, in this famous sermon of his re-published in the *Christian Budget*, know as accurately as he should have done what he was talking about.

It is amusing at times to hear what critics have to say about us, mainly on account of the want of acquaintance or investigation which they display. This Rev. Mr. Jowett, for instance, commenced his reference to Secularism with the statement that "Within the lifetime of some within this hall a society was formed which was called the Secularist Society." That is true as regards the formation of a Secular Society, but what follows in the Rev. Jowett's discourse is entirely wrong. True, he defines the objects of the Society with a fair amount of accuracy for a sky-pilot.

He says: "Its program and interest were to be confined entirely to things secular and temporal, without regard to things eternal. They did not propose to deny God; they only proposed to ignore him. It would be philanthropic. It would be humanitarian; it would engage in works of benevolence; it would not have a jot or tittle of theology. It would love, love, love, and in its program of philanthropy its entire plan was enshrined. The defect in its constitution was this—it made no provision for the sustenance of the very spirit it proposed to exercise."

The Rev. Jowett might have explained what was the "sustenance" he talks about. He does, indeed, say that our "lamps are going out for want of oil." But that is an observation which strikes us as one rather intended to encourage Secularists to renewed exertions. He says "their (Secularists') energies are failing here, yonder, and everywhere." It doesn't exactly look like it to those who know anything about the subject. Still, there are many Free-thinkers who would like to see even more indications of interest and activity, if only to put such persons as the Rev. Jowett to shame, though none would think of assessing him or his opinions at a very high value.

Mr. Carvell Williams, the champion of Nonconformity, in a recent address, observed that the "secular press deserved its name." He meant, of course, the newspaper press. Well, one is glad to know that there is a secular press, and that it deserves its name. The religious press lately has been specially "off color"—illustrations poor, sometimes absurd; letter-press crammed full of nonsense—a large proportion being directed against so-called "infidels" and "infidelity."

As for pressmen, in such a connection, they may be fairly described either as indifferent or as privately a very unbelieving class. Many of them possess a complete knowledge of scripture. Some don't—that was the occasion of Mr. Carvell

Williams's remark. Some don't want to learn any more, because they are sick of the whole thing, and there are always a Bible and a Concordance in a newspaper office. For the ordinary pressman there are no engagements, or, as they say in America, "assignments," so hateful as religious fixtures.

The biggest swearers and blasphemers at May meetings, Church Congresses, and even in Convocation, are pressmen. And it is not to be supposed that there is any lack of others, even in clerical garb, who are indisposed to use similar expletives at these tiresome and detestable meetings. The rubbish talked is more than enough to make any intelligent and cultured pressman sick—also some of the parsons and ministers, more especially when they have to listen to rivals whom they inwardly despise, or possibly fear.

A new terror, says the *Topical Times*, is to be added to travelling in the United States. As if draughts like cyclones and nigger attendants full of original sin were not enough, we are now told that managers of American railways have decided to hold religious services on trains travelling long distances. This is worse than the innovation lately made in the London County Council trams. Therein, just as you are about to kiss your best girl when the conductor is not looking, your eye may catch a Scriptural transparency warning you against all sorts of evil practices, and reminding you of the shortness of human life.

The founder of Buddhism was a philosopher, not a religionist. His teaching was purely Atheistic. He and Confucius were the first great Secularists in human history. But the mass of Buddhists are superstitious folk; and we are not surprised to read that Buddha's bones—fictitious articles, of course—are being brought from Siam to Tokio, the capital of Japan, where half a million will be spent on the celebrations.

A god can be purchased for a farthing in China, or even for less. The plenitude of gods in China has long been a subject of remark. There are gods celestial and gods terrestrial, gods of heaven and gods of hell; gods of the earth, sun, moon, and stars; of thunder, lightning, wind, and rain; of water, fire, wood, earth, and metal; and of the seas, rivers, mountains, hills, seasons, snow, frost, tide, trees, and flowers. There are Indian gods and Chinese gods; some gods are of stone, others are of wood, clay, and bronze. There are images, pictures, and tablets. There are white gods, black gods, yellow gods, and red gods. The smallest are an inch in height, and the tallest fifty feet. An extra special kind of god costs probably as much as £200.

Wesleyan Methodist local preachers in the Huddersfield district have listened "with rapt attention" to an address by Mr. S. L. Mosley, of the Beaumont Park Museum, on "The Creation and Development of Man." This gentleman told them that "Nature did not unfold what God was—the Bible did." We quite agree with him. And we recommend his audience to read Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled *The Bible God*, which displays that same deity in his true colors.

"Why Won't Parsons Debate?" asked Mr. J. G. Bartram in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. Three correspondents answer him. Mr. Anonymous refers him to the public libraries for Christian Evidences. Mr. W. Gael says that sceptics are "superior persons," and ought to be left to their superiority. Mr. R. I. Wilson says that Mr. Bartram only wants to revive an interest in a fast-decaying cause. All of which is entirely beside the mark. A fourth correspondent, Mr. Jas. Reid, sides with Mr. Bartram, and asks why the "roaring ecclesiastical lion" does not silence for ever the insignificant "material lamb." We hope this correspondence will continue.

