

1900.

26
16
26
26
10
76
26

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Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Blank Atheism.

MORE than twenty years ago I was personally acquainted with the late Mathilde Blind. James Thomson ("B.V."), the author of that sombre and powerful poem, *The City of Dreadful Night*, was with me on more than one occasion in her rooms, which were then the centre of some distinguished intellectual society. Swinburne used sometimes to call there, though it was never my luck to meet him. Professor Clifford was another visitor, and with him I came into fairly close contact. One evening I had a little party, consisting of Miss Blind and a few of her friends, at my own bachelor diggings, where by request I read them Thomson's masterpiece. It was not then published, in the ordinary sense of the word. I had it as it appeared in the *National Reformer*—a presentation copy from Thomson himself, with the omitted stanza added in his own handwriting. It had been a good deal talked about in select circles, and the members of that little party were very glad to make its complete acquaintance in that fashion. When the floodgates of criticism were open, one young poet suggested some rather fatuous improvements. All admired the work very much, or said they did; but I noticed that they all regarded it as a literary curiosity, a striking poetical *tour de force*, and not at all as the life-agony of a man of genius minted into golden verse by his unsubduable art. That aspect of the case did not seem to strike them a bit, and I felt considerably disappointed at their *dilettante* observations.

But why do I go back to that long-ago? Why open the deliberately shut doors of old memories? Why let the daylight of recollection into ancient, disused chambers, where the only footfalls are ghostly, and even these are deadened by the dust of many years? Because I cannot help it. Because a sentence in a book, casually meeting my gaze, has done it in my despite.

"What took this soul of mine on the verge of a blank Atheism, of utter denial and despair; what took it and led it out of itself to the calm and awful centre of things?"

This was the sentence that arrested my attention in the "Memoir" which Dr. Garnett contributes to the new edition of Mathilde Blind's *Poetical Works*. The sentence is hers. And having raised the question, she supplies the answer.

"It was Buckle. I verily think I owe to him what I owe to no other human being—an eternal debt of gratitude for the work he has left. It was the right book at the right time, the serene proclamation of law as he unrolled the history of humanity before me from its earliest germs."

Now I confess to a certain sense of confusion in reading all this. In the first place, Buckle did not do what he is alleged to have done. He did not unroll the history of humanity from its earliest germs. His work was a great one, but that is not a proper description of it. In the next place, I can hardly conceive that Mathilde Blind had not read Buckle when I knew her, and she was certainly an Atheist then. Clifford was so far from being ashamed of the designation that he gloried in it, and we all understood that Mathilde Blind's attitude was precisely similar. What on earth then could she mean by saying that Buckle saved her from "blank Atheism"? What, indeed, is there in Buckle incompatible with Atheism? Did not his orthodox critics call him a teacher of the Atheistic philosophy? Not that he was an Atheist, but as far as his book went it was not unnatural that they (at any rate) should think him so. It does not appear that Mathilde Blind herself ever

became a positive Theist. I fancy she called herself to the end an Agnostic. Her own poetry is not the work of a believer in God. What on earth then, I repeat, did she mean by the statement that she had been saved from "blank Atheism"? And what is the meaning of the words that follow? "Utter denial" of *what*? And "despair" of *what*? The whole thing is like a Chinese puzzle.

I cannot help thinking that Mathilde Blind, writing perhaps in after years, when Clifford was dead, and when perhaps the great Bradlaugh struggle had rendered "Atheism" more odious than ever, used the word with that looseness which is only too common, but of which *she* ought not to have been guilty. It is curious how so many persons, and orthodox teachers especially, are loth to let "Atheism" stand by itself, and tell its own story. They seem to feel the necessity of prejudicing the reader (or hearer) against it at the very outset. So they hasten to put a suggestive, or even a sinister, adjective in front of it, as a kind of warning herald. Sometimes it is "downright" Atheism, sometimes it is "utter" Atheism, sometimes it is "grovelling" Atheism, sometimes it is "blatant" Atheism. This, by the way, is the favorite adjective of gentlemen like the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. But "blank" Atheism is perhaps the most ingenious form of depreciation. The horrified imagination of piety is free to fill in the "blank" according to the instant movement of the spirit. Then it has at least a suggestion of swearing. It sounds like a polite or fastidious form of "damned Atheism," or even one of those stronger expletives which are so common in the streets of Christian cities. Yes, "blank Atheism" is distinctly good, and may be recommended to the average apologists of religion, who might blunder into obvious bad language if left to their own resources.

When one comes to think of it, however, it is perfectly clear that Atheism is only "blank" in the sense that it is not Theism. Atheists dispense with what they regard as fictions, but they retain what they (and everybody else, for that matter) regard as facts. They dismiss dreams, but they cling to realities. They roam the earth, though they believe in no hell under it. They admire the ever-shifting panorama of the sky, though they believe in no heaven above it. They breathe the universal air, though they do not believe it is peopled with invisible spirits. All that anyone is sure of is theirs. The "blank" in their minds and lives only relates to the unknown, the incomprehensible, and perhaps the impossible.

What is it that the Theist *knows* and the Atheist does *not* know? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. To the greatest minds, as well as the smallest, God is at the best an inference; and the doctrine of a future life can only be verified (if at all) by dying. In this world, therefore, and on this side of death, the Atheist has, or may have, as much information as any religionist. Nor has he fewer sources of enjoyment, or fewer means of personal development and elevation, or fewer opportunities of social usefulness. The "blank" only means that he does not burden his mind with the contradictory fancies of theology. He objects to wasting his time in trying to ascertain the value of the infinite X. And he has learnt from history that the pursuit of such chimeras has produced a very decided "blank"—as far as secular science and civilisation are concerned—in the minds and lives of many men of genius, and of whole societies of inferior mortals.

G. W. FOOTE,

A Real Secular Reformer.

THE recent Co-operative Congress held in Cardiff recalls to our mind the name of Robert Owen, whom we regard as having been one of the greatest Secular reformers of modern times. Possessing a practical mind and a benevolent nature, he devoted his life to the promotion of human happiness amongst all sections of the community. Unfettered by the dogmas of theology and untrammelled by the teachings of popular religion, he was free to apply his rare abilities to the secular welfare of society. In claiming Owen as a Secular teacher, we do not mean that he endorsed all the principles of the National Secular Society, for these were not formulated in his time. Neither do we wish to commit the members of the N. S. S. to the approval of *all* Owen's teachings. We do, however, allege that much of what he taught constitutes the very basis of Secular philosophy. His life was spent in doing good, and his constant aim was to improve the social condition of the masses apart altogether from the theological exactions of his day. With him the welfare of humanity did not depend upon the belief in a Deity or a future state. His motto was: "The proper study of mankind is man." The wisest of the Romans, the great statesman and philosopher, Cicero, taught his son that true morality was the necessary result of reasoning built upon human necessities. Robert Owen gave practical meaning and force to this teaching by inculcating principles the adoption of which would assuredly end in the establishment of a new moral world—a world wherein every human character would be formed on principles based upon right-knowing and right-doing, upon the enforced expulsion of ignorance and the removal of the causes of evil.

As to what is generally termed religion, Owen regarded it very much in the same sense as Secularists do. In his famous declaration at the City of London Tavern meeting in 1817 he boldly said: "All the religions of the world were false, because they directed man's attention either to superstitious imaginings or to vain speculations about an unknown future, instead of to the growth of human sympathy, the formation and elevation of human character, and the improvement of man's condition and surroundings here on earth." This is the Secular view. In our opinion, if any religion is to be retained in the future, the only one which should be worthy of the name as a binding system should be one in which the good of all faiths shall be retained, and from which their errors shall be eliminated; a religion based, not upon supernatural figments and allegories, but upon the eternal laws of nature and the laws of that great kingdom of human nature whose only monarch is man. He it is who must be regarded as the foremost actor in the great drama of life. The essence of Owen's teachings is this: That human conduct should be regulated by modern requirements and by the scientific and philosophical discoveries of the age in which we live; that we should learn how to live honestly and usefully, and not concern ourselves as to the "how" to die; that Christian teachings are too impracticable and limited in their influence to attain the world's redemption; and that all improvement, general and individual, is the result of the brain-power and physical exertions of the brave toilers of every country and every age who have labored for human improvement.

Robert Owen believed, as Secularists do, that morality is of more service to man than all the theologies combined. In fact, he looked upon theology as the great curse of humanity. He considered that the study of social questions was of greater value in elevating mankind than the belief in all the creeds and doctrines of the Churches. Owen thought, and he was certainly right, that the supposed orthodox revelation has really had nothing to do with the moral elevation of the people. This, no doubt, is a fact, for the obvious reason that a revelation from a God to man cannot logically change or modify itself; it must be, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, wholly unalterable, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." This, indeed, is what orthodox religionists claim for what they call their morality—that it never changes. But such a contention is fatal to

their claim to possess a truly humanitarian system of morality. The very essence of such a system is its adaptability to the ever-varying necessities and circumstances of mankind. It is not here contended that prudence, honesty, and benevolence must sometimes change their inherent nature. On the contrary, they will ever be binding upon man; but for what reason? Merely because he cannot exist justly and happily without them. He must be prudent, or he loses his all, and thus becomes a burden on others; he must be honest, or he will be a criminal to society, and will not be able to have any guarantee for his own rights and for the safety of his own possessions; he must be benevolent, or else he will neglect his duty to others, and the old age of iron will return, with its law of might making right, and the despotic rule of the strong over the weak.

The truth is that the basis for moral action is not to be found in the Bible, but in the Roman law of the Twelve Tables, which laid down the broad general maxim that "the well-being of the people is the supreme law." This may be taken as a fundamental principle for all time and all nations. The kind of action which will produce such well-being depends, of course, upon individual and national circumstances, varied in their character and diversified in their influence. Rules of life, "revealed" eighteen hundred years ago, do not meet the requirements and satisfy the genius of to-day. This progressive morality is the principle of the Utilitarian ethics which now govern the civilised world. It is not merely the individual, but society at large, that is considered. To use an analogy from nature, social existence may be compared to a beehive. What does the apiarian discover in his studies? Not that every individual bee labours only for individual necessities. No; but that all is subordinated to the general welfare of the hive. If the drones increase, they are expelled or restricted, and well would it be for our human society if all drones who resisted improvement were banished from amongst us. In the moral world, as in religious societies, there are too many Nothingarians—individuals who thrive through the good conduct of others, whilst they themselves do nothing to contribute to the store of the ethical hive.

Robert Owen was pre-eminently a social reformer, and, inasmuch as progress depends upon secular agencies, he was also the inculcator of those principles upon which Secularism is based. Granted, there may be some social questions that do not come within the domain of Secular advocacy, but whatever advances the condition of a nation is secular, not theological. It has been well said*: "Robert Owen stands out as one of the most earnest and self-sacrificing social reformers of the nineteenth century. The founder of infant schools in England; the pioneer of that vast co-operative movement which now spreads like a net-work over the length and breadth of the land; the advocate of those Factory Acts which have lightened the toil of millions of human beings; the persistent and pertinacious agitator who, by his invincible logic, demonstrated the justice of, and the necessity for, what is now termed a 'living wage'; the large-minded philanthropist who pleaded for that 'equality of opportunity' which most social reformers now regard as an indispensable condition of effectual social improvement—in all this we recognise the passionate devotion, the generous self-sacrifice, and the unswerving loyalty of one who strove to make the life of the people purer, sweeter, and brighter by his having lived and worked amongst them."

