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## Grant Allen.

*Grant Allen: A Memoir.* By EDWARD CLODD. With a Bibliography. (London: Grant Richards.)

MR. EDWARD CLODD has fulfilled a pious duty in writing this Memoir of his friend, the late Mr. Grant Allen. And he has done his work excellently. He has said all that is necessary in these couple of hundred pages of liberal and well-margined type. For the subject of this volume is really not one of the immortals, although he was possessed of many fine and admirable qualities—qualities of intelligence that made him interesting and stimulating to a large class of readers, and qualities of character that endeared him (apparently) to a large circle of friends. We may add, in passing, that the volume includes a beautiful portrait of Grant Allen, and specimens of his minute handwriting. The motto chosen for the whole Memoir is from Landor—which should have been stated; but as Landor meant it for himself we doubt the propriety of using it for another. We need not say more; yet more could easily be said in such a case.

We learn from this Memoir that Grant Allen was Irish on the father's side, and Scotch, with admixture of French, on the mother's side. We are told that he was as near as possible a pure-blooded Celt. Whereabout we are treated to a little of the fashionable talk about the peculiarities of the Celtic genius. It reads very prettily in print, but it is probably all stuff and nonsense, and none the less so because it appears to have been devoutly believed in by Grant Allen himself. His father was a Church clergyman, who revolted against the Athanasian creed, and finally resigned his incumbency. Allen was born at Alwington, near Kingston, Canada, on February 24, 1848. He was educated there at first under a tutor, afterwards in France, then at Birmingham, and lastly at Oxford; matriculating at Merton College in 1867. While at Oxford he became a Herbert-Spencerite, if the expression is allowable. "Having," Mr. Clodd writes, "from his earliest boyhood dismissed, if he ever held it, all belief in the supernatural, his was no sudden conversion, but the orderly development of a mind attuned to the new evangel." His first marriage was brief and unfortunate; his wife was stricken with paralysis, and died after two years of helplessness. His second marriage seems to have been fortunate in every way. As a writer on scientific subjects, he gained the esteem of good judges, and even of the best—such as Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley. This kind of writing, however, did not bring him a subsistence; so he turned to fiction, produced a number of readable novels, gained the *Tit-Bits* prize of £1,000, and managed to rub along in comparative comfort until his death, which occurred on October 25, 1899, after weeks of frightful agony. For the rest, it may be said that he was not a man of action, but "a literary gent," that his life was not eventful in the sense that others can appreciate, and that the real interest of this volume is rather intellectual than personal. Yet it would be unfair, as well as impolitic, to pass over in silence the testimony of a friend like Professor F. York Powell, who knew him for thirty years. "There was perpetual interest," this friend says, "in his talk and life. But if he had been blind and unlettered I should have loved him and respected him, for he was ever a close follower of Truth, and walked in noble companionship with Pity and Courage."

With regard to Grant Allen's scientific writings, it is difficult for an ordinary reviewer to say anything useful.

Mr. Clodd thinks he might have made a very considerable name in this direction if the conditions had been more propitious. But this is scarcely a profitable theme of speculation. There may be—though we doubt it—many mute, inglorious Miltons buried in country churchyards; but the accomplished fact is the only thing that counts, and the only basis for the world's judgment. It seems to us that Grant Allen was rather acute and active than original. His versatility is praised by his friends, including his biographer; but versatility means ineffectiveness except in the case of consummate genius. The late Mr. Gladstone was a versatile man; he wrote on many subjects, and his great name gained him a hearing; but nothing that he wrote, outside the sphere of practical politics, was really worth the attention of those who were conversant with his subjects.

It was as a novelist, according to Mr. Lang, that Grant Allen found his true line of work. We suspect, however, that this judgment is due to the fact that Mr. Lang was no judge of his friend's scientific work, and dissented from his social, political, and religious opinions; so that the novels were the only things he could unreservedly appreciate. Grant Allen was not a born novelist. He wrote fiction merely to earn money. He says himself that he stooped deliberately to catch a lower (and profitable) public taste. Most of his work in this line was pot-boiling. It was not dishonorable, but it was not literature. Towards the end, by a sort of reaction, he began to take himself seriously as a novelist—and he overdid it. He wrote certain "Hilltop" novels, which he invited the public to regard as serious expressions of his convictions. But that was not art. It was preaching. *The Woman Who Did*, for instance, is a poor melodramatic story, with nothing of any value in the way of characterisation. It was written for didactic purposes. "This is my Evangel," he wrote in a presentation copy of the book to Mr. Clodd. So it might have been. But great novels are not written in that way. When the didactic purpose becomes predominant it is the death of art. Art may have friendships, but no alliances. Such close unions are like the connection of France with Russia; the former supplying all the rhetoric, and the latter reaping all the advantage; with the further result that the more ethereal partner is dragged down to the level of the more ponderous one.

Grant Allen had great trouble in getting his "Evangel" published. "The publishers," Mr. Clodd said, "would have none of it." The author threatened to destroy his manuscript. His old friend Nicholson "offered to take it into the immortal custody of the Bodleian." But this "flattering suggestion" was declined. A middle course was to be adopted. "I'll keep the MS.," Allen said, "during my lifetime, and ask my wife to pass it on to you after my departure from a planet which I shall have scanty cause to remember with gratitude." Considering the character of the book, the case was really developing into comedy. But at last Mr. John Lane agreed to publish the thing. It had a good sale, though not a great one; and it affected for the worse the sale of Allen's other novels afterwards. Mr. Stead published a summary of it in the *Review of Reviews*, believing that "the book was its own best antidote." But the monopolists of the bookstalls in Ireland—as was no doubt natural in such a Catholic country—refused to sell the magazine, and declined "to be made the vehicle for the distribution of attacks upon the most fundamental institution of the

Christian State." They need not, however, have been alarmed. Mr. Stead was right; the book is its own best antidote. The story itself—as far as a story can—refutes the author's thesis. Nothing but mischief and suffering to everybody concerned comes of the heroine's attempt to live a life of "free love" by discarding the obligation of legal marriage. And by a curious irony, which Allen evidently did not perceive, the partial peace and happiness which comes at the end is due to the unsophisticated heart of the young "Philistine" lover of the heroine's daughter. Instead of throwing her over when he learns the secret of her birth, he acts like a sound, honest lad who is really in love and means "to marry the girl" on that very account—which is the best of all accounts. He sends her a telegram, refusing her proffered release, and holding her to her engagement. Excellent young "Philistine"! There is much to be said against his species, but there is often a certain racial soundness in it. He is not necessarily without a clear eye for justice and generosity, and he has sometimes to retrieve the consequences of the perversity which (as Goethe noted) is apt to develop in cleverer people.

Mr. Clodd's comments on this matter are judicious. He does not like to give his friend away; but he is bound to admit that Allen showed in this instance the Celt's disposition to "react against the despotism of fact," and that "his enthusiasm obscured the enormous complexity of the problem." Mr. Clodd observes that "Christianity has much to answer for" in regard to the sexual evils of modern society. It has treated the sexual as opposed to the moral, and the result is "pruriency and nameless vices." But, after all, marriage is not a distinctively Christian institution. Christianity adopted it from Pagan society, and made it "sacred" in the religious sense of the word, thus placing it beyond the influence of the spirit of reform. What we have to do in the immediate future, as Mr. Clodd sees and indicates, is to rationalise marriage—not to destroy it.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

### Aggressive Christianity.

I WISH in no way to question the right of persons to believe in the Christian or any other religion, if they consider that they have sufficient evidence to justify them in so doing. Neither do I object to theological propagandism being carried on in a proper and judicious manner. On the contrary, in my opinion all questions should be submitted, when desired, to full and fair discussion. I am a thorough believer in debate, and I also adhere to the broad and sound Secular principle, that no persecution nor social ostracism should be inflicted for holding and avowing honest and sincere opinions. We cannot all think alike; therefore, while I claim freedom of thought for myself, I readily grant the same to those who differ from me. Nothing tends more to limit individual and general progress than the attempt to prevent freedom of opinion. "During," says Buckle, "almost a hundred and fifty years Europe was afflicted by religious wars, religious massacres, and religious persecutions; not one of which would have arisen if the great truth had been recognised that the State had no concern with the opinions of men, and no right to interfere, even in the slightest degree, with the form of worship which they may choose to adopt." It is this continual interference with the opinions held, and the form of worship adopted by others, that has made Christianity thoroughly aggressive.

The aggressive spirit of Christianity has always been stimulated by fanaticism, which is perverted emotion and excessive enthusiasm. Under its sway reason and judgment are deprived of their normal power, and visions are substituted for realities. Fanaticism is an evil which should be avoided, but more particularly upon religious questions, the tendency of which is to excite the worst of human passions and to cause the most unjustifiable outrages upon the feelings of those who have the courage to think and speak contrary to the dictum of the prevailing theology. History is full of records which prove the truth of this allegation. But

ample evidence is afforded of its accuracy in the conflict now going on in China. Undoubtedly, Christian aggression is at the bottom of the unfortunate dispute in the East. Here we have another instance of missionaries doing their best or worst to verify Christ's words, "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Lord Salisbury, in his recent speech at Exeter Hall, pointed out the necessity of missionaries being more prudent and just to other religionists. He mentioned the fact that some nations had got the idea that missionary work was the mere instrument of the secular government, whose objects it aimed to achieve. This view is held by the Chinese, and the recent massacres of Christians in that country were no doubt due to it. The *Daily Chronicle* of June 20, referring to this speech, puts the case thus:—

"We touched yesterday upon the missionary question, which is so intimately concerned with the movements of popular opinion in China.....There was a time when the evangelist took his life in his hand, and suffered martyrdom for his faith, without invoking any secular authority either to aid or to avenge him. But now a foreign mission that incurs hostility looks to its Government to send a gunboat, and the regular appearance of the gunboat inspires the belief in that quarter of the world that the missionaries are the agents of foreign aggression.....Speaking of Mohammedanism, Lord Salisbury said: 'You are dealing with a force which a pure, though mistaken, theism gives to a vast population. You will not convert them.....I think that your chances of conversion, as proved by our experience, are infinitely small compared to the danger of creating great perils and of producing serious convulsions, and, it may be, of causing bloodshed which will be a serious and permanent obstacle to that Christian religion which we desire above all things to preach.' It would be difficult to overrate the gravity of these words. They mean that to the mind of a statesman, and in this case a statesman whose religious feeling is very deep, the possible success of missions in the East is outweighed by the danger to peace and to the character of Christianity itself. That is a proposition which the missionary societies must ponder seriously."

