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THE

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Breaking China.

THERE are two great missionary religions—Mohammedanism and Christianity. Both have the doctrine of exclusive salvation, both insist on the absolute necessity of true faith, both are proselytising as well as bigoted, and both have been spread very greatly by the sword. On the continent of Africa these two religions come into contact and rivalry. The Christian missionaries make but little progress. For the most part they are obviously carrying on salvation as a business, and trying to obtain converts as a dividend on the investment of their supporters. The Mohammedan missionaries, however, are far more successful. Not only do they preach a simpler doctrine, but they go to work with great disinterestedness. It is they, and not the Christian missionaries, who carry neither scrip nor purse. They live almost entirely on alms and hospitality, and they make a great impression on the dusky Africans, who are not such fools but they can tell the difference between an apostle and an adventurer.

Christianity, as a missionary religion, has the warrant of its founder. "Go ye into all the world," he said, "and preach the gospel to every creature." This was a very large order, and it has not yet been executed. The real truth is that the missionaries of Christ do not like to operate very far from their base of supplies. They also like to be pretty near protection in case of necessity. What they do is to go just a little ahead of the political line of their employers. Still, they frequently get into trouble, and those who come to get them out of it generally effect a settlement in the locality. Thus the missionaries are advance agents of commercialism and imperialism.

We are quite unable to understand what right these missionaries have to special protection. They travel for Christ, and he should rescue them from danger. Moreover, if they are murdered they are lucky; for their Master said that it was a blessed thing to be persecuted in his name, and all denominations hold that a martyr is sure of heaven. Besides, these missionaries leave behind them in their own country, at least in England, laws which render sceptics liable to imprisonment for criticising the Christian faith too severely; what right, then, have they to cry out that they are persecuted and oppressed when they make themselves detested by flouting the religion of other people in strange countries, where they were not invited, where they are not even welcome, and where at the utmost they are only guests and not citizens?

Since the Western Powers—England and France particularly—forced themselves upon China, there has been extensive missionarying in that part of the world. The China Inland Mission alone has an income of more than £50,000 a year. True, there was a decrease last year of £8,381, but that may be owing to the war subscriptions. This Society keeps 752 missionaries going in China, with a very poor record of success. All the lot of them have baptised only 1,194 heathen in one year; indeed, 75 stations out of 114 report no baptisms at all. Every convert thus cost over £43, and if the whole population of China is to be converted at that rate Christendom will be bankrupt in the process. But this is only one of the soul-saving agencies at work amongst the Celestials. Just as all the Christian Powers have a covetous eye upon China's resources, so the missionaries of all Christian Churches have a covetous eye upon the harvest of Chinese souls ready

for the reaping. So they rush in with their sickles, and do very well at the business; for their salaries are calculated on a Western basis, and China is a very cheap country to live in, which leaves a fine margin for saving and remitting to England.

Englishmen abroad do not err on the side of modesty, and English missionaries have a peculiarly bad reputation in this respect. Orientals are great sticklers for etiquette, partly because their whole life is so regulated by custom. Now there is remarkably little etiquette about the average English missionary. He takes with him, not only the pride of his nationality, but the special pride of his religion. He is absolutely right, and the "heathen" are absolutely wrong; moreover, they are wretched idolaters, and their different social regulations are considered as positive wickedness. Hence the missionary too often gives himself pharisaic airs, in addition to his racial and religious arrogance. The result is that he generally makes himself disliked, and sometimes detested; and when the despised and insulted "heathen" get a good opportunity they are apt to go for him with considerable gusto.

It seems pretty certain that the missionaries are very near the bottom of most of the trouble in China. The Chinese have an old and solid civilisation; they are proud and exclusive; they have a general distrust of foreigners; and, unfortunately, this national feeling has been intensified by the way in which the "outer barbarians" have treated them during the last fifty years. But the missionaries appear to make little allowance for this very natural sentiment. They boldly affront the "prejudices" of the Chinese, with a full reliance on being backed up by the government of their own country whenever their reckless tactics cause a bother with the natives. It must also be recollected that European Powers have shown a keen business aptitude for making the most of these bothers between the natives and the missionaries. Emperor William, for instance, compounded very profitably for the murder of two German men of God. He obtained some twenty thousand pounds' compensation, and a good open port with a strip of Chinese territory. Is it any wonder, then, that the fanatical "Boxers," who represent the Chinese hatred of foreigners, make special attacks on the Christian missionaries, their stations, and their converts?

We are not justifying the excesses of these "Boxers." We are only explaining them. We suppose, as the *Star* puts it, that civilisation must be upheld—when it happens to be remote from South Africa. Anyhow, the European Powers are intervening. Thousands of British, Russian, French, German, and even American fighting men are making for Peking, where they go ostensibly to protect the lives and property of Europeans, but really to deal with the Chinese Empress and her government. Going to Peking and protecting the Europeans is the smallest part of this policy. The great question remains behind—What is to be done afterwards? Will the Powers agree on a positive as well as on a negative basis? Or will they fall foul of each other? Will Russia and Japan come to an open rupture? And will the other Powers take sides in the quarrel? Or will they agree to rule the country by an Emperor and a Ministry of their own appointment? In any case, it is sad to witness the break-up of an old civilisation, involving the welfare of more than a fourth of the whole human race. Perhaps it must be so, but it is all the same a melancholy spectacle.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christian Falsehoods.

ONE of the greatest drawbacks of the age is a lack of harmony between profession and practice. Orthodox believers are constantly extolling the advantages of truth, while they indulge in the most glaring and unjustifiable falsehoods. Shakespeare has said, "Tell the truth, and shame the devil"; but many professed Christians have not shown much alacrity in attempting to try the experiment upon his "Satanic Majesty." A prominent want of our time is a strict adherence to truth, the observance of which is necessary to the establishment and consolidation of confidence among the members of the human family. Falsehood is indulged in under different forms. There is deliberate lying, and there is the habit of deceit and perversion of facts. History and experience testify that a certain class of Christian exponents have been, and still are, guilty of both these evils. That this is a fact we shall demonstrate from the testimony of professed Christians, and thereby show the hollowness of the theological boast that the religion of the Bible is an inspirer of truth. It is not difficult to prove that the Bible itself favors the very opposite of truth. For instance, take the following: "Now, therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee" (1 Kings xxii. 23). "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" (Romans iii. 7).

Unfortunately there is no lack of historical confirmation of the allegation that Christianity has failed to inspire its believers with a desire to practise truth and other virtues. Mosheim, the Christian historian, tells us that in the fourth century "the Church was contaminated with shoals of profligate Christians," and that "even true Christians" were not innocent "in this matter." Salvian, who was a clergyman of the fifth century, writes: "With the exception of a very few who flee from vice, what is every Christian congregation but a sink of vices?" Dr. Dicks, a Christian authority, states that "slander, dishonesty, falsehood, and cheating are far from being uncommon among those who profess to be united in the bonds of a common Christianity." And Wesley, referring to "Bible-reading England," says: "Such a complication of villainies of every kind, considered with all their aggravations; such a scorn of whatever bears the face of virtue; such injustice, fraud, and falsehood; above all, such perjury and such a method of law, we may defy the whole world to produce." These, be it remembered, are descriptions of Christian conduct given by Christians themselves. We advise the reckless and uninformed speakers who hold forth in the parks on behalf of the so-called Christian Evidence Society to ponder well the above facts before they utter further nonsense about the unique beneficial influence of the Bible. We commend to the consideration of these wild, young theological enthusiasts the following recent words of an "Ex-Minister":—

"The highest honor we can pay to truth is to show our confidence in it, and our desire to have it sifted and analysed by how rough a process soever, as being well assured that it is that alone which can abide all tests, and which, like the genuine gold, will come out all the purer from the fiercer fire. While there are bad-hearted men in the world, and those who wish to make falsehood pass for truth, they will ever discover themselves and their counsels by their impatience of contradiction, their hatred of those who differ from them, their wish to suppress inquiry, and their bitter resentment when what they call truth has not been handled with the delicacy and niceness which truth demands."

Coming down to the present day, we find within the Church an utter disregard of truth, and also instances of conduct the most dishonorable. If any reader of this allegation doubt its accuracy, let him read two articles on "Some Clerical Vices," signed Martin West, which appeared in the *Church Gazette* of May 5 and 19. There the writer, who has been behind the scenes, gives his personal experience of the falsehood and deception indulged in by the clergy. Here are a few specimens of his indictment of the teachers of Christianity.

Alluding to a previous contribution of his, he writes:—

"In that article I ventured the opinion that the most prominent clerical vice in these times is cowardice, and plenty of people have let me know that they consider me very much mistaken. My critics are not at one among themselves, and the competition for the chief place in clerical viciousness is keen. Hypocrisy, untruthfulness, and time-serving are the favorites. Want of honor has been asserted to be worthy of the prize, pride has not lacked support, and even avarice has been suggested. One is amazed to find how vicious the clergy must really be.....It is notorious that cowards are usually liars; they are not sufficiently self-reliant to dare to speak the truth. I am bound to allow that two out of the three really colossal liars I have known in my time have been parsons. In one case I veritably believe that the gentleman in question was mentally incapable of speaking the truth, so gross and palpable were his lies.....I am bound to say that a long rural residence has shown me that one of the commonest complaints against the parish parson is that 'he is such a liar'.....A kind correspondent in the Eastern Counties tells me that the clergy from the Thames to the Humber are a bye-word and a scoffing. In nearly all the cases I have investigated the net result is that the parson is not sincere, that he is a time-server, and that, given sufficient *kudos*, he is anxious rather than otherwise to sell his friends. This is in effect a charge of dishonorable conduct. Honesty compels me to admit that in the course of a long and confiding life I have had a number of dirty tricks served on me, and in the serious cases all but one have been by a parson."

If a Freethinker had written the above, Christians would probably have doubted the accuracy of the statements; but the writer is a professed Christian, and in his articles he gives ample details in support of his allegations. Surely it is time that the moral teacher was substituted for the parson, and that truth and honesty took the place of theological falsehood and priestly deception.

But these Christians are not simply guilty of falsehoods themselves; they also teach that which is false. For example, to call the religion of Christ "the gospel of peace" is to proclaim that which we know to be false. Wherever Christianity has been supreme peace has been broken, and brute force has triumphed over all moral considerations. It has been aptly said: "The world has been devastated with sanguinary encounters, and the followers of Jesus have neither prevented those horrors nor done much to mitigate their evil effects upon mankind." This is not surprising when we remember that the Bible represents the Christian's wars as commanding the most brutal and unnecessary wars that ever devastated the human family. We read: "The Lord is a man of war." David exclaimed: "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." A curious occupation this for a God of peace! The supposed founder of Christianity never intended, if his words may be relied upon, to bring to the world a gospel of peace, for he distinctly said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." And yet Christians, in defiance of truth, allege that their faith is opposed to war. If this were so, it would prove how inconsistent the great bulk of professed believers are in supporting, as they do, the present lamentable conflict in South Africa. This war is carried on either in accordance with Christianity or in defiance of it. If the former, Christ's gospel is not one of peace; if the latter, his object to establish peace has been defeated. In either case we have had the sad spectacle of two opposing Christian armies slaughtering each other, and both appealing to their God in support of their work of blood, carnage, and desolation. If this is the result of two thousand years of Christianity, the sooner its reign is brought to an end the better for humanity.