Mr. Justice Day is a Roman Catholic, like ex-Judge North. He is famous for his severe sentences and his love of bogging. He is now seventy-four years old. He was married fifty-four years ago to his first wife, who died in 1893. Instead of preparing to follow her into the beautiful land above, his lordship has just tied himself up afresh in the holy bonds of matrimony. "Mr. Justice Day," according to the *Star*, "is full of strength and vigor."

A Brixton Station porter went mad. That is not surprising when it is remembered that he worked for the good old Chatham and Dover—a Company, we believe, started by Noah before he entered the Ark. Still, it was not the Chatham and Dover that drove this porter mad. Religion got in front of the Company this time (you see even religion can get in front of the Chatham and Dover), and claimed the poor fellow for its own. His madness pronounced itself when he saw a clergyman walking along the platform. The religion-added porter dropped upon his knees and implored the man of God's forgiveness. After a good deal of persuasion he was got downstairs, but all the way he kept begging forgiveness. He is now in the infirmary, and his malady is certified as religious mania.

N.B.

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Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 27, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester: 1, "Is Dr. Mivart in Hell?" 3, "After the War in South Africa?" "Is there a God? An Answer to President Kruger's Question." June 3, N. S. S. Conference; 10, 17, 24, Athenæum Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—May 27, Bradford.—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.
H. LEES SUMNER.—Your belated letter to hand. Thanks all the same. We quite understand your reasons in respect of the matter you mention. Your brother's death was long expected, but where affection exists the actual bereavement is a heavy blow, however great the preparation. Your later postscript informs us that you think Mr. Ball's letter "splendid." Of course the subject is one on which a difference of opinion prevails. But the discussion is in the best of hands. With men like Mr. Gould, Mr. Ball, and Chilperic conducting it, it may be called the battle of the giants.
J. OSCAR.—Two contents-sheets shall be forwarded instead of one. Many thanks. With regard to your suggestion, we are compiling a list of newsagents who sell the *Freethinker*, and we hope to publish it shortly. Perhaps our readers will help us to make it complete by sending us the names and addresses of such newsagents known to them.
DR. PARK.—Thanks for the paper. We shall be sending you a proof in a day or two.
A. S. TROTMAN.—The extract you send us from Ruskin was printed in the *Freethinker* some months ago. You must have overlooked or forgotten it. Thanks all the same.
E. H. J. J. J.—See "Sugar Plums." Obligated to shorten, as your report did not arrive till Tuesday, and we go to press very early this week.
J. G. BARTRAM.—See paragraph. We hope you will be able to arrange the business successfully.
D. FRANKEL.—See paragraph.
A. B. MOSS.—List will appear next week. Too late for this number. Sorry to hear of the orthodox ruffianism you were exposed to on Sunday evening at Limehouse. We hope Mr. Frankel has recovered from the effects of the severe blow he received. It is a pity that the police were too late to catch the scoundrels.
X. Y. Z.—draws attention to a nasty misprint in "Mimmermus's" article last week. In the second quotation on p. 309 the word "land" thrice repeated should have been "laud." We thank this correspondent. Our file copy of last week's *Freethinker*, taken at random from a week's issue, has the word "laud" all right. Only a few copies—about 500—were printed with the mistake in them.
JAMES NEATE.—All the London Branch members should rally round the central flag on Whit-Sunday.
W. S. CLOGG.—It is no use quoting from Mr. Foote's article. He is not taking part in the discussion on "Religion." Better let the present champions fight it out.
W. SLEIGH.—We are advised that the book was forwarded to you. Perhaps it went astray. Another copy has been sent since the receipt of your letter, and we hope it has reached you safely. You did quite right in communicating with us. All complaints should be addressed to Mr. Foote personally.
L. SIMPSON.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops." Your postscript has appeared in the *Freethinker* already. The original story ran that an Oxford divinity student, in an examination paper, defined "Faith" as "That faculty which enables us to believe what we know to be untrue."
W. W. HARDWICKE.—The mistake has been rectified.
OLD ADMIRER.—The business is gradually getting ship-shape at Stationers' Hall Court, and we are slowly recovering lost ground. A very bad dislocation of business was caused by Mr. Forder's breakdown. We are doing our level best to get matters straightened out. The last trouble of all is the chaos of the subscribers' list. So many subscribers have been receiving the paper irregularly or not at all. The Company will see that they get it all right in future, if they will only inform us, in case they are overlooked. It will be clear sailing when the list is rectified up to date.
C. J. PEACOCK.—Contents-sheet shall be discontinued. Sorry to hear that the newsagent has been "intimidated by some of his customers of the established faith."

F. A. DAVIES.—Cannot be inserted till next week. Lecturers' engagement lists are too late when they arrive on Tuesday. They should be sent in earlier.

E. COTTERELL, a Freethinker, and a member of the N. S. S. of sixteen years' standing, takes time by the forelock, if not by the eyebrows. He sends us 2s. 6d. as a "first donation" towards the Joseph Symes Fund referred to in the N. S. S. Conference Agenda. He suggests that arrangements should be considered for sending out a lecturer from England to fill Mr. Symes's place during his absence. "The flag," he says, "so bravely kept flying by Mr. Symes should not be lowered for a moment."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Glasgow Herald—Sunday Chronicle—New Century—Programme—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Sydney Bulletin—Truthseeker (New York)—People's Newspaper—Blue Grass Blade—Printing Trade Cover—Yorkshire Evening Post—Ethical World—Freidenker—Isle of Man Times—Church Gazette—Torch of Reason—Progressive Thinker—Huddersfield Examiner—Two Worlds—Yarmouth Mercury—Crescent—Daylight.