If it were not for the deplorable consequences of this missionary enterprise, the conduct of Christians in the matter would be exceedingly amusing. With an unpardonable audacity, they assume the right of conquest, and hug to themselves the delusion that theirs is the only true religion, which, on account of its superiority, is destined to triumph over all other religions. Were ever such conceit and impertinence surpassed? It was through acting upon this fanatical notion that so many of the cruel wars which have devastated the world were caused. But why should professed Christians intrude themselves upon believers in other religions, and speak of their faiths in offensive terms? No doubt there is much in those religions that is false and absurd. But cannot the same be said of the teachings of the Christian Churches? Undoubtedly it can, and with the strictest accuracy. And, be it remembered, Freethinkers have been ostracised, fined, and imprisoned in this country for saying so. Now, however, when these pious orthodox believers are being paid back in their own coin, they call for the aid of the secular government. Well may Lord Salisbury remind us of the proverb they have in the East: "First the missionary, then the consul, then the general." It would be far better if the followers of the "Prince of Peace" would act upon the advice: "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." At the meeting of the British Association held in Ipswich, in 1895, Dr. R. N. Cust, LL.D., F.R.G.S., rebuked Christian aggression thus:—

"If foreigners were to introduce themselves into England, and Arab Mohammedans were to get possession of a plot of ground close to Westminster Abbey, and erect a conspicuous mosque with minarets, and call to prayer in loud tones, I doubt whether the populace of London would bear it; they would at first treat it contemptuously as a nuisance, and the police would deal with it in the category of dustmen's, fruitsellers', and milkmen's cries, or a street band of nigger singers and music; but patience has its limits. And what can be said of Englishmen who presumably enter China on a Christian mission, erecting on a sacred hill in Fuchau a lofty building, which overhung the place of Chinese worship? If the Chinese from time to time rise up against the 'Foreign Devils,' and take their revenge in an atrocious manner, this is the real cause; they do not want the presence of overbearing and unsympathetic foreigners in their midst."

There cannot possibly be any justification for the aggressive missionary work which has been going on in China since the Treaty of Peking was signed in 1860. From that time Christians there have not only assailed a religion much older and more extensively believed in than their own, but they have done so in a most offensive and impertinent manner. If it is urged that Christianity is the better religion, and, therefore, should supplant all others, the answer is that such an assertion is as false as it is egotistical. Even Lord Salisbury admits that the Mohammedans have a "pure theism," which cannot be said truthfully of Christians. And the Rev. Canon Taylor writes thus of the influence of the religion of a people designated by Christians as "heathen":—

"When Mohammedanism is embraced by a negro tribe Paganism, devil-worship, fetishism, cannibalism, human sacrifice, infanticide, witchcraft, at once disappear. The natives begin to dress, filth is replaced by cleanliness, and they acquire personal dignity and self-respect. Hospitality becomes a religious duty, drunkenness becomes rare, gambling is forbidden, immodest dances and the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes cease, female chastity is regarded as a virtue, industry replaces idleness, license gives place to law, order and sobriety prevail; blood feuds, cruelty to animals and to slaves, are forbidden. A feeling of humanity, benevolence, and brotherhood is inculcated. Polygamy and slavery are regulated, and their evils are restrained."

Contrast this with Canon Farrar's indictment of Christian missions. He says in the *Crescent*:—

"Sir Henry Layard, an entirely impartial observer, said of the town of Shuster, an Eastern town of thirteen thousand inhabitants, in Persia, that the inhabitants were clean, happy, and prosperous; and then he adds this frightful sentence: 'Why? Because there were no Christians.' Terrible witness! And what did it mean? There are no Christians, and therefore no grog-shops, and therefore the people are happy, prosperous, and contented! Alas! not content with destroying our own land and our own people, we Englishmen have carried with us wherever we have gone this corroding curse of drink. To quote the late Archbishop of York, 'We have girdled the globe with a zone of drunkenness; we have laid a stumbling-block before the helpless childhood of the world.' England has not only stained, she has polluted with drink and honeycombed with foul disease, the lives of those races who will survive their contact with her. How can we avoid the guilt of this terrible national indictment?"

It is not denied that some good might have occasionally followed the labors of a few of the missionaries; but, where this has happened, it has been through the application of secular agencies, and not in consequence of adopting Christian teachings. The orthodox author of *Conquests of the Cross* is candid enough to admit this. He says: "Secular enterprise has built the great Christian cities of the Western Hemisphere. The California of to-day could not have been created by missionary effort alone." Personally, I regard foreign missions as a combination of fanaticism, fraud, impertinence, and folly. Their history is a record of failure, and also of provocation of hatred and wars, which have retarded personal liberty and paralysed national progress. Instead of sending men where they are not wanted, and where they are instruments of mischief, let attention be given to requirements nearer home, where, in too many instances, civilisation is sadly needed.

CHARLES WATTS.

### Are We Still Christian?

NEARLY thirty years have elapsed since Strauss asked the question I have placed at the head of this article. The query was direct, and the querist sought in asking it to bring the Christian world to a reconsideration of its fundamental doctrines in the light of existing knowledge. But that is what the religious world never has done, and never will do. The usual restatement of religious beliefs, so that they may not conflict with modern knowledge, is not a candid examination of their real present value, but an endeavor to see how much of the old can be retained in spite of modern developments, or an attempt to twist modern teaching so as to harmonise with ancient records and decaying creeds. It is in this way that the doctrine of evolution is made to harmonise

with Genesis, the Biblical account of the origin of languages with the scientific belief of the common origin of most of the European tongues, and, in sociology, the teachings of Marx and Lassalle extracted from the nebulous sayings attributed to Jesus Christ. The question is never, "What evidence is there for the old beliefs?" but always, "How much of the old belief am I compelled to relinquish?"

One way of answering the question might have been by putting a counter query: "Have we ever been Christian?"—Christian, that is, in the sense of carrying out the plain teachings of the Christian religion to their logical conclusion. Certainly no nation has ever been Christian in that sense. Individuals here and there may have come nearer the mark, but in the mass the common sense of mankind has asserted itself by putting the necessary qualifications or modifications on Christian teaching that would admit of their possessing at least a show of reason. We hear much of the corruption of primitive Christian teaching, but the truth is that it was only as it became corrupted that it became decently practicable. Such a precept as "Give to him that asketh" demanded the qualifying clause—if he is deserving of the gift; that enjoining the believer to "Resist not evil"—do not encourage the spirit of revenge. In every case the extravagances of Christian teaching had to be toned down before there was even a decent pretence that it was applicable to ordinary human affairs.

And even then the interpretations placed by the bulk of the body of believers varied to such an extent that, in talking of Christian beliefs, it is necessary to specify the century, almost the generation, in order to have a clear conception of what set of beliefs we are referring to. There is no definite set of beliefs that can be said to have been accepted by all Christians at all times and under all conditions. The nature of inspiration, of revelation, of the nature and relation of the three persons of the Trinity, of Providence, have all varied from age to age, one generation adopting what another has rejected, or taking as an article of faith what had previously been denounced as the greatest of heresies.

In the essay I have named Strauss answered his own question by showing in a series of chapters that the standpoint from which we moderns contemplate nature has so completely altered from that of our ancestors that Christian beliefs no longer possess any force. To them the earth was the centre of the universe, the scene of God's direct operations; man was literally the lord of creation, with all nature constructed with a view to his welfare and happiness. With us, on the contrary, the earth has been deposed from its commanding position, and ranks only as a mere speck in a universe of worlds; man, while the most complex form of animal life known to us, is yet but a term in the long series of animal forms, to the continuance or happiness of which nature is as supremely indifferent as it is to the preservation or happiness of a worm struggling in the jaws of a bird. The cosmology upon which Christianity rested, and from which it was a logical conclusion, has been completely destroyed; it no longer exists even in the minds of the most illiterate, and with its decay the doctrines of Christianity are left without even a gloss of reason to hide their barbaric character.

The inevitable result of these changes, as Strauss pointed out, has been that Christian beliefs can no longer stand as matters of intellectual conviction. They do exist as inherited doctrines, and persist for a number of more or less sinister reasons—the belief of the well-to-do that they keep the "lower classes" in order, and thus serve to keep down the police rates; of the poor that it provides them with charitable relief, which, for the most part, they would be better without; of the professionally interested because they serve as a source of income. They exist thanks to the indolence of one class, the fears of another, and the cupidity of a third; but a search for Christian doctrines as matters of sound intellectual conviction is fast assuming the shape of a search for the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life.

What educated man or woman is there to-day who can honestly believe in the power of prayer, in miracles, in inspiration, in special providence, or in any of the specifically Christian doctrines? All these beliefs may still be professed, but is there any sincerity at the back

of the profession? Why is it that Christians denounce as impostures all stories of miracles and the like, except such as are contained in their own sacred books, and, when one of their contemporaries professes to have received a message direct from God Almighty, join with the most pronounced Atheist in looking upon such an assertion as a proof of dementia? Only that there is no conviction beneath the assertion of belief. There is a Wesleyan Methodist fire and life assurance society. This by itself is a practical negation of the belief in Providence, and a religious body in the States recently denounced such societies as Atheistic in character. But suppose this association were offered the chance of insuring two buildings—an Atheistic lecture hall with a lightning conductor, and a church without; does anyone doubt which building would have to pay the larger premium? When it comes to hard matters of fact the Christian acts pretty much as does the Atheist. He takes all the precautions that science advises or common sense suggests, and if he does place his trust in providence it is only because his resources elsewhere have failed.

No man can see God in the workings of the world as our ancestors saw him. Science has so successfully explained in terms of mechanical forces one set of phenomena after another, criticism has so riddled the various conceptions of Deity that have been propounded from time to time, that the portion of the Athanasian Creed affirming that God is incomprehensible is being generally accepted, only there is the additional conviction that it is hardly worth while troubling one's head concerning an established incomprehensibility. Christians themselves, filled with the desire to commit suicide to save themselves being slaughtered, explain at length that nature expresses invariable laws, that there is no alteration in the mechanical sequence of events either discoverable or thinkable; only they add that behind these processes there is a Deity as the creator and sustainer of all. But it was neither God the creator, nor God the sustainer of invariable processes, that roused the fears and secured the worship of people. They worshipped God not as the creator of the universe, but as the constant manipulator of it in the interests of mankind. A God that *created* the world, and ever afterwards "sat up aloft seeing it go," could no more command the worship of people than a parliament that was twelve months in recess each year could successfully appeal for their votes. A mere abstraction such as Deity has become in the hands of most advanced apologists may live for a while in virtue of the inherited feelings or instinct to which it appeals, but its final disappearance is a mere question of time.

The distance we have drifted from our ancient moorings may be seen plainly enough by one or two further considerations. Nothing is more commonly met with in religious circles and in religious journals than the statement that Parliament is not the place in which religion should be discussed, nor is the pulpit the place to decide political issues. One could appreciate such a declaration if it were made by Atheists only, but to find it stated by Christians is, to say the least of it, surprising. Christians of earlier generations knew of no such division, nor does the greatest Church of all, the Roman Church, admit any such division to-day. To them the Church was part and parcel of the State, and if Christianity be all that its confessions of faith declare it to be, their position was the only logical one. If Christianity be a body of doctrines resting upon evidence that can command the assent of all who impartially examine them, if the current claim be true that the highest form of social life is inseparable from belief in these doctrines, that even family life and individual character are endangered by their absence, then every argument that will hold good for the State taking charge of the education of the people, regulating certain aspects of family life, and doing what it can to raise the character of its subjects, will also hold for the State to act as an instructor in matters of religion. Upon these assumptions the State has as much right to insist that a parent shall instruct his children in religion as it has to insist upon his taking charge of their education or supplying it with proper food and shelter. It is conceivable that Christians might be so far in a minority as not to be able to induce the State to act in this manner; but that Christians themselves should assist the movement for divesting the State of all influence in

matters of religion is an admission that they have ceased to believe in the supreme value of their own dogmas, and have come to regard religious beliefs as a kind of speculative luxury that no one gains by in the possession or loses by in the rejection.

