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Jehovah's Apples.

It is not often that a Christian minister sends us a letter for publication, but our readers will find one on a later page of this week's *Freethinker*. The writer resents the idea that the clergy are afraid of debate. He also complains of our ridiculing the Christian view of the Fall in an extract headed "That Pippin" from our *Bible Romances*. "Assuredly," he says, "no scoffing or jeering is a worthy method of dealing with the question." But the laughing and jeering, in this particular case, simply consist in divesting the story of its factitious glamor and placing it in the clear daylight of common sense. Many absurd Bible stories are told with great solemnity, because the authors, as well as their first readers, regarded them as actual occurrences; for the supernatural was in their eyes as ordinary as the natural. Talking snakes and donkeys are serious enough to savages and barbarians, as they are to children who listen to fairy tales. But when we cease to believe in their possibility they become ridiculous, and solemnity gives place to laughter. The point of view is everything in these matters. What is irreverence to the man who believes is honest derision to the man who disbelieves. When the Christian complains of "scoffing and jeering" he simply lacks imagination, and fails to put himself mentally in the sceptic's place.

It should also be borne in mind that temperament plays a large part even in the most important discussions. The solemn man wonders what the humorist is "grinning" about, and the humorist wonders how on earth the solemn man is able to keep such a long face. Bishop South, one of the masters of English prose, was very witty; and he was taken to task by a dull *episcopus* for sprinkling his sermons with such "levities." "Now, my dear brother in the Lord," he replied, "do you mean to say that if God had given you any wit you would not have used it?"

Mr. Alcock, our clerical correspondent, is certainly a very serious man. It takes a great deal of seriousness at this time of day to enable even a clergyman to believe that Adam and Eve were real personages, and that the Garden of Eden was a definite portion of the earth's surface. Most clergymen nowadays treat this story as symbolic or allegorical, but Mr. Alcock appears to accept it as actual history. This may not be flattering to his intelligence, but it speaks volumes for his honesty. He is, indeed, a most simple-minded believer. We suppose he would have believed it devoutly if the Bible had said that Jonah swallowed the whale, instead of the whale swallowing Jonah. So simple-minded is he that he throws the burden of disproof upon the sceptic. He claims the right to hold that Eve was seduced by a serpent until he is "shown that the Devil could not have employed a snake for such a purpose." Now, a very little physiology would soon "show" him this. Serpents are not endowed with a talking apparatus, and all the devils in hell could not make them use organs which they do not possess.

It is taken for granted by Mr. Alcock that Adam and Eve existed as individuals, and were the first parents of mankind. But a multitude of his clerical brethren would tell him that he is mistaken. Adam and Eve are legendary or mythological figures. Thousands of years before they were created, according to the Bible chronology, countries like Egypt were inhabited by millions of civilised men and women. Nor is it conceivable by an Evolutionist that the human race proceeded

from a single family. Those who ask "Who were the first parents of mankind?" are hopelessly behind the science of the present age. They do not understand the elementary principles of Evolution.

Let us assume, however, for the sake of argument, that the Bible story of the Fall is really true. In that case, we say it is perfectly puerile. Mr. Alcock says that Adam and Eve existed "in a state of childlike innocence." But what he means is childlike *ignorance*, for he afterwards says that "we" cannot help "loving" evil, and on this theory children are infected with what is called original sin. Suppose we take Mr. Alcock's word for it that Adam and Eve had "no evil inclinations." If that were true, it would have been impossible for them to "go wrong." They might have made mental mistakes, but they could not have been guilty of vice, crime, or sin; for it is indisputable that an external "temptation" has no force except in relation to an internal tendency. All their Maker had to do was to leave them alone in their "innocence." But he did not do this. He set a trap for them. They fell into it in their ignorance, and their benevolent Creator, who has no First Offenders' Act in his jurisprudence, gave them penal servitude for life—to say nothing of their dangers after death—for a single indiscretion.

After asserting the "innocence" of Adam and Eve, and their being without any "evil inclinations," Mr. Alcock states that their sin was "deliberate." We beg him to reconcile these apparent contradictions.

God is said to be omniscient. He knows everything, even before it happens. He was perfectly aware of the inevitable consequence when he put Adam and Eve to the "test." Was it not, then, a cruel farce? A father who *knew* that his boy would steal a shilling would be wicked if he deliberately left one in the boy's way.

"Felt dependence on the Creator" is one of those soothing phrases of which Christian preachers have an abundance. Adam and Eve, we are told, set God at defiance, by eating his forbidden apples. They committed the crime of rebellion. But why did not God try to govern them through their reason? Forbidding a thing does not necessarily make it immoral. We cannot be said to do wrong, morally speaking, unless we know that our action will inflict injury on others. Mere obedience is not in itself a virtue, although it becomes so when we perceive the social grounds of its necessity.

Mr. Alcock is puzzled by what Paul called the war in our members. We do not agree with him that men have a special "love" for sin. We regard the statement as a gross libel on human nature. But we do admit that men have "contradictory instincts"—or rather impulses which are sometimes in opposition to each other. Mr. Alcock explains this fact by the theory that man is fallen. We explain it by the theory that man has risen. And our theory has the advantage over his of being countenanced—nay, demonstrated—by science. There is no "mystery" in this matter to the Evolutionist. We have all descended physically, and ascended morally, from savage progenitors, as they in turn descended (and ascended) from still more brutal ancestors. By the law of heredity, their natures are still powerful within us; and by the laws of conscience and civilisation, we are under a contrary pressure from collective humanity. The selfish instincts come into collision with the social instincts; and moral progress consists in the growing subordination of the former to the latter.