In referring to Robert Owen at the present time, it is not our intention to discuss the respective merits or otherwise of co-operation and competition, but rather to point out that in this great man Secular philosophy had a profound and genuine teacher. His fundamental principle was that "The character of man is formed *for* him, and not *by* him." In our opinion, this is sound philosophy, if at the same time hereditary influences are not ignored. It should be remembered, however, that such influences are imparted to, and not acquired by, the individual. It has been well observed: "Character may be likened to a body to which a number of springs are attached, and which, plunged into the ocean of life, manifests activities

* *Social and Political Pioneers*, by Ramsden Balmforth.

in accordance with the particular springs which are touched or played upon." It would be difficult, of course, to decide precisely how far heredity affects character, and to what extent our actions are influenced by our environment; but that we are affected by both circumstances appears to be certain. Hence the necessity of our living healthy and moral lives, not only for our own sakes, but for the benefit of those who shall follow us. The scientific definition of any particular object of our contemplations is, that it is the sum of all the causes which produced it. If one of the causes which produced any particular phenomenon had been deducted, or if additional influence had been added, the result then produced would have differed from that which we now behold in precise proportions to the efficacy of the cause which had been added or withdrawn. Thus, with Robert Owen, we assert that human beings are as much the consequence of all the causes and circumstances which have affected them and their development previous to and since their birth as the lower animals are now acknowledged to be.

The influence of circumstances in human beings is forcibly illustrated by the science of botany. Suppose we take a wild flower from the woods for the purpose of improving its appearance and value. It has grown up under what are named natural circumstances; we transplant it to a garden, and endeavor to modify its condition. According to the end we have in view, so are, to use technical language, the "artificial causes" we bring to act upon its particular condition. We begin with an examination into its constitution and character. If it has faults and blemishes, we immediately try to remove them and protect it from those climatic influences which produced such faults. If it be its half-developed beauties which we wish to foster into full maturity, we multiply and stimulate those conditions which we have discovered by experience to have a positive influence on the better part of its nature. Now, apply this to the science of human cultivation. As with the uncultivated flower, so it is in many respects with the wild, uneducated man. The flower is what *it is*, and the wild, undisciplined man is what *he is*, in consequence of the aggregate of causes which have made them both what they are. Secularism recognises these influences of circumstances. It cannot, therefore, regard man as necessarily bad; on the contrary, it believes in the goodness of human nature, remembering that man frequently lacks improvement as the result of being surrounded by imperfect conditions, through the neglect of correct discipline and a want of proper understanding of his moral and intellectual faculties. CHARLES WATTS.

(To be concluded.)

The Decay of Persecution.

In my series of articles on "The Future of Religion" I have tried to make good the thesis that the more powerful causes of the decline of any religious belief are not so much the logical arguments that may be brought against it as the steady development of the general social structure that serves to destroy the type of mind upon which such beliefs live. A consideration of the change that has come over the public mind in relation to religious persecution will, I believe, still further strengthen this conviction. From regarding the suppression of heretical opinions by force as the most sacred of duties, we have come to regard it as the most dangerous of practices; and a change of such a drastic description as this must certainly require some powerful and far-reaching cause as an adequate explanation.

Up to a comparatively recent date there existed a practically unanimous opinion upon the subject. Save for a dissentient voice here and there, all were agreed that some opinions *must* be suppressed in the interests of social order and public morality. The attitude of the early generations of Christians on this matter is too well known to need recapitulation. So soon as persecution was possible it took place; and the malignity of the tortures inflicted has never been surpassed, if they have ever been equalled, in the world's history. "There are no wild beasts so ferocious as Christians who

differ concerning their faith" was the comment of the Pagan world upon Christian conduct in the infancy of that faith, and the subsequent career of the various Churches showed that pre-Christian nations were but novices in the art of inflicting torture for a difference of opinion.

Whatever changes the Protestant reformation brought about, it effected none for good in this direction. The only difference was a little variety in the opinions of those who persecuted—a change not likely to be valued very highly by those who suffered. Luther, while pleading for toleration, did not ask it "for such as deny the common principles of the Christian religion"; and as to Jews, their books were to be burned, their synagogues destroyed, and themselves confined as madmen. The intolerance of Calvin has become a byword; his very apology for the murder of Servetus, entitled *A Defence of the Orthodox Faith*, bore the significant sentence on its title-page, "In which it is proved that heretics may be rightly coerced with the sword." His follower, Knox, was only carrying out the teaching of his master in declaring that "None provoking the people to idolatry ought to be exempt from the punishment of death," and that "magistrates and people are bound to do so [to inflict punishment] unless they will provoke the wrath of God against themselves."

In every Protestant country laws against Catholicism or against rival Protestant bodies were enacted. In Switzerland, Geneva, Sweden, England, and in parts of Germany and France, laws of different degrees of severity against heresy were passed. In America the same thing prevailed. In some States Catholic priests were subject to imprisonment for life, Quaker women were whipped at the cart's tail through the streets, old men of the same denomination were pressed to death between heavy stones. At a later period (about 1770) laws against heresy were pretty general. "Anyone," says Fiske, "who should dare to speculate too freely about the nature of Christ, or the philosophy of the plan of salvation, or to express a doubt as to the plenary inspiration of every word between the two covers of the Bible, was subject to fine and imprisonment. The tithing man still arrested sabbath-breakers and shut them up in the town cage in the market-place; he stopped all unnecessary riding or driving on Sunday, and haled people off to the meeting house whether they would or no."* In fact, as Professor Seeböhm remarks, "under the rule of the Boston saints there was as little religious liberty as under the rule of Calvin at Geneva."

Nor was this feeling confined to recognised religious leaders; it was shared by some of the foremost writers and statesmen. Locke's *Letters on Toleration* and Milton's *Areopagitica* stand in the front rank amongst the world's writings in favor of liberty of thought and speech. Yet Locke was of opinion that "Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an Atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all." And Milton, whilst holding that it was more "wholesome" and "more prudent" that many be tolerated rather than all compelled, yet hastened to add: "I mean not tolerated popery and open superstition, which, as it extirpates all religious and civil supremacies, so itself should be extirpate."

In view of what is known concerning the intolerance of the Reformed clergy in general and the Puritan clergy in particular, I may digress for a moment to notice the astonishing statement of Mr. Lecky that it is to Puritanism we mainly owe the fact that in England religion and liberty were not dissevered.† Mr. Lecky's own volume contains ample proof that in itself Puritanism was no more favorable to religious liberty than was the creed against which it fought. He has pointed out (p. 174) that in the case of the Scotch clergy they were compelled to throw themselves upon the people for that support which they could not obtain elsewhere, and were thus driven into becoming the champions of democratic measures. In the same manner, struggling for the right to live, Puritanism was compelled to voice that desire in the *language* of liberty, even though its true spirit was absent from its mind. But that Puritan-

* *Critical Period of American History*, page 76.
 † *History of Rationalism*, ii., p. 178.

ism, or dissent broadly, was a friend to real liberalism of thought is a statement that the quotations given above, and which might be supplemented by scores of additional instances, easily dispose of. The real substance of the matter was well put by Spurgeon, who is reported to have said that his sect was the only one that had never persecuted, and it had never done so because it had never had the opportunity.

To return to our subject. The question, "Is it right that heretical opinions should be forcibly suppressed?" which, as we have seen, was once answered in the affirmative by some of the wisest and best of men, is now answered as emphatically in the negative by all except the most ignorant. It is, unfortunately, true that the spirit of persecution is not yet dead. Many ban where they can no longer burn, and social ostracism is often as effective in the manufacturing of hypocrites and in hindering the growth of advanced opinions as were the less refined methods of imprisonment and death. But, at least, it is no longer preached as a duty or gloried in as a virtue; and when it occurs it is usually set on foot in a more or less surreptitious manner, even its promoters being half ashamed of their work. But that Christians generally should now be found living in harmony with those who deny the very fundamentals of their faith, and at times even claiming for them a fair hearing and courteous treatment, is, to say the least of it, a remarkable phenomenon.

Nor does this anti-intolerant feeling limit itself to this world; it is extended to the next. In place of the old teaching that God will punish with everlasting torments those who doubt his existence, we hear that hell is a barbarous conception, that God cannot afford to damn a good man, no matter what his religious opinions are, and that to believe otherwise is un-Christian and insulting to the deity. It is not my purpose, at present, to determine whether such beliefs are Christian or otherwise. It is enough to note that such beliefs have existed, and do exist at present in any society or section of society that admits of their existence. I will only remark that, as these beliefs did once form part and parcel of Christianity, as universally understood, and as it was clearly the development of social life that moralised Christian beliefs, and not *vice versa*, it is impossible to regard that religion as anything but a mere social barometer at best, illustrating the vices or virtues of the society in which it is established, and, as experience has shown, more concerned in excusing the former than in improving the latter.

The various causes usually named for this radical change in public opinion—the diffusion of scientific knowledge, education, discussion—while all-powerful instruments in bringing about a more tolerant feeling, yet would appear somewhat inadequate. They seem to be secondary rather than primary causes; or, at least, it seems possible to range them all under a single wider and more comprehensive generalisation. Indeed, the existing arrangements for the communication of knowledge, the opportunities for discussing any and every opinion, seem to me to argue a radical change in the *structure* of society, from that condition where the forcible suppression of heresy is looked upon as a social and religious duty. Our conception of the nature of the State and of the relations existing between its individual members has undergone a profound alteration; and it is in this direction that we have to ultimately turn for a complete explanation of the phenomenon.

Our leading philosopher, Mr. Herbert Spencer, has divided social structures into two main groups, which he names the military and the industrial respectively. Accepting this generalisation as, at least, a convenient division of societies, we may commence by noting that a decline of militarism and a decline of persecution have gone on side by side, while the growth of industrialism has been accompanied by a corresponding increase of toleration. These dual processes are more closely connected than would appear at first sight; for a close examination of the mental traits necessary for each condition discloses the fact that militarism breeds while industrialism discourages the type of mind from which persecution results. It is an old observation, and one that is borne out by a survey of facts, that the severity of a nation's penal code will be tolerably proportionate to the cruelty of its customs and the barbaric nature

of its amusements. People accustomed to find their amusement in the sufferings of others are hardly likely to err on the side of leniency in their treatment of criminals, still less to shrink from inflicting punishment upon those who by their opinions threaten the existing social structure. We have thus a dual line of investigation opened, for, while the habits of earlier generations will serve to account for the severity of the punishments meted out to the holders of unorthodox opinions, the different views held of the structure and function of the State, and the relations existing between its members, will serve to explain their origin.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Invalided Home.

OCEAN CHATS ON CAMP CONVERSIONS.

SCENE I.—*Deck of Cape Liner bound for Southampton.*
THE REV. JOHN ASSINIBIAH, *army Evangelist, returning, invalided, to his flock.* Now engaged in holy converse with MISS TABITHA PURSALL, *a pious Cape Town spinster of uncertain age but assured fortune.*

ASSINIBIAH: Ah, my dear Miss Pursall, how grateful we ministers of the Gospel must ever feel when we recall the opportunities this lamentable war has afforded us in the great work of bringing souls to Jesus.