The plain fact is that the vast majority of the civilized world have already outgrown Christian beliefs. They may, many of them, still accept these in name, but they attach to them a meaning completely at variance with their historical significance. The whole spirit of Christianity is alien to the methods of modern thought and antagonistic to its results. It dismisses its God as a myth, its science as a fairy-tale, its description of an after-world as hysterical and useless. With the doctrine of eternal damnation denounced from hundreds of pulpits as an outrage on the character of God; with the fall of man dismissed as a fable, and by implication the necessity of the atonement abolished; with the various doctrines of Christianity affiliated to similar teachings of half-savage religions; with the Bible reduced from its historic character as a God-given revelation to that of a mere collection of anonymous pamphlets without a shred of authority in science or history; with all this already accomplished, one may well ask with Strauss, Are we still Christian? Christian in name, perhaps in temper, yes; but in conviction, for the most part, no. Conviction—honest, earnest, intellectual conviction—on this subject is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. As a profession it still exists, and it will continue to exist in this form so long as the indolence of one class combines with the interest of another for its perpetuation.

C. COHEN.

### Christians Climbing Down.

ONE of the phases of modern theological thought which is not without its amusing aspect is the effort of Christian advocates to "climb down" without appearing to do so. The feat requires some amount of intellectual agility. Still more does it demand considerable resources in the way of verbal skill. Nevertheless it is attempted with some show of courage, though the utmost that can be hoped for is a merely partial success. Any success at all must depend upon the extent to which people are in sympathy with the object of the effort, and their willingness to excuse the methods for the sake of the end in view. In other words, the pretence that the "climbing down" is not what it actually is, but, if anything, is a move in an upward direction, can impose on none but those who are only too willing to be deceived.

Whether even these can persuade themselves into a belief that they are satisfied with the pious gymnastics performed may be open to doubt. But they feel it necessary to accord some kind of acquiescence, and so outwardly, at any rate, there is an agreement amongst them that abandonment does not mean defeat, that diminution is in reality development, and that the best way to support a tottering creed is to divest it of its essential features.

When one remembers the attitude of Christian advocates twenty years ago in regard to many cherished doctrines now abandoned as untenable, it is impossible not to feel amazed at the changes that have taken place. Mark Twain, who is something of a philosopher as well as a humorist, once remarked that "the altar cloth of one æon is the door-mat of the next." That is a true saying, though it has taken a much less period to see various theological dogmas dragged from the Holy of Holies and trampled under foot. Christian believers themselves are engaged in this salutary work with an industry that may well excite both astonishment and amusement. Not only do they acknowledge their early illusions, but they are now professing to discover in them the working of a divinely-appointed plan. Thus we learn from the *Christian World* that—

"To the present generation it is becoming increasingly clear that many things which it had been accustomed to regard as religious fact are really not so, and the revelation is one full of danger to the inner life unless its actual significance is fully explained. The Church has been, in a sense, brought up on illusions, and the plain man who

is just becoming conscious of this is shocked at the discovery. His first impulse is to cry 'Treachery!' Religion has betrayed him; the teacher has proved false, and is therefore no longer to be regarded."

Quite so; and nothing that this writer proceeds to urge can effectually dispel that very natural sentiment from open and intelligent minds. Unfortunately for him, and the remnant of faith he allows himself, his theory of the "mission of illusion" does not work out in anything like the way he would wish it. Applied to a number of religious beliefs—once accepted, but now discarded—it accentuates rather than removes the difficulties of so-called Divine Revelation. It is quite true, as he says, that the early Church, "whether it looked before or behind it, met the mirage. It looked behind to a view of the Old Testament which we now smile at. In its forward look the first Christian community had a similar experience. It is pathetic for us, as we gaze back from that far-off standpoint, to observe the absolute confidence of those early forecasts and the way in which events have contradicted them; to see how in succession now a Justin Martyr, now an Irenæus, now a Tertullian and a Cyprian, and anon a Jerome and an Augustine, find in the state of the world around them the sure signs of the Advent and the world's end." Just in passing, it may be observed that the expectations of these early Christians were based upon the clear and unmistakable teaching of Christ and his disciples. The early Christians were wrong, as we know. Events have contradicted their forecasts. But so were Christ and his disciples wrong, for with them originated the falsified expectations. Then this writer goes on to say:—

"To-day we have to recognise that a certain portion of the Church creeds were wrought in an atmosphere of illusion. They were constructed to the scale of a pettier universe than that to which we now know ourselves to belong. The creeds are, for one thing, geocentric. They conceive the earth as central, with heaven and hell as adjunct and completion. They are unreal to a view which regards our planet as a dust speck in the infinity of the worlds.

*'At contra nusquam apparent Acherusia templa.'*

"Jacob's ladder no longer reaches to the sky. The heavens have removed far off and become astronomical. In short, the concepts which presided over the Church creeds represent, in the language of a recent writer, 'undeveloped science, imperfect philosophy, and perverted notions of history.' They will have to be revised. Their view of Christianity is steadily giving way in the minds of men to one more in accord with the laws that govern the outside universe and the evolution of the human soul."

Having thus described the present situation, the *Christian World* writer advances the theory that, as "the law of illusion is written broadly in every department of life," so it prevails in religion. He does not think that religion will be the poorer for "the change in some of its surrounding ideas. The previous history of the human movement should be enough to reassure us on this point. What man has found hitherto is that the new reality which he reaches is always greater and more satisfying than the old illusion which it displaces." All this, it will be perceived, is in agreement with the Freethought view that religion is of purely human origin, and is the result of that evolution which governs the physical and moral world. It goes to prove that religion is a natural product—the outcome of ignorance and helplessness, refined and diminished from time to time as knowledge and the strength that it gives increase. To the same extent is disproved the supposition that religion is a special emanation from Deity, or that religion originates and proceeds on the lines now suggested, it may well be asked by the plain man where does the Supreme Being come in, and what is the value of a revelation which admittedly conveys error, and so mixes it up with truth that it takes ages to complete the work of elimination.

But can it be seriously argued that "illusion" was a necessary part of "revelation," which is the inevitable inference from the theory now advanced? The pretence that man was unprepared in earlier ages for the illumination he has since attained to is entirely wide of the mark. He might just as well have commenced with religious truth as with what we now know

to be religious error. The true relation of the world to the universe, and the fact that the world would long survive the era of the early Church—which are the two instances cited in the *C. W.*—might just as well have been disclosed at first as at last. And so they would have been but for the simple fact that the Scriptural writers and Christ and his disciples and the primitive believers were then, like all the rest of the world, ignorant of the truth. It is suggested that knowledge on these and other matters was designedly withheld in the so-called divine revelation. But where is the evidence that it was ever possessed? After all, the damning fact against the Bible is, not so much that truth was withheld, but that positive error, with all its evil consequences, was solemnly promulgated. If we admit any supernatural agency in the production of the Bible and the establishment of the Church founded upon its teachings, we must recognise the working of a malefic rather than a beneficent spirit—one capable of wilfully misleading mankind, and leaving it through long ages to find out as best it might the truth for itself. The *C. W.* writer, profiting by the self-sacrificing efforts of heretics whom the Church remorselessly persecuted in the past, may "smile" at the view formerly taken of the Old Testament and held until comparatively recent times; but can he truthfully assert that the delusive notions regarding that book were ever a necessary part of the education of the world? From any point of view, the bulk of the fables and foolish fancies at which he now "smiles" were perfectly superfluous when they were written, just as he finds them to be superfluous now. How do we know that the "realities" in the New Testament to which he clings as the essence of true Christian belief may not in like manner turn out hereafter to have been foisted upon us in accordance with this newly-discovered development plan? The "law of illusion," once in operation, will, we suppose, go on. Some religious writer in a *Christian World* of the future may, therefore, be expected to look back and "smile" at the *C. W.*'s present view of the New Testament and of Christ. But, whatever may be in store, is it quite conducive to implicit faith at the present time to learn so much about the "mission of illusion"? The plain man will begin to think that the real present-day want is a "mission" for dispelling illusion, not for explaining and defending it. He will begin to ask whether, through all the long centuries that have gone by, the Almighty has been playing off a joke on his poor, easily misled mortals; or whether, if serious, he has deliberately disseminated or sanctioned the dissemination of gross and grievous error.

FRANCIS NEALE.

### Acid Drops.

THE German liner, the *Saale*, which was destroyed so tragically at New York, was just going to leave for Boston to take on board the members of the Christian Endeavor Society who were making a trip to Europe. Are we to consider this as a "judgment"? If so, it seems that the newest big Christian Association is sadly out of favor with God Almighty.

A number of poor wretches, including (it is said) some women, were fastened down below in the burning *Saale*, and fought each other furiously to get to the portholes. The scene is described as appalling. But the grimest touch of all is to come. Father Brosman was seen on board a small tug giving absolution through the portholes to the struggling and perishing wretches inside! It would take the satiric genius of a Byron to bring out all the significance of that spectacle.

"The catastrophe was the act of God," says Mr. Schwab, the North German Lloyd agent at New York. This is his way of making it out that, "We are not responsible for a dollar's worth of freight or personal indemnity." Piety is generally pretty consistent with self-interest.

If that dreadful fire was really the act of God, there ought to be some means of bringing the perpetrator to book. The destruction of property was bad enough, but the loss of life, and the sufferings of those who perished, were still worse. Not only men, but women and little children, were slowly burnt to cinders. The reporters say it was "like hell." And perhaps Mr. Schwab thinks that if God keeps an everlasting hell to roast his own creatures in, it is quite conceivable that he sets up a foreign branch of it on earth occasionally.

A special correspondent of the *Glasgow Herald* sends home a very pious effusion from Kroonstadt, chiefly about the sick and wounded, the doctors and the nurses. He says that the men at first were "dying like flies," but they now "thank Providence for the nursing sisters," although Providence afforded them no aid until the sisters appeared upon the scene. This writer talks about "the Almighty" with the greatest familiarity. One would imagine that he dined with the Boss now and then. But perhaps he is only a Scotch minister, with a characteristic amount of religious self-conceit.

Old Moore's Almanack seems to be a greater authority than any of the Hebrew prophets. The 1900 issue contains a hieroglyphic cartoon for July, which includes what may be regarded as a distinct forecast of the Chinese trouble. The figure of a railway train, with the Devil riding in front, clearly points to the N. S. S. excursion. This anticipation of the two greatest events of the present month is calculated to throw Talmage and Baxter into the shade, and even to make them green with envy.

We drew attention recently to the case of the Rev. Mr. Dixon, an American minister, who invoked God's wrath on a brewery, which was soon afterwards struck by lightning, and the brewery company thereupon started an action for damages. In his defence, the reverend gentleman denies responsibility. Others besides himself were praying for the destruction of the building, and it will be impossible for the plaintiffs to prove that it was struck in answer to his prayer. Had he been preaching upon the matter, without any fear of awkward consequences, he would probably have more than hinted that the so-called accident at the brewery was a direct answer to his personal supplication; but when there is a possibility of his suffering from this theory, he repudiates it, and declares that the whole subject is involved in obscurity.

With this Dixon case in mind, we were turning over again the other day the pages of a great book by a very great man. We refer to Hume's *History of England*—a work now superseded by more modern and popular Histories, and therefore practically neglected. But it is a great book nevertheless, and its composition is marked by those "careless inimitable beauties" which won the high and competent praise of Gibbon. Well, in turning over the pages of this masterpiece, we noticed a passage we had marked (and forgotten) on an incident in the time of the Heptarchy. Aldefrid, the Northern King, was besieging Chester, and the Britons marched out to oppose him. They brought with them 1,250 monks from the monastery of Bangor, who "stood at a small distance from the field of battle, in order to encourage the combatants by their presence and exhortations." And what was the result? "Aldefrid," the historian says, "inquiring the purpose of this unusual appearance, was told that these priests had come to pray against him. *Then are they as much our enemies*, said he, *as those who intend to fight against us*; and he immediately sent a detachment, who fell upon them, and did such execution that only fifty escaped with their lives." Hume adds that "The Britons, astonished at this event, received a total defeat."