It is also a positive falsehood to assert that we are indebted to the Christian faith for the abolition of the slavery, the establishment of hospitals, and help for the poor. Let any Christian reader of these lines deny this statement, and ample historical evidence shall be furnished to prove what we have here asserted. In the meantime we would ask, What hospitals, what colleges and universities, what system for the relief of the poor, and what measure for the abolition of slavery did Christ or his early followers supply? The orthodox religion is based upon falsehood, and is perpetuated by deceiving

the thoughtless and credulous portion of the community. The true remedy for this deplorable evil is the acquirement of knowledge, the exercise of reason, and the practical appreciation of the science of life.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Future of Religion.

(Concluded from page 355.)

WHEN from the belief in the existence of God we turn to the consideration of the belief in a future life, there are to be found exactly the same forces in operation. First of all there is the question of origin. And here the evidence is, if anything, stronger and clearer than in the last instance. To my mind, there cannot exist a shadow of a doubt, after a careful and impartial examination of the facts of the case, that the belief in a future life owes its origin to the mistaken notion of savages concerning the phenomena of dreams, swoons, catalepsy, etc. Dreaming that he sees people, the savage inevitably concludes that he has seen them; a conception of the nature of dreams that is present even in comparatively civilised records, such as the Bible or the Koran. That at death, which bears such a striking superficial resemblance to sleep, it should be assumed that this double, which formerly returned on the sleeper's awakening, should now have left it for an indefinite period, is a conclusion both natural and inevitable. It is a conclusion that is, at any rate, reached by all savages, and the universality of the belief in a future state of existence is only a proof that as the human mind is, generally speaking, everywhere alike, it has always drawn the same conclusion from the same premises.

We need not pause here to sketch the successive phases through which this belief passes. The custom of burying food or weapons with the dead, of burning a widow on the death of the husband, of slaughtering servants on the death of a chief, are all resultants from this primitive belief, whilst the ethical doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state is the simple transference of a growing social consciousness into the supposed future life. The facts supporting this view of the origin of the belief are too numerous to be overlooked, and too plain to be easily misunderstood. And when we have traced the beginning of the belief, we have, at the same time, indicated the certainty of its steady decay. A belief that owes its origin to ignorance must decline before the advance of knowledge, however much its dissolution may be retarded by artificial methods.

But as with the belief in God, so with the belief in a future life; long after its intellectual foundations have crumbled away it appeals to and receives support from the feelings it has fostered. In the face of trouble, of misfortune, of death, people need, we are assured, the support of some such belief as this. So far as the latter is concerned, I do not, for my own part, believe that death presents to the vast majority of people anything like the terrors theologians are in the habit of picturing. When the body is enfeebled by age or disease, or the mind exhausted by pain, as most generally is the case, death comes far more as a kindly nurse administering an opiate than as a brutal tyrant prepared to inflict unknown tortures. The common experience of all will confirm this much, although the interested activity of the priesthood working on the mind *in times of health* seeks to persuade us otherwise. People may talk of the death-bed necessity of such a belief while they are well, but when the end comes each one falls into the lap of death like a weary child into the arms of a nurse, filled with one longing—the longing for rest. And even if it were otherwise, what would it prove? Absolutely nothing. A little observation is enough to show that, in the long run, one's intellectual convictions and emotions match one another. A Christian finds the hope of personal immortality necessary to his peace of mind; a Buddhist regards the destruction of personality as the one belief that makes life endurable; while a Materialist is equally content to regard his personality as something springing from the transitory grouping of indestructible atoms which the shock of death will inevitably disperse. In each case there is an adaptation of feeling to conviction; these are, indeed,

not two distinct things, but two sides of the same thing. The mistake into which the Christian Theist falls is that of picturing himself with exactly the same feelings, but with an entirely different set of beliefs; an impossible condition of things.

But here, again, the process of social evolution has steadily undermined the strength of the belief in immortality. It was a profound observation of Feuerbach's that the joys of heaven were built up from the miseries of earth. Right through history the heaven that men have dreamed of has only been a transfigured earth—earth rid of all its impurities and filled with all that they desired most. While the outlook here was hopeless, while injustice was paramount and its removal seemed a matter of impossibility, little wonder that the place of redress was located in the shadow land beyond the grave. With the growth of scientific knowledge, with man finding the means of his own improvement placed within his own reach here, the necessity for a future life grew proportionately less; and thus the growth of society co-operating with the advance of scientific knowledge mutually strengthened each other, and reduced the belief to a mere speculation in which only a decreasing number have any real faith. Death has already ceased to be the determining factor in life that it was but a little while ago. The message of the Churches is rapidly altering from "Are you prepared for death?" to "Are you fully equipped and prepared for the battle of life?" and when the Churches begin to deliver their enemies' message, the end is surely approaching.

The third belief, that religion acts as a controlling and regulative force for good, is certainly not borne out by an appeal to the facts of human experience. It is one of the stock counts in the Christian indictment of non-Christian religions that they are responsible for some of the most brutal and revolting customs that exist. To a very large extent the indictment is sound, for, even though evolution might lead one to look for other causes besides religious beliefs, it is unquestionable that many of the revolting habits that accompany uncivilised life are moulded and perpetuated by man's constant fear of the supernatural, and the necessity of constantly securing the goodwill of the invisible beings by whom he imagines himself to be surrounded.

The only curious thing is that the Christian does not see that such charges as he brings against other religions apply with equal force to his own. Allowing for difference of time, place, and position in the scale of civilisation, no religion has been responsible for greater or worse crimes than has Christianity, or has proven a greater obstacle to the orderly development of civilisation. It took nearly a thousand years for the world to regain what it had lost by its earliest triumph, and the story of modern Europe is from one point of view a story of the struggle the world has waged against religious pretensions and priest-fed ignorance. The European countries where the Christian Churches are most powerful to-day are the places where civilisation struggles most desperately for existence; it is only where the competing forms of religious belief are sufficiently strong to neutralise each other's influence that secular civilisation is most advanced.

The fact is that such an argument as the one under consideration owes its apparent strength to a very common form of mental confusion. It is due to mistaking a mere historical association for a causal connection. Historically religious beliefs have exerted a powerful influence over moral and social regulations, and this mere association has led to the conviction that they were a vital part of a well-ordered society. Even to-day under the term "religion" there are grouped a number of customs and regulations that are in no exact sense religious. The emotions born of social aggregation, the different forms of social co-operation, the various relationships that are determined by the family and by society at large, are all loosely grouped under the one word "religion," with the result that people come to regard them as inseparable from religious beliefs. This, obviously, is by no means the case. There is not one of the essential functions of social life that could not go on as well in the absence of a belief in the supernatural as in its presence. Let any religious man seriously ask himself whether in the absence of his belief in the supernatural his conduct

towards, or his opinion of, his fellow creatures would undergo any alteration for the worse, and he will find himself able to give but one answer to the question. The relations of parent and child, of husband and wife, brother and sister, friend and friend, are clearly independent of any religious beliefs we may entertain; they are the relations based upon the solid facts of life here, and no speculations concerning a God or a hereafter can ever materially disturb them for any length of time.

It may, of course, be held that religious beliefs act as a deterrent to the wrong-doer—a kind of auxiliary to the police force, as volunteers serve as an auxiliary to the regular army; to which the plain answer is that the mere number of those who pass through a religious training, and yet figure in the criminal court, is a sufficient reply. I do not believe that religious beliefs have ever kept a man from doing a wrong action when he had resolved to commit it; while it is "writ large" on the face of history that they have been the most powerful factors in the misdirection of human energy.

And, whether it be regrettable or not, the plain fact is that religious influences are becoming weaker in all departments of human thought or of social activity. Science and philosophy have long ceased to take their marching orders from any of the Churches, or to fashion their conclusions in accordance with their dogmas. Ethics and psychology, so long the special domain of religious supremacy, are rapidly shaking themselves entirely free from the thralldom of their ancient mistress. In economics religion is a negligible quantity, and that which once gave laws to all is now content to follow and voice the teachings of sciences that it has found itself powerless to suppress. In brief, the principle of differentiation operates here as elsewhere. In early periods of human history the essential nature of religion is hidden, because it is closely bound up with the whole circle of human affairs. As development proceeds, one factor after another disengages itself from the general body, until, finally, religion stands alone, its real nature apparent to all, and with no useful function left for it in the circle of social life and duties.

True, the final stage of this process has not yet been reached, and its arrival may be retarded by a number of different agencies. So long as the maintenance of religious beliefs is the condition of the perpetuation of strong-vested interests, we may expect to find, and shall find, strenuous efforts being made for their continuance. But vested interests, be they ever so powerful, cannot maintain religious beliefs for ever in the face of the spread of more accurate knowledge and the growth of a more humanised society. Our chief consolation is that by the spread of saner knowledge concerning nature and man, and by the creation of institutions that are concrete examples of the power and dignity of human nature, we are destroying that ignorance and helplessness upon which religious beliefs are ultimately dependent for their existence.

C. COHEN.

Converting the Heathen.

THE *Church Gazette* appeals to the *Freethinker* on a question of taste which is also one of principle. It links the *Freethinker* in somewhat uncongenial companionship with a Ritualistic journal, and its object is apparently to play off both against a well-known Roman Catholic print. It says:—

"We should like to ask the *Freethinker* or the *Church Review* whether they would stoop to print the following war-whoop over the difficulties of a society which is doing very good and solid work:—

"It will be pleasant intelligence to all religious-minded people to hear that the Church Missionary Society is in 'a financial position which is sufficiently serious—the subscriptions have greatly fallen off.' Are Englishmen beginning to open both their eyes and their ears?"

"We believe neither of these journals would express anything but regret. These words are taken from the *Universe*, a journal which seems to reproduce all that is narrow and uncharitable in Romanism."

It is well that the *C. G.*, having addressed such a question to the *Freethinker*, immediately undertakes to furnish the reply. For was there ever an interrogation

so skilfully or so ingenuously worded? It seems to impel the expected reply, or, as an alternative, leaves the interrogated in an ungracious and unenviable position. If the *Freethinker* fails to disclaim what is necessarily its own sentiments, then it "stoops," and is no better than a "narrow and uncharitable" Romanist organ. The *C. G.* gives it up as being deficient in good taste and right feeling, is disappointed with it, and possibly will have no more to do with it. It may hereafter regard the *Freethinker* distantly and reproachfully as a journal from which it expected better things. And yet, even in order to secure the good opinion of the *C. G.*, how could we admit that the Church Missionary Society is "doing very good and solid work," and how could we regret that its subscriptions are diminishing? The observation of the *Universe* seems a just one, though probably dictated only by hatred of Protestantism. It would be equally just if applied to the foreign missions of the Romish Church. No doubt Englishmen are "beginning to open both their eyes and their ears" in regard to foreign missions as carried on by all the Churches. Slowly, though surely, they are coming to the recently-expressed opinion of the Countess of Warwick that the money would be far better expended at home.