MISS TABITHA: Ah, indeed. It has in that way proved a truly precious blessing.

ASSINIBIAH: Yes, some thousands have gone to their long account. Let us hope they were all prepared, and are now in bliss. It is not for me, as a humble instrument in the hands of the Lord, to display any vain boastfulness. God forbid! But when I think of the numbers I have been the unworthy means of leading to the Throne of Grace—*(lost in ecstasy at the recollection)*.

MISS TABITHA: What glorious work for the Gospel of Christ amongst all those brave fellows.

ASSINIBIAH (*modestly*): Yes, I hope—I know it has been. Do you know the text of my very last sermon was, "It is good for us to be here"? The discourse met with much appreciation, though some of the poor fellows, rather annoyed that their regiments had been kept back so long, and on half rations too, audibly expressed the opinion that it would have been better if, instead of being there, they were further ahead. You see they hardly grasped the spiritual significance of the situation.

MISS TABITHA: Oh, yes, I can understand their restlessness. But you improved the occasion—I am sure you did.

ASSINIBIAH: Yes, under the blessing of God, many decided for Christ. Many more came seeking for light and guidance. Do you know that for ten or a dozen nights I could hardly get any sleep? Men would come and wake me up, exclaiming: "Oh, dear Mr. Assinibiah, tell me how I can be saved. My sins lie so heavy on me that I dare not go to sleep." They simply came and implored to be led to salvation.

MISS TABITHA: Thank heaven for that awakening—

ASSINIBIAH: I didn't at all mind being wakened. Oh no, that was nothing so long as there was work for the Lord to be done. But so many seemed to come one after the other in the night. Let me see how many dozens of soda and ginger beer and tins of biscuit had I at the commencement? Ah, I forget; but they soon went. The men would come, and, after a brief communion in prayer, would leave—some with two or three bottles, some with half-a-dozen of soda or ginger beer to take to their comrades. The number who assured me that they were strict teetotallers was surprising—most gratifying indeed. Not quite so many came when the stock was exhausted, and with difficulty I induced them to remain for prayer. Several, I fear, went away in an ungodly frame of mind. But how thankful one must be that so many were led to acknowledge the truth as it is in Jesus. I missed a whole tin of biscuits one night, but the anxious inquirer who had visited me in the dark, and to whom I spoke of the matter next day, assured me that he had a perfect abhorrence of biscuits, finding them so indigestible.

We had ten minutes of prayer and communion, and he went away I know—saved.

MISS TABITHA: How gratifying to you as a worker in the Lord's vineyard.

ASSINIBIAH: Yes, I had some light French wines, but they were not much to the men's tastes. I was specially pleased with two young lads from Lancashire who came to me, and showed me with pride the Bibles presented to them by their Sunday-school on their leaving for the front.

MISS TABITHA: How nice to think they valued and preserved their gifts.

ASSINIBIAH: Yes, they told me with emotion that nothing in the world would induce them to part with their gifts. They asked me, in fact, to take charge of the Bibles for them. If they left them with me for safe keeping, would I be so kind as to lend a small sum on them? One of them said something about buying tobacco—not to smoke, oh no, but to plug up the hollow tooth of a comrade who was suffering terribly from *tic doloureux*.

MISS TABITHA: Dear me, what an odd proposal.

ASSINIBIAH: No, I said to them very firmly, those precious volumes must remain in your own keeping. The Bible must be to each of you your inseparable companion. You must read it day and night. I will lend you a small sum, and will ask you to take your Bibles back with you and read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word of God.

MISS TABITHA: Truly that was golden counsel.

ASSINIBIAH: Yes, I lent them half-a-sovereign. They took it, and how encouraging it was to hear them thank me with tears in their eyes—

MISS TABITHA: For the half sovereign?

ASSINIBIAH: No, for allowing them to take their Bibles away. They positively hugged the holy volumes to their breasts, and—and spat on the coin for luck. The Rev. Chrysostom Jones told me afterwards that he had had a precisely similar experience with the same lads. I was rather surprised to hear that they also went to the Roman Catholic chaplain, but he said he had a Bible of his own, and there was no special need why they should go carting theirs about; it might do them as much harm as good.

MISS TABITHA: Oh, now, wasn't that Romish all over? Where should we be if it weren't for our open Bible?

ASSINIBIAH: Not at Pretoria. (*Reflectively*) Though to be sure the Boers are Bible-readers.

MISS TABITHA (*sweetly*): But without the guidance of our own dear ministers of the Gospel.

ASSINIBIAH (*bowing*): Oh, thank you, dear Miss Pursall, thank you so much. How kind of you to say so. It is one of the compensations of our holy calling to be appealed to by all who are in spiritual doubt and tribulation. That reminds me of a very gratifying instance. At Jonono's Kop, I think it was, a private in one of the Welsh regiments met me, took me by the hand, and, looking me straight in the face, said: "Sir, I am a wicked man!"

MISS TABITHA: He realised his sin, then? Ah, the first step to salvation.

ASSINIBIAH: Yes, he said: "I am a wicked man. Do you think there is any hope for me?" I replied: "Yes, my brother; Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Will you trust Him?" "But you don't know how bad I've been," he said. And then he told me how, from boyhood, he had been a persistent sabbath-breaker, how he could hardly open his mouth without swearing, and that, when a mere youth, he had played Nap on the tombstones in the parish churchyard, and once had greased the chancel steps, so that the curate slipped down on his nose. In broken accents, he asked: "Do you think the Lord will have mercy on me?" "Yes, he will," I said; "I will pray for you here and now." I went down on my knees and prayed, and then I said: "Will you trust the Savior?"

MISS TABITHA (*rapturously*): And he said yes. Oh, I know he said yes, and you plucked him as a brand from the burning.

ASSINIBIAH: Not just then. There was, indeed, a smell of burning at the moment. He looked round and saw some fires lighted, and with the cry "Rations!" dashed off. He returned later on, and we knelt down together in earnest prayer. Afterwards I missed my

gold watch—a present from the Society for the Protection and Evangelisation of Aged Aborigines.

MISS TABITHA: Oh, what a loss! Do you think he took it?

ASSINIBIAH: No, I feel sure *he* didn't, for he attended my ministrations as long as we were together, and always confessed himself a humble follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. (*A pause.*) But now, my dear Miss Pursall, let us look forward rather than backward. We have on our Siloam chapel, to which I am returning, a debt of £1,500. Riches are but a trust from the Lord. You, I feel sure, are anxious to help on the plan of salvation, &c., &c.

[*They meet afterwards at Exeter Hall. Subsequently with relatives and friends at a place of worship duly "licensed for the solemnisation of marriages."*]

SCENE II.—*Deck of a troopship homeward bound with sick and wounded soldiers.* PRIVATE JONES, known to his comrades as *Wandering Willie*, and PRIVATE SMITH, similarly known as *Tired Tim*, engaged in conversation.

WILLIE: Well, Tim, this bloomin' job's over as far as we're concerned.

TIM: Yus, and dam glad I am that I'm comin' back with nuthin' wuss than I've got.

WILLIE (*solemnly*): We orter thank Gawd—both of us. (*Sighs piously.*)

TIM: That's what I said when I planted that Khaki Testament away in my traps. Bli'me, I wonder whether I've got it safe? It'll be worth a dollar or two—p'raps half a thick 'un or more—when we get back to the ole show, won't it? 'specially as I put a bullet through it.

WILLIE: Yus, if you've got the luck to find a mug to make an offer as soon as we're landed. In a few weeks the market'll be swompt with the blamed things.

TIM: Wonder how that ole bounder, Assinibiah, is goin' on? Wish I could go and rouse the ole Juggins up now for a drop er soda to liven up the Scotch. Worse luck, these army doctors won't allow yer to 'ave anythin' sperritoal when you're on the sick-list. (*With bitter irony*) That comes o' dyin' for yer country! I wouldn't mind a few mouthfuls of prayer for the sike of a good livener, just now.

WILLIE: Wonder what's gawn with Assinibiah's clock? Shouldn't be surprised if the Boers ain't got it. That cantin' feller that nicked it ought to 'ave bin drummed outer the regiment. But he got a bullet inside him instead, and when he was flopped into the trench with the other stiff 'uns 'is pockets 'ad been turned inside out. I don't 'old with such snidey tricks as he got up to. I was brought up respectable, in the Church of England, thank Gawd.

TIM: So was I. But *you* pinched Assinibiah's tin o' biscuits.

WILLIE: Right; that was only fair loot. The fat ole bounder didn't want 'em hisself, and I did.

TIM: And he's got you daown as sived!

WILLIE: So I was—for I was rare 'ungry. D'ye think the Lord'll forgive me?

TIM: The beak wouldn't, if it had been in White-chapel. Good ole Whitechapel!

WILLIE: Good ole England! Good ole Bobs! Good ole—Oh, Christ! now I've been and 'urt this bloomin' arm.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Prophet Zadkiel.

ALACK-A-DAY, for the days of old
When heads were clever and hearts were true,
And a Caliph scattered stores of gold
On men, my Ali, like me and you!

Haroun was moody, Haroun was sad,
And he drank a glass of wine or two;
But it only seemed to make him mad,
And the cup at the Saki's head he threw.

Came Yahya in, and he dodged the glass
That all too near his turban flew;
Then he bowed his head and he said: "Alas
Your Majesty seems in a pretty stew!"

"And well I may," the monarch said;
"And so, my worthy friend, would you
If you knew that you must needs be dead
And buried, perhaps, in a day or two.

"The man who does 'Old Moore's' Almanacks—
Ez Zadkiel, a learned Jew—
Has found amongst other distressing facts
That the days I have left on this earth are few."

"Call up the villain!" the vizier cried,
"That he may have the reward that's due,
For having, the infidel, prophesied
A thing that is plainly quite untrue."

The Caliph waved his hand, and soon
A dozen dusky eunuchs flew;
And back in a trice before Haroun
They set the horoscopic Jew.

"Now tell me, sirrah," says Yahya, "since
From astral knowledge so well you know
The term of the life of our Sovereign Prince,
How many years are left to you?"

"May Allah lengthen the Vizier's days;
His highness's loss all men must rue;
Some eighty years, my planet says,
Is the number that I shall reach unto."

A single stroke of Yahya's sword
Has severed the Jew's neck quite clean through.

"Now tell me, sire, if the fellow's word
Seems, after that, in the least bit true?"

Haroun he smiled, and a purse of gold
He handed over to Yahya true;
And the headless corpse, all white and cold,
The eunuchs into the gutter threw.

Acid Drops.

ACCORDING to the Washington correspondent of the *Daily News*, the "Churchmen" over there have been putting strong pressure upon the Government for more decisive action in China. They demand full protection of the missionaries and church property, at whatever cost. "They seem to think," says an official, "that the United States can post a regiment to the front for every missionary."

Jesus Christ, when he got into trouble, spoke of the legion of angels that his Father could send to his assistance if necessary. Modern missionaries know a trick worth a dozen of that. They prefer the support of Tommy Atkins and the Handy Man, well armed, of course, with rifles and bayonets, and well backed-up with Maxim's and Gatlings. How many of the "heathen" are sent to heaven is a minor matter. What the missionaries want is to keep out of heaven themselves.