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 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C.

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

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

Special for Freethinkers.

THE Freethought Publishing Company's new Prospectus is enclosed in every copy of the present number of the *Freethinker*, thus affording a fresh opportunity to those who have not yet given any tangible support to this enterprise.

Now that the Company has settled down in its own premises, and is transacting its own business, it is seen to be something more than a mere project. A great future lies before it, if it is only supported as it should be. And that support need not press heavily upon the members of the Freethought party. A very considerable number of persons who could easily invest a little money in this effort have not yet made any sign of their readiness to do so. I appeal to them to wait no longer, but to fill in the Application Form for Shares which accompanies the new Prospectus; and to fill it in with a leaning towards generosity rather than niggardliness. If all did their duty, the capital of this Company would have to be increased, and it would soon revolutionise the literary propaganda of Freethought.

I have said before, and I think it necessary to repeat, that a good many Freethinkers do not quite realise how incumbent it is upon them to provide the sinews of war for those who are fighting their battles. It is of little use to appoint generals and other officers, with ever so many good warriors behind them, if no provision is made for guns, rifles, ammunition, and commissariat. It is *resources* that tell in the long run. The Christians know this very well, and they subscribe hundreds of thousands—nay, millions—in the course of every year. Of course it is impossible for Freethinkers, who are a relatively small and poor minority, to do anything like that; but they could do a great deal more than they have been doing. And they should really rouse themselves in face of the tremendous efforts which all the Churches are making to retain and even to extend their positions. If the friends of Freethought do not put their hands in their pockets, with a view to fetching out a palpable contribution towards the success of their cause, they will find themselves beaten out of the field

by the Superstitionists; and, instead of gaining fresh conquests, they will lose the fruits of old ones. Personally, I have no respect at all for a Freethinker who will do nothing for Freethought. He might just as well be a Christian.

In this case it is not exactly a donation which is asked for; it is an investment; and presently it should return a fair dividend. Even if it never did that—which is extremely unlikely—what could be more right and proper than that Freethinkers should be financially upholding their own cause, in a straightforward, honest, and business-like way, instead of leaving one man, or two or three men, to do all the work, and take all the responsibility, and find the wherewithal in a haphazard, hand-to-mouth way, just as they can, and often amidst miserable worries, anxieties, and discouragements? *This* is not the way to deal with burdens. Spread them out. Let all concerned take a share of them, instead of letting them press a few down to the ground.

The more Shares taken up in this Company, the better it will be all round. Rent and other expenses *must* be incurred, however small the volume of trade. Increase the volume, and the expenses do not rise in proportion. And the volume of trade in this case depends upon the working capital at the command of the Directors. To sell old publications you must bring out new ones. That is a fixed law in the publishing business. And the bringing out of new books and pamphlets is a costlier thing than outsiders imagine. There is a good profit at the end, unless you make mistakes; but the investment is a big one at the beginning.

Naturally the *Freethinker* is the key to the Company's whole business. With a sufficient capital, a reasonably ambitious policy could be pursued in regard to our weekly organ. Instead of pegging away, as Gatacre, Methuen, and others did in the earlier stages of the war in South Africa, we should be able to carry out a well-conceived and comprehensive plan of campaign, after the fashion of Lord Roberts. And the result is a practical certainty. For the *Freethinker* has an indestructible vitality, as the last few unfortunate months have shown; and, starting from its present assured position, with the assistance of adequate resources, it would probably extend its circulation sufficiently to return a handsome profit on the investment. Every paper has to be pushed in this way. The commercial side is of vast importance. Were the most brilliant staff of writers in the world to be got together, they would fail without capital and business management.

Even with our present resources, we shall not be inactive. We shall do a good deal. But we want to do more. We ought to do more. And the Freethinkers of this country must enable us to do it. *Must* is the word. It is written, and let it stand. I am doing *my* duty; my colleagues are doing *their* duty; and I call upon the rest of the party to do *theirs*. Let them fill in these Application Forms for Shares promptly and generously. They will see that the terms of payment are easy. Even the poorest have a chance of doing something.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE delivers three lectures at Manchester to-day (May 27), in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints. His subjects are attractive, and there should be good meetings. These are the last lectures in the Hall for the present season.

The fine weather and the Relief of Mafeking excitement somewhat diminished the audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. Still, there was a very good meeting in the circumstances, and the lecture was very warmly applauded. Mr. A. B. Moss occupies the platform this evening, his subject being "The Gospel of Evolution." Mr. Moss has not lectured

at the Athenæum Hall for some time, and we daresay his friends will rally round him on this occasion.

Last Sunday Mr. Charles Watts lectured twice at Fails-worth to first-rate audiences. Although the Secular Hall has been considerably enlarged, it was quite full in the afternoon, when Councillor W. Healy, J.P., presided. In the evening the hall was crowded in every part, and the chair was occupied by Councillor Aldred. Both gentlemen made brief and appropriate speeches. The meetings were exceedingly enthusiastic, and the music and singing were excellent. Friends were present from Manchester, Oldham, Bury, Stockport, Rochdale, and Heywood.