It is but the other day that the Church Missionary Society held its May meeting. A careful perusal of the report of the proceedings does not disclose any reason why it should be treated with more consideration than any other missionary enterprise, except as regards the magnitude of its operations. It is true that it is in want of additional funds. Is there any religious organisation that is not? However much these agencies collect, they always want more, and the curious thing is that, somehow or other, they get it, which, unfortunately, cannot be said of organisations having Rationalistic aims. The subscribers to missions are assured that they are giving to the Lord, and probably they think they are making a good investment. Though the subscriptions to the Church Missionary Society have shown a falling off, the gross income of the Society for the year amounted to the very respectable sum of £404,905, including £32,883 in legacies, £80,619 taken from the Centenary Fund, and £20,611 in special funds. Omitting the two latter figures, an income of £303,675 was left as compared with £307,660 in 1898-99. The past year's expenditure was £367,268. So that the Society on current account has a deficit of some £63,500. But then it has a Centenary Fund and a Three-Years' Enterprise Fund amounting to £198,048, less minor amounts that have been drawn. What is there to wail about in this, or to justify the lament of the hon. sec. as to the "lukewarmness of the Church, as a body, concerning its missionary enterprise," which lukewarmness he thinks should be the subject of "humiliation"?

What, it may be asked, has the Society achieved with this very large expenditure? Well, it has effected 8,260 adult baptisms during the year. It has, of course, kept up its establishments—its mission stations for the natives previously converted; but during the twelve months it has only baptised 8,260 adults. And the Lord only knows how many of these are genuine, unbought conversions, and how many are likely, in future years, to hold good. If we want to know where the £367,268 has gone, we must look, in the first instance, to the army of missionaries engaged. The European missionaries alone number 1,235; and the native clergy and lay teachers 6,817; a total of 8,052. If the Society is of any service to the native populations, which is more than doubtful, its usefulness in finding paid employment for its missionaries in the field and its large staff at home is absolutely indisputable. No doubt, the laborer is worthy of his hire; but these laborers do not seem to do very much for their wage. Their failure is the more remarkable because they are always pretending that the work has the "special blessing of the Lord." Well, with an expenditure of £367,000 and the Almighty at the back of it, the results as set forth in the report are miserably insignificant. Obviously there is something radically wrong. Either the natives do not want the vaunted Gospel of Christ, preferring the faiths of their forefathers; or the activity of the missionaries undergoes some curious diminution when they have left Exeter Hall for the mission field.

With half that annual income, what could not Freethinkers achieve in winning men from superstition in this Christian country of ours—under the very shadows of its cathedrals and churches and chapels? It is no idle boast to say that the Freethought organisations thus supported could effect twenty, nay, fifty, times as many "conversions" as the Church Missionary Society can point to in any year of its existence. And they should be real, intelligent, permanent conversions, too—free from the imputation which rests upon so much of the so-called "work of salvation" abroad.

The Church Missionary Society, it is true, engages in medical and educational labors among the native populations. But that is a mere adjunct, and is "sicklied o'er" with the cast of theological teaching. That department of secular work is, and is meant to be, a mere bribe wherewith to catch converts, just as the tickets for coal, soup, and blankets are used by the Church in its missions at home. The real object of the Church Missionary Society is set forth in a resolution passed at its recent meeting, in which the "speedy evangelisation of the world before the coming of the Lord" is placed as the primary aim, and Christian people are asked to "pray that it may please God so abundantly to bestow on the native Churches the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they may not only maintain in truth and love the faith once delivered to the saints, but also may, with an earnest sense of their responsibilities to their own countrymen, proclaim the Gospel of his grace, and both by holiness of life and boldness of utterance may gather multitudes into the flock of Christ."

This is a very pious sentiment in the true spirit of Exeter Hall, but it gives rise to this reflection: Either God who is thus appealed to helps foreign missions, or he leaves them alone as being solely the work of man. If he does give help, then it is a pity he does not vouchsafe a little more of his Almighty power; and if he does not undertake to accord any assistance, then Christian appeals for it are idle. FRANCIS NEALE.

Teaching the French a Moral Lesson.

SOMETIMES foolish things are so funny that you are inclined to pardon the folly for the sake of the humor. In the category of such funny things may be included Mr. McKinley's order to close on Sundays the United States building at the Paris Exposition.

Sunday is the one great day for an exposition in France, as it was a great day in Chicago. Millions of people from all over the world will crowd to the fair every Sunday. They will find the United States building closed up, standing a foolish monument to American hypocrisy.

Some selected idiots urged upon Mr. McKinley that it was our duty to make an example even to France by closing the United States building on Sundays. Mr. McKinley, whose sense of the ridiculous equals that of a dog chasing his tail, orders the building to be closed accordingly. Even in the United States the stupidity which closes instructive resorts on Sunday is practically dead. It lingers here and there in spots. Apparently Mr. McKinley is one of the spots.

Since God Almighty leaves Niagara Falls open on Sunday, allows the sunsets to display themselves on Sunday, lets the rain fall on dry fields on Sunday, we should think that Mr. McKinley might allow the French to see inside of the United States building on Sunday.

We wish the French Government—as it has a perfect moral right to do—would demand the opening of our stupid building seven days in the week, and, in the event of a refusal, order it to be removed from the grounds, and put in the place of such a monument to stupidity some sensible structure that would be open all the time for the benefit of all visitors.

Is it not humiliating to think that, through his desire to curry favor with a small set of bigots, Mr. McKinley causes the people of the United States to be represented as idiots in the eyes of Europe?

—New York Journal.

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

Acid Drops.

WHEN General Baden-Powell started for South Africa he hoped they would "give him a tight corner," and he certainly got it. This feeling is common amongst born soldiers. The Rev. Dr. Newman Hall, in the course of his recent Merchants' Lecture, said that he remembered passing by the Wellington Barracks at the time of the Crimean War, and he heard one officer say to another, who had been ordered to the front, "What a lucky dog you are!" That was heroism, said the lecturer; the officer thought his companion lucky to have the chance of being wounded or slain for his country. And so it must be with the Christian, if called upon to suffer mentally and physically and to witness for Christ. No doubt. But how many Christians are "called upon" to do anything of the kind? Witnessing for Christ is one of the most lucrative businesses going. Dr. Newman Hall himself has done pretty well at it. He may have been ordered to the front, for all we know, but it has not been inconsistent, at least in his case, with a very respectable longevity.

Commandant Eloff, President Kruger's nephew, who was taken prisoner by General Baden-Powell at Mafeking, seems to have a good deal of human nature about him. He was deserted, during the attack on Mafeking, by a certain Field Cornet; and, on receiving a letter of sympathy from this gentleman after his capture, Eloff replied that he hoped the devil and his angels would torment him eternally, and that he and his would rot. When human nature is fortified by Bible reading, it comes out hot and strong on such occasions.

In *Pen Pictures of the War*, just published by Horace Marshall, there is a chapter on "Religion in the Camps," in which it is said: "The inefficiency of some of the regular Army chaplains may possibly be one reason why the War Office sanctions irregular assistants—to the no small indignation of the professionals." One of these professionals has written home complaining with bitter jealousy of the Salvationists, who, he says, "flood the place with tracts, and howl Moody and Sankey every night." How these Christians love one another!

One lesson of the present war in South Africa should be taken to heart by men (and women too) of all parties. Mr. Ernest Smith, the *Star* correspondent, says: "It is curious that one cannot keep 'Tommy' in good health when we give him a rest. Put him on to a heavy march, such as the one we have just accomplished between Bloemfontein and this place [Johannesburg], and he gets as hard as nails, and, though he seems to drag wearily along, he strikes clear of disease." Naturally. On forced marches the soldiers work hard on spare diet. They get a compulsory taste of exercise and temperance, which are together the golden rule of health. It is always better to wear out than to rust out. Besides, the former is an ever so much slower process. On the whole, it is very doubtful if anybody ever worked himself to death, as long as he was able to get a fair amount of sleep. Not work, but worry, is the fatal thing.

The flight of the Boers on the relief of Mafeking was so hurried that Commandant Snyman even left his Bible behind him. He *must* have been in a hurry.

The United Kingdom is the one civilized state in which marriage with a deceased wife's sister is illegal. This is owing to the action of the House of Lords, and the special action of the Bishops. These high and mighty censors of public morality have, however, been obliged to pass the Colonial Marriages Validity Bill, legalising such marriages when contracted in the colonies.

The Catholic reaction has spread to Belgium. As a result of the recent elections to the Chamber of Deputies, there are eighty-five Catholics, one Christian Democrat, thirty-three Liberals and Radicals, and thirty-three Socialists. The Catholics have thus a compact majority. Brussels itself has returned eight Catholics, as well as five Socialists, two Progressists, and three Liberals.

According to the Paris correspondent of the *New York Journal*, there is "a remarkable religious growth among the highest class of thinking Frenchmen, strongly contrasting with the atheistic conditions so long prevailing in France." Brunetière, Huysmans, and Bourget have given in their adherence to Roman Catholicism. Yes, but Zola and a host of other writers still stand by Freethought. France is undoubtedly suffering at present from a wave of reaction, but this will probably spend itself before very long, or else it will rouse the ardor and valor of the friends of progress, and prompt them to win another great victory for their principles.

"Bourget," according to the *Sunday Special*, "was born

and educated as a Catholic." But if he was *born* a Catholic, why did he require to be *educated* as a Catholic? The truth is that he was *not* born a Catholic. He was born, like every other baby, a nothingarian.

The Nonconformists are raising a fresh and vigorous protest against the Training College system, by which the Church of England holds an immense power over elementary education in Board as well as in Voluntary schools. Our contemporary, the *Daily News*, which is Nonconformist in its general policy, says that "The Church of England has learnt the value of the old Jesuit maxim of 'securing the children.'" Yes, and the Nonconformist Churches follow the same plan as well as they can. What is called "The Compromise," under which the Bible is read and expounded "undenominationaly" in Board schools, is simply a Nonconformist dodge. Lord Salisbury plainly told a Nonconformist deputation, in his cynical fashion, that he couldn't understand what they had to complain of, as it was Nonconformist religion that was taught in nearly all the rate-supported schools of this country. The deputation was much annoyed, but that is not uncommon when people hear an unpalatable truth.

The Society of Friends (Quakers) passed a minute at their annual meeting and forwarded it to Lord Salisbury. After expressing sorrow at the war in South Africa, they proceed to say that they "cannot but also grieve over the discredit brought upon the religion of Jesus Christ by warfare between those who name His name and seek Him as their Savior and example." That, indeed, is the pith of the whole matter. Britons and Boers are both Christians. There is very little fighting on this planet but Christians are in it.

The Co-operative Union Congress had a similar difficulty to the one which arose at the National Secular Society's Conference. The Independent Labor Party sprang a resolution upon the Congress about working-class representation in the House of Commons. Mr. G. J. Holyoake said he did not know what right the resolution had there. The Standing Order Committee ought not to have accepted it. Co-operators were neutral in politics and religion, and that had been their security. If the Independent Labor Party could carry a foreign resolution to-day, some other association would carry another foreign resolution to-morrow, and in the course of time co-operation would be forgotten. We quite agree with Mr. Holyoake, and are glad to see that the resolution was thrown out by an overwhelming majority—which probably included a good many who would have voted for it at another time and on a different occasion. The policy of the stalking-horse ought always to be treated with disdain.