The *Daily Express* reports an interview—real or imaginary—with a Chinese gentleman living in London, who holds a high position in a firm of Eastern merchants, and has for many years belonged to the Boxers' Secret Society. This gentleman says that his countrymen found out the real value of what the Westerns call "civilisation" ever so many hundreds of years ago. They tried it and found it wanting, so they gave up vain strivings, and foolish luxury, and mad ambition. What they are now animated by is "a calm desire for happiness in this world." Their religion is a philosophy of life, and has stood the test of two thousand years. "We believe," this gentleman adds, "that the best thing to pursue in this life is happiness, and we teach our children that their happiness can only be secured by the performance of duty, by the observance of moral and business obligations, and by surrounding oneself with a circle of equally happy friends and relatives." If this is, indeed, the prevailing philosophy in China, we should like to see it extensively imported into Europe.

With regard to the missionaries, this Chinese gentleman is represented as saying that the opposition to them is perfectly natural. "They come," he says, "with a new religion, upon the main principles of which they are bitterly divided amongst themselves. They tell us that unless we accept their doctrines we shall suffer eternal punishment. They frighten our children and the more weak-minded of our older people, and create all kinds of dissensions between families and individuals. No wonder we will not tolerate them."

We learn from the *Rock* that, in view of the present solemn crisis in the history of China, "which may so largely affect the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom," and in view of the peril to which the missionaries and native converts are now exposed, the Council of the Evangelical Alliance urges upon the ministers of all denominations to make this a subject of public prayer, and calls upon all Christians to engage privately in special intercession.

Now what, in the name of common sense, does this mean? If the almighty is concerned as to the "extension of the

Redeemer's Kingdom," why did he let the crisis arrive? Already some of his missionaries and native converts have been killed. Is not prayer to him now an imputation that he ought to have interposed earlier? Has it not all the appearance of a suggestion that he has been asleep? If the crisis and the massacres are a part of some mysterious plan, ordered by him perhaps before the creation of the world, where is the use of trying to dissuade him from carrying out his will? The suggested appeal of the Evangelical Alliance is an impertinence, little short of blasphemy. The decent and sensible thing for Christians to do is to leave him alone, if they don't want him to regard them as ignorant, meddling fools. According to their own account, it is he who is running the show. What do they want to worry him for?

Miss Marie Corelli—which her real name is something else, as Mr. Weller would say—has published a twopenny "Social Note on the War," the sub-title being "Patriotism or Self-Advertisement?" No doubt a good many people will have their own opinion as to which the lady is after. She is severe upon her own sex, as usual. She is also down upon Mr. Rudyard Kipling for his "Absent-Minded Beggar." A good deal might be said against that bit of verse, but what she says is mainly nonsense. She takes the French word for beggar (*mendiant*), and then asks what Frenchmen will think when they hear Tommy Atkins called by *such* a name. Marie Corelli raises her eyebrows at "beggar" as a term of endearment. Well, if she will visit Newcastle-on-Tyne, and keep her ears open, she will discover that a word very much like it, but a thousand times worse in its original meaning, is frequently used in the very same way.

Kipling incurs Marie Corelli's censure because he is not a Tennyson. She overlooks the fact that he knows that already. Tennyson sent Kipling a letter in praise of his "English Flag," and the young poet's acknowledgment was admirable. "When the private in the ranks," he said, "is praised by the general, he cannot presume to thank him, but he fights the better next day." The man who wrote that doesn't want lessons in modesty, or in any other branch of good behavior, from this highly self-conscious lady novelist.

Marie Corelli is too fond of criticising her betters. She has a turn in this pamphlet against Mr. Swinburne, who has dared to refer to Christ upon the cross as "carrion crucified." She stigmatises him as a writer of "lewd verse," and as the "chiefly-praised poet" of the "poisonous doubt and negation of God." Mr. Swinburne can afford to smile at the first indictment. To the second indictment, omitting the "poisonous," he would probably plead guilty.

Our pious and indignant lady novelist has a slap in the face for another great Freethinker—Mr. Thomas Hardy. One of the words she ventures to use in regard to his splendid *Tess* is "bestialities." She tilts up her more or less elegant nose at its "repulsive character." Why it actually "turns on a case of seduction." No doubt it does, but seductions do happen in this world, and a good deal often "turns" upon them. If it is a sin to refer to them, Marie Corelli is herself one of the worst of sinners. In one of her novels a lady tries to seduce the Devil.

Olive Schreiner also comes in for a castigation on account of her *African Farm*, with its "utter atheism and materialism." On the whole, it seems pretty clear that English literature will never be in a satisfactory state until Marie Corelli is appointed to a censorship. Meanwhile, it might do her some good to reflect that it is very questionable form for one novelist to be criticising others, especially when the others are persons of genius, and the one is—well, not precisely on the same level.

The Manx clergy have been preaching ever since they were ordained: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal." Yet they went and placed their "treasure" in Dumbell's Bank, and have since been lamenting their unhappy confidence—not to say inconsistency. What business had they with banking accounts? They pretend to be humble followers of Jesus of Nazareth—the "perfect example," who, so far from having any specie in reserve, lived from hand to mouth, and hadn't even where to lay his head. His apostles were equally impecunious. When Christ sent them out to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, he said: "Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses."

Possibly the Manx clergy will urge that their deposits in Dumbell's Bank were not "treasure" in the ordinary sense of the term, but thrifty savings carefully put by for a rainy day. But what business had they to provide for the future? Did not Christ specifically say, "Take no thought for the future—morrow—what ye shall eat, drink," and so on? He showed what he meant by his own personal example, which is not followed, even at a long distance, by the present-day preachers of his gospel. The Manx clergy have now learnt something of

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what he intended to convey by his reference to the "deceitfulness of riches." Having lost their own—whether great or small—they have appealed through their Bishop to lay Christians also curiously enough in possession of sinful "treasure." And the other day they passed a resolution thanking his lordship and English Churchmen for their ready and generous response. No doubt, they will go straightway and "lay up" some portion of what has thus been subscribed. Either their practice or their precept is lamentably wrong. As they have plenty of leisure, they might as well face the question, and decide which it is they will abandon. Wriggle as much as ever they please, they still stand convicted of gross and glaring inconsistency.

A sapient reviewer in the *British Weekly* thus comments on Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*: "The judgment of unprejudiced scholarship on such a book must be severe, and, in fact, the book need not be considered by the serious student. One cannot help thinking of how Robertson Smith would have dealt with it." The reviewer, of course, may speculate as to what would have been the result if the mighty intellect and scholarship of Robertson Smith had been brought to bear on the subject. But we confess that we haven't the faintest curiosity in that direction.

It is a pity that people who think there is no further anti-theological work to be done will not take the trouble to look around them. Here is the Ilford District Council deciding not to allow Sunday music in their parks in consequence of the opposition of religious folk, who think that such music is a desecration of the Lord's Day.

We hear a great deal about the "hardworked" clergy, though it is wonderful what a lot of time and attention many of them are able to devote to pursuits quite outside their calling. Many of them might be half-pay officers or pensioners looking at the little time they think it necessary to devote to their duties. Here is the testimony of Canon Haygate, quoted from "Ember Hours," and apparently endorsed by the *Church Review*: "Surely we are the most eccentric clergy the world ever saw. There is scarcely any subject or occupation which is not taken up by some clergyman, who continues to hold his preferment, whilst his thoughts and time are given to an extraneous occupation. One man writes for the newspapers as a politician, another is wholly an entomologist, another a geologist, another a florist, and the like. One man takes up mesmerism and labours for it, another spiritualism, and the like." Yes, we really have the most eccentric clergy the world ever saw.

Dr. Washington Sullivan is an Ethical Religionist. That, we believe, is what he calls himself. But he is really a Theist, who tries to base morality upon belief in God. It was natural, therefore, that he should superlatively praise the late Dr. James Martineau. Still, he need not have gone to the extravagant length of saying that it was "the commanding influence" of this eminent Theist which prevented religion from being "swept clean out of the cultivated intellect" after the magnificent success of Darwinism. The forces that make for the longevity of religion are far greater than the genius or personality of any one man. What takes a long time to get born, and a very long time to grow to maturity, takes a long time to die—at least to die a natural death.

Mr. C. Napier Henry, a well-known artist, has once more refused to pay the Rector's Rate at Falmouth. This time he is joined by Mr. H. S. Mackenzie, a member of the Town Council. Both protest against paying for what they don't want. Those who require the Rector's services should pay for them. That is their position. They also hold that the Rector acts very meanly in living upon the compulsory contributions of people who wish to leave him to his own resources.

Good old "Providence"! Three school children were killed by lightning the other day at Arthington. Any decent human being who had the management of that storm would have strained a point in favor of the little ones.

We have read that Ingersoll once took refuge from a storm, and amongst those who sought the same shelter was a Baptist preacher. This "dipper" tried to improve the occasion by "getting at" the great Freethinker. He expatiated on the grandeur of the elements in a state of commotion, and wondered how any man with a grain of intellect could remain an unbeliever in the presence of such a spectacle. Ingersoll listened until he thought it was about time to give the man a lesson. Then he said that the storm was very far from proving a Providence. "Why," he said, "if the lightning gets amongst us under this shelter, it is just as likely to kill me as a fool like you. Where's the Providence in that?" They always got on the wrong side when they tackled "Bob."

The late Mr. C. H. Pearson, the author of that striking book on *National Life and Character*, whose Biography has just been published, had conscientious scruples about taking

the fellowship oath at Oxford, and asked his friend Acland how he had prevailed on himself to take it. Acland replied that he had consulted Dean Gaisford, of Christ Church, who addressed him in this fashion: "Well, Acland, your father was a Fellow of All Souls, and your eldest brother was a Fellow of All Souls, and A., and B., and C., whom you know and respect, were all Fellows; and none of them felt themselves hampered by this scruple. And if you think it necessary to entertain doubts where they didn't, all I can say is that I think you must be a very conceited young fellow." That satisfied Acland, but it did not satisfy Pearson, who had a conscience of his own.

Lord Kelvin, the famous scientist, attended the meeting of the Ladies' Protestant League at Wimborne House, and spoke against the Ritualist "poison" which is being circulated in National Schools. But is it not a wonder that Lord Kelvin does not see the only possible remedy? As long as religion is allowed in National Schools (that is, State-supported Schools) at all, the various sects will fight for paramourty, and the most powerful will carry the day. The proper thing to do is to banish religion from the schools altogether. There would then be no trouble, no heart-burning, no quarrels, no grumbling over the silly Conscience Clause, and no fear of children being stuffed with religious teaching against the wishes of their parents. Those who really wanted religious teaching for their children could get it at Sunday-schools, or other places devoted to that object.

"Her Majesty's ship Hell" is the name given by the crew to the *Europa*. She is infernally hot between decks.

"Will a Sunday mainly devoted to cycling, golf, or tennis linger with holy charm in the hearts of the youths and maidens of the present day?" That depends, Mr. Editor of the *Church Weekly*, upon a variety of circumstances, and especially the meaning you attach to the word "holy." If the right sort of youths and maidens get together, and the weather is bright and settled, and the facilities for the pastimes are satisfactory, and a little flirtation is possible, the occasion—though it be on a Sunday—may linger with some charm in the hearts and memories of the young. Why shouldn't it? And where is the use of lamenting that "in many a country house on Sunday afternoons you will see tea, croquet, novels, and even cards, going on as usual"? There is no earthly or heavenly reason why people should not so amuse themselves if they please. By the way, what has "tea" done? Aren't we to have any tea on the Lord's Day? This strikes us as being quite a new Sabbatarian "kick."

Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper still continues to insert sermons by eminent ecclesiastics in its columns. Probably more than half the bishops have contributed, besides others of the illustrious obscure. Popular prejudice favors the idea that the clergy are educated men. These sermons prove that a number of the best heads in the Church are intellectually three centuries behind the Chinese.

A young minister, about to preach his first sermon, feeling nervous, endeavored to rally his courage by means of stimulants. When the time came to preach he was decidedly drunk, and he, with difficulty, mounted the pulpit. Soon after he lost his balance. Falling down the steps, he seized the lectern, a brass eagle with outspread wings. Still holding the lectern, he bowed to the congregation, and said gravely: "Ladies and gen'lmen—(hic)—if it hadn't been for —(hic)—that confounded sparrow, I should—(hic)—have broken my neck."

We are not alone in our estimate of the gifted Sheldon and his works. Here are a few comments from the *Topical Times*: "Mr. Sheldon—or his henchman in the religious Press—is crying out that he has only received eight pounds on the sale in England of 'millions of copies' of *In His Steps*. We don't believe 'millions of copies' have been sold; but, if they had, we should say Mr. Sheldon had been grossly overpaid. Eight shillings (and costs) would have met the case handsomely. The *Christian World* is surprised that none of the big publishers thought the book would sell. We are not. We have read it; and we can sympathise with those literary salesmen who thought it was too bad even to catch the pence of 'the average reader.'"

Birthday text-books are usually insipid productions, but the worst we have ever set eyes on is one compiled from the works of the Rev. Mr. Sheldon. It is entitled *In his Steps: A Birthday Text-book*. It contains a spoonful of religious pap for intellectual infants for every day in the year. Each dose of Sheldonian soothing syrup is accompanied by a quotation from the Bible. It is only fair to Mr. Sheldon to admit that he does not write more stupidly than the Holy Ghost.

Another masterpiece in the same line is the *Chamberlain Birthday Book*. Joseph may or may not be a great statesman; he certainly is a shocking writer. He seems to be almost unacquainted with literature. We miss, among the

quotations, the Colonial Secretary's tender inquiry after the health of Mrs. Kruger. It might have been included as a proof of his humanity, for he is popularly supposed to have a heart as hard as nails.

Once Mr. Chamberlain, like Silas Wegg, did "drop into poetry." In the course of the Home Rule split he quoted some lines from Longfellow comparing the union to a ship. But Longfellow is familiar to every schoolboy, and that particular passage had been used by American orators many thousands of times.

The *Sunday Companion* favors the public with the portrait of a lady who has spent sixteen years of her life in connection with the mission for placing Bible texts in trams and omnibuses. Without desiring to be either ungallant or impious, we do not know which we would sooner have staring us in the face all through a long tram or 'bus ride—one of the texts or the lady's portrait. Either seems about enough to cause one to jump out and give "cabby" a chance. We would fain believe that the portrait is as far from reality as the texts are from the truth. It is calculated, we are told, that these texts are seen no fewer than 500,000,000 times by travellers in our cities. And still the bulk of us remain unconverted.

In answer to a correspondent, the *Rock* prints the following:—"ATHEISTS IN FRANCE.—We know of no figures more recent than those of the 1881 census; 7,684,906 persons then returned themselves as believing in no religion. Are you surprised at such a sad state of things?—*J. Brown, Finsbury Park.*" The query is rather cryptic. If the *Rock* means that it is a "sad state of things" that there are so many non-religionists in France, we can only express our regret that there are not more. But it is probable that the total given above did not represent all in 1881, and does not represent all now, for many people not unnaturally resent formal interrogation as to their religious or non-religious views.

A Church of England paper is to be started in which an active propaganda will be carried on to bring about Disestablishment. We notice that in this announcement nothing is said about Disendowment. The world will never see a Church of England paper brought out to advocate *that*. It is one of the few impossibilities of the future.

The cheek of some Christians is simply staggering. The *Sunday Companion* states that the following letter has been received from the West of England by a gentleman well known in London for his liberal support of philanthropic causes: "Sir,—Will you please send me £10? I want a bicycle, but it is to convince the people here that God answers prayer. You will be blessed for it.—A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST."

There is hope for prosy preachers after all. If they cannot interest their hearers by the subject-matter of their discourse, they may create a little excitement as to the length of time they will probably talk. The Rev. Charles Williams, of Accrington, declares that the betting mania has now reached such a point that the boys of his Sunday-school have betted on the length of his sermons! If this became prevalent amongst the "grown-ups," a minister might rope in a pretty fair sum for his Church Building Fund or Dorcas tea-fight by backing the exact time through a trusty friend amongst his congregation.

One has often remarked the large number of half-educated, wholly unintellectual "men of God" who go strutting about as the Rev. Dr. This or the Rev. Dr. That. The *Christian World* has let some light in on this curious fact in its last issue. It says that a gentleman whose name figured in the Congregational Year Book of last year in the list of "Evangelists and Lay Preachers" paid last autumn a two months' visit to America, and "has returned with a D.D., conferred, he says, *pro merito* by a University bearing a name which neither we nor any of those we have consulted have ever heard of before. Whether the *pro merito* in this case represents the reputation gained by the candidate as a divine or his contributions to the science of divinity, or the results of a course of studies at this university during his two months' American visit, does not appear. What does appear, and with sunbright clearness, is that procedures of this sort, if allowed to go unchecked, will bring the whole business of receiving and wearing honorary degrees into utter disrespect."

Further, the *Christian World* says: "There have been some glaring instances of the above in the Free Church ranks of late years, and it needs to be put down with a strong hand. For men who have neither had a University training nor shown any evidence of special theological learning to surreptitiously acquire, and then strut about in, these borrowed plumes is, they must be taught, a heinous example of false pretences, a procedure which, instead of bringing them honor, exposes them to the contempt of honest people."

The pious users of these practically bogus degrees must be aware that they are acting dishonestly—conveying false impressions to the public, if not to their own immediate followers. Then again, the title of "Reverend," though not deceptive, is often used by persons to whom it is singularly inapplicable. It seems to be specially prized by sucking young curates, who in age, ability, and personal influence are far from being "reverend" in any eyes but their own.

The War Office (says *M.A.P.*) seems now determined to remove the real or imaginary grievance as to Church of England chaplains being men of no special power or ability, and the Pall Mall authorities have, therefore, invited Canon Knox-Little to go out as a chaplain to the forces.

If the War Office authorities had exhibited months ago some solicitude for the material comfort and proper equipment of Tommy Atkins, they would have been entitled to some thanks. The sending out of a theological wind-bag at the eleventh hour is but a poor solatium for bad and insufficient rations, an inadequate supply of guns and horses, and an exhibition of stupid "red-tapeism" all round. The War Office now thinks it must do something anyway, and the sending out of Knox-Little is one of the latest of its brilliant ideas.

The Bishop of London recently claimed that the Christian Church, centuries ago, formed character, and did not discourage learning. Whereupon the *Daily News* remarked that "the prohibition of Greek is hardly the encouragement of learning, and the most superficial reader of Erasmus knows how Greek fell under the ecclesiastical ban. Like the subaltern," our contemporary says, "who declared that if he wrote distinctly people would be finding out how he spelt, the ecclesiastical hierarchy did not want their dupes to discover what liberties they took with the New Testament."

The Archbishop of Canterbury was a bit "previous" in expressing his "satisfaction that the voluntary subscriptions have not slackened in consequence of the aid grant." This sort of talk may do for the annual meeting of the National Society, but it will not do for the general public. In 1896, the year before this grant was carried, the "Voluntary" subscriptions amounted to £643,386, while last year they only amounted to £603,241. This is a very considerable decrease. And it is larger still relatively, for the attendance at Church schools has increased during the three years by over 22,000. The subscriptions, therefore, should have been increased, if only to keep pace with the increase in the number of scholars; instead of which they have very perceptibly decreased; so that the "slackening," to use the Archbishop's language, is quite serious. And of course it is natural; for why should Churchmen tax themselves to maintain their own schools when the general taxpayer is willing to find the money for them?

When Byron started (satirically) to find a hero for *Don Juan*, he found himself in the midst of an embarrassment of riches. "Every hour," he said, "brings forth a new one." Well, he might say the same thing again if he were living now. The whole "hero" business is being overdone. And that fine sailor, and capital good fellow, who commanded the Naval Brigade at Ladysmith, seems to be of the same opinion. Captain Hedworth Lambton, speaking at the Anglo-African Writers' Club Dinner, said: "How far the Naval Brigade assisted in saving Ladysmith is of no importance so long as Ladysmith was saved." That is the spirit of the real "hero." Do your bit of good work, if you can, and then talk of something else.

What a horrible name is Wormwood Scrubs! A well-known convict prison exists there, and the name and the place together are suggestive of something a good deal like Inferno. Of course, there is a chapel in the prison, where the poor devils in convict khaki sit on hard benches to have the gospel poured into them. Now and then a visitor is allowed in to witness the gruesome performance, and one such visitor has been writing an account of it in the *Westminster Gazette*. The service on this particular occasion was "run" by the Church Army, which also provided the preacher. The "lost" ones sang a hymn lustily, but it does not seem to have been well chosen:—

Brothers, we are treading
Where the saints have trod.

That may be true. But what a reflection on the saints!

After the service for the men was over the women trooped in. According to the *Westminster* reporter, they sang "O God, our help in ages past" fervently, but it was the "Home, Sweet Home" in the voluntary that brought the light into their faces. Heaven is all very well in its way, but women prefer a happy home on earth; with a man's voice in it, even the smell of his tobacco, and the delicious prattle of children. Compared with this, what is "loafing around the throne"?

N.B.

The FREETHINKER is no longer published at 28 Stone-cutter-street, but at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed.

To Correspondents.

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

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your useful batches of cuttings.

J. M. HEADLEY.—Pleased to see your vigorous and telling reply to Father Scott in the *Yarmouth Mercury*. You have him on the hip with respect to Draper. The priest must be a great ignoramus, or something much worse, to call Draper an "obscure scribbler." Besides the important works you mention, Draper was the author of a standard book on Physiology.

H. C. LONG.—We share your hope that women will do more in future to promote the cause of Freethought. But most of them can do more in their homes than they can possibly do outside. If they only make their children Freethinkers, by saving them from religious cramming and training them to use their own minds, the mothers of England will do more than half the work of emancipation.

D. FRANKEL.—See "Sugar Plums." The secretary (Miss Vance) has the excursion arrangements in hand. We note your offer of assistance if it should be required.

SUBSCRIBERS to the *Freethinker* who have not received the paper recently are earnestly requested—if this should meet their eyes—to communicate at once with the Freethought Publishing Company, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C. If they will kindly give particulars, the matter shall be put right promptly. Complaints are coming in still from subscribers whose addresses were not handed over to us by our former agent. The fault is not ours, be it remembered; and a similar difficulty can hardly occur again, now that the Company is doing its own business in its own premises.