Capital! Capital!! We admire the resolution and common sense of Aldefrid. If the prayers of the clergy in a time of war are of any avail, they are as much combatants as the soldiers themselves, and should be treated as such by the enemy. On the other hand, if their prayers are useless, they are such wretched impostors that it would be almost an act of justice to rid the earth of their presence.

The action of the Powers in China has had one result. In every hotel and restaurant throughout the celestial kingdom the daily bill of fare now includes roast, boiled, and stewed missionary.

This year's Royal Academy exhibition is unusually good. We did not notice, however, that masterpiece by Daub, R.A., "Flea Defending its Young against a Christian Evidence Lecturer."

The *Morning Leader* tells the story of a cliff-fall at Dover in 1870, by which several persons were killed, including a clever little boy artist. A pig, weighing eight score, was also buried, but was dug out alive after a lapse of 160 days, when it was reduced to two score. The wonderful pig—rather too wonderful for us—was afterwards exhibited to "ladies and gentlemen" for one shilling, and to "tradesmen" for sixpence. On the supposition, however, that the story is true, a friend sends us the following verses:—

Long time ago  
The Blessed Lord  
Loved children, though  
He swine abhorred.

But children now  
May go to Scratch,  
So God a sow  
From death may snatch.

The Lord does not appear to keep a providential eye on children nowadays. In a single morning paper we note two paragraphs recording the death of Edmund Laurence Abbot, aged nine, at Camberwell, and a child named Harrison, at Kingston. The former fell from the parapet outside an attic window, and the latter was killed in a brake accident.

There's a friend for little children  
Above the bright blue sky.

So says the hymn. But *is* there?

There is going to be a fresh rumpus over the School Board education question at Birmingham. The Liberal "compromise" instituted by Dr. Dale in 1873 allows of Bible reading without note or comment in the schools, supplemented by religious instruction given by voluntary visitors on two mornings of the week. But the Church party have been working hard to get control of the Board, and the Chapel party—for that is what the so-called Liberals are—see that some change must be made to checkmate their opponents. Mr. George Cadbury, the Cocoa Christian, and the Rev. F. L. Wiseman, a professional Christian, have therefore induced the Liberal majority to agree to the following change. A short service is to be held in the schools, consisting of a hymn, the Lord's Prayer, and the reading and repeating of selected passages of Scripture. This alteration is supported by a majority of the teachers, who do not seem to relish the prospect of being called upon (through the Church party) to give religious instruction themselves. It is probable, we suppose, that the "Liberals" will win, and continue to control the Board schools on the new lines; but Freethinkers will not be able to take sides with either party in this ridiculous quarrel between Church and Nonconformity. Their policy is to get religion swept out of the schools altogether.

Dean Farrar will not find last week's *Church Times* very pleasant reading. If he does not wince at its review of his latest work, *The Life of Lives*, he will be more than mortal. And we know that, beneath a thin veneer of humility, he is rather a proud man—proud of his literary performances—and sensitive, though usually silent, under criticism. His habit of asserting things which are at least doubtful is pointed out commented on. "The possibility of his being mistaken seems to be as foreign as ever to the author's mind." His new work, hints the reviewer, is full of his customary cocksure, headlong conclusions. Everything with him is just what it ought to be for the purpose of the argument immediately in hand. Elsewhere it is something else, equally needed, and defined with equal assurance. In this latest work, as in his others, he revels in a "riot of words."

His habitual fervency of language leads him into exaggeration, which the reviewer regards as extremely perilous in one part of the book—namely, the four chapters which are a "development of the argument for the truth of Christianity drawn from the moral and spiritual supremacy of Christ." Here the *Church Times* seems to think that the Dean has given away the whole case to the sceptic by his reckless exaggeration. Dr. Farrar, appealing to the general belief in the Providence of God, classes the Stoics, Marcus Aurelius, and the rest, as "molehills and thistles amongst mountains and forest trees," which judgment, says the *Church Times*, is ludicrous. A few pages further on Dean Farrar himself writes: "I look upon the 'little golden Pastoral' of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius as the most perfect moral book which heathen antiquity produced."

Then Dean Farrar asserts that in all histories of the nations there can scarcely be found one man of epoch-making eminence who has not believed in God. The *Church Times* characterises this sentence as a "perfectly reckless statement. The names of epoch-making men of whom this could in no sense be asserted crowd upon the masters. Again he appeals to the sages and philosophers, the masters of modern science, of whom he says the foremost have not only had faith in God, but also have believed rightly in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. "What shall we say," asks the *Church Times*, "of the audacity which can make such a statement? Are there no Jews or Unitarians amongst the foremost men of science? Spinoza, Huxley, Helmholtz, Darwin, Spencer—are these not amongst the foremost, or are we asked to accept the statement here made of their belief?"

Yet again, Dean Farrar writes that no sceptic will be able to dispute that not amongst the greatest philosophers, the brightest poets, and the best men whom all former history records, can so much as one be found who can be offered as a distant parallel to Jesus Christ. "But that," says the *Church Times*, "is precisely what many sceptics do, as a matter of fact, dispute. To assume their agreement with what they deny is palpably absurd, and brings the whole argument to naught."

The candid reviewer in the *Church Times* does not hesitate to allude to the "vein of falsehood" running through this portion of Dean Farrar's books, and adds that "a shrewd opponent of Christianity could hardly find a better opening

than is here afforded." All of which, as we have said, must be very pleasant reading for the literary Dean.

The Rev. Price Hughes has been preaching on "Humility." At first we thought that someone had been accusing Mr. Price Hughes of humility. But no; there are plenty of foolish people in the world, but none quite so foolish as that. He doesn't himself even make a pretence of displaying that virtue—if it be one. "Created," he says, "in the image of God, we are a 'divine workmanship,' and each one of us has an inestimable value in the sight of God." If this is true of the common ruck of people, what, indeed, must be the heavenly estimate of Price Hughes? Even he might blush to tell us.

It seems now to be pretty clear that the gifted Sheldon would have done well to stop at home in the States. He has turned out to be a great disappointment here. He spoke at a Temperance Convention at Edinburgh, and referred to Topeka as a city where the sight of a drunken man is as rare as that of a Sabbath-breaker in Edinburgh. A sigh interrupted him, and a whispered "Alas!" which he understood. "Not a good simile," said someone; and Mr. Sheldon replied: "I am sorry; it used to be so. Well, then, I will say as rare as the sight of tramcars in motion in the streets of Edinburgh on Sunday." After this, we are not surprised to learn from a religious weekly that "there were persons in the audience who were a little disappointed in Mr. Sheldon's speech; it was not exactly the sort of thing which was expected of him.

The best advice that can be given to this reverend and sadly over-rated visitor would be either to make "tracks" at once for home, or to remain in strict seclusion during the rest of his visit. Even religious audiences are not entirely devoid of perception.

They have a way—which is quite their own—of receiving episcopal suggestions at the Church of St. Alban's, Holborn. The other day they had High Mass there in honor of their patron saint. A letter was read from the Bishop of London suggesting the setting apart of the festival as a "day of abstinence." The reading of the letter was immediately followed by a substantial lunch.

Some years ago a parishioner of Christ Church, Clifton, published for private circulation and use a book called *Selections from the Old and New Testaments*, from which large portions were omitted on grounds of "religion and decency." He also expressed his disbelief in the doctrines of eternal punishment and the existence of the Devil. This was thought sufficient by the then vicar, the Rev. Dr. Flavel Cook, to justify him in repelling the parishioner from Holy Communion. On appeal to the Judicial Committee the sentence of the Arches Court was reversed, it being held that "no legal cause of repulsion was shown." In a "huff" at thus being over-riden, the vicar resigned his living. The other day he died. Whether he ever forgave that Judicial Committee does not appear, but it is believed that he never quite recovered from the shock of discovering such a terrible heretic amongst his congregation.

"I would like to boil a bishop in oil!" says one of the characters in Mr. H. G. Wells's latest novel, *Love and Mr. Lewisham*. A very horrible desire—almost as bad as the actual treatment of heretics by the Church when it rejoiced in unlimited power. But, of course, Mr. Lewisham does not mean what he says. He explains: "They know perfectly well the case against what they teach. They know that it is neither madness nor wickedness nor any great harm of others not to believe. They know perfectly well that a man may be as honest as the day—right and decent in every way—and not believe in what they teach. And they know that it only wants the edge off a man's honor for him to profess anything in the way of belief. If a man is well off, they will trundle to him no end, though he laughs at all their teaching. They will take gold plate from company promoters, and rent from insanitary houses. But if a man is poor, and doesn't profess to believe in what some of them scarcely believe themselves, they wouldn't lift a finger to help him against the ignorance of their fellows."

The Rev. Father James Foley, after preaching at Bury St. Edmunds on Sunday night, was found dead in his bedroom on Monday morning. If this had happened to a Freethought lecturer, what would the religious press have said?

Who says that popular culture is not increasing? A lady resident in a famous West-end square, the other day, reproached her cook for an unconscionable delay in the serving of dinner. The lady was calmly told that it was due to a heated discussion between the cook and the butler. "Really!" said her mistress; "and what was the argument about?" "Well, mum," replied the cook, "it was about whether we was descended from Darwin or not."

Signor Crispi, interviewed on the Chinese crisis, declares

that the "Christian missionaries are responsible for all that may happen and for all the outcome of present events."

A couple recently presented themselves at the altar of St. Mary's Church, Prittlewell, for the solemnization of marriage. The vicar, the Rev. E. Kimber, commenced the ceremony, but suddenly broke off with the remark, "I cannot marry you," and then disappeared into the vestry. The disconsolate couple had to retire from the church un-united. It seems that the man of God had found out that the bridegroom had been divorced. The bridegroom appears to have been a man of precious little spirit, or he would have followed the parson into the vestry and kicked him for his public affront to the lady. However, one cannot sympathise with couples who go to the church under such circumstances. They court indignity, and, to some extent, deserve it for in any way seeking the services of "churlish priests." The registrar's office is always available. Parsons would begin to think less of themselves if they were but systematically ignored.

Two curious paragraphs appeared in Sunday's *Reynolds'*—curious, that is, because they were printed under the same heading in the same column. The first paragraph summarised a letter to the editor from a correspondent who spoke of the National Secular Society as being to all intents and purposes dead. The second paragraph announced that the N. S. S. was going on excursion to Brighton, and was to have "a big tea" in the Skating Rink. Hundreds of corpses must have travelled to Brighton, if the first paragraph told the truth. We recollect nothing like it since Sennacherib's army awoke in the morning and found they were all dead men.

We believe the gentleman who wrote to *Reynolds'* about the poor defunct N. S. S. is a Secularist who has not succeeded in getting everybody to agree with him on certain outside questions. He is a good fellow in other respects, but he cannot stand *this* sort of treatment, and has therefore excommunicated himself. That is a way some people have. And as it doesn't do to admit that any Society can live without them, they go about announcing its decease.