Anti-Semitic disturbances have occurred at Konitz, in West Prussia, and the Jews' synagogue has been destroyed. Troops had to be sent to restore order. What a blessed thing this religion is, to be sure!

There can be no real self-government amongst people who are distracted and divided by religious differences, especially when these differences come in to aggravate other differences of race and language. The scandalous scene in the Austrian parliament had to be terminated by the Emperor's order for its prorogation. When the representatives of the people act like insane monkeys, the very safety of society is involved in strong personal government.

The Evangelical weekly called the *News* is very wroth with the *Times* and other newspapers for reporting nauseous divorce cases. In other columns it advocates the spreading of the Scriptures, sublimely oblivious of the fact that they contain gross obscenity which the *Times* would not dare to print. Truly, as the *News* observes, "it seems almost incredible that such folly should be exhibited by us to the world in this age of progress and common sense."

It was not a party of "bungs" or costers returning from Epsom races, but five members of a Bible students' mission returning from an outing at Macclesfield, who were overturned in their waggonette and injured the other day. None were killed—and that's where Providence came in. Better late than never.

The first sermon of Bishop Chavasse since his consecration was remarkable for its confession of Christian weakness and the Divine aloofness. "The nineteenth century," he said, "was drawing to a close with the vast majority of mankind unevangelised; for the Church, even in Christian countries, had failed to leaven the masses with the precepts of her Divine Founder." If this be so, the natural inquiry is, What is the Divine Founder doing all the time? What was the use of his coming down on earth and suffering on the Cross if myriads of the world's inhabitants are to go on living and dying without even so much as hearing of his name? This is really a very comic scheme of salvation.

The poor, hard-worked clergy! At a meeting of the Kingston and Surbiton Branch of the English Church Union it was stated that in the diocese of Canterbury was a clergyman who refused to hold a service on Sundays unless he was requisitioned by a certain number of his parishioners to do so, whilst in the Peterborough diocese there was a vicar who enjoyed himself on Sundays by watching parishioners attending services conducted at the village school by a layman.

Propos of this, we have the statement of Archdeacon Waugh, that in the diocese of Ripon there are three parishes with an endowment of £700 and two vicarage houses, and the population thus spiritually provided for reaches the enormous total of five hundred.

Once more the Great Yarmouth Race Committee, in making up its accounts, has voted substantial grants to various churches. The Parish Church Organ Fund receives £100, the new St. Thomas's Church £100, Breydon House (a Church institution) £50, and St. Peter's Church Restoration Fund and Gorleston Church Tower Restoration Fund £10 each. The *Christian World* remarks that it is incredible that any churches should be willing to receive shares of the profits of a great gambling carnival. But the *Christian World* ought to know the Established Church better by this time. It has no compunction in taking anything that it can get.

Old Dr. Ryle, ex-Bishop of Liverpool, died at Lowestoft on Sunday afternoon. His resignation was recent, and, although his age was very advanced, it was expected that his good constitution, and excellent retiring stipend, would enable him to last for a good many years. But you never can tell. In the midst of life we are in death, as the paradox goes. Anyhow, Bishop Ryle is dead, and has left his salary behind him. What we are puzzled about is this. During his lifetime he had three wives; will he have all three of them in heaven, or will he have to make a choice? In the latter case, what is to become of the other two? Will they be widows through all eternity, or will they get spliced to the spare husbands of wives who married two or three times on earth? This is a very perplexing problem, as Jesus Christ himself found on one occasion; and considering it too closely is likely to give one a headache, especially in this sudden hot weather; so we leave it to the clergy who still preach hell, and who are probably able (with the Lord's help) to stand headaches and heat better than we are.

Bishop Ryle was a fine old fossil. He had recently published some sermons delivered by him while Bishop of Liverpool. He says in one of them: "We do not often meet with men who deny the divinity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Ghost, or disbelieve the Bible, or doubt the existence of God, and so bring upon themselves swift destruction."

The *British Weekly* makes some pointed comments on this sermon. "What is meant," it asks, "in these days by disbelieving the Bible? It is not so long since Dr. Ryle would have said that to disbelieve the Bible was to dispute its verbal and literal inspiration. Whether he would say so now, when his own son, still an Evangelical, is a leader amongst the Higher Critics, we do not know. Facts like these, however, have to be deeply considered. Preachers may be quite sure that many of their hearers in all the churches are full of doubts and questionings and misgivings. They have often read plausible arguments for unbelief with which the preacher is unfamiliar."

The Rev. Mr. Sheldon's attempt to run an ideal newspaper for a week has inspired another editor, H. J. Feltus, of the Bloomington, Indiana, *Star*, to turn over the paper to the "printer's devil" to conduct the sheet as Satan would. In an editorial Mr. Feltus says: "The *Star* for Saturday will be a devil of a paper. No church notices, nor reading matter, nor advertisements of a religious nature will be received. We propose to let the devil have full sway!"

A question of conscience has been submitted to the editor of the *Methodist Times*, who is a great stickler for honesty when he is not fabricating tales about "converted" Atheists. A correspondent says he went as assistant to a grocer, "who is well known in the town as a Christian." He found, however, that he could not conscientiously work for him, as so much deception was practised in the shop. "For instance, if a lady asked for a ham at 8½d. per lb., I gave her exactly the same quality as if she had asked for one at 7½d. And, again, if a customer asked for 10d. butter, and the next customer asked for 11d., they were both served from the same cask. With bacon, one counter was 8½d. per lb. the best cuts, and another counter 9½d., and yet exactly the same piece and the same brand. After two days I mentioned it to my employer, but he could not see any wrong in it, as the customer was better pleased when she paid a better price. So I felt it my duty to leave, as I find this is a general thing in the grocery and

provision trade." The editor decides that it is "a dishonest practice."

The Higher Criticism is being discussed in the *United Presbyterian Magazine*. Mr. Norman Fraser, of Hamilton, finds that such criticism is helpful to faith in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, Dr. Whitelaw cannot understand how anyone can hold on more intelligently and firmly to Jesus as the Son of God whilst believing him to be mistaken about the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Flood, and about all that is said of Moses, Abraham, and David. At a public breakfast of the Scottish Church Society, Professor Cooper denounced the Higher Criticism as having "shaken the very foundations of the faith."

Here are the outlines of a fine allegorical picture in which Talmage might figure. They are sketched by himself in a sermon in which he says: "I put one foot on Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, and I put the other foot on Spencer's *Biology*, and then, holding in one hand the book of Moses, I see our Genesis, and, holding in the other hand the book of Revelation, I see our celestial arrival." Under Talmage's "beetle crushers" there is small chance for science.

Canon Christopher, rector of St. Aldate's, Oxford, is much concerned over the Ober-Ammergau Passion play. He is not sure that "the stark Atheism which openly defies God and the Lord Jesus Christ is not less objectionable than the making merchandise of the Savior's sufferings, and parodying them in order to add to the attractions of a continental tour." This is very fine as an outburst of pious indignation, but how can "stark Atheists" defy, openly or otherwise, that which they do not believe to exist? Where is there any instance of such an absurd defiance?

The *Times*, in its description of the Ober-Ammergau play, says: "If one strolls into the *Gastzimmer* of one of the inns of an evening, one may be surprised to discern, through the dense clouds of tobacco smoke, heads grouped around wooden tables covered with big *Seidel* of Bavarian beer. Yet, on the morrow, their owners are going to fill the parts of St. John, or St. Peter, or of Nicodemus, in the dramatic representation of the Passion of Christ."

What is there so incongruous in this, after all? Was it not made a matter of complaint against Christ that he consorted with wine-bibbers, or, as we should now say, pothouse company, and was he not most agreeable and accommodating amongst the drunken marriage guests at Cana?

The Rev. C. Stewart Thompson, writing home from India to the Church Missionary Society and describing the lamentable effects of the famine, exclaims: "Oh! how we are longing for rains!" No doubt; but why doesn't he pray for them? There is in his Book of Common Prayer a form of appeal to Almighty God for the fall of rain. Or, if he has prayed, what efficacy does there appear to be in that kind of supplication?

Mr. Richard Bagot, who contributes an article to the *National Review*, is described as "another promising candidate for excommunication." He has already received a warning from the Vatican upon the publication of some of his articles in *Il Popolo Romano*, but he does not hesitate to refer to "the extent to which the art of equivocation is practised at Rome," and to the "cynical falsity" of the Vatican. He further says that Romanism is not only making no progress in Great Britain and her colonies, but is losing ground.

"Christ's Temptation" is the subject of an article in the *Catholic*. The writer says that "modern examples" show a forty-days' fast to be "quite possible without any miracle." Yes, but not in the open air and under the conditions in which Jesus was placed. No doubt the writer knows this very well, but feels he cannot afford to say so. We fancy he is mistaken, though, in attempting to set aside the miraculous character of Christ's temptation. The reader may by-and-by be tempted to ask whether the Master was not helped out by a good supply of sandwiches—tinned stuffs not being then in the market.

Poor old Archbishop of Canterbury! His own salary is as large as ever, but he complains that, although the country is getting richer, "the money devoted to religious objects is less than it was years ago." Dr. Temple implores the nation to "spend a fair proportion" of its wealth on "the great cause of Christianity." But he does not state what is a fair proportion. Perhaps he would say "A tythe at least"—which would be a very pretty income for the Black Army, considering that the annual income of this nation is something like a thousand millions.

"Cantaur" was speaking at the annual meeting of the

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Last year this Society spent £13,000 more than it received, and the subscriptions were £3,500 less than they were half a century ago. This was naturally a very lamentable fact to the Archbishop, but we fancy the trouble will go on increasing. People are gradually discovering that there is no Christian knowledge to promote.

The porter at St. George's Workhouse, London, who, applying for another appointment, said he "could relieve the chaplain when on annual leave," had pretty accurately gauged the amount of ability required for the holy office. Probably the porter would have proved himself equally as effective as the salaried cleric. Certainly no great effort would have been needed. The porter's proposal contains the germ of an economic suggestion that ought to commend itself to Bumbledom. Why not merge the appointments in future, and employ "porter-chaplains"? The inmates wouldn't object; in fact, they would hail the amalgamation with delight if a part of the stipend saved were distributed to them in 'bacca and tea.

The tradesmen of Swansea, who have been annoyed by vexatious prosecutions for Sunday trading, are now taking retaliatory steps. They have applied for summonses against the Mayor and Corporation for employing men on Sundays, against a Councillor for being driven to chapel on Sunday, against a magistrate for allowing his men to work on Sundays, and against a minister for being driven to a wedding on a Sunday. This is a good way of showing the absurdity of Sabbatarian interference.