F. T. CORNERFORD.—We should be very sorry to see the English race "ruling the world under the reign of Christ." With regard to "Colonial Expansion," it is doubtless quite right in some parts of the world, and inevitable in others. But there is no room for such colonisation in China, which already has four hundred millions of population. China may be hectorated and exploited, but it cannot be colonised.

MIMNERMUS.—Hope your brief trip to the seaside has been agreeable and (in point of health) profitable.

W. HEAFORD.—Thanks for your letter. See paragraph. It was good of you to set the ball rolling again in Regent's Park.

JOSEPH SYMES FUND.—A Scotch Friend, 7s.; Arthur Spencer, 2s.; W. H. Harrap, 10s. Friends will oblige by not sending us any more subscriptions to this contemplated Fund until we hear from Mr. Symes.

ATOMICUS.—It is easier to entertain large ideas than to carry them out. The practical course would be to join the local N. S. S. Branch and see what you can do to promote its constructive work. Advice from outside is never very helpful. Understand, we are not complaining, but suggesting; and we thank you for taking the trouble to write.

J. H. B.—You gave no name to go under the verses.

A. COLEMAN.—"Ally Looyer" is no relation to Ally Sloper. You won't find him in the Bible except under the alias of "Hallclujah."

A NEW MEMBER.—Regret we cannot make use of it.

OLD ADMIRER.—We intend to review Mr. Clodd's Life of his friend, the late Mr. Grant Allen, if possible next week.

I. G. BARTRAM.—See "Sugar Plums." We hope you will have good meetings on both Sundays.

T. WILMOT.—We have made the appeal for assistance, as requested; and we venture to hope that our own additional remarks will be fairly pondered.

RECEIVED.—The Boston Investigator—The Sunday Reader—Two Worlds—The Eagle and the Serpent—Crescent—Yarmouth Mercury—Life and Beauty—A Special Note on the War, by Marie Corelli.

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

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.

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

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.

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

Sugar Plums.

APPLICATIONS for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, are coming in, but more slowly than we could wish. We know that the holiday season of the year is not the most propitious for such an object; nevertheless, we venture to hope that those who have not yet taken Shares, but mean to do so, will lose as little time as possible in carrying out their intention. It is not that their money is wanted as yet by the Company. That is very far from being the case. But the Directors, and particularly the Managing Director, want to plan out a strong program for the winter season, which begins in September; and to do this effectually it is requisite that they should know what resources will be at their command. That is why the laggards are asked to hurry up.

London Freethinkers should all note that the N. S. S. Annual Excursion is fixed for next Sunday (July 1). A special train has been chartered to run to Brighton. It starts at a convenient hour in the morning in two divisions; from Victoria 9.25, and Clapham Junction 9.30—and from London Bridge 9.25, and New Cross 9.30. The return from Brighton is timed for 8.15, arriving in London some time before 10. This will give excursionists a good long day at the queen of English seaside resorts. And if "Providence" is only kind in the matter of weather we may all look forward to a "grand old time." The tickets, by the way, are only 3s. for adults, and 1s. 6d. for children under twelve.

The London Branches, we believe, are all co-operating in this agreeable function. Most of them, if not all, are suspending their propagandist work on that day, so that nothing may interfere with the success of the excursion. There ought to be at least five hundred in the train. Mr. Foote will join the party, and we dare say other well-known Freethinkers will do the same, as on former occasions.

The East London Branch secretary, D. Frankel, writes to say that the Branch will hold no meetings on Sunday, July 1, in order that all its members and friends may be free to join the N. S. S. Excursion to Brighton. Mr. Frankel adds that a number of the younger members, including himself, can row fairly well; so that any timid persons who would like to go out in a boat, and yet are afraid to trust to themselves, might take advantage of the skill of their East London friends, with a minimum of risk.

The Jubilee of *Reynolds's Newspaper* was a great success. Upwards of four hundred more or less well-known Radicals, Socialists, and Republicans—the majority of whom we should say were Freethinkers—assembled at the festive boards in the large King's Hall of the Holborn Restaurant on Thursday evening, June 14. Mr. Henry Labouchere presided, and Mr. W. M. Thompson, the editor of *Reynolds's*, was the guest of the evening. The other speakers were Mr. A. E. Fletcher, Mr. G. J. Holyoake, Mrs. Byles, Mr. H. M. Hyndman, Mr. George Howell, Mr. Steadman, Mr. Herbert Burrows, Mr. E. Belfort Bax, Mr. J. F. Green, Mr. Quelch, Rev. Harold Rylett, and Mr. G. W. Foote. Unfortunately the King's Hall is not particularly well adapted to public speaking, and some of the orators were very indistinctly heard, while others could not be heard at all except by those in their immediate vicinity. Mrs. Byles was brief, pointed, and happy, and her voice carried into every corner. Mr. Foote, of course, was heard by everybody. So was Mr. Thompson, who has his voice under good control, and possesses a considerable oratorical faculty.

All went merry as a marriage bell until the band struck up "God Save the Queen," at which there were indignant hisses, but also some cheers. Later on, at the very close of the meeting, one of the diners was expelled. It was said that he had sent up a request to the bandmaster, in the chairman's name, for the national anthem. We do not know whether this is true; anyhow, it was hardly worth while expelling him at five minutes to eleven, just as the King's Hall proceedings were terminating.

Most of the speakers (there was at least one exception) had something to say about the war. But after the chairman and the guest of the evening had exploited that topic, it was wearisome and even nauseous to have the poor remnants turned over and over. Indeed, there was far less unanimity of opinion than appeared to be thought at the head of the

table; and a practised speaker, with the opportunity and the mind to do it, would not have had a very great difficulty in creating a diversion. The four hundred odd ladies and gentlemen at the dinner tables were not, and it was impossible that they should be, in perfect agreement with every article of the *Reynolds'* program. The one universal sentiment was that Mr. Thompson was an able and outspoken editor, with the full courage of his convictions; and that *Reynolds'*, while not monopolising the light and leading of the age, had for fifty years stoutly upheld its flag of Democracy. From a purely journalistic point of view, it should be added that Mr. Thompson and his colleagues (who ought not to be forgotten) have succeeded in making and keeping the paper *interesting*. And that is probably one of the main causes of its success.

Mr. Cohen lectured in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon and evening to first-rate meetings. A collection was made in the afternoon for the Hospital Sunday Fund. There was a record sale of the *Freethinker*, and a good many tickets for the Brighton excursion were disposed of.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch has once more engaged Mr. C. Cohen to lecture on the Town Moor on "Race Sunday" and the following Sunday. A morning lecture will be delivered at 11 on the Quayside; the evening lecture will be at 7, near the Military Sports Stand on the Moor. The local Freethinkers are asked to assemble in strong force, at least at the evening meeting, for reasons which are sufficiently obvious; and those who are willing to assist this good effort financially should communicate at once with the secretary, Mr. J. G. Bartram, 117 Morley-street, Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Messrs. Watts and Co. advertise in another part of this week's *Freethinker* the Dresden edition of Ingersoll's writings and speeches, which is being published by Mr. C. P. Farrell on behalf of the Ingersoll family. The edition will run to twelve volumes, and, as the price is proportionate, it is of course not everybody's purchase. Precautions are apparently to be taken against this edition being "pirated" in England, but we do not think there is a likelihood of anyone attempting to publish such a vast collection of Ingersoll's utterances in this country. Whether this Dresden edition will always be the "only authorised" edition of Ingersoll remains to be seen. Always is a very long time, and all sorts of things are liable to happen in the future. Meanwhile, we hope, if only for Mr. Farrell's sake, and for the sake of the Ingersoll family who are presumably behind him, that the complete edition, expensive as it is, will find a fair number of purchasers on this side of the Atlantic. It is a big venture, involving a heavy outlay.

Manchester Freethinkers are requested to note that Mr. H. Percy Ward delivers two open-air lectures in their city to-day (June 24); in the afternoon at 3 at Ducie-street, Piccadilly, near London-road Station, and in the evening at 7 at Stevenson-square. The local "saints" should rally round the platform on both occasions.

Mr. T. Wilmot, secretary of the Camberwell Branch, asks us to request South London Freethinkers to give their moral support, and, if necessary, something else, to the Secular outdoor platform in Brockwell Park to-day (June 24). Last Sunday the platform was stormed and broken to pieces. A new one will make its appearance to-day, and we hope it will be effectually guarded against violence.

And now, having performed that little duty, we address ourselves to another. Mr. Wilmot does not tell us why the platform was stormed and broken to pieces. According to a newspaper paragraph which we have seen, the lecturer referred to the Queen as "an insignificant little woman." That may be his opinion, and he is entitled to hold it; but it was not very wise, or in very good taste, to express it in public, especially at a time like this. Even a pronounced Republican may well think that the Queen's sex and age should be a protection against rough personalities. Besides, a Freethought platform is not a political platform, and nothing but mischief can result from overlooking this fact, which ought to be obvious even to the most enthusiastic political sectarians. And when politics are carried to the length of personality on a Secular platform, it is likely to create a diversion to the disadvantage of our propaganda. Undoubtedly our platforms must be maintained, but just as undoubtedly those who speak from them must display a proper sense of responsibility.

Mr. W. Heaford, having held a successful open-air meeting on Sunday morning at Ridley-road, had a free time in the afternoon, so he strolled into Regent's Park, where he found a C. E. S. meeting just started, but no Freethought gathering. There were little knots of people here and there, but that was all. Mr. Heaford therefore started a meeting "on his own," and soon had a splendid assembly around him. He held it for over an hour, and then took the discussion. Everything passed off very smoothly, and the lecturer received a lot of sympathetic applause.

The Regent's Park Freethought Society, Mr. Heaford says, is dead, having split into atoms over political matters. It seems a thousand pities, he adds, to let another season pass without organised propaganda being revived. We quite agree with him, and the matter shall have immediate attention.

By the way, the C. E. S. meeting became a *fiasco* as soon as Mr. Heaford started. The audience of the virulent and lugubrious C. E. S. speaker were only waiting for something better.

Mr. F. Lester, 123 Abbeyfield-road, Rotherhithe, S.E., has reprinted from our columns Mimmermus's article, "The Gospel Writ in Steel." It mainly consists of a list of blasphemy prosecutions during the present century, and is a most effective leaflet for propagandist purposes. We hope it will be used largely during the summer season at outdoor meetings.

The Liverpool Branch picnic is fixed for Sunday, July 21. Local friends will please note. The Alexandra Hall will be closed during July and August.

The new series of Sunday Freethought Demonstrations are being arranged for with all possible dispatch. The red tape of government offices is the principal cause of delay. Permission has to be obtained to drive the brake, which serves as a platform, into the various Parks. It is intended to start on July 8, and a fuller announcement will appear in our next issue.

Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* are now issued as a handsome volume by the Freethought Publishing Company, with a special brief Preface by the author. This publication has long been asked for, and will probably command a large sale. The work is both instructive and entertaining. It contains a good deal of information, gathered from all kinds of sources; and it is written throughout in the author's raciest style. We do not know of any book to compare with it. There may be better books and worse books, especially the latter; but, as it stands, with its merits and demerits, it has at least the distinction of being unique. As far as we are aware, there is absolutely nothing like it in existence; and if the reader wants this sort of thing at all, he must buy this particular volume. To orthodox Christians it will be terribly "blasphemous," but if they can only be got to read the first dozen pages we venture to think that few of them will stop reading till they get to the end. By that time, we also venture to think, it will be impossible for them ever to look upon the Bible in the same old light again. This is a book for Freethinkers to read and keep by them, and a book likewise for lending to orthodox friends who display any symptoms of an inquiring disposition.