On the previous evening (Saturday) a tea and social meeting was held in the hall, when Mr. Sydney A. Gimson formally opened the school extension and new class-rooms. Mr. F. J. Gould was present, and spoke briefly upon the advantages of Secular instruction. Mr. Watts also gave a short address. The collections at the three meetings amounted to over £37. We congratulate the Fails-worth friends upon their great success.

To-day, Sunday, May 27, Mr. Watts lectures afternoon and evening in Bradford, when he will be pleased to meet friends from the surrounding districts.

This is the last time that we shall be able to draw attention effectually to the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society on Whit-Sunday. It has already been announced that the Conference itself will be held in the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, in the morning and afternoon; and that the evening public meeting will be held in the handsome Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place. London Freethinkers will, of course, make a note of this, and turn up in the evening in strong force to greet the delegates and visitors from the provinces. The list of speakers will include Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, and probably Messrs. Moss and Heaford.

Luncheon will be provided at the Bedford Head Hotel, nearly opposite the Athenæum Hall, at 1 o'clock, for the provincial delegates and visitors. Those who intend to be present should communicate as early as possible with Miss Vance, in order that she may give the Hotel people a fairly approximate idea of the number to be catered for.

Miss Vance acknowledges the following fresh subscriptions to the Conference Fund:—J. Weston, 5s.; Mrs. McMillan, 5s. We are somewhat astonished that London Secularists have not made a better response to our appeal on behalf of this Fund. There is still time for the laggards to remit their donations.

The Conference Reception Committee will be pleased to meet any train on Saturday, June 1, if previous notice of arrival be given to the Secretary. They will wear the time-honored Bradlaugh colors, and will post themselves immediately under the large clock at each station.

The office and shop at 1 Stationer's Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, will be open until 2 p.m. Miss Vance will be at the Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, from 4 p.m. onwards. Light refreshments will be obtainable. There will be a general reception at 8 p.m. Delegates and visitors are again reminded not to leave sleeping arrangements until their arrival.

Friends arriving by either the Great Northern, St. Pancras, or Euston Station can take the Hammersmith Omnibus (red) from outside the station to the door of the Athenæum Hall (fare 1d.).

The oldest of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, the veteran Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn, hopes to be able to attend the N. S. S. Conference. Considering his great age, this is a wonderful proof of his interest in the movement, and it should shame a good many younger members into greater concern and activity.

Mr. Umpleby gave £20 towards the projected Twentieth Century Fund, which was resolved upon, on Mr. Foote's suggestion, at the 1899 Conference, but has had to remain in abeyance ever since, for various reasons, and some of them sufficiently obvious. To put the whole matter in a few words, the road has been blocked by other imperative business. But this Twentieth Century Fund has not been forgotten. Mr. Foote is drafting a circular about it, at the Executive's request, and it will be distributed by the date of this year's Conference.

Writing to us within the last few days, Mr. Umpleby says that if five Freethinkers will subscribe £100 each, or ten will subscribe £50 each, he will himself subscribe £100 or £50, and do it immediately. He says his offer is not to extend later than the Conference, but we have no doubt that he will give us a longer grace (seeing how busy we are) to see what we can do to secure his cheque.

The West Ham Branch is discontinuing the open-air meetings at Limehouse on Tuesday evenings in order not to clash with the indoor meetings at the Public Hall, Canning Town.

Members and friends of the Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch are earnestly requested to attend a special meeting this afternoon (May 27) at 3, when "Race Sunday's" propaganda and other important business will be dealt with.

We are asked to state that the Bethnal Green Branch will hold no meetings in Victoria Park on Whit-Sunday, as its members want to attend the N. S. S. Conference. Mr. Cohen was the lecturer in Victoria Park last Sunday. He had a very large and appreciative audience, and there was a capital sale of the *Freethinker*.

An important addition has been made this week to the list of "Cheap Books for Freethinkers" advertised on our fifteenth and sixteenth pages. We refer to the edition of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The limited number of copies of this capital bargain ought to be snapped up immediately. Gibbon should be in every Freethinker's library, for the greatest of historians was a pronounced sceptic. Byron described him as "sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer." These two volumes are handsome, and wonderfully cheap.

The *Bible Handbook*, which has been out of print for some time, is now being reprinted for the Freethought Publishing Company. The old stereotype plates are discarded, and the whole book is being reset afresh in beautiful clear type. All the references, too, are being rechecked. The new edition will be ready for publication in a month or so.

Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* are being bound up in a neat volume, with a title-page, a list of contents, and a new Preface. It was intended at one time to add two fresh numbers to the Series, but that idea has been abandoned, and the work must be regarded as complete in its present condition. By the way, it begins with "The Creation Story" in Genesis, and ends with "St. John's Nightmare," or the book of Revelation.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of special Executive meeting, held on Monday, May 14; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, J. Cooper, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. E. Sims, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, E. W. Quay, C. Watts, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. The Secretary reported that the Secular Society, Limited, had paid £15 to the N. S. S. Treasurer for secretarial work performed for it by the N. S. S. Secretary.

The notices of motion for the Agenda (already printed) were then discussed, and remitted to the Agenda Committee; and the Secretary was instructed to write to those Vice-Presidents who had not made attendances this year, and to inquire if they would be able to attend the Society's meetings in future.