The postal authorities up till recently adopted the very commendable plan of allotting the Sunday work to employees who, having no conscientious scruples in the matter, were willing to undertake it. The number of volunteers having fallen off, the authorities have required certain junior men to take duty who entered the service on the express condition that they would be liable to give attendance on Sunday. Each man will be required to be in attendance on about one Sunday in six, but will be at liberty to find a substitute. This does not seem to be any very great hardship. Nevertheless, the postal employees have protested. But for the cheese-paring policy of the authorities, no trouble need have arisen. It would be easy enough to engage a sufficient number of supernumeraries to cover the work, and there are heaps of poor clerks and others in all the large towns who would be glad of the job.

The uncharitableness, not to say venom, introduced by Church people in the unedifying dispute over Ritualism has led to an outrage which all right-minded persons will agree is shameful in the extreme. The tombstone erected by Lord Halifax, the Ritualistic leader, in Hickleton Churchyard, over the grave of three of his sons has been defaced and mutilated, evidently by some Protestant fanatic. When this kind of thing can be perpetrated by one set of Christians upon another, it is surely a comfort and a distinction to be outside the pale of Christianity altogether.

An old beggar woman in Paris, named Marie Zeo, being a devout Catholic, was in the habit of fasting three times a week; was accustomed to pray kneeling in cold water; applied burning coals to her body, and lashed herself with a leathern thong covered with nails. She wore a hair shirt, and her body was covered with burns and wounds. She was sixty-two, and her death is attributed to her self-inflicted tortures. A cheerful kind of religion which could suggest and sanction such useless suffering, which falls little short of suicide!

It is a good thing that the Rev. Ernest James Augustus Fitzroy is a professing Christian, and was formerly vicar of St. Jude's, Liverpool. Had he been a professed Freethinker, we should never have heard the last of his delinquencies. Some time ago he stole a brother clergyman's portmanteau, and was committed for trial, but released on promising to enter the Church Army. Recently he tried to pass a worthless cheque in a public-house at St. Pancras, and for this offence is again committed for trial. When arrested, he admitted that this was only one of 120 similar cases of which he had been guilty. Fictitious cheques were found upon him. He lost his living at St. Jude's through intemperance.

A Brixton local preacher and chapel builder is under remand for defrauding the Works Department of the London County Council. He absconded, and then attempted to commit suicide.

Thomas Perkins, who has acted as sexton at various churches in Surrey and Lincolnshire, is charged at Northampton with stealing £6 from Kingsthorpe Church poor box. House-breaking tools were found in his possession. Similar offences in various parts of the country are alleged

against him. He says he forgives those who have been instrumental in his arrest—he is so happy.

A correspondent signing himself E. Scott in the *Yarmouth Mercury*, by way of reply to Mr. Headley, denies that St. Cyril of Alexandria had anything to do with the murder of Hypatia; indeed, he alleges that "St. Cyril deeply deplored the crime." His authority for these statements is not Gibbon, whom he sneers at, but "other historians." But he is careful not to name one of them. It will be time enough to answer his nonsense when he condescends to be specific.

Dr. Norman Macleod, the new Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, will have no "paltering" with the "essentials" of the Christian faith. "The preacher," he says, "who leaves his hearers in doubt as to whether he honestly believes, say, in the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, or in the historical truth of his resurrection from the dead, has no place in a Christian pulpit." We quite agree with him. But his protest will not prevent the spread of scepticism amongst the clergy. Call themselves Christians as they may, it is simply impossible for a considerable number of them to be Christians in the old sense of the word. Little by little, they are obliged to abandon the miraculous; and theology is minimised, ostensibly in the interest of ethics, but really in the interest of self-preservation.

"Some of our readers," the editor of the *Sunday Reader* says, "may ask whether the evil of Atheism is sufficiently widespread to create alarm amongst Christian people. If any of them have any doubts on this point, let them go to the public parks and see the large crowds which gather round an infidel speaker. That these are not attracted by mere curiosity is evident from the fact that they plainly show their sympathy with the speaker, and appear to thoroughly enjoy his coarse jests on holy subjects." But this is not all, nor even the worst, for "The circulation of infidel literature is unfortunately large, and this touches a larger and more intellectual class."

The editor of the *Sunday Reader* is evidently a more sensible and careful writer than the gentleman he has engaged to contribute a series of articles on "Infidelity and Agnosticism." Mr. Waldron airs his subtle wit as soon as possible by remarking of the National Secular Society that "its head is a Foote." We suppose this is a great effort on the part of the Christian humorist. He must have been nursing that colossal joke a long time to work it off so quickly in his second paragraph.

Mr. Waldron goes on to say that you may easily pick out the Atheists in a crowd by their faces, for the joy has gone out of their lives. Well, well! Were we not about right in saying beforehand that it did not matter very much what this Christian Evidencer might say? He will never pass for a genius until he gets to heaven. There would be no chance for him in the other place, which is known to be well stocked with wits and philosophers.

Sheriff Campbell, of Stornoway, has been passing some strong remarks on the custom of letting young people do their courting in bed. "Witnesses," he said, "took their places in the box with sanctimonious countenances, and, before taking the oath, assumed an attitude of prayer to Almighty God to help and guide them to bear faithful witness, and then, under the sanctity of that oath, went on to admit that in their own houses they allowed this custom, without taking any precautions or making the slightest protest or objection." He called upon all the Presbyteries in the island to war against "this phase of the social habits of the people," which was "a disgrace and a scandal." But what can we expect the Presbyteries to do? These religious bodies have always been fighting, in their own way, against "fornication." No success, however, has attended their efforts. The fact is, their hard, puritanic religion makes the lives of the people so mean and unlovely that they are forced to fly to carnal excitement in order to render their existence tolerable.

The Rev. H. R. White made an after-dinner speech at the annual feed of the Mars Lodge, R.A.O.B., at Shoeburyness. He pointed out that there were three hundred religious denominations in England, and said that if there was one clergyman attached to each there were three hundred ways to get to the better land. Here the Mayor interposed with a question. "Is that to be sold in plots?" he asked, amidst loud laughter. But the reverend gentleman went on describing the duties of a clergyman, one of which was "to baptise babies at both ends." We have heard that wheeze before, but did not expect to hear it from the mouth of a professional baptiser. It looks as though the dinner had taken effect.

Mr. Raymond Blathway interviewed a Black African Bishop, now in London, for the *Daily News*. Being asked how far down civilisation went in the mind of the native African, the Black Bishop replied as follows: "It depends upon the district. I, for instance, am a Yoruba native, as also was my predecessor, Bishop Crowther, the first Anglican native Bishop in Africa. Now we have had for centuries clear and distinct ideas of civilisation in the Yoruba country. Marriage is a recognised institution, although polygamy is allowed; there is no such thing as adultery, there is no illegitimacy. We have a great respect for authority and for age. Our law of inheritance gives the wife entire control of her own property and earnings, which on her death pass to her children. We have a regular system of government, a popular assembly of the people, declaring their own mind upon any important subject that may be before the Government. We had a regular Court of Divorce in the country; theft is punished with death and perpetual social disgrace to the thief's family. No respectable man would take a daughter from or give a daughter to that family; the same with suicide. This springs from their strong belief in the doctrine of heredity—a doctrine formulated not from science, but from experience. For this reason they are very strict in their marriage relations. Here you can marry first cousins; that would be unheard of in the Yoruba country. All these things will prove to you that already we have a system of civilisation, and so you see it would not do to graft your system wholesale upon ours."

It is evident, therefore, that the British missionaries have little to teach these negroes in the way of morality. Perhaps they have something to learn from them. We very much doubt if the Yoruba people will be improved by the Christian gentlemen from England who are so anxious about their immortal souls.

The Russian Church is reported to have made elaborate arrangements for excommunicating Count Leo Tolstoy. His offences are manifold. He does not believe in the Trinity, he speaks lightly and blasphemously of the mystery of the Incarnation, perverts the holy text of the Gospels, and mocks at the rites and sacraments of the Church. Worst of all, he calls the Church a human institution. Whoever says that is a deadly enemy of priestcraft. The theory of the Church is that it is ordained by God.

This is the *Anno Santo* (the Holy Year) with the Roman Catholic Church, and pilgrims are flocking to the Holy City. Ninety thousand of them visited Rome between Christmas and All Fools' Day, fifteen thousand of whom were foreigners. Half a million are expected before the year closes. And as they all leave a bit for the Pope, the holy man is in clover. A Belgian nobleman is reported to have given him 700,000 francs. A still larger sum was given by a wealthy Austrian pilgrim. Yes, the *Anno Santo* is working out extremely well for the Holy Father.

Life out of Christ is life in a cellar. So said the Rev. Professor Marcus Dods in a Presbyterian church at Edinburgh last Sunday. Bradlaugh and Ingersoll, therefore, lived subterranean lives—mean and miserable; while Professor Dods, we presume, lives well up on the third floor—near heaven. For our part, we should say that life out of Christ is more likely to take a man to a garret than a cellar. Opposition to the orthodox faith too often dooms a man to poverty as well as calumny.

Mr. C. W. Bowerman, Secretary of the London Society of Compositors, and Mr. James Sexton, Secretary of the National Union of Dock Laborers, are going to America with a gift of £4,000 for the founding of a Labor College over there in acknowledgment of the Ruskin Hall founded by Americans at Oxford. An excellent fraternal mission! But why on earth must they start with the blessing of the Bishop of London? Is that in recognition of the fact that religious journals are the worst sinners against Trade Union regulations as to the hours of work and the rate of wages?

The late Miss Mary Kingsley—a brave, bright woman—expressed as her last wish that her body should be buried at sea. The remains were, therefore, enclosed in a heavy coffin, and conveyed by a torpedo boat several miles off Cape Point, where they were sunk in the depths of the ocean. This was quite a poetic funeral, but we shudder to think of the lady's prospects when "the sea gives up her dead." That coffin was sure to burst, and the fishes have had a dinner before this. How, then, will the lady pull herself together again at the resurrection?

The rector of Ascot Heath shot himself in the mouth in his own house, and death was instantaneous. We hope this case will attract the attention of Dr. Talmage, who is now amongst us. According to that gentleman, it is the Atheists who are always rushing into suicides' graves.

N.B.

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To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Baltham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

JAMES FORBES.—You are mistaken. There are no two such chapters in the Bible. Perhaps you are referring to the close similarities between Kings and Chronicles.

W. COX.—See paragraph.

A. E. E.—Thanks. The mems. have proved useful.

JOHN MARTIN.—It is not possible to give you the right pronunciation of "Goethe" by print or writing. Ask a German, or an Englishman who knows how, to pronounce it in your hearing.

JAMES NEATE.—Much pleased to hear of the capital and successful meetings in Victoria Park.

T. SMITH.—Thanks. Hope to make use of it.

R. AXELLY.—Contents-sheet shall be sent to the newsagent. Accept our thanks.

SAMOTH.—(1) We cannot answer your question as yet *re* Ingersoll's works. The complete edition, which is being issued by the Ingersoll family, will run to some twelve large volumes. We understand, too, that this edition is to be copyrighted in England; and, in any case, the Freethought Publishing Company would not think of acting contrary to the family's wishes. Perhaps an arrangement might be made for publishing a special selection of Ingersoll's works in England. But the arrival of the American edition must first be awaited. (2) Pleased to have your congratulations on the other matter. (3) We shall hold your 2s. 6d. for the Symes Fund. But we are not inviting subscriptions just yet. We are asking Mr. Symes whether he will be able to visit England if the financial difficulty is surmounted. If he cannot, it is no use proceeding further. Several weeks will elapse, necessarily, before we hear from him.