Bible Romances makes a companion volume to *Bible Heroes*. The two together cover "Holy Writ" in a special and, indeed, an unprecedented manner. Add a third volume, *The Book of God*, to complete the trinity, and the reader will have the means beside him of making a thorough survey of the whole field of the Christian Scriptures.

Will the friends of the *Freethinker* kindly bear in mind that we are still anxious to receive the names and addresses of newsagents who will display our weekly contents-sheet? Copies are forwarded by post to such newsagents every Wednesday from our publishing office.

Rothschild and the Saints.

"He preserveth the way of his saints."—*Proverbs ii. 8.*
ONE evening, when Heine was drinking with some wealthy Jewish friends in Paris, one of the party inquired why the wine before them was called *Lachryma Christi*—"tears of Christ." Heine replied that it must have been because Christ wept at the idea of such good wine being drunk by unbelieving Jews. A similar thought arises in viewing the late Baron Rothschild's bequest at the British Museum. Here we have a mass of reliquaries, devotional objects, and figures of saints, upon which devout Christians had lavished their art and their wealth, and which had all drifted at last into the hands of a Jewish virtuoso. The Christian saints who thus found themselves the property of an unbelieving Jew must have wept at their fate, and repeated Job v. 17: "To which of the saints wilt thou turn?"

Those readers of the newspapers who occasionally glance at other matters besides the war may remember that a little while ago there appeared sundry notices concerning "the Waddesdon Bequest," which had recently been added to the attractions of the British

Museum. This legacy was due to Baron Ferdinand Rothschild, whose wealth had enabled him to acquire a very large collection of those objects of art which millionaires delight to gather together. People who were tired of perusing the monotonous accounts of Boer exhibitions of white flag and white feather read with interest the glowing accounts which the pressmen gave of Rothschild's collection, and flocked to the Museum in such crowds that it was very difficult to get a sight of the treasures. The visitors, being chiefly nominal Protestants, do not entertain any enthusiasm for the poor saints; and they do not display much biblical knowledge. I observed a puzzled group standing before a gorgeous dish of Limoges enamel, brilliantly painted with the Woman of the Apocalypse, riding on the Seven-Headed Beast so dear to the *Christian Herald*, and surrounded by emperors, popes, kings, cardinals, &c., &c. They looked with amazement at the scene, and one of them ventured the remark: "It must be the picture of some *imaginary* animal." Close by was a plate illustrated with the story of Judith and Holofernes, and a fond father was informing his son that it represented a scene from Roman history.

Considering that the collector of all these articles was a Jew, it is remarkable that the great majority of them are either Christian objects of devotion, or are decorated with Christian subjects. Baron Rothschild's taste in saints was extremely catholic. He did not confine himself to one family group, but gathered them together with an open mind. There are representations of no less than thirty-one saints of the Church, comprising Anne, Barnabas, Bernard, Catherine, Christopher, Cosmas, Damian, Elizabeth, Gabriel, Genevieve, George, Gregory, Helena, Hubert, James, Jerome, John the Almoner, John the Baptist, John the Evangelist, Leger, Luke, Margaret, Mark, Matthew, Michael, Nicholas, Paul, Peter, Thomas Aquinas, Ursula, and Valerie. Some of these saints are familiar, others are not; and if anyone does not find his favorite saint amongst them, that is not my fault; it is Baron Rothschild's. I have an idea that St. Leger had something to do with horse-racing, but Alban Butler does not say anything about it in his *Lives of the Saints*. Most of these saints are represented by one figure only, but there are four St. Georges and three St. Margarets. The Virgin Mary occurs thirteen times, and there are four crucifixions. There are three reliquaries, two of them empty; but the third contains an article which one would hardly think would interest a gentleman of the Hebrew persuasion, for it is nothing less than a thorn from the Crown of Thorns. The thorn is of formidable length, and very well preserved after eighteen centuries. The Museum now boasts two of these thorns, the other being in the Gold Room; but there are plenty more scattered about Europe; and an irreverent friend of mine, who has travelled a great deal, says: "If J. C. wore all the thorns I've seen, his head must have looked like a blooming porcupine." The Rothschild specimen did not receive its present setting until the time of Philip II. of Spain, so that there is a little gap of a millennium and a half in its pedigree; but of course no one but a rabid Wyckliffite would object to it on that account. It is set in a costly sapphire, and contained in a reliquary of gold enamelled with the twelve apostles, the Father, the Virgin Mary, and John the Baptist—quite a little family group. To those who hunger and thirst after coincidences we are able to point one out: let him that readeth understand it. Exhibit No. 30 is a circular dish of painted Limoges enamel, representing Moses striking the rock. Martial Courtois, the artist, desiring to display his erudition, has placed at the top of the picture four Hebrew letters in a blaze of light. The letters he intended were probably יהוה, the tetragrammaton Jehovah; but what he actually wrote was יהוה, which is simply the Hebrew words, "and a thorn." Baron Rothschild must have often smiled when he looked at this picture, to think that he really possessed this dish "and a thorn" from the Crown of Thorns.

In forming a collection it is, of course, the wisest plan to confine oneself to some particular period, for it is far better to study one period exhaustively than to range in a dilettante fashion over the universe. The period here chosen by Baron Rothschild was the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, and nearly all the objects are Flemish and German work of about that time. There may be differences of opinion

as to the intrinsic beauty of the art, and the visitors seem to be more dazzled than charmed by it; but it is certainly an interesting and instructive collection not only to the craftsman, but also to the historical student, for it must be remembered that these articles were mostly made in Flanders and Germany during those religious convulsions signalised by the massacres of the Duke of Alva and the Thirty Years' War. One of the silver cups, in fact, is a memorial of Gustavus Adolphus; and a silver salver was once the property of the Prince of Orange. Among the wood carvings is a contemporary medallion portrait of the famous John of Leyden. The other John—John Calvin—seized the city of Geneva, and established himself there as Protestant Pope and Despot, imprisoning, banishing, hanging, and burning everybody who did not agree with him. In like manner, John of Leyden seized the town of Münster, in Westphalia, which proved the worst failure of his career; for the Bishop of Münster collected together his aristocratic relations, stormed the city, and executed John of Leyden and his adherents, with those little refinements which invariably accompany religious contests. The Rothschild medallion gives the portrait of this celebrated gentleman, with the explanatory German inscription: "John of Leyden, king of the Anabaptists of Münster, at the age of twenty-six years." The portrait shows that John, like another person, had "no form nor comeliness, and no beauty that we should desire him." Thus, we see that Baron Rothschild collected Anabaptist saints as well as Roman Catholic ones.

England is scarcely represented in the collection except by the Lyte Jewel, a miniature of James I. set with diamonds, which the Baron bought at the Hamilton Sale for £2,835.

We read in Judges xvii. 5 that "the man Micah had a House of Gods." The Baron Rothschild also had a house of gods, for the objects which are not decorated with Christian saints are ornamented with Olympian deities. It is unnecessary to give a list of them, for they are all there, and none have been left out. Neptune is most numerous, Bacchus comes next, Hercules is a good third, and Venus and Apollo tie for a fourth place. In saints the Baron's preferences were for the Virgin Mary, St. George, and St. Margaret; in gods, Neptune, Bacchus, and Hercules. We have pondered over the question, but are unable to offer any satisfactory explanation of his choice in either case.

Curious people have often busied themselves in collecting statistics of the tastes and amusements of princes, aristocrats, and millionaires; but it is not often that we are enabled to study the particular saints that a wealthy Hebrew gentleman delights to honor; and the biblical student will be pleased to note that Judah is still, as in Hosea xi. 12, "faithful with the Saints."

CHILPERIC.

Chemico-Physical Theories of Life.—III.

THE words "electricity" and "magnetism" had been too much regarded as fetish words, self-explanatory, instead of being, as they are, simply names for phenomena—viz., the attraction of certain bodies by other bodies. That is really all that is covered by these two terms, and it is essential that the fact be borne in mind. For, whereas it was supposed and taught that the words represented *specific* properties or endowments, it is now demonstrable that that is not so, but that *all matter is so endowed*, only the gamut of endowment is an infinite one. The complete intellectual assimilation of this fact is the key to understanding the whole problem of the "Quick" and the "Dead." For it permits the realisation of the fundamental postulate of the new materialism that there is no beginning to anything except *form*, which, by reason of the infinite relativity of engerial endowment, is perpetually mutable and variable. There is no existence, no form, no substance, to which the attributes of "sameness," or "identicalness," "yesterday, to-day, and forever," can be applied. Even type and archetype change. The system of phenomena of to-day is the outcome, or inevitable issue, of that of yesterday [so to speak], and to-morrow's that again of to-day, and so on interminably, whether backwards or forwards.

All phenomena are the result of the play of variously electrified elements upon one another, or, in other words, of the interconvertibility of forces, or energies, all force or energy being, primarily, electrical. It is legitimate to speculate what the primal phenomena were. And the speculation most acceptable to this explication is that of the "urstoff," or firemist. Some say they cannot conceive a firemist; though such can readily enough conceive a ghost. Such persons might aid their conceptions by viewing the Bessemer process of steel manufacture, and studying the same carefully; or, by regarding the sun's photospheres through a good telescope, not only with the eye, but with the scientific imagination as well, and keeping in mind the diameter of these firemists; or by observing the phenomena attendant upon the release of pressure from fluid atmospheric air, or its treatment at divers temperatures. The man who cannot form a fair conception of the primeval mist after such object-lessons must be far removed from the normal psychological plane. Anyhow, the firemist condition, of which our sun's photospheres form a relic, was most conceivably the primeval status of all matter; but it was no more chaos than our earth is now. Neither was it more, nor less. It was a cosmos of a kind. The only difference conceivable between the cosmos then and now is that then all was kinetic and disintegrated, whilst now mostly all is integrated and potential.

This integration, the integration of the elementary bodies, there is every reason now to think, was and is the inevitable and necessary consequence of a process of cooling. We see repeated examples of this annually in the congelation of water; and physical science has, in the laboratory, yielded similarly pointed object-lessons in the liquefaction of gases and atmospheric air. Other conditions besides that of temperature merely have, no doubt, been determining factors, but that of temperature has indubitably been the principal and primal.

Electricity, which in some form or another is the universal cosmic energy, is not only heat yielding in kinesis, but, when potential, demands warmth for its kinesis, friction in any form, the heat of chemical interchange, applied warmth, or mere physical juxtaposition, as in the voltaic pile, or the conjugation of living things.

What men have been in the habit of objectifying under the name of "force," and sundry correlative terms—some of them bearing personal references—is not truly an object, or objectifiable in any of its modes *per se*. We only know it as an inalienable attribute (or pertinent) of matter; some forms thereof holding more in potential than others, some holding it more tightly, some more loosely, than others. Take, for instance, the difference in this respect betwixt gold and uranium; or that betwixt the fruit of the *pinus muricata* and dynamite.