The meeting then adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

Failsworth Sunday School.

THE opening of the new "wing" of the Failsworth Secular Sunday School was a great success. A goodly number of Secularists were present, including Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, of Leicester, Mr. F. J. Gould, Mr. Larner Sugden, and Mr. T. H. Crumpsall. Letters of apology for unavoidable absence were read from Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. F. Smallman. Mr. Gimson was presented with a silver key in unlocking the door of the new premises. He said that his father had laid the foundation stone of the School twenty years ago, and the silver trowel presented on that occasion was still highly treasured by the speaker, who would also prize the silver key. He congratulated the conductors of the School on the progress made in that twenty years, and hoped that another twenty years would witness still greater developments. Afterwards more than 250 persons sat down to tea, Charles Watts being then present. On the following day (Sunday) Mr. Watts delivered two lectures in the hall to large and appreciative audiences. During the two days the collections realised £37. Assistance was rendered by the Failsworth String Band and the School Choir, under the able leadership of Mr. Alfred Warren. We may add that the School alterations involve a cost of £900, and £400 has already been subscribed. It is to be hoped that the balance of £500 will be met by contributions from those who appreciate the valuable work done at the School.

Woman and Modern Religion.

HER DEBASEMENT UNDER JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

(Concluded from page 310.)

SOMETIME the philosopher of history will write what has never yet been written—namely, the procuring spirit, the efficient cause of degradation, of intellectual stupor, of the vast sway of superstition and the prevalence of vice and crime that characterised the Middle Ages. There intervened a period of a thousand years that has never been paralleled in the history of mankind for its debauchery, its superstition, its intellectual vagaries, its frightful and nameless criminal practices. What brought that blot upon the history of the world was the destruction of the equilibrium of the two forces, masculine and feminine. When the Christian Church degraded woman; when it banished her from the priesthood; when it put into form and symbol, into ceremony and rites, the picturesque and dramatic belief that in her was the original, inherent guilt—it opened the sluice-ways of historic fields for every kind of injustice and crime; it turned back the day and made possible that unspeakable night of a thousand years; it degraded man; it degraded religion; it brought all that was high and holy into infamy and disrepute. The priests did not marry. They went away into ascetic lives to escape the contamination of woman, and it is a matter of record by both Draper and Lecky that concubinage and prostitution, illegitimacy and nameless crimes, prevailed with a wickedness and intensity that have never been equalled in any other period of the world. It is a matter of record that one of the Popes of Rome built a magnificent palace and dedicated it to illicit pleasures. It is a matter of record that the poor peasants, the farmers of one of the English boroughs, when a priest was sent to them, came together, and, for the protection of their own wives and daughters, refused, in the right of fathers and husbands, to permit the priest to dwell in the parish unless he provided for himself a concubine.

Woman in the present time bears the result of the old tradition of her inferiority. It is only within a few years that she has been recognised as possessing any right in the Churches. Woman supports the Church to be robbed by it; maintains the ministers to be insulted by them—insulted, understand me, by the theology they accept and the doctrines they continue to promulgate. There is, perhaps, no one influence that has ever existed that has been so potent to debase woman in her own estimation as the auricular confession. To that latticed orifice the mother, the wife, the young girl, must put her lips and into the ears of a man tell the story of her inmost soul. Age after age that continues, and the poor woman has become the abject slave to religion without the power to resist. If there is to be an auricular confession, if women are to tell into the ears of their confessor their inmost lives, then in the name of God, in the name of decency, in the name of justice, in the name of religion, let there be women priests.

Until within a few years woman could not enter the pulpit. This has changed rapidly within the last decade; but for hundreds and hundreds of years it would have been a great scandal if woman had attempted to speak in the Churches. She is not even yet permitted to go as a delegate to some of the conferences or conventions. Her business is to stay at home and cook dinners, to raise the minister's salary, and have bazaars and suppers to pay the choir; but when it comes to the honor and dignity of representing the Church in the capacity of a delegate she is ineligible because of her sex. Women may stay at home and embroider slippers for the minister, but they cannot accept any honor or dignity at the hands of the Church. Woman may wash with her tears the feet of the masculine Church and masculine God, and wipe them with the hairs of her head; she may break with sad and loving hands the alabaster box to anoint him for his death; but a man will stand behind the altar and draw a line about its sanctity across which woman may not pass. Such has been the influence of religion, of theology. Its baneful potency has reached all the departments of human life. Until within a few years woman had no existence whatever in the eyes of the law. The moment she became a wife

she became a nonentity, and even at this present time only one-ninth of the States of this Union have laws partly recognising her freedom and her equality.

The popular reforms, the agitations, take, as I view them, special phases. Some plead for the extension of the franchise; some plead for the justice that should come to women employees, for the same labor the same wages that men receive; some plead for other things; but all of these are incidental questions to the one great question—a question that must be settled some time, gentlemen, by men. It is simply a question of the recognition of the absolute equality of the two sexes. There can be no great and just civilisation, there can be no just and humane laws, there can be no extended and worthy progress, as long as men grow up having within their minds and hearts the possibility of looking upon woman as an inferior being. It is not the question of this reform or that. It is a question of moral sentiment, the uplift of the ideal, the illuminating and informing of the conscience, and then all these incidental and auxiliary questions will settle themselves. Think of the pathos, of the injustice, of the sadness, of the shame of having a well-defined class of outcast women, and not a hint of a class of outcast men. How did it ever happen that there was a double standard of morality for society? It happened because men have come across the centuries worshipping a masculine God. It came because in Eden there stood a masculine Creator without the first throb of sympathy for the feminine part of this world. It came because in all these years man—egotistical, tyrannical man—has assumed the absolute control of the conscience and the mind of woman. The double standard of morality is traceable for its origin directly to the Bible and to Christian theology. There never can be justice in the relations of men, there never can be humanity, equality, and freedom, until we look up to God, men and women; and look into the skies and worship a being whom we would not loathe upon the earth.