G. ANDERSON.—We are obliged. See "Sugar Plums."

J. HUNTON.—The *Star's* quarrel with the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes does not interest us as editor of the *Freethinker*. It is a political quarrel.

CHILPERIC.—Your valued article is not in time for this week's issue, but will appear in our next.

R. DOWDING asks whether there is likely to be "any excursion amongst members of the N. S. S. to the Paris Exhibition." He and several others he knows think of taking the trip, and he believes it would be most enjoyable if a party could be made up, especially if they could get in touch with some of the Parisian Freethinkers. This correspondent thinks that a note in the *Freethinker* would elicit ideas on the subject.

G. J. WARREN sends us a cutting from the *East London Observer* giving a report of an address said to have been delivered by Dr. Mordaunt Sigismund in Regent's Park to "an audience chiefly consisting of individuals professing Atheism." This person referred to "infidels" as "fools," "hungry hounds," and "sharks." He said his sister had fallen into their hands, that they robbed her of her substance, and could scarcely await the moment of her departure before dividing the spoil. This pleasant speaker, with such a gift for accuracy, described himself as a Jew. Do any of our readers know anything about him?

E. EVELIN.—See reply to Samoth. We hold your 2s. for the Symes Fund. The documents you asked for have been forwarded. Pleased to hear you wish to join the Secular Society, Limited, and to take Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company.

R. C.—Glad to hear you so much enjoyed the Conference public meeting in the Queen's Hall. Your suggestions in regard to the *Freethinker* are worthy of consideration. We might have the paper folded, but the Index would involve much labor and a fair amount of expense. However, we shall see.

A. YARMOUTH friend, who was in court when the Rev. William Richmond, of Norwich, was fined for indecent conduct on the South Beach, says that the reverend blackguard several times begged the magistrate to be merciful in the Lord's name, and was particularly anxious to have the matter kept out of the newspapers. The case was quite unfit for publication, and the magistrates were merciful to his "grey hairs" in letting him off so easily.

W. HEAFORD.—Thanks for the enclosure. The matter will come before the next Executive meeting.

ESS JAY BEE.—Always pleased to hear from you. In our next.

H. LEES SUMNER.—Your letter has our attention, though we fancy your fears are exaggerated. Fresh arrangements are being made.

R. RHODES, the Chatham Branch delegate to the N. S. S. Conference, writes: "I wish you would convey through your journal the sincere thanks of this Branch, and of myself in particular, for the reception given to the provincial delegates. Knowing something of such work, I felt for the organisers in their arduous duties. Although a thorough Cockney myself, I confess to having seen more of London in one day (Whit-Monday) than I ever saw in any similar period of my life there. Everything was all that could be desired."

J. A. NOKES.—Your *Freethinker* subscription is handed to the Company's secretary. We are pleased to hear from so old a subscriber, and to know that you still enjoy reading this journal above all others.

CONFERENCE FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—R. Johnson, 4s.; M. Brown, 1s.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Two Worlds—Paisley Express—Sentinel—Gray's Gazette—Boston Investigator—Daily Express—Truth-seeker (New York)—Glasgow Herald—Yarmouth Mercury—Lucifer—Ethical World—Truthseeker (Bradford)—The Sunday Reader—La Raison—New York Journal—Western Morning News—Catholic.

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 3s. Special terms for repetitions.

Special.

OWING to the Whitsuntide holidays supervening, a great many of the new Prospectuses of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, which were inserted in the *Freethinker* a few weeks ago, got thrown aside or mislaid. We therefore print an Application Form for Shares in our advertisement columns for the sake of those who may want to have it handy. A large number of Secularists, who have not already done so, can afford to invest a little in this enterprise. All the preliminary difficulties—and they were very considerable—have been surmounted. The Company has settled down in its own premises, and the great thing to be done now is to develop the publishing business and extend the circulation of the *Freethinker*. To do this on really effective lines involves the command of ample resources. We do not start from zero, but from an advantageous point of the register, from which the ascent, under favorable conditions, is comparatively easy. What is sought is not gifts, but investments. Those who take up Shares have a proportionate control of the operations, and there is no reason in the world why they should not get a reasonable return upon their money. In any case, it seems the business of the whole party, and not of one or a few individuals, to find the means for properly carrying on the work of the party; and this Company is organised for the purpose of doing a work of the very highest importance. It is to be hoped, therefore, that all who are capable of assistance will lose no time in rendering it. Several persons have applied for Shares during the past few weeks, but the number is not quite satisfactory, considering the easy way in which the payment of the Shares is distributed. We beg the sleepy ones to wake up, and the tardy ones to bestir themselves. This is the affair of all who sincerely desire the success of the Freethought movement.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THE Athenæum Hall will be closed for the rest of the summer. There will be no lecture to-night (June 17). The weather is really too fine for indoor meetings, and the ventilation of the Athenæum Hall, depending largely upon temperature, does not work so well during the summer heat. London Freethinkers who occasionally visit this Hall are requested to note this announcement.

Arrangements are being made for a number of Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in London during July and August. Miss Vance is seeing to the business side of the enterprise, and Mr. Foote is exercising a general supervision, besides taking his share of the speaking. Detailed announcements will be made in due course.

The Annual Excursion of London Freethinkers, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, has long been fixed for the first Sunday in July. Metropolitan Branches all had good notice of this fixture, and some of them (at least) have arranged to drop their outdoor work on that day, in order to release their committees in particular as well as their members in general. Margate had the preference as the place of destination, and Mr. Munns kindly undertook to put his large room at the disposal of the excursionists for tea. But unfortunately the railway officials found out, after a lot of correspondence, that they could not start a special train at any time whatever between eight and ten. A special train has therefore been chartered for Brighton, the second place of choice. The tickets are only 3s. each, and half price (1s. 6d.) for children under twelve. A guarantee is given for a minimum of three hundred, but this number ought to be considerably exceeded.

The N. S. S. special train for Brighton is timed to start as follows:—London Bridge, 9.25; New Cross, 9.30; Victoria, 9.25; Clapham Junction, 9.30. This is a very convenient time for all concerned, except, perhaps, for a few who live in remote suburban parts. But of course it is impossible to suit everybody's convenience in so vast a place as London. The return from Brighton is timed for 8.10.

Mr. W. Heaford had a fine meeting in Victoria Park on Sunday evening, and the experiment will be continued, especially as more ladies attend the evening lectures. In the afternoon there was a little disturbance, but neither Mr. Heaford nor the Branch committee were put out of temper by it, for they know that Christians take a good deal of educating.

Mr. C. Cohen delivers his first evening lecture in Victoria Park this summer to-day (June 17) at 6.15. Local "saints" will please note. Mr. Cohen also lectures there in the afternoon at 3.15.

Baron Adolphe de Rothschild, of Paris, left nearly £800,000 in legacies. £20,000 goes in aid of poor Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, and Jewish rabbis. The testator hopes that this act of toleration will find imitators. Certainly it shows his own freedom from religious bigotry. But we think a great deal more of his more purely charitable bequests to hospitals, poor children, and ill-used animals. Very little is left to exclusively Jewish charities. Baron Rothschild's will is calculated to allay the passionate prejudice against the Jews which is being fomented by the Catholic Church for the most sinister political ends.

Mr. Justice Mathew deserves credit for calling attention, as he did before the Romilly Society, to the wicked ill-treatment of unconvicted prisoners in England. During 1898 no fewer than 513 accused persons were detained in prison for eight weeks before they were brought to trial, and as many as 86 were found to be innocent when they had an opportunity of meeting the charges against them. These innocent persons were locked up in a cell for twenty-three hours out of every twenty-four, and, besides being tortured in various ways, were placed at a great disadvantage in preparing for their defence. Such treatment of unconvicted prisoners is a sheer relic of barbarism. Bail ought to be allowed in every possible case. Moreover, the persons under arrest should be allowed all freedom consistent with their safe custody.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured to a good audience at Mile End-road on Sunday. He was opposed by a prophet who pronounced the doom of London, amidst general laughter. Mr. Moss is contributing a series of Freethought letters to a South London paper.

The Liverpool Branch picnic is fixed for July 22. Waggonettes will run to Aughton and Ormskirk. The tickets are 3s. 6d. each. Friends wishing to join the party should apply early to Mr. Hammond, 26 Sandheys-street, or to Mr. W. Cox, secretary, 1 Dove-road, Walton.

The Co-operative Congress has resolved that £10,000 shall be spent on the memorial to Robert Owen at Newtown. It is to take the form of a public library, to include books of reference relating to questions of social reform; connected with which is to be a hostel for students of sociology. Our readers scarcely need to be reminded that Robert Owen was a Freethinker as well as a Humanitarian.

"Why Won't Parsons Debate?" is still being debated in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*. Christians and Freethinkers are both having a fair hearing. But the parsons lie low. A wag at our elbow says that when they don't lie low they lie high.

The *Times* has printed the following extract from a letter written by the late Professor Mivart not long before his death:—"The various articles and few books I have written have always represented my convictions at the time as accurately as I could represent them. My last work, *The Groundwork of Science* (John Murray), has undergone no ecclesiastical supervision, my convictions when I wrote it being almost fully what they now are. I have no more leaning to Atheism or Agnosticism now than I ever had; but the inscrutable, incomprehensible energy pervading the universe, and (as it seems to me) disclosed by science, differs profoundly, as I read nature, from the God worshipped by Christians."

Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, asks us to remind Branches that it is now their duty to appoint their corresponding secretaries and delegates to the Executive. This should be done forthwith, as an Executive meeting will be held during the last week in June.

"George Sand."

"I claim no place in the world of letters; I am, and will be, alone, as long as I live and after."—*Walter Savage Landor*.

LITERARY reputations are set up and demolished with so provoking a rapidity that it is pleasant to turn to a really great writer who is beyond the reach of the journalistic turmoil of the day. Long ago Sainte-Beuve placed "George Sand" at the head of the then living French writers. How far "George Sand" deserved the exact place indicated by the renowned French critic we cannot venture to determine, but her name has since been inscribed among the Olympians.

Amantine Dupin, better known by her pen-name of "George Sand," was born in 1804. She was a descendant of the famous Marshal Saxe. She was brought up by a grandmother and a tutor who held Voltairean views, but did not wish to impress them upon a child. Consequently, Mdlle. Dupin was left with no religious teaching at all during some of the most impressionable years of her life.

Some stories, impartially told her, about Christ and Jupiter and other mythical monsters were all the theology that she remembered at this time. At the age of ten, with the precocity of genius, she had invented a god of her own. But this deity was dethroned as she grew older. Unfortunately, the young girl was sent to the convent of the Anglaises at Paris to complete her education. The Christian superstition was there presented in its most winning form by the nuns who adapted themselves to her highly imaginative and sympathetic nature.