Though I care nought for authorities, *merely as such*, it is well worth noting here that Sir Isaac Newton, in the preface of his great work entitled *The Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, wrote: "I wish we could derive the rest of the phenomena of nature by the same kind of reasoning, from mechanical principles; for I am persuaded, by many reasons, to suspect that they may all depend upon certain forces by which the particles of bodies, by some causes hitherto unknown, are either mutually impelled towards each other, and cohere in regular figures, or are repelled, and recede from each other." "The causes hitherto unknown" are now resolvable into the one cause—electricity—for Faraday's discovery or speculation that every molecule was necessarily an "ion" [or electricity bearing particle] is now accepted as the basis fact of the science of Chemistry, and is the key to the philosophy of the new Materialism.

Philosophically viewed, the old distinction betwixt dead and living matter is now effete. All nature lives, either potentially or kynetically, either as "natura naturans" or as "natura naturata." The terms "dead" and "living" are, therefore, only properly usable in a comparative sense, as expressing conditions, more or less. The phrase "dead matter" is an anomaly, otherwise; for even the very "deadest" matter has the potency of life, and, as Tyndall said in his Belfast speech, "of all things." Even spiritists and spiritualists nowadays are obliged to admit that their imagined

beings have "bodies" of finely-attenuated matter, not realising that the admission gives away their whole case, for they cannot demonstrate how such "fine matter" can be individuated, nor how, individuated consciousness can be granted, for the sake of argument, *will* can emerge. Will, as we know it, emerges only as the outcome of a process of cerebation in an organ, the evolution of which has taken eons of time, and the process itself takes time. As the late W. E. Gladstone would have said, if he could have brought himself to give the subject his attention, "it passes the wit of man to conceive" any will energy otherwise functioned.

The chemical elements illustrate, in two ways, the relativism of the magnetic energy. Firstly, it manifests in duplex form, commonly termed positive and negative. These words simply cover plus or minus endowment, greater or lesser excitation, more or less coerced condition, and *not two forces*. Secondly, this relative endowment effects a very exact cleavage, analogically sexual, betwixt the elements whose classification is into metallics and non-metallics, and no known product exists which does not contain one or more members of each class in combination.* Arrange and re-arrange them as you may, the reciprocal duality of the classes is such that the union issues in production of a disparate compound; and, further, the union is governed by laws of definite proportion of volume and weight. Why matter possesses this constitution rather than another we do not know. What philosophy must do is to accept the fact, with all its implications, and reason logically upon them, recognising that an ultimate origin to things is impossible, because what *is, ever is*. What *is, never* can be what *isn't*. Matter has the characteristics now, therefore it must always have possessed them, and must continue to possess them. Its forms change, its forms are continually changing, its forms will ever change, but it perdures.

The basic idea, then, of universal existence is therefore not innumerable trillions of molecules merely perduring, but these incessantly in motion; and such atomic energy can be regarded from two aspects—*viz.*, that of the ultimate units singly—the "ions" of Faraday, or that of groups of individuals, from molecules upwards, acting harmoniously. Thus each elementary group is regarded as having a characteristic fundamental energy of its own. Not differing, as it were, radically in nature, but in quantity, vehemence, selectivity, mode, and other subsidiary ways. In short, and in fact, whilst the primal energy is unique, the seventy odd elements possess just so many fundamental modes thereof.

Given these, it follows, necessarily, that from the combinations of two or three, or more, of them with one another, the field of evolution of secondary energies is infinite. Thus the infinite intercombinations of matter, due to the inherent energy thereof, evolves and maintains an infinitude of forms and substances and organisms.

ROBERT PARK, M.D.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Our valued friend, Mr. Ball, has been good enough on one or two occasions to accuse me of not distinguishing between the word and the thing signified. Such an accusation is calculated to invite a reference to what a certain person said about a mote and a beam.

His sensitive conscience is also troubled that I should imply that he accused me of unfairness when he only said "not quite fair." As, however, not quite fair and unfair are only different degrees of the same thing, and as he does in the same letter specifically remark that I am irrelevant or unfair, we may take it that "Honor is satisfied."

In a former letter I ventured to lay down certain positions about the word "justice"; and Mr. Ball's rejoinder is merely equivalent to a plea of—Guilty upon all the usual of the indictment. Our learned friend, with his usual courteous eagerness to place his stores of knowledge at our disposal, points out that the word "morality" is derived ultimately from the Latin *mores*. Our "morality," however, came to us from the French, and it will probably not be

* It is possible, of course, that the development of Physical Chemistry may necessitate a change of view and statement here.

questioned that French *moralité* means the same thing as the English "morality," in spite of what has been said in haste about the word changing its meaning.

We are also thankful to have it stated that our respected associate does not justify arbitrary alterations of the meanings of words, as his previous deliverances seem to show; though even now he talks about evolving new meanings. (The facetious compositor makes it "revolve" new meanings," which is distinctly good.)

Mr. Ball is surprised that he should be expected to "miraculously and slavishly" employ the same words as Mr. Gould in describing the same thing. But suppose these two gentlemen were to meet with a huge dark animal, having a wrinkled skin and a comparatively small tail; the nose of this animal being lengthened into a long trunk, and having two of its teeth projecting as tusks! I rather fancy that both Mr. Ball and Mr. Gould would miraculously and slavishly use the same word, "Elephant," in describing the monster.

The paragraph concerning religious crimes was of the highest relevance; because we are calmly assured by our esteemed opponents that the word "religion" conveys to the mind an elevated and beautiful, but excessively hazy, ideal of universal benevolence. If they are right, then history must be false when it relates the crimes that have been committed in the name of this nebulous beneficence.

Our worthy friend, by some occult method of interpretation, understands me to say that religion is almost universally identified with ethics; and we are further informed that, although the forced partnership of religion and virtue enables the enemy to describe opponents of religion as opponents of virtue, yet Mr. Gould can rebut the libel by explaining that his "religion" is not the common brand, but a new and improved variety, with the signature on every box. He should try this method on the next Christian Evidence man he meets, and communicate the result to us. An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory.

Of course, no one ever suggested that Mr. Ball used the phrase, "amiable eccentricity of some modern ethicists." It was I who said it, because it seemed to sum up the style of argument we hear about this Objectionable Religion. We are told to let the Objectionables have their little fling, because "it amuses them and don't hurt you."

Mr. Ball takes it as an unkindness to say that he uses words in a Pickwickian sense; but, nevertheless, continues to talk in the same style. When "religion" is defined as a system of faith and worship; and Mr. Bradlaugh certainly never claimed to have religious faith. Furthermore, it should be unnecessary to explain that, in defining religion as faith and worship, we are speaking of actual worship, not metaphorical. Our friend cannot surely wish us to suppose that phorical people go to church every Sunday to indulge in metaphorical worship.

We are informed that it is an error to suppose that Matthew Arnold was a pious religionist, because he has been canonised as a heretic by finding a place in the *Dictionary of Freethinkers* compiled by the lamented and revered J. M. Wheeler. But Mr. Wheeler distinctly said in his preface that his purpose was to record the names of those who had contributed in their generation to the advance of Freethought. The Anglican Bishop Colenso figures in the *Dictionary*; and I understand that Martin Luther narrowly escaped inclusion in it. However nebulous and inconsistent Matthew Arnold's theology may have been, he evidently regarded himself not only as a very pious individual, but also as a sincere Christian. In the introduction to the popular edition of his best known work he says of it: "The object of *Religion and Dogma* is to re-assure those who feel attachment to Christianity, to the Bible, but who recognise the growing discredit befalling miracles and the supernatural. Such persons are to be reassured not by disguising or extenuating the discredit which has befallen miracles and the supernatural, but by insisting on the natural truth of Christianity." There should, therefore, be nothing to be surprised at in my description of him.

As to my turpitude in dislocating Latimer and Johnson, I have carefully restudied the two paragraphs referred to, even unto seven times, and still fail to perceive their independence of one another. But as the writer did not intend to have them associated together, I must beg him to blame it to my obtuseness.

The cynic must find food for sardonic mirth in the spectacle of so many worthy people making a fuss about the word after they have abandoned the thing. We have individuals who deny inspiration and deny Christ, and yet are pathetically anxious to explain that they are Christians. We have others who reject every real belief in a personal deity and revelation from him, and yet are very angry if anyone hints that they are Atheists. While others who have given up every vestige of religious belief, who deny every point of religious doctrine, and who pay adoration to naught in the heavens above, the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth, yet proclaim that they have still got "religion," and use all kinds of arguments, philological, psychological, and illogical, in the endeavor to maintain that the word "religion" means something or other that they can still subscribe to.

When the religionist sees unbelievers; throwing away the fruits and kernels of theological doctrines, while hugging the

husks of theological words emptied of their meaning, it is small wonder that his mind reverts to the parable of the prodigal son, who wandered away into a far country and would fain fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat.

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I BELIEVE in the out-of-nothing
Everything Creator;
And I believe in the "natural" Son
With a supernatural Pater.

I believe that the Mother of Christ
Was a pure and spotless virgin,
And challenge contradiction from
A doctor or a surgeon.

I believe that Jesus Christ
Was gentle as a pigeon,
Although He tried to overthrow
The Israelites' religion.

I believe they ran Him in,
And brought Him unto "Pontius";
Then nailed Him to a crucifix,
Till dead as nails, unconscious.

I believe He was buried—His tomb
Was seen by His favorite "donahs";
And his burial lasted just three days,
To tally with the Prophet Jonah's.

Yes, I believe He was dead three days,
In spite of sceptics' scorning,
Although He died on Friday and
Arose on Sunday morning.

Three days and nights inside the tomb
He never ceased to tarry,
But at the same time went to Hell,
And interviewed Old Harry.

I believe that He rose again,
As I've already stated,
And flew away to the Heavenly Regions,
Somewhere situated.

I believe in the Holy Bird,
On Jah's left hand it perches;
And I believe in the Church of England:
Damn all other Churches!

I believe in the saints' "communion,"
No more strife and schism;
Believe all sins are pardoned, save
The sin of Atheism.

I believe in a universal
Corpse revivication,
Heav'n for souls whitewashed with blood,
For all the rest "cremation."

I believe my creed is true,
And any fool can see it;
Freethinkers don't, but they be damned;
Amen, say I, so be it!

ESS JAY BEE.

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, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Hamlet."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "Superstition and Science."
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack, "Christianity and Progress"; 6.30, E. Pack, "Is there Happiness in Heaven?"
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A. B. Moss, "What do Christians Believe?"
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15 and 6.15, R. P. Edwards.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, W. J. Ramsey.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "Science and Scripture."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30 and 7.15, S. E. Easton. Wednesday, at 8.15, W. J. Ramsey.

LIMEHOUSE (corner of Salmon's-lane): 11.30, A lecture.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture. Lectures every Tuesday and Thursday at 8 p.m.

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 Friday evening at 8.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Ross, "Religion and Astronomy."

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): Open-air lectures by H. Percy Ward—3 (Ducie-street, Piccadilly, near London-road Station), "The Foolishness of Prayer"; 7 (Stevenson-square), "Hell, and How to Get There."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—June 24 and July 1, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—June 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 24, Manchester. July 1, Birmingham. 15, Northampton. 22, Birmingham. August 19, Northampton.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—June 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 24, m., Ridley-road; a. and e., Victoria Park.

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