It is a question, I say, of education, of the uplift of the moral ideal. The time will come—I hope it will come while we live—when we men shall stop and reflect what are we that we assume or have assumed the exclusive right in anything that concerns both, and the woman more than the man. What are we that we shall make war? If soldiers are to be called; if sons and husbands and lovers are to be armed and are to go out to death, it ought not to be at the will or behest of men, but at that of mothers and wives and sweethearts. What are we that we assume to make laws that concern us both alike, and concede to woman no right to a voice in determining what they should be?

No man can be great at heart or noble, no man can be worthy the name of man, who does not respect his mother and all womanhood as at least equal with himself. When I think of this human life of ours, the winding paths of pain, the shadowed ways of suffering, of agony, and of tears; when I think of all the burdens that are laid upon mankind, the heaviest bends down the shoulders of her who is mother of the world; when I remember how all we are we owe to her, how in the glad and happy time she sang as she rocked our cradle, knitting or mending or sewing while under the inspiration of a chaste and holy love; when I remember how, in the wayward and unthinking years of childhood and youth, it was the mother whose love was never overtaxed, it was the mother whose arms were ever open with forgiveness in her heart; when I remember how she toiled and toiled that we might have a little better chance in this world than had come to her; when I remember how she grew old and white-haired and wrinkled and wan and feeble with the patient and uncomplaining toil of many years, and how we folded at last her cold hands in peace across the loving breast; how the smile, even after death's cold touch, illuminated her face like a halo from the home of God; when I remember the mother, I can worship the best by paying the homage of my honor, my respect, and my love to the motherhood of this world.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

J. E. ROBERTS.

"O mummy, doesn't it smell solemn!" was a little girl's remark on entering a ritualist church where incense was burnt.

Negro Preachers and Their Work.

"BISHOP" HANDY, the dark and venerable head of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Virginia, created a sensation at the conference the other day. He arose and in a tremulous voice announced that he had received letters making grave charges against some of the ebon members then on the floor. These letters accused the guilty mokes of drinking nigger-gin, failing to pay their debts on the seldom occasions when they were able to obtain credit, raiding the feathered property of white folks in the dark of the moon, and zealously chasing various and sundry sisters to a standstill. A committee of investigation has been appointed, and it has not reported as yet, probably for the reason that the members of the committee have themselves bumped up against some gin and sisters.

The incident is by no means abnormal. The average negro preacher is a preacher only because he has greater cunning and greater gift of gab than his fellows, and is too lazy to work. He has no education, and even less morals than the usual darkey. In addition to his appetite for liquor and his lusts of the flesh, he is often a mischief-maker, and keeps his parishioners in continual ferment, when, if left alone, they would be quiet enough. Most of the black uprisings in the South have been fomented by negro preachers, who are generally smart enough to be miles away when the trouble occurs. The belief in many negro skulls that the black is several degrees better than the white is largely due to the assurances of their preachers. Many of the criminal assaults upon Southern white women are traceable to the teachings of these greasy, indolent, vociferous mal-odorous nuisances.

It is a singular thing, however, that when the white-headed bell-wether of the Virginia flock of rascals made his announcement to the conference the reporter for the Associated Press deemed it of sufficient importance to wire it all over the country. The information that "Bishop" Handy had received the accusatory letters, and that an ecclesiastical scandal was threatened, was gravely printed in one hundred northern and eastern papers. It goes to show that it is impossible to disassociate the northern mind from the idea that these bellowing frauds are really educated and regularly ordained ministers, leading godly lives and doing their best to save the souls and cleanse the minds of their congregations.

It would be better for the South, and very much better for the negro race in America, if every black preacher below the Mason and Dixon line were first soundly whipped and then placed at the handles of a plough. Not in ten instances in a hundred do they do any good at all. In seventy-five instances in a hundred they are productive of positive harm, and the extent of this harm depends entirely upon the number and savagery of their congregations. Negroes, of course, should be permitted to have ministers if they want them, but the executive officers of the state should insist that these ministers be of good character, and that they possess some genuine qualifications. As matters stand just now, any buck in any part of the South, feeling a desire to talk for a living, announces that he has got a call, and forthwith commences to expand a Bible which, in many cases, he cannot read, and to stir discontent and overt crime among his hearers. In fifty per cent. of Southern lynchings the negro preacher has been the inciting cause of the victim's crime, and in these cases it would be a wiser and more just thing if the preacher were hanged along with the poor savage whom his inflammatory language has led to death. In reconstruction days, and for a long while after, most of the trouble experienced by the whites in attempting to govern came from the preachers. Things have got better of late years, but still the fat, indolent, bullet-headed preacher shouts in plantation corners or in little secluded "Tabernacles," and still outrage and swill punishment result from it.