After two years' pressure the poor girl succumbed and was on the verge of spoiling her whole life by taking the veil. Her grandmother became seriously alarmed, and removed the girl not a moment too soon. The nuns had done their damnable work only too well. Mdlle. Dupin's faith, and her wish to renounce a life of which she was wholly ignorant, persisted long after the gates of the convent had closed behind her.

However, she was not like other girls. Her mind was too wide to be permanently affected by the drug of Christianity. Recovery came, slowly but surely. Her first shock arose from a perusal of Chateaubriand's *Genie de Christianisme*, a book, unwittingly, recommended by her unsuspecting confessor. She found the ideas so antagonistic to her preconceived views founded on the *Imitatio Christi* that she was finally led to doubt the truth and unity of a religious system, which could thus be expounded in two different senses. She glided gently and imperceptibly into a tranquil Theism. Family troubles ensued. Her grandmother died, and her home was broken up. Her father's family was alienated

by her mother's relations. Her mother, who should have been her best friend, proved to be the worst guardian possible to such a girl.

In her pitiable distress, deserted by her own kindred, Mlle. Dupin committed the greatest mistake of her life. A few years before she had, by the help of her sceptical grandmother, escaped from the life-long imprisonment of a convent. Her wise old counsellor was now dead, and she unknowingly wrecked her life on a marriage-of-convenience. In her trouble and loneliness she allowed a M. Dudevant to persuade her that he would be a true friend. In an evil moment she married him. She never loved him, and he—well, he never loved anybody. He got drunk, he kept low company, he was a beast. After years of torture, after the unutterable agony of a most miserable marriage, the unfortunate and ill-used wife procured a judicial separation and the custody of her two children. During these wretched years her eyes opened. She lost her trust in a vague optimism. Like *Candide*, she was disillusioned by the inexorable logic of facts. In 1831 she published her novel, *Rose et Blanche*, as the work of "Jules Sand." It was written in conjunction with Jules Sandeau. Her own first complete novel, *Indiana*, which deals with the subject of marriage, appeared in 1832 under the now famous name of "George Sand," and from this time she continued to write an immense number of works. About the year 1832 she became acquainted with Alfred De Musset. The story of this *liaison* has been shadowed forth by her in *Elle et Lui*, published after his death, and by him in the *Confession* written soon after the events. It is worth noting that De Musset, not contented, like a Congreve, with leading the fashion and dragging vanquished ladies after his triumphal car, sighed for a union of souls, and was inspired with his first serious attachment by a woman who appealed first to his intellect. He profited by the connection. "George Sand's" robust good sense swept away the Byronic affectations and Wertherian posings of his adolescence; and his most famous work in poetry is directly inspired by the memory of his friendship with this magnificent woman.

As a novelist "George Sand" is inferior to Balzac. Her stories are too didactic to be perfect. Novels with a purpose have been effective and, at the same time, artistic. Voltaire, whose swift, live pen was always wielded in the service of liberty, and Rousseau, who flamed his social views over the universe, influenced men through the medium of prose fiction. In a lesser degree this is true of St. Pierre, Chateaubriand, and Dickens.

"George Sand," aiming at the same power, almost overloads her stories with masses of reverie. Her language is beautifully rich and pure. Only occasionally does she indulge in declamation, and yet her sentences are exquisitely melodious and full. She does not run her thoughts to death, but leaves the reader at the end of one of her brief, opulent sentences, with plenty of food for future thought. Especially is this noticeable in *Spiridion*, in which she openly attacks the Christian superstition, and in *Consuelo*, which treats of the question of women's rights.

"George Sand" is free from the effusive self-assertion so common with French authors. There was something of the nobility of the Stoic in her nature. She soared above the uneasy vanities of so many of her contemporaries, and that mannerism which Theophile Gautier wittily characterised as "*L'Hugolâtrie la plus cannibale et la plus feroce*." She was indifferent to luxury and fame. She did her work bravely, invoking no celestial assistance, her virtue not asking a reward. Freethinkers welcome in her a great writer not silenced by the terrors of the day or limited by the bonds of conventionalism, one capable of ascent into calmer and more fortunate regions. The kingdom of thought outlasted the dynasty of the Pharaohs, and will outlive that of the Guelphs. Its palaces are more glorious than imperial dwellings. In its Elysian fields we still hear the matin-song of blind old Homer, and the mellow notes of Shakespeare and Cervantes.

A woman of this stamp, like our own "George Eliot," must be judged tenderly and with reverence. We of a lower and less impressionable mould, who cannot enter, perhaps, into the rarer ether which genius inhabits, must remember one thing. The George Sands and the George

Eliots suffer for us, sum up in their lives our highest aspirations, set before us the experiences of struggles greater than our own. They are the true confessors of humanity. When we think of the life and work of "George Sand" we must acknowledge that this gifted woman fought the battle of Freedom. It was a warfare not without many scars, with the fluctuations and the losses of a night-battle; with rallyings on the stricken field; with glorious triumphs. We owe to the victories of such soldiers of the Army of Human Emancipation the preservation of all that we most highly prize.

If "George Sand's" works exhibit this warfare and this perplexity on too many eloquent pages, we judge with the forbearance springing from that larger wisdom which tempers justice with sympathy. Her first claim on us is, indeed, genius; but we should be hardly less interested in the record of a woman born of that heroic temper to which, after life-long recognition of the vanity of vanities, Liberty never waxed old, nor Love failed of his loveliness.

MIMNERMUS.

Chemico-Physical Theories of Life.—II.

"It is inconceivable that *inanimate brute matter* should, without the mediation of something else, *which is not material*, operate upon, and affect, other matter without mutual contact.....That gravitation should be innate, inherent, and essential to matter, so that one body may act on another at a distance, through a vacuum, without the mediation of anything else, by, and through, which their action and force may be *conveyed* from one to another, is to me so great an absurdity that I believe no man, who in philosophical matters has a competent faculty of thinking, can ever fall into it."* So Sir Isaac Newton wrote; but, as the same great physicist also wrote "that to every action there is always opposed an equal reaction," it is obvious that some pre-conception overshadowed his mind at the moment of writing the first quotation. For the question is not whether a body can act upon another at a distance, but whether it can *react* without being in actual contact with it. Nobody disputes action at a distance now, when aerial telegraphy is an accomplished fact, and hypnotic suggestion is a common recreation. It is dangerous even for great philosophers to try to set up a margin to the conceivable. † What is inconceivable to-day may be the common concept of to-morrow. Still more dangerous for them is it to allow any inherited ideas to overshadow their reason. In the case in point they actually made the great man oblivious, for the moment, of his own discovery that all action was reciprocal.

In endeavoring to get as near the heart of the problem as possible, we have to reckon up what it is we have to deal with in the last analysis, as the "things of eternity." What is it actually that persists through all the changes wrought in, and brought by, time, which is merely their measure? The final analysis brings out matter and force only, and these so absolutely and indefeasibly in union or oneness that the one cannot be obtained, otherwise than momentarily, or so-called *nascently*, without the other. It may be that the twain are in loose bonds; it may be that the bonds are almost indissoluble. It matters not; force cannot be gotten apart from matter; yea, not even the most intangible, the most ineffable, the least conceivable as resident in it—viz., psychic or mental.

Unified matter and force, then (one unique thing under two aspects, just as Body and Mind are two aspects, two modes of one unique thing), is the "thing of Eternity" with which we have to deal. It is the thing which has had no beginning and shall have no end, howsoever many changes it may go through or may have gone through. It lies within the province of philosophy, it is the business of philosophy, to explain how it came about, and how it comes about, that this thing can emerge in so many forms and give

* Quoted from page 242 of *Some Unrecognised Laws of Nature*, by Singer and Berens. (John Murray; 1897.) A work much too little read and known.

† Up to the middle of the present century heat and magnetism were supposed to be material substances, whose interconvertibility with mechanical motion appeared inconceivable. (J. B. Stallo, *Concepts of Modern Physics*, p. 82.)

rise to so many different modes of force, and yet neither diminish nor create. What has been called the "mystery" of this has been a mystery only in view of the explication being sought for in the wrong direction. Of course, if men look for a thing in a locality where it isn't, success in the search is not to be expected. So, when an explication of a purely natural phenomenon was sought for in unnatural or supernatural realms, it is not surprising that no solution was forthcoming harmonic with the maturer intellect. The misty theories of metaphysicians were all mere scholastic modifications of one another, and they all possessed the root idea that a unique supernatural power existed, *in personal monstrous form*, which not only evolved matter and force from out its own self-existence, but continued to impress and modify the same from without.

In the course of the century now expiring, thanks to certain great men who made it the business of their lives to free thought from the incubus of such a transparently untrue and obstructive idea, and to certain physicists and chemists who fearlessly enunciated the conclusions clearly arrived at by them as the result of experimental observations and acute speculations, the bonds were burst, and way was made for chemico-physical theories of life and the great generalisation known as evolution, which implies that in matter there is "the potency of all things," as Tyndall truly and boldly put it in his famous Address to the British Association at Belfast.

This theory, at first hotly contested, repudiated, and held up to ridicule by all interested in the maintenance of the old ideas, has since then been calmly swallowed and intellectually digested by them when they realised that their intellectual health was in danger *if they didn't*. Then a curious phenomenon occurred. Nobody was half so enthusiastic and appreciative of evolution as these same individuals! The scales fell suddenly from their eyes, a great intellectual clarification ensued upon the purgation of effete conceptions, and, not to be beaten in the philosophic race, they actually began to tumble over one another in the endeavor to formulate theories homologating chemico-physical theories of life in harmony with their pre-conceptions. I can only consider one of these here, as it is so nearly philosophical as to deceive the unwary.*

This is the theory which regards evolution as the gradual informing or mentalisation of matter by spirit; or the gradual informing of matter to will for a purpose, by and through an inhering bias towards that end, which bias ultimately "subdues" matter, the primary intractability of the latter being assumed. Now, this may be allowed to be a respectable theory, embodying an intelligible concept; and, with a slight alteration, it was adopted by one of the most distinguished philosopher preachers and theologians of this century, and, since then, almost universally by religionists. I allude, of course, to the late Principal Caird, who, in his Gifford Lectures, defined it as the doctrine of the "Immanent Presence." Nevertheless, when any attempt is made to apply it practically, it breaks down entirely. In the first place, of course, it does not harmonise with the dogmas in any particular; next, its primary implication would be the sole responsibility of the "immanent." But it is known that the immanent presence in matter is not supernatural, but natural, † and not moral, but indifferent; that it is chemico-physical in all its modes, even the most recondite, invisible, and intangible, and is capable of being dealt with, under law, in all these modes. But, even if that were not so—even if, in the last analysis, say of mind, there compeared a residuum which the mind itself must regard as metaphysical, why, even then, the theory would be found unworkable in the biological, sociological, ethical, and theological spheres. But, as a matter of fact, *there is no such residuum*; and so, *ad hoc*, metaphysics—a very useful science in its way, dealing with ideas, products of the brain, and their relationships in various categories—only justifies its title after the fashion Pickwickian, or *lucus à non lucendo*.

* Since the foregoing was written the Moderator of the final Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland chose that historic occasion to declare his adhesion to the theory.