"Murder and Suicide by an Atheist" is the heading given to the report of an inquest at Holloway, by a weekly newspaper that should have known better. This so-called Atheist, we learn from the evidence, believed in witches and ghosts! He wrote a letter in which he spoke of a woman long deceased as still living, and as being a witch still capable of injuring the living. Upon this letter the coroner observed: "Perhaps his mind was affected"; apparently forgetful that the Bible sanctions the belief in witches, and that the third person in the Trinity is a "holy" ghost. The deceased further wrote that the "world is ruled by unseen things." Obviously this man was no Atheist; in fact, as regards witchcraft, he was more of a believer in "Divine Revelation" than the coroner himself.

This so-called Atheist had for some time been a disciple (so to speak) of Sir Wilfrid Lawson. What a wonder it was, then, that the newspapers did not seize upon this fact. It would have made a capital headline—"Murder and Suicide by a Teetotaler." People would have wondered what teetotal drink it was that screwed him up to the shooting point.

Another instance of mental derangement is disclosed in an inquest on a Wesleyan Lay preacher who was found dead under the floor of his house. Amongst his delusions was the belief that he would be carried up to heaven like Elijah, also that he could live without food.

There is a certain pathetic humor about a yarn told by the Rev. Ian Maclaren this week. Some little time ago a slum mother was instructing her little girl in Scripture knowledge, and was explaining to her about the Garden of Eden. The child was much impressed, and last she said: "It must have been very beautiful, mother. I suppose now it's all built over."

A publican has been summoned at Hyde for allowing hymns to be sung in his club room. The technical offence was that he had no music licence. It seems odd that you may, without a licence, howl Moody and Sankey everywhere except in a pub. Teetotalers ought certainly to protest against this exception, for what better plan of keeping people out of pubs on Sunday evenings than the introduction of unlimited hymn-singing on the licensed premises?

Apropos of the retaliatory summonses taken out against Sabbatarians by Swansea tradespeople, the *People* rejoices that cant has got what may be called a backhander. It mentions that "not long ago, when an article by a London critic had revived certain provincial prejudices against actors, the stage was denounced from a Swansea pulpit, and a movement was started that threatened to close the theatre to the members of one of the most popular dissenting congregations. The management of a London company thereupon faced the bigoted Protestants with a sermon in print that aroused the friends of the drama, and the controversy raged with

vigor. When a community is attacked for its narrowness, not to say 'religious tyranny,' as Swansea is being very properly attacked at the present time, it is pleasant to give the other side a recognition. On the occasion of the theatrical trouble just mentioned the Mayor of Swansea, a member of the very chapel whose minister had denounced the stage as an annex to the bottomless pit, convincing himself of the high reputation of the players who had arrived in the midst of the crusade, invited the principals to dinner. Thereupon the management gave a reception on the stage, which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress and many distinguished burghesses. This was an honest and courageous answer to a bigoted 'minister of the Gospel,' and it was a fitting punishment for him that the majority of his congregation made a special point of attending the theatre during the week of the visit in question."

The *People* further observes: "It is gratifying to know that the persecution of the little traders of Swansea is meeting with an equally notable protest against cant and intolerance. Both these vices of the ultra sanctimonious, who too often make their professions a cloak for villainy of some kind, are rampant in London itself. 'The Society for Promoting the Due Observance of the Lord's Day' has, however, in its latest report, to lament the growth of Sunday music throughout the land, and the extension of wholesome recreation in the shape of picture galleries, museums, Sunday lectures, and Sunday concerts of high-class music. The Mawworms who issue this report go so far as to suggest that the reverses to our troops in South Africa were a judgment upon us for our neglect of the Sabbath. Fortunately, the very excess of their rebukes makes their homilies nauseous to honest and independent men and women, so that they frequently check a pernicious influence that might otherwise have effect on the conduct of the people."

£117,227 is a very tidy sum to be left behind by a deceased apostle of the poor Carpenter's Son of Nazareth. According to the *Times*, this amount represents the gross value of the estate of the late Rev. Charles Twemlow Royds, rector of Hupham, Lancashire. There are a few trifling legacies in the reverend gentleman's will, and one of them is positively facetious. It is £10 to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

The second volume of the Cardiff Corporation Records, as we learn by an article in the *South Wales Echo*, gives some interesting items about the burning in effigy of Tom Paine in 1792. The following bill was made out and duly entered by the Corporation: "For the use of Tom Paine: Hat and oil-case, 3s.; Fales shirt and cravvet, 2s. 6d.; Gloves and Hose, 4s. 2d.; Shoes, 7s. 6d.; the Carpenter wood and Labour, 5s.; Black Ribbon, 4d.; To making the Efegi of Tom pain, £1 1s.; To three Days serving the publications, 6s.; £2 9s. 6d." A further slip orders the payment of the Hangman's fee: "Pay Watkin Williams Hangman the sum of four shillings for Hanging Tom Paine, and at last burnt him."

Thomas Paine was not then burnt in effigy as the "infidel" author of the *Age of Reason*, but as the republican author of the *Rights of Man*. The former work was not published at that time. The latter work had brought about a trial for treason, and Paine had fled to France in order to escape the hangman. No doubt he was burnt in effigy in many other places, and it would be interesting to ascertain what information on this point is contained in other Corporation records. Meanwhile, it should be noticed that he was already Tom Paine (or Pain). The religious bigots, therefore, did not invent that familiar appellation. They merely borrowed it from the political bigots, and handed it down to future generations.

Commenting on the Chinese treatment of missionaries, the *Sunday Chronicle* observes: "There is nothing we all of us condemn so strongly as religious intolerance. That is why, I suppose, Mr. Kensit and his followers are still at large, and why the medical men in Peckham had such a busy time of it one night a few weeks ago; why, also, the police in Belfast have to be on the alert on the eve of certain anniversaries. But for Chinese intolerance there is still this to be said: that our missionaries take with them not only another religion (and gunboats), but another system of morals, a system of morals fundamentally different from that which has for centuries held the field in China. Now to hit at a people's system of morals, its social and domestic customs, is to hit in the rawest spot of all. The Mormon missionary, for instance, who preaches polygamy lies not always on a bed of roses when he preaches to a monogamous people. Why, then, should we look for a much softer lot for a Christian missionary who preaches monogamy to a polygamous people?"

The Rev. G. S. Reaney, vicar of Christ Church, Greenwich, writing in the July number of *St. Luke's Church Monthly*, deals with the question, "Why do they not come to church?" He admits that the masses are not degenerating morally; on the contrary, they have much improved during the last fifty

years. But they prefer recreation and amusement to attending the house of the Lord, and Sunday is fast becoming a holiday instead of a holy day. Thus there is an "increased secularity of life" amongst them; moreover, they have almost lost "the sense of sin"—which, by the way, is the morbid emotion that all the men of God exploit for a living.

An enterprising nigger at Tyler, Texas, took advantage of the late eclipse of the sun. He appeared as a stranger in a colored church on the previous Sunday night, and told the congregation that the Lord was going to play tricks with the orb of day. This, he said, was intended as a sign of the Lord's displeasure at their miserly contributions. When the eclipse began the negroes ran off to their church, with plenty of change in their pockets, which they handed over to the Lord's messenger, who was there to receive it. They never saw him again.

The *Church Monthly* for July rebukes "half the infidels of the present day" for speaking of what they have never studied, and of things of which they are very ignorant. Our contemporary goes to the length of quoting with approval the saying of that fine old bigot, Dr. Johnson, that no honest man could be a Deist, for no man could be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity. Well, that settles it. Every unbeliever is a rascal. But this is unfortunately no proof of the opposite proposition, that every Christian is an honest man.

Our contemporary, the *Church Monthly*, for instance, cites Dr. Johnson as its authority for the statement that "Hume owned to a clergyman in the diocese of Durham that he had never read the New Testament with attention." This is very unlikely of Hume, to begin with; in the next place, a nameless clergyman somewhere in the diocese of Durham is a very vague witness; and, in the third place, Dr. Johnson was just the man to repeat any nonsense about one he hated—and he hated Hume for several reasons besides his being a Freethinker.

Even if Hume had not read the New Testament with attention—such attention as would be given to it by the clergyman he is supposed (or feigned) to have spoken to—the fact would not in the least invalidate his scepticism. The proofs of Christianity must, from the nature of the case, be chiefly sought outside the Bible. The contents of Christianity are quite another thing. One need not recollect all the details of all the miracles in the Bible in order to decide for oneself whether miracles are credible. Hume discussed the general question in a masterly manner; and, although he has often been answered, he has never been refuted. Indeed, his real argument is generally left untouched.

The man of God who has been put by the Bishop of Coventry in charge of St. Andrew's, Bordesley, during the vacancy, finds himself minister in a parish of "over 24,000 souls," and he writes to the *Birmingham Daily Mail* that his congregation does not exceed twenty all told. The reverend gentleman makes a touching appeal for a number of things, including "£100 to meet existing liabilities." He refers to what will be done "as soon as the gas has been reconnected," so we suppose it was cut off by the hard-hearted Gas Company—or was it the Birmingham Corporation? This is very sad. They never ought to want "gas" in a church.

The editor of the *Sunday Reader* notes "considerable heartburnings among the infidel fraternity" in consequence of his publication of Mr. Waldron's articles, which are really the weakest stuff we ever read. We wish him a better contributor. As for the "heartburnings"—well, we can only say "Good God!"

Evidently the Rev. Dr. Jesse Young was quite too good for the editorial chair of the *Central Christian Advocate* of St. Louis. He has been turned out in consequence of his advanced views on the Higher Criticism and other matters. Nevertheless, in his valedictory address, he has a Partisan shot at his persecutors. "We have kept," he says, "in mind the fact, which some seem to have ignored, that we are living in an age of transition. We warn those who need the admonition that it would be a dreadful thing to allow the Church to wake up some day to get its first impression of the new truths concerning the Bible from outside and hostile sources."

Miss Hasbrouck, an instructor in history in the high school at Holyoke, Massachusetts, has had to tender her resignation, in consequence of her inability to tell orthodox falsehoods. A student asked her if Jesus Christ was an only son, and she replied: "No, he is one of a family of ten brothers and sisters." This is strictly in accordance with the New Testament, which mentions four of Jesus Christ's brothers, and refers to an uncertain number of his sisters. But it was blasphemy in the ears—pretty long ones, no doubt—of the Rev. Mr. Harkins, who denounced the honest and accurate lady teacher from his pulpit, and thus procured what was practically her discharge from her situation.



## N.B.

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## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 8, Finsbury Park, at 3.30, Freethought Demonstration.

## To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—July 8, at 3.30, Finsbury Park Freethought Demonstration.—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.

R. P. EDWARDS.—See "Sugar Plums." The date, not being mentioned, could not be included.

B. ROBERTS, and OTHERS.—Mr. Forder is no longer agent for the Freethought Publishing Company, and the shop at 28 Stonecutter-street is closed. All orders for literature should be sent direct to the Company at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C. We are sorry you cannot get any answer from Mr. Forder respecting the orders you sent him, but in face of our repeated announcements in the *Freethinker* we cannot be held responsible for the loss or the delay.

J. S., W. C., and others, have written rather sharply about not receiving the *Freethinker*. We beg to remind them that we have several times called attention to the fact that we had good reason for believing Mr. Forder's subscription list to be very inaccurate, and that we have asked subscribers whose weekly copies did not reach them to communicate with us, stating the period covered by their subscriptions. This was accompanied by the promise on our part to see that the paper should be sent to them during such periods. What more could we possibly do? It is ridiculous to be angry with us.

C. D. S.—Thanks. See paragraph.

J. EDWARDS.—It is enough that you are obliged to Mr. Neale for his reply. Whether you agree with him or not is a personal matter.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

HORACE DAWSON.—See "Acid Drops."