As for the formality of the charges against the Virginia crap-shooters in cheap broadcloth, it is funny. He is a very exceptional negro-minister who will not get drunk if he has the chance, and will not steal if he thinks that detection is unlikely. As for sexual morality, they haven't any. They harry the sisters as a hen-hawk harries chickens. Privileges of this kind are among the main inducements to the healthy buck to drop the hoe and "talk de word o' Gawd."

—*Brann's Iconoclast*.

Stand not aloof nor apart,
Plunge in the thick of the fight;
There in the street and the mart,
That is the place to do right.
Not in some cloister or cave,
Not in some kingdom above,
Here, on this side of the grave,
Here should we labor and love.

—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*.

Correspondence.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I am sure we are all grateful to Mr. Ball for his interesting and improving sermon, which I shall always treasure; but perhaps I may be permitted to point out a few misconceptions into which he has unwittingly fallen.

In the first place, my remarks upon the words "justice" and "morality" were not animated by unfairness, but by charity. Mr. Gould started with the assertion that words changed their signification in the course of their history; but his illustrations were most unfortunate, for he pitched upon some words which have not changed their signification. Instead of seizing upon this slip in any controversial spirit, I merely threw out a very broad hint that there was something wrong in the statement. This hint, however, was lost upon Mr. Ball, for he proceeds to reiterate more emphatically than Mr. Gould that "justice" and "morality" have changed their meanings. My classical attainments are slight, but I am under the impression that the Latin *justitia* (for example) meant exactly the same thing as the English "justice." If I am wrong, I am open to correction. What seems to be in Mr. Ball's mind is, that there are a few minor matters which were once considered just and moral, but are now thought to be the opposite. A little reflection, however, will show that this by no means implies that the fundamental abstract ideas, justice and morality, have been modified.

It is well known that some words have changed their meanings in the course of ages, but this fact does not give anyone licence to alter the meaning of any particular word to suit his own particular fancy. If it did, then our speech would speedily resemble the "language which was vouchsafed to man to conceal his real thoughts."

My inherent Philistinism prevents my perceiving the beauty of the phrase, "Religion of Humanity," as I fail to see any necessity for worshipping an abstract idea.

"The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone," but the European in his enlightenment bows down to a printed word.

St. James said that the proper way of showing faith and worship was by visiting orphans and widows in their afflictions, and preserving oneself unspotted from the Cosmos. But it is evident that that was not the recognised meaning of *Theskeia*, for we have only to turn to any other passage of the New Testament in which the word is used to see that St. James's definition is impossible. Thus Acts xxvi. 5: "After the strictest sect of our visiting orphans and widows in their affliction, I lived a Pharisee." If religion really consisted in "alleviating human suffering," no one would have any objection to it; but, as a matter of fact, it conveys no such idea; and when people sought to express this idea they were forced to find an entirely different word—namely, "philanthropy."

Mr. Gould assures us that this Transcendental Religion (or Objectionable Religion) consists of loyalty, consistency, high purpose, gentlemanliness, honorable temper, ethical straightforwardness, and devotion to an ideal. Mr. Ball, on the other hand, assures us that the same thing really means moral emotion, earnestness, benevolence, and the quality of being upright in one's dealings. It would therefore appear that neither of them has any clear or definite idea in the matter.

For my own part, I am not prepared to endorse the view that all "religious" wars, murders, persecutions, and massacres were undertaken in a spirit of pure and disinterested benevolence; or that when "religious" persons tell lies about infidels, they are actuated by an exalted love of truth; or that Catholics and Protestants cut one another's throats for centuries with the sole idea of improving one another's morals.

There is no objection to anyone using a word in more than one sense, provided that these are legitimate senses; but the question now at issue is whether it is allowable to use a word in an unusual and false sense. In fact, the discussion is neither more nor less than a debate on the proprieties of the English language; and it is in sorrow, not in anger, that we are compelled to avow ourselves at variance with such admired and respected colleagues as Mr. Gould and Mr. Ball.

CHILPERIC.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I must emphatically demur to Chilperic's rash statement that "As Mr. Gould does not recognise any deities, he has nothing to have faith in, and nothing to worship." Such assertions play into the hands of the enemy by supporting the slanders with which he assails our party. Faith (according to Chambers's and other dictionaries) is trust, confidence, belief, fidelity, honesty, etc., and is not necessarily dependent on theology. Many Atheists, myself included, have very strong faith in the principles of Secularism, and in many persons (as in Lord Roberts, for example), and in truths of many kinds. "Objectionable" as our words may be to

Chilperic, we even venture to hope that he will forgive us when we protest that we have faith in his articles and in his own sincerity and veracity. Possibly, however, we might console him to some extent by confessing that we have "no faith" in some of the remarks in his controversial letters against the use of words made objectionable in his eyes by theological associations.

As to "nothing to worship," surely the strictest of Atheists is not in the least debarred from a little "hero-worship," or even from a great deal, if he is so inclined. Why insist on narrow limitations of the use of popular words expressing feelings of very varying degrees of strength and complexity? Emotion is not mathematics. The poetry of life and language is not bound by cast-iron rules. The prayer-book itself makes the bridegroom say that he worships the bride, just as he may himself perhaps tell her that he adores her. Worship is but *worth-ship*, respect, esteem, honor, usually of course in an intensified degree; and we are not bound to submit to the exclusive appropriation of the word to theological purposes. Intense feelings of esteem, reverence, admiration, and wonder may well and properly express themselves as "worship" of the admired and revered object.