† It is surely superfluous to note that the contention that "nature is spirit" is a gratuitously impudent one. A "spirit" surely cannot become the subject of chemico-physical analysis.

This theory, then, is found to be lacking in the criteria of a true theory—viz., the tests of time, of growing knowledge, of subjective need, apart from the fact that it is antithetical to the *præambula fidei* of the Confession, of which the cardinal proposition is the complex personality of the Deity; and this, by its implication of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence, is negative to any other personality save itself only. Each "elect" human is only a member of the one. But the cardinal datum of civilisation, society, law, and government is that there are *persons* innumerable, or practically so, and there is no disputing the fact which is obvious and palpable.

As few men make a life study of philosophy, progress is but slowly made; and, in any case, time is an element in the making of great conceptions. One man approaches it from the knowledge and standpoint of one science, another from another; one regards it through green spectacles, and another through yellow; one brings to bear upon his studies an hereditary bias, another an acquired one; but only one in the million devotes a life of impartial and judicial thought to the study of the history of philosophy as a groundwork, and then to a systematic survey of the sciences at first hand, and, finally, to a synthetic elaboration of the matured intellectual result. Hence it is that the human mind has made so little progress in answering the questions which puzzled the philosophers of IONIA; and Agnosticism is the high-water mark of that progress, except to the ingenuous nurslings who can bring themselves to believe that things can "descend from eternity" when spelt with a capital E.

The remarkable progress which has recently been made in the knowledge of and technical adaptations of electro-magnetism has emboldened certain philosophers to take the forward intellectual step which has so long been foreseen as inevitable by the more speculative thinkers. Taking a firm stand upon the indubitable chemico-physical facts that matter force is *not* intractable, but, on the contrary, inconceivably plastic, that it is the *only* eternal thing, eternally undergoing metamorphosis, they endeavor, successfully as I think, to rear a coherent cosmology.

ROBERT PARK, M.D.

(To be continued.)

Sacred Swindlers.

[At the canonisation of two dead "Johnnies" by the Pope in St. Peter's, the other day, the crowd was so great that one of the pilgrims was killed, and many fainted.]

A PAIR of ghosts, in Peter's fane,
The Pope and God were sainting;
But, spite of inspiration plain,
The people gasped for breath, in vain,
And feeble folk were fainting.

The Pope beheld the hapless host
That fought for respiration,
And knew that what they wanted most
Was oxygen, not Holy Ghost;
Not grace, but ventilation.

The humbug claims to be endowed
With pow'rs of inspiration,
And yet, by all 'twill be allowed,
He could not give a gasping crowd
The means of respiration.

They promise much, these priestly knaves,
To those who will support 'em;
To those who'll fill—poor swindled slaves!—
Collection-boxes, and their graves—
N.B.: The rest's *post-mortem*!

G. L. MACKENZIE

Onward, ye children of the new faith! The sun of Christendom hastes to its setting, but the hope never sets of those who know that the sunset here is a sunrise there.—M. D. Cowway.

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"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—After all he has said against any ethical signification having been attached to the word "religion," Chilperic now discovers not only that it is "a common theological trick to allege that religion is a compendium of all the virtues," but that this identification of religion and morality has been so sedulously inculcated by the clergy that it is widespread both among religious and irreligious people. After emphatically protesting that the word "religion" never did have "any ethical sense or meaning," Chilperic himself now shows us that religion is almost universally identified with ethics. The only remaining difference between us on this point is that Chilperic regards the now admitted association of morality with religion as a highly successful piece of trickery, while I consider that it has been directed, with good as well as bad intentions, to the benefit of society as well as of theologians.

That this identification of theology and virtue enables the enemy to libel opponents of theology as opponents of virtue is no more an argument or reproach against Mr. Gould than against Chilperic. Mr. Gould would rebut the libel by explaining that, so far as the moral sense attached to the word was concerned, he ardently supported religion. Chilperic, on the other hand, would correct the libel by defying and denouncing the almost universal association of religion and morality. I think that Mr. Gould's method is at least quite as easy and practical as Chilperic's, and quite as justifiable.

Chilperic, too, often attributes to me views for which I cannot hold myself responsible. For instance, I do not suggest that the secularised use of the word "religion" is "only the amiable eccentricity of some modern ethicists." Cicero was not a modern ethicist, and I think it probable he had as many followers in ancient times as Matthew Arnold, Comte, and others, have at the present day. Far from regarding this purely ethical use of the word "religion" as only an eccentricity, I have labored to show that it is no more a mere eccentricity than Secularism is.

Chilperic concludes his first paragraph with the partly unintended statement that this theology-excluding sense of the word "religion" is "a very ancient and well-known theological falsehood." He must admit that Atheistic religion was never taught by the Church; and some of us are not so far carried away by the anti-theological bias as to stigmatise the moralization of religion as pure falsehood and trickery. The great extent to which, even from the most ancient times, religion has honestly and beneficially included morality is seen, I think, in the Ten Commandments, of which six are purely secular, three purely theological, and one partly theological and partly secular.

As to "faith," I stand in good company. I have heard Mr. Bradlaugh speak publicly and earnestly of his "faith" (as President at one of the N. S. S. Conferences, if I remember rightly), and he warmly resented the false accusation that he had no faith. To such stalwarts as Chilperic this was, of course, one of Mr. Bradlaugh's "little weaknesses"; but, for my own part, I have always looked upon it—or, rather, upon the splendid fact it represented—as a great and glorious strength. Chilperic, however, is partly right in the accusation he brings against me. I should indeed be "shocked" if that he had no faith in high principles, no faith in himself, no faith in the honor of women or the honesty of men, and that he was an "infidel" in the worst sense of the term. And I should deeply regret (what, of course, is impossible) if he were such a moral monster as to be entirely destitute of the emotions which make up the sense and feeling of worship in the higher and nobler types of men and women—the feelings of reverence, loyalty, admiration, wonder, love, gratitude, devotion to the highest and noblest, and so forth. (Such feelings, by-the-by, largely represent the "subjective" state which Chilperic acknowledges to be one meaning of the word "religion," but which he thinks not germane to the present discussion.) As to my plea (and Mr. Bradlaugh's) for "faith" being due to love of respectability, or being directed to a merely metaphorical or ridiculously unreal "Pickwickian sense" of the word, I think Chilperic never made a greater mistake in his life. And my defence of "hero-worship," and my plea for leniency towards other secular uses of the word "worship," I am prepared to justify on grounds far higher and in senses far more real than those assigned to me. Of course, none of us wish to impute "unrighteousness" to Chilperic if he expresses himself differently from us in these matters; and it is quite amusing to find that he thinks it necessary to claim toleration from us, whose very object in the present discussion is to promote mutual toleration.

The assertion, or assumption, that Matthew Arnold was "a very pious religionist" is a surprising one, especially from a writer who expressly limits religion to the theological portion of its meaning. Mr. Wheeler, rightly enough, placed Matthew Arnold's name in his *Dictionary of Freethinkers*, and says that his *Literature and Dogma*, "from its re'ection of

supernaturalism, occasioned much stir." Matthew Arnold, he adds, "is abreast of the thought of his age, but he curiously unites rejection of supernaturalism, including a personal God, with a fond regard for the Church of England. He may be said, in his own words, to wander 'between two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born.'" Chilperic has allowed himself to be deceived by a nominal and sentimental adherence to Christianity. Matthew Arnold's support of Biblical religion (as I can testify from the personal experience of bygone years) was akin to Bishop Cosenso's support of the Old Testament and Gibbon's nominal adherence to the creed he undermined.

My "unfortunate" quotations from Latimer and Johnson were perfectly to the point in the paragraph in which I had placed them, as showing association of morality with religion. Chilperic tears them from their context and forcibly applies them to a subsequent paragraph with which they had no connection. By this means he makes them figure as my illustrations of the use of the word "religion" without recognition of deity. This method of dislocating my arguments and reducing my illustrations to irrelevant absurdity is not one that commends itself to my approval.

W. P. BALL.

BULL WORSHIP BY THE JEWS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—If Mr. R. P. Edwards will look again at my article on the Old Testament, he will see that I gave the "authority" he asks for—namely Wellhausen, quoted by Bishop Blomfield. If, further, he will turn to Exodus xxxii., he will find an account of the worship by the Israelites of a calf made of molten gold. (See also Deut. ix. 12 and 16; Psa. cvi. 19; Acts vii. 41.) It is generally agreed that this molten idol was in the figure of an Egyptian god—the bull Apis or Mnevis. (See Cambridge Bible.) Sir William Dawson, in his *Egypt and Syria*, page 20, mentions the bull Apis as the original of the golden calf of Hebrew idolatry, and says that the magnificent tombs of these bull-gods of the Egyptians still exist in the necropolis of Memphis at Sakkara. Josephus speaks of the temple of a golden calf at Little Jordan (*Wars*, bk. iv., chap. i.). As showing the identity of the molten calf with an Egyptian bull-idol, it may be noticed that, inasmuch as the Egyptians carefully avoided eating the flesh of the animals they worshipped as gods, Moses is represented as making the Israelites swallow in water their idol-figure ground to powder.

The worship of the calf, or young bull, at Horeb was not an isolated instance of that form of idolatry by the Jews. In 1 Kings xii. 27-33 we read that Jeroboam made two calves of gold, and said: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." He set one in Bethel and the other in Dan, and it is recorded that the people went to worship the one at Dan, as they probably went to worship the other at Bethel. That the Israelites were prone to make gods of this kind is shown by the warnings in Deuteronomy iv. and elsewhere against making the "likeness of any beast that is on the earth," or of "four-footed beasts."

FRANCIS NEALE.

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.): Closed during the summer.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Herbert Burrows, "The Ideal Municipality."

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("The Victory," Newnham street, Edgware-road): June 21, at 9, Half-yearly meeting.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

- STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, F. A. Davies.
- BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, F. A. Davies; 6.30, W. J. Ramsey.
- PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, W. J. Ramsey.
- BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mr. Calvert, "Whence came Christianity?"
- VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen.
- CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
- FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, R. P. Edwards.
- KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. Heaford.
- EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Pack.
- HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, E. Pack. Lectures every Tuesday and Thursday at 8 p.m.
- KILBURN (corner of Glengal-road): 7.15, E. White.
- HAMMERSMITH (back of Lyric Theatre): 7.15, S. Parsons.
- S. L. E. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. Newland.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of June, July, and August.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11, F. Hanks. Mr. Ward will lecture in the Bull Ring every Wednesday and Thursday evening at 8 (weather permitting).

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Hammond.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Pic-nic to Lymm. Members and friends meet at Oxford-road station at 1.15.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A lecture or reading.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Annual Meeting; Election of Officers.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—June 17, m., Mile End; a. and e., Victoria Park. June 24 and July 1, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—June 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.

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

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—June 17, m., Station-road; a., Brockwell Park. 24, e., Stratford. July 1, m., Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 8, e., Hammersmith. 15, m., Battersea; e., Stratford. 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

R. P. EDWARDS, 48 Woodstock-road, Shepherd's Bush.—June 17, m., Clerkenwell; a., Finsbury Park; e., Mile End. 24, m., Ridley-road; a. and e., Victoria Park.

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