J. G. BARTRAM.—See "Sugar Plums." Pleased to hear you have found a civil C. E. lecturer at last. It is a rare species.

G. DICKINSON.—We think with you that all the excursionists to Brighton enjoyed themselves on Sunday. They looked remarkably happy for a lot of "damned" Atheists. By the way, this is not swearing, but orthodox Christian language. Glad to hear you took 11s. worth of *Freethinkers*, tracts, and pamphlets with you, and distributed them to the best advantage. Thanks also for the cuttings. The gentleman who thinks the N. S. S. is "on the high road to decay" should have joined the excursion and worked off his bile on the Brighton front.

W. SIMONS.—Your lecture-notice for Kingsland Green reached us last week on Thursday. The postmark on your card was "July 27"—Wednesday. Tuesday morning is our latest time for receiving such things.

V. C. MARTIN.—Why not read Luke iii. for yourself? If you did, you would see that the genealogy of Jesus is there traced, not through Mary, but through Joseph. It is the same in Matthew i. The Jews did not trace genealogies through females. There is nothing wrong with the *Bible Handbook* statement. It is absolutely accurate.

ALFRED HURST.—Pleased to hear you intend to take at least one share in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, shortly. A large number of Freethinkers ought to be getting into the same frame of mind.

W. NELSON.—See "Sugar Plums." Such announcements can hardly go under Lecture Notices.

H. PERCY WARD.—Pleased to have your friendly letter. Keep on with the work, as you are doing; and keep on with nothing else. You are bound to succeed then. We have always been glad to do anything we could, however little it might be, to ease the very hard path of young men of ability who devote themselves to Freethought propaganda. The more there are of them the better we are pleased.

J. T. JONES.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

DR. PARK.—Your letter shall appear in our next.

RECEIVED.—Humanity—Leeds Daily News—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—Sunday Reader—Truthseeker (New York)—Ancient Mother Worship—Humane Review—St. Luke's Church Monthly Herald—New York Sun—Crescent—Yarmouth Mercury—Glasgow Herald—Two Worlds—Isle of Man Times—Zoroaster, by Artists (Watts & Co.).

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.

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

THREE has been considerable delay in obtaining the necessary permits for this year's Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in London. Miss Vance, as the N. S. S. Secretary, wrote more than once, and finally had to call at the London County Council's office, where she found the gentlemen who were responsible still going leisurely to work, as though they were the originals of some of Dickens's sketches of the Circumlocution Office. The curious thing is that, although it takes the N. S. S. weeks to get an answer, the Christian Evidence people are somehow or other treated with great celerity. They have, on more than one occasion, learned of the Freethought Demonstration on a Thursday and obtained permission for a rival Demonstration before the Sunday. We are a little puzzled to understand why such permissions are given to them at all. One Demonstration is quite enough at one time on one spot. Of course the object of the Christian Evidence people is to cause confusion and disorder. They always pitch as near to the Freethought Demonstration as they can, and have generally to be removed to a greater distance by the constables. What they want is, not so much to hold a meeting of their own, as to break up the meeting of their opponents. We may add that an official letter has been sent to the County Council on this point.

The first of these projected Sunday Freethought Demonstrations will take place this afternoon (July 8) in Finsbury Park. Mr. Wilson has kindly promised us a brake and a pair of horses, as on former occasions. The brake, which serves as a platform, will be stationed above the band-stand, and the speaking will begin at 3.30. Mr. Foote, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Moss will be present for certain. There will probably be other speakers, but we are not certain about them at the moment of writing.

North London Freethinkers should do all they can to advertise this Finsbury Park Demonstration. The notice is a very short one, owing to the delay already referred to, and a special effort will be necessary to make the gathering known to the public who might attend it.

The other Demonstrations will, as far as possible, be held on Sunday evenings. It is a bit cooler than it is in the afternoon, and a larger number of people are out of doors.

Arrangements have been made for Demonstrations at Clerkenwell Green (July 15, morning), Regent's Park (July 15, evening), Hyde Park (July 22), West Ham (July 29), Brockwell Park (August 12), and Victoria Park (August 19). Other places will be arranged for if possible.

The Annual Excursion of the National Secular Society took place on Sunday, and was in every way a great success. Hundreds of members and friends of the Society journeyed by special train from London to Brighton, and spent the best part of the day there amidst fresh air and in sight of the sea. Fortunately the weather held up until tea-time (5.30), and lifted when tea was over sufficiently to allow of a stroll on the front to those who did not mind a slight sprinkling. The return journey was started soon after eight o'clock, and the arrival in London was in good time for all to get home conveniently.

Amongst the excursionists were G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, V. Roger, J. Neate, E. Bater, "Chilperic" "Mimnermus," G. J. Warren, C. A. Watts, and—well, really a great many more well-known Freethinkers than we can give a list of. The fair sex was generously represented. Miss Vance was present, of course, as the busy Secretary; also Mrs. Foote and two of her girls, Mrs. "Chilperic," Mrs. Henderson, Mrs. and Miss Wilson, and—well, here again we must come to an abrupt finish.

During the afternoon Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts paid a visit to Mr. G. J. Holyoake, whom they had the pleasure of finding in good health—very good health, considering his

eighty-four years. They induced him to come down to the tea party in the Skating Rink, which, by the way, is a very handsome and commodious hall. Mr. Holyoake met with an enthusiastic reception, and his speech was much applauded. He said that he wanted them all to understand that, while age was impairing his sight and rendering him deaf, it brought no sort of change in his convictions; on the contrary, he was a firmer Freethinker (if that were possible) than ever. Mr. Foote added a few words as Chairman.

Another incident of the afternoon was a Freethought meeting on the beach—a novelty at Brighton. It was an impromptu affair. An orthodox speaker was reviling leading Freethinkers, and, after opposing him, Messrs. Moss, Heaford, and Roger started a meeting of their own, which was large, orderly, and attentive.

There was a rivalry amongst the London Branches in regard to this Excursion. Each tried to outdistance the others in the sale of tickets. We are informed that the Finsbury Branch came out a good first in the competition.

Some of the ticket sellers worked very hard—particularly Messrs. Bater, Leat, Quay, Frankel, Munton, and Schaller. Mr. Quay worked so hard that he got left behind at Victoria Station. He was so anxious to fill the train that he just missed it himself—much to the regret of his friends.

The Birmingham Branch held its annual picnic on Sunday last, and had a fine drive to Stratford-on-Avon and back. Old Sol was in a good humor, and beamed approvingly on the Sunday desecration committed by the four brakesful of heretics and their friends. Everyone seemed to be having a good time. The only drawback was that all the places of interest to Shakespeare lovers—excepting the church—were closed. About ninety ladies and gentlemen—to say nothing of the one baby present—did justice to a substantial tea. Messrs. J. Partridge, W. T. Pitt, and C. Steptoe were heartily and unanimously thanked for the admirable arrangements they had made for the comfort of the “saints.”

The West London Branch has just held its half-yearly meeting. The report stated that the Branch did perhaps the best work of all the London Branches, for not only were meetings held regularly during the summer in Hyde Park and at Kilburn and Hammersmith, but the propaganda was carried on during the rest of the year by means of Sunday discussions. Unfortunately this Branch is handicapped by the new rule forbidding collections and the sale of literature in the Royal Parks. The balance sheet showed about £3 in hand and other assets to the value of £8. The cash surplus was due to the River Excursion last July, the success of which was mainly owing to the exertions of Mr. Munton. This year the separate Branch excursion has been dropped, in the interest of the general excursion to Brighton; and it will, therefore, be necessary for the members and friends to come forward liberally with their subscriptions and donations. Mr. R. P. Edwards resigned the honorary secretaryship, in spite of requests that he would continue to hold it, and Mr. G. Parsons was elected in his place. Mr. Munton was re-elected treasurer.

Moncure Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* has now been translated into French. The fact of the translation being the work of M. Felix Rabbe is a guarantee of its excellence. M. Rabbe's *Life of Shelley* has been translated into English.

Mr. H. A. Cumber, writing to Miss Vance from Valparaiso, and acknowledging the receipt of a portrait of Mr. Foote—which he says is “really an excellent likeness, and quite the same as my own mental portrait of him”—says that what an Englishman notices first in South America is “the elementary sanitation of the towns and the utter absence of personal cleanliness amongst the people.” “I suppose,” he adds, “there will always be an affinity between filth and the Catholic faith.” This correspondent, who left England a few months ago, sends home his best wishes for the good old cause.

Another Freethinker, whose name has often appeared in Secular subscription lists—Mr. W. H. Deakin—writes to Mr. Foote from Calcutta, under date of June 14, with the thermometer at 106 in the shade. But the sultry heat did not diminish his interest in the Freethought cause in old England. “Allow me,” he says, “to offer you my hearty congratulations on the successful attainment and opening of your new premises. After the many struggles against bigotry and prejudice you have had all round (in this age of liberty of thought!), it is an accomplishment for which the Freethought party ought to feel grateful.”

Mr. Deakin remarks that the missionaries do not appear to make much headway out there, considering the fact that their first church was established as far back as 1593. He also notes that the Britishers never employ a Christianised native as a servant if they can help it. Whatever small vices the native may have in his natural state, he is pretty certain

to take on drunkenness in addition when he becomes a Christian. As for the missionaries themselves, Mr. Deakin observes: “We always see them going for a drive in a dashing turn-out, with a liveried groom and coachman; very much in imitation of the Carpenter's Son who had not where to lay his head!” Our correspondent adds: “I get the *Freethinker* regularly, and appreciate it very much, for I do not feel so far away when I read it.”

The *Yarmouth Mercury* prints a smart letter from Mr. J. M. Headley in reply to Father Scott, who will find it difficult to answer.

Mr. Cohen had a good meeting on Sunday evening on the Newcastle-on-Tyne Town Moor. About 1,500 people were present. Mr. Boyce, a Christian Evidence lecturer, had special opportunity afforded him for opposition. He made use of the time in a gentlemanly manner—which is rather unusual in that locality; and Mr. Cohen replied to the satisfaction of all his friends.

The South Shields Branch took advantage of Mr. Cohen's presence in the neighborhood, and got him to address an open-air meeting in the Market Place. His lecture was highly appreciated by a large audience. Two orthodox disputants offered some very feeble opposition. In the unavoidable absence of the Branch president, Mr. S. M. Peacock, the chair was taken by the secretary, Mr. R. Chapman.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch holds its annual meeting to-day (July 8) at three o'clock at 1 Granger-street, for the election of officers, etc. All members are requested to attend.

The Sheffield Secular Society goes on excursion to-day (July 8). Members and friends are to meet at 7.50 a.m. in front of the Midland Station, to travel by the 8.10 train to Grindleford, whence conveyances will take the party by road near the Derwent to Matlock Bath, returning in time for the 8.27 p.m. train for home.

Mr. A. B. Moss's article on “God and Evolution” and a long letter by Mr. W. P. Ball in reply to “Chilperic” will appear in our next issue. They are in type, but are crowded out of this issue by the pressure of other matter.

A review of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* appeared in last week's *Reynolds's Newspaper*. Our contemporary says that this “neat little volume ought to be read by everyone desirous of the truth in such matters.” “Mr. Foote's style,” it adds, “is always bright, and the topics dealt with are of a nature to awaken interest even in the dullest mind.”

## The House that Jack Built.

AN EXTRAVAGANZA.

I.—GEOCENTRIC.