As to religion being "a system of faith and worship," this is only one of the meanings allotted to the word in dictionaries. When Chilperic himself treats religion as a "system" and as a "subjective" state he commits himself, without knowing it, to two distinct meanings. One dictionary gives as many as seven different definitions or significations. The last of the seven meanings given in the *Century Dictionary*, and illustrated by a quotation from Shakespeare (*As You Like It*, iv., 1, 201), is "sense of obligation; conscientiousness; sense of duty"—in addition to which seventh meaning we are afterwards referred to the "Religion of Humanity" in connection with the "positive" philosophy.

The higher religions, which have conquered other religions by survival of the fittest, are moral religions. They have succeeded because they have made morality an important part of their system of faith and morals. Johnson, who was a sincere Christian, says in his dictionary that religion is "Virtue, as founded upon reverence of God, and expectation of future rewards and punishments." The very derivation of "religion" suggests that the word arose to signify the utilization of superstitious feelings and beliefs for social or moral purposes. Latimer, in his sermons, following St. James, says: "Religion, pure religion, I say, standeth not in wearing of a monk's cowl, but in righteousness, justice, and well-doing." It is beyond dispute that an enormous number of people have regarded ethics as an all-essential part of religion; else, why the importance attached to the Ten Commandments and the injunction to love one's neighbor as oneself? Yet Chilperic cannot admit that the word "religion" has, or ever did have, "any ethical sense or meaning."

He objects that "No standard English writer has used the word religion ethically, except with the implied assumption that ethics are bound up with the recognition of a deity." Many of us regard Matthew Arnold as a standard writer, and he wrote a book entitled *Literature and Dogma*, in which he maintained that religion was morality touched with emotion. The *Century Dictionary* quotes him as saying: "Religion, if we follow the intention of human thought and human language in the use of the word, is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling; the passage from morality to religion is made when to morality is applied emotion." Notwithstanding the adverse influence of the superstition of the past, I believe that a far better array of quotations from standard writers could be found in support of a mainly, or even purely, ethical or non-theological use of the word "religion" than in support of our own specialised use of the word "secular" and its derivatives.

Evolution of language proceeds in spite of protest. One might as well play Joshua, and order the sun to stand still, as expect such a word as "religion" to remain fixed for ever to one solitary meaning that happens to be preferred at one particular time. Language is more or less figurative, poetical, metaphorical, fluid, reaching out into vital developments and changes, without which the evolution of language, and of much else, would be seriously crippled.

If Chilperic has really kept his own rule of confining a word to a single well-defined use, I must warmly congratulate him (and also the readers of his instructive and interesting articles) on his resurrection from a sixth-century tomb, and also on the vast improvement in his tactics and pursuits since the time when, as King of Neustria, he murdered his wife in order to marry his mistress. For, of course, he has not been "hankering after other people's labels"—an "infraction of the Tenth Commandment" which he leaves to Mr. Gould.

W. P. BALL.

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, A. B. Moss, "The Gospel of Evolution."
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, G. Spiller, "Lay Down Your Arms."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, F. J. Gould, "Walt Whitman, Democrat and Poet."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack; 6.30, R. P. Edward.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mr. Calvert.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
KILBURN (corner of Glengal-road): 7.15, A lecture.
HAMMERSMITH (back of Lyric Theatre): 7.15, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen, "Atheism."
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A lecture.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, A lecture.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture; 7, C. Cohen. May 30, at 8.15, C. Cohen.
LIMEHOUSE (corner of Salmon's-lane): 11.30, A lecture.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen, "Bible and Civilisation."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11.15, Fred Hanks, "Was Christ a Practical Reformer?" Every Wednesday and Friday, at 8, H. Percy Ward.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday School; 7, Sunday School Anniversary. Cantata, "A Summer's Day." Infants' chorus, "Meadow Fairies." Vocal and Instrumental Solos, etc.
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Annual Business Meeting—election of office-bearers, etc. 6.30, Social Meeting in Commemoration of Mill and Owen.
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote—11, "Is Dr. Mivart in Hell?" 3, "After the War in South Africa?" 7, "Is there a God? An Answer to President Kruger's Question."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): W. Heaford—11 (if fine, near Monolith), "A Plea for Freethought"; 3, "The Limitations of God"; 7, "War, Religion, and Human Nature." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Conference Agenda.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—May 27, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park; e., Mile End. 30, Mile End. June 3, Conference. 10, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park; e., West Ham.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—June 3, Conference; 10, m., Mile End; 17, m., Limehouse; e., Stratford; 24, m., Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye. July 1, N.S.S. Excursion. 15, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park; 22, Northampton; e., Stratford.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—May 27, Northampton. June 10, Birmingham. 17, Northampton. July 1, Birmingham. 15, Northampton. 22, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion street, S.E.—May 27, m., Westminster.

R. P. EDWARDS, 48 Woodstock-road, Shepherd's Bush.—May 27, m., Hyde Park; a., Peckham Rye; e., Brockwell Park.

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