ONCE upon a time it was my good fortune to meet Jack, and to inspect the wonderful house which he built. I account this a distinct gain, because it has always appeared to me that this ancient nursery legend is marked by one obvious defect. The poet leaves us completely in the dark as to the design, the capacity, and the general appearance of the house of which Jack was at once architect and builder. I therefore deem it an auspicious circumstance that I am in a position to make good so serious an omission.

But suffer me to go on with my story. To commence with, the proportions of the house that Jack built were truly astounding. I can speak with authority on this point, because I carefully measured it every way with a six-inch rule which I always carry in my pocket. I found it to be exactly twenty furlongs in length, twenty furlongs in breadth, and twenty furlongs in height. My readers will now begin to recognise, as they never recognised before, the underlying facts which have helped to maintain the renown of Jack's house. They will readily perceive that throughout all time it has been positively unequalled for size. Hence is no doubt derived the world-wide fame of the house that Jack built; hence do we account for the thrilling verse which has perpetuated its memory through countless centuries.

The walls of this marvellous house were built throughout of transparent ebony, which had been specially prepared from trees grown in the forests of Utopia. Its roof was painted on the under side a brilliant blue, and on the upper side it was overlaid with pure gold to a depth of several feet. From this ceiling were suspended by invisible chains countless

beautiful lamps, which varied in size and brilliance. The largest of these would about equal in magnitude an ordinary cart-wheel, and the next would be about as far round as a large dinner-plate. Some might have been mistaken for glowing billiard balls, whilst others studded the blue like tiny sparkling pin points. These lights did not permanently occupy any one station, but were moved about from one position to another, and were liable to be extinguished at certain periods.

As this house was of so vast a height, it may occasion surprise when I state that it consisted of but one story. The ground floor, however, was laid out with an excess of care, and bore a singular resemblance to a miniature continent. Through it flowed diminutive rivers of real water, and there were also dwarf mountains capped with pure white snow. Forests of tiny living trees ornamented one part, and meadows of plush-like grass enriched another. Here and there were clusters of lakelets, and in one portion of the ground was to be found a reduced model of an active volcano. All these elaborate productions were Jack's own handiwork, and great was the delight which he took therein.

But the most remarkable part of my story consists in the fact that Jack's house was inhabited by myriads of living creatures, which varied in size and form and feature. Some of these bore a curious resemblance to human beings viewed through the wrong end of a telescope. For the accommodation of these diminutive men, women, and children, Jack had constructed miniature hamlets, villages, towns, and cities. Jack had a wonderful affection for these wee humans, because he had himself made, them by way of pastime and for his own enjoyment. Here I wish it to be distinctly understood that this is no fairy-tale, but actual historical fact. The real purpose for which Jack built this unique house was, firstly, for his own pleasure, and, secondly, for the advantage of the small folk who dwelt therein, and who were the product of his own busy hand and fertile brain.

## II.—HELIOCENTRIC.

A thousand years went by, and again in my wanderings I met Jack, and again I saw his unsurpassable house. Once more I beheld its walls of transparent ebony, and once more I checked its dimensions with my six-inch rule. To outward appearance the house was unchanged; but as soon as I viewed the internal arrangements, I saw at once that a startling transformation had been effected. The only feature which recalled my former knowledge of the place was the countless host of brilliant lamps. These, indeed, had increased in number, and were now not only suspended from the ceiling, but were hung in festoons upon the walls, and were even grouped in clusters upon the floor of the house.

The principal object, however, which now attracted my attention was a massive globe of steaming, fiery metal which was placed exactly in the centre of the building, equi-distance from walls and floor and ceiling. This blazing sphere was fixed in its place by immovable iron rods, and the heat it gave out was enormous, besides lighting up every corner of the house. Again, I observed that at convenient distances from this fiery ball there were other smaller balls composed of mud and mist, and that these smaller balls seemed to move around the large central ball.

But the more I looked, the greater was my perplexity as to the fate of the little peoples who formerly had occupied the minute cottages and palaces clustered on the floor of Jack's house, for every trace of these had disappeared. The problem vexed my soul so much that at last I went in search of Jack, and to him I propounded my question. Then Jack explained to me that during the thousand years which had elapsed since my previous visit his little humans had still further attenuated in size. I then asked Jack to show them to me, but this he declared was impossible. As I was still dissatisfied, he bade me look upon the balls of mud and mist which were circling around the central fiery globe.

"Seest thou," he said, "the third of those revolving spheres?"

(My readers must bear in mind that Jack was born a great many thousand years ago, which fact is sufficient to account for his somewhat archaic mode of speech.)

I looked carefully, and distinguished a hunk of dirt which was probably about equal in magnitude to a Dutch cheese. Then I told Jack what I saw.

"Well," answered he, "that is where my dear little children now live."

At this I smiled sceptically, for it seemed beyond all doubt that Jack was making game of me. However, the man was so much in earnest, and he explained to me with such a wealth of scientific words the processes which brought about this marvellous attenuation, that at last I became convinced, and believed in him with all my heart.

However, I could not help wondering what purpose was served by the other balls of mud and mist which rolled round and round the flaming orb in the middle of the house. I speculated whether it was not possible that some, at least, of the diminutive folk had found a lodgment thereon. It seemed hard to believe that all the human fry should have congregated on one lump, when, to all appearance, others were just as habitable. I disclosed my doubts to Jack, but, strange to say, he received them somewhat churlishly.

"No," he said, "all my children live on the one sphere."

"But," persisted I, "what, then, is the use of the other balls?"

"I put them there," he answered shortly, "to make things a little brighter on the sphere where all my interests are focussed. By their reflective capabilities they help at times to light up the place a bit."

And this was all I could get out of Jack.

## III.—COSMIC.

A thousand years went by, and once more it was my lot to fall in with Jack, and to survey his house, which never can be beaten. Once again I beheld the walls of transparent ebony, and measured its proportions with my six-inch rule. Again I marked that the outward form was unaltered; but the internal economy was, if possible, more completely transformed than upon the last occasion. Within the precincts of the house was a countless number of sparkling balls of fire, every one of them being in active motion. They varied in size from almost imperceptible sparks to spheres of perhaps one inch in diameter. But the thing that caused me the most astonishment was that nowhere could I discern the blazing orb which formerly had been so securely fixed at the heart of the house. So far as the eye could see permanence existed nowhere.

Before I had ceased to marvel at the wonders which now met my gaze, I found Jack was standing by my side. Thereupon I asked him what he had done with the flaming globe which had formerly given light and heat to all the place. Then Jack bade me look at a point within the house about two hundred fathoms from where we stood.

"Seest thou," he said, "a scintillating pellet, the diameter of which may be about the seventieth part of an inch?"

"Nay," I retorted, "you ask too much. My eyes are not so young as they were. You cannot reasonably expect me to distinguish so minute a speck at so vast a distance."

So Jack handed me a powerful glass, and, after considerable pains, I thought I made out the tiny ball of which he spoke.

"That," said Jack, "is the mighty orb which hung in the middle of my house when last thou visitedst it."

I was becoming used to believing great things, but this revelation staggered me. However, after more lucid explanation on Jack's part, I accepted the incontrovertible truth.

But, after many hours of sober reflection, it occurred to me that Jack had not informed me what he had done with his wee human children, so I again sought him. Jack thereupon explained that his little bairnies lived on the same old lump of mud and mist, but that it would avail nothing to show it me.

"This little ball," said he, "has become so insignificant a grain of dust that, if held in the palm of thine hand, it would be scarcely discernible."

"And do you still," I ventured to ask, "expend all your care and devotion upon this solitary, minute particle and upon its infinitesimal inhabitants?"

A smile of calm content played across the features of Jack.

"Thinkest thou," he quietly asked, "that I allow my mental balance to be disturbed by the scale of things? It is even as I have said. All my thought is for the comfort, the enjoyment, and the happiness of these children of my love. For them have I hung these myriad lamps in air, and provided every boon which has entered into my imagination to conceive."

It was at this point that I, for the first time, began to mark an alteration in my companion. Jack always had been a fine fellow, but now one could not fail to be impressed by his truly noble carriage. There was about him a certain mien of grandeur which was lacking in the earlier days of our acquaintanceship. It was clear that Jack had developed greatly since first I knew him.

But even now, whilst I was still looking at Jack, he startled me by inquiring if I had lately measured the walls of his house. So I felt in my pocket for my rule, and here comes the strangest part of my adventures. I searched diligently, but with all my searching I could nowhere find the walls of transparent ebony. I wandered many leagues, but failed to discover that the house had walls or boundaries of any description. Wherever I went, I beheld only the same persistent succession of dazzling fire-balls, varied at intervals by streams of liquid fire, and again by clouds of steamy vapor. So, after I had journeyed fully one hundred thousand miles, I fell to the ground in utter weariness, for my quest appeared to have neither beginning nor ending.

Whilst I lay on the ground in a half stupor, I thought I heard the voice of Jack speaking to me. I could not, however, clearly distinguish his form, because he had now grown past all recognition. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he seemed to be as big as his own house. However, I made bold to speak to Jack, and to ask him if he still centred all his love upon the one tiny grain of sand located one hundred thousand miles away. He assured me, with tears in his voice, that his undivided affection had not wavered for one moment of time. I then pressed him to explain why he had hung these lamps in such a remote wilderness.

"They shine," said Jack, "that they may give light upon the little spot of earth to which I am so tenderly attached."

But I reflected that at this vast distance those infinitesimal creatures could not possibly discern these lamps, and I ventured to hint as much to Jack. Then the calmness which was the usual characteristic of the man vanished. The voice raged furiously, and for five long mortal hours it could not speak for spluttering. At the expiration of that period the voice of Jack cursed me with a terrible curse.

"Degraded wretch!" said he, "and is thy name also to be added to the Book of Unbelief?"

Not only did the voice of Jack curse me. The hand of Jack struck me, and his is no light hand, as I can testify. The result was that for the space of three moons and a quarter I lay unconscious.

When I came to myself, the voice of Jack once more thundered in my ears.

"Man," he said, "tell me the meaning of the house which I have built."

But I answered that the thing was as dark as midnight to me.

"Then," commanded Jack, "get thee away unto the nearest steeple-house, and unfold the matter to the man thou wilt there find arrayed in black garments. Tell him all, and hold nothing back. Then, if he expound not unto thee the riddle, do thou abjure the man of the steeple-house and all his works. Have thou no dealings with the varlets who babble streams of imbecility, and who seek to delude the credulous into the belief that rivers of wisdom flow from their lips. Do thou shake off the dust from thy feet, and quit his steeple-house for ever. I have said it. Go!"

Let me offer one parting word of counsel. If ever my readers attend one of Sir Robert Ball's lectures on astronomy, I exhort them not to supplement the celestial feast provided by the man of science with a terrestrial feast of salmon and cucumber. I speak what I do know.

G. DAWSON BAKER.

## Chemico-Physical Theories of Life.—V.

MAN can support enormous variations of temperature—say variations of 200 degrees centigrade, or thereby. The regulation of the animal heat whereby the animal adapts itself to its environment depends upon that part of the digestive process which furnishes the combustible material to the machine, and, on the other hand, to the respiration which furnishes the oxygen to maintain the combustion process; and so accelerates, or retards, combustion, and the lung and skin transpiration. Here, of course, radiation, conductivity, and evaporation play a more or less predominant rôle, according to circumstances. In proportion as the air is dry its motion favors evaporation. Then the quantity of oxygen absorbed by the blood varies in a ratio inverse to the temperature of the air respired. It is entirely reflex, mechanical, and independent of the number or frequency of respiratory movements which *diminish under the influence of cold.*

All conditions which, like cold, tend to enfeeble the organism in any way tend also to diminish the production of animal heat, and, consequently, to lessen the power of resistance to cold. What becomes of *design* here? Thus, W. Edwards, the naturalist at the Jardin des Plantes, determined the fact that young animals, which produce less heat, resist cold much more feebly than adults. Also, that in cold seasons the effects of cold are more intense upon them. Nor are these effects momentary or transient. They are frequently *enduring, and determine ulterior results.* Thus, the rearers of silkworms remarked that when they placed, for incubation, *under identical circumstances of temperature*, eggs of the Bombyx which had been conserved in an icy, and others which had been placed in a cave of which the temperature was not so low, these latter matured more quickly, even to the extent of four or five days.

Now, the conclusions Edwards drew from his observations were, that after an experience of undue cold, although the body may regain its first degree, by or through the application of heat externally, nevertheless there remains, for a time, a diminution of capacity of heat production; and that the more one is exposed to the repeated action of this cause, provided the intervals are not too long, the *more this diminution of capacity augments.* And why is this thus? Simply because there exists a constant relation betwixt the organic activity and functional activity; and that not alone as regards nutrition, but also as regards the functions of relation; which is as much as to say that the activity of the combustion of the aggregate depends entirely upon the activities of the cellular or atomic constituents. This fact is well worth pondering by the advocates of teleological theory; but it is not isolated, only neither time nor space will permit amplification here. *Ex uno disce omnes.* Of course, a *designed* organism might be expected to react quite differently; or a spirit-governed one. But not only is the "living" thing conditioned by the same laws exactly as the "dead" thing, so-called (and properly so, for distinctive purposes), but the thinking thing likewise. And, just as the naturalist has difficulty in defining exactly where the dead ends and the living begins, so there is difficulty in determining exactly any line of demarcation as betwixt the non-thinking and the thinking.

There is a difference between thinking and conscious thinking, of course; but, even as betwixt the conscious state and the unconscious states of matter, the line of demarcation is extremely narrow. This has been demonstrated for us, beyond all cavil, by those magnetic phenomena which, for distinction, are named "hypnotic."

But consider the mineral, generally reckoned the "ultima thule" of consciousness. It is indisputable that it has, in a sense, consciousness of other matter, and especially of other matter like itself. If it hadn't, it would not discriminate in crystallisation, selecting the right and rejecting the wrong substance, nor would it have the productive capacity of sexually selecting the non-metallics, and, by combining with them, forming new substances. All this process is involved in the magnetic phenomenon of polarity, and takes place, as we say, mechanically. But that fact does not vitiate

the postulation, and, if it did, it would, almost equally, vitiate the postulation of human consciousness.

Thus, in the last analysis, intelligence, the thinking process, is the accurate automatic action, or selective attraction and repulsion, of the atoms and cells; and this sometimes emerges on the plane of consciousness and sometimes not, according to circumstances of tension and attention.

The infinite complexity of intelligence in all phenomena is apparently a difference in degree, not in kind. It is simply that difference which can be conceived of as inevitable betwixt an atom and its simple mind and a body composed of innumerable atoms and its complex mind. To quote from Redcote Dewar's work, entitled *From Matter to Man*: "The structure of the complex body and the complex mind, of course, introduces infinite and wonderful complexities; but these do not affect the fundamental origin of intelligence. There is the same relation betwixt them as there is betwixt a dictionary and a philosophy; as infinite philosophies may be produced from the dictionary, so infinite intelligences may be evolved from the one alphabet of elementary atoms and their energies."

I homologate these sentences after giving a large proportion of time and thought to the study of the questions both underlying and overlying the subject. It does not appear to me that any theory bearing upon the ether, and its modes of energy, or of conveying energy, can invalidate the rational cogency of these considerations. At present I am not inclined towards any theory attributing to ether-waves the potency of gravitation or magnetic force. But, assuming that such theory eventually came to be accepted by physicists, and stood the tests of scientific analysis from every point of view, then all that would be demanded would be to alter the incidence of the argument from the centre to the circumference; or, in other words, the mind would be forced to recognise the inertia of all "matter," and the source of all its manifold energies as "immanent" in the vibrations of that ether which is omnipresent, and, in the view of such theory, would be omnipotent.

The mind of man, regarded as an opposable integral force, is not impugned, nor its dignity derogated from, by chemico-physical correlation of psycho-physical operations. 'Tis simply regarded as the dynamic focus of brain potentialities, comprised in which are the ideas of individuality, personality, and continuity of consciousness. It is the supreme inflorescence of the evolutionary nisus, the latter again being the necessary outcome of the magnetic constitution of matter. The attribution of spurious powers and bogus attributes to the mind is not calculated to enhance its value; and, of course, chemico-physical theories take no account of them. The mind is denuded of these accretions. One of them is free-will. The acceptance of any chemico-physical theory implies the idea of thought mechanism, and this implies necessary sequence of events in response to the incessant sequence of internal or external environmental stimuli. We cannot will to think in any particular way, however much we may, by habit and custom, believe we can. Let anyone attempt, for instance, to "will" to hear the musical sound "re" when "do" is sounded, or to see green when blue is painted up; it will be found impossible. And just so is it throughout the whole gamut of thought; and the wise man, knowing this, and desiring that his acts shall conform to his wishes, takes care to arrange his whole environment—diet included, of course—so that naturally his acts will emerge as desired. For a full exposure of the universal illusion of free-will the reader may refer to a very learned and exhaustive essay from the pen of Professor Hamon, of the University of Brussels, and published by the University Press, Limited.

ROBERT PARK, M.D.

### Humanity.

Whatever any of us may do, whatever attitude we may assume, we are but a portion of collective humanity. How little do we possess, how little are we, that we can really call our own—that is purely individual. We draw for our knowledge, not only upon those who came before us, but from those among whom we live. The greatest genius, even, would produce little if he had to depend upon his own natural resources.—*Goethe.*

## Correspondence.

### BARON ROTHSCHILD'S SAINTS AND GODS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It is with diffidence I venture to offer a suggestion to so accomplished a scholar as "Chilperic"; but I think I can give some explanation of the late Baron Rothschild's taste in gods and saints, which he says in his article, "Rothschild and the Saints," he has pondered over, and is unable to offer any satisfactory explanation of. The explanation, I think, is simple. The Baron would buy his curios for their intrinsic value and artistic merit without regard to their purpose; he, therefore, has bought the plate which was fashioned for the party in power in the Netherlands—the Imperial and Spanish Catholic masters of the country. At that period the decoration of furniture, especially of goldsmiths' work, was a mode of occult political propoganda, or of declaring an ostentatious loyalty. This accounts for the frequent occurrence of St. Margaret, who was the patron Saint of Margaret, Governor of the Netherlands, the natural daughter of Charles V. St. George and Hercules were both the patrons of brute force—St. George in its military aspect, and Hercules in its social. Hercules remained a popular god all through the Middle Ages, and is found in Christian art as the "Virtue"—Force. Their occurrence on the plate of the Netherlands under the rule of Charles V. is easily understood. Bacchus is a kind of patron god of Spain even to the present time, and his image on table vessels made for Spaniards, or men desiring to be well with Spanish authorities, is most appropriate; moreover, Bacchus is universally used for the decoration of plate and wine vessels of all kinds throughout Europe. Neptune naturally is the chief god of a country below the level of the sea, and of a people dependent on maritime commerce. That the Virgin Mary comes first is easily explained. She was the most frequently represented in art of all kind throughout Europe, and was even more popular in northern countries than in Italy and Spain.

While, as I have said, St. Margaret, the patron saint of the Governor, would be badge of adherence to the Catholic cause, St. George, the patron of England, would have a Protestant and Republican signification, especially during the War of Independence, when the Dutch naturally looked here for assistance. Venus and Apollo were also party symbols as being the opposites of Diana and Acteau, the favorite gods of the Court of France after the advent of Diana of Poitiers; Venus, as love and fecundity, opposing the slaughteress virgin goddess of death, and Apollo, as the god of the arts, opposing the brutal hunters of the French Court.

If I may suggest to "Chilperic" and to your readers, I should expect to find very interesting political suggestions in the designing of the ornament around these figures, and I imagine, from my knowledge of the art of the period, it will give valuable hints on the real opinions held at the period, which the Inquisition and Protestant bigotry both prevented being written in ordinary characters. GEORGE PORTER.

### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF monthly Executive meeting, held at the Society's Offices on Thursday, June 28; the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. E. Bater, T. Gorniot, S. Hartmann, W. Heaford, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, C. Quinton, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, E. Sims, T. Shore, T. J. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, C. Watts, and the Secretary.

The first matter dealt with by the new Executive was the appointment of the Benevolent Fund Committee. Messrs. G. J. Warren, V. Roger, E. Bater, E. W. Quay, and H. J. Stace were unanimously elected.

Messrs. B. Munton and W. Leat were elected on the Finance Committee.

The necessary conditions having been complied with, permission was given for the formation of a Branch at New Tredegar, and eight new members were admitted.

The President presented a draft circular re the Twentieth Century Fund, and it was moved by Mr. Gorniot, seconded by Mr. Hartmann, and carried unanimously: "That it be adopted, and at once issued."

The Secretary reported the receipt of an invitation from the International Federation of Freethought Societies to the Congress to be held in Paris in September, 1900.

After some discussion, it was moved by Mr. Hartmann, seconded by Mr. Moss: "That the N. S. S. should be represented at the forthcoming Congress by its President, Mr. G. W. Foote, and Mr. W. Heaford."

Mr. Foote accepted, with the qualification that if business required his presence in London he should be released. Mr. Heaford also accepted, the details being adjourned until the next meeting.

The Secretary reported that the Demonstrations would commence on Sunday, July 8, and the meeting adjourned.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

## 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.

### OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.  
 BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15 and 6.30, R. P. Edwards.  
 PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A lecture.  
 CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. A. Davies, "What do we know about Jesus?"  
 FINSEBURY PARK: 3.30, Freethought Demonstration. Speakers: Messrs. Foote, Watts, Moss, etc.  
 BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.  
 VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen; 6.15, Debate between Messrs. Cohen and Bowman on "Has Man a Free Will?"  
 KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.  
 MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; 7.15, A lecture.  
 July 11, at 8.15, W. J. Ramsey.  
 EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Pack.  
 HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. A. Davies. Lectures every Tuesday and Thursday, at 8 p.m., by R. P. Edwards.  
 KILBURN (corner of Glengal-road): 7.30, R. P. Edwards.  
 HAMMERSMITH (back of Lyric Theatre): 7.15, F. A. Davies, "The Ethics of Secularism."  
 WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey.

### COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): Closed during the months of June, July, and August.  
 BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Is there a Future Life? A Secularist's Answer." At 11, in the Bull Ring, Mr. Ward. Mr. Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8 (weather permitting).  
 SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Arrangements for Annual Picnic.

### Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 8, m., Kingsland; a. and e., Victoria Park.  
 ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 15, m., Camberwell; a., Brockwell Park. 22, Northampton.  
 H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—July 8, Birmingham. 15, Debate at Northampton. 22, Birmingham. 29, Manchester. August 19, Northampton.  
 F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—July 8, e., Hammersmith. 15, m., Battersea; e., Stratford. 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

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[Continued on p. 431. Look There!]

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