G. W. FOOTE.

Christ on the Stage.

So the Ober-Ammergau performances are doomed! That is to say, there will be no repetition of them next year if a certain section of the Evangelical Church can have their way. But as it is not at all likely that these objectors can carry their desires into effect next year or for some years to come, it is just possible that the Passion Play will be continued a little longer—probably till it ceases to pay. When it does die the natural death of all survivals of mediæval superstition, no sane person is likely to shed many tears. The world will go on, even in the holiday season, just as well without it. Some other and possibly better excuse will be found for an excursion to the same or adjacent regions, and the pious humbug of the present pilgrimages will be spared.

There was a proposal a little time ago to bring the peasants to this country, so that they might give performances of their play at the Royal Aquarium. But it seems to have been thought by enterprising *entrepreneurs* that the representation of Christ on the cross, even when redeemed by the buffoonery of a farcical Judas Iscariot, would hardly "take" like a wild and woolly west or a South African show, and there is just now a probability that the Mongolian will be the best card to play for public peep shows.

Meantime the passion displayed by the Evangelicals over this passion play is more than a little diverting. "Blasphemous" is the mildest term they apply to it. "Horribly profane," "a mixture of hideous farce and sickening crudities," "abominably irreverent and indecent," are other expletives used. The curious thing is that this Ammergau play has been given for goodness knows how many years past, and not until quite recently has any objection been raised to it on the ground of coarseness or profanity. It is but a survival of the ancient "mysteries," and of those "miracle plays" which became extinct in this country after the accession of Queen Elizabeth. The "devils" who figured in these performances were indeed open to criticism. They supplied the comic element in the sacred tragedies, and their jests were of the most irreverent character, but were always received with manifestations of delight. "Whenever," says a Christian writer, "a crowd of people were represented—in the Deluge when Noah is preparing his ark, or at the sacred scenes in the New Testament history—the writer of the 'mystery' introduced us to the language and thoughts of the lowest of the mediæval rabble. Sometimes these plays were enacted on a stage of three compartments—the uppermost representing heaven, the middle earth, and the lowest hell. The more horrible the latter was the better the spectators were pleased." The Coventry plays are said to have included the most revolting representations of the Deity, which may be readily understood if the writers followed literally on the lines of the Old Testament portraiture.

But we have grown out of the tone and spirit of these early religious plays, with their odd mixture of the sacred and profane, of piety and levity, of devotion and coarse pleasantry. And we have—or rather the Evangelical section referred to have—become so extremely superfine and sensitive that the annual performances of the guileless peasants at Ammergau, which are refinement itself as compared with those given in our country centuries ago, are now denounced as contrary to all notions of religious propriety, and as irreverent displays that ought to be sternly put down. It is said that the "most sacred events during the passion days of our Lord, even His prayers, His agony, His crucifixion, and dying words, are reproduced as a 'performance,' a veritable 'show' of a most sensational character, exhibited for a money payment."

Certainly some of the descriptions which have appeared of the latest show suggest a conscientious endeavor to give a realistic representation of New Testament incidents. Christ, in shaded crimson robes, comes on the stage seated on an ass led by the adoring disciple John. Every effort is taken to prevent any similarity to the circus jester of our childhood who, with white and carmine-covered cheeks, used to make his *entrée* similarly mounted. The entrance of Christ is said to be "heart-

thrilling." Somebody who, as it were, discharges the function of ringmaster asks, "Art Thou the Messiah?" Then come in answer the "clear brave words," *Du sagst es, ich bin es* (You say so, I am). This, we are told, "goes like a lance through brain and heart." Why it should do so does not quite appear. If he comes on as the Messiah, naturally he would say he was the Messiah when interrogated. What else would you expect? They have a new Christus now, the other one having died of some ordinary vulgar complaint which would destroy all the idealism if it were mentioned. The *Abend Mahl* (Last Supper) is said to be most sacredly and solemnly given. The Gethsemane scene is "terrible." Judas, we are told, is a torture throughout. Nevertheless, he supplies the farcical element, and "every time Judas appears the country people laugh and titter." The last scenes also are terrible—the scourging in the soldiers' hall, the scoffing of the rabble, and the Christus standing bound before Pilate. The Crucifixion is "terrible and prolonged." For eighteen minutes Christus is on the cross which makes the hearts of all, like Magdalen's, "hang there too."

"It is awful! the face of the dying Christus, the words he spake, 'in a [loud] voice,' *Es ist Vollbracht, Vater, in deine Hande empfehle ich meinen Geist*. The roll of thunder and sudden darkness gives intense relief.....All this would be impossible, impious, did we not know the people here. They are not only brought up to it, but born for it. Johannes' little child, scarce two years old, is in two tableaux. And the Christus! He is exceptional, extraordinary. With his marvellous ability and beauty, he is like a child—a simple child that would fain become a monk. The play of these devout artists is their form of worship, and they willingly speak of it in their simple and beautiful language."

Now this is the sort of thing presented year after year in the past, not only without a word of protest, but with absolute eulogy as a perfect Christian art picture. Present-day Evangelicals profess themselves amazed at the blasphemous mockery. Whilst they pity the ignorant peasants who take part in the spectacle, they are excited to the utmost abhorrence of the miserable priestcraft which encourages such an abomination, and by implication the tourists who travel thither and pay to witness it.

The crusade against the Ober-Ammergau performances seems to be developing. The *Morning Post* has led the way with a series of hysteric criticisms, and a well-known ecclesiastic is widely distributing "A Protest and a Plea." But what does the opposition amount to? It simply means that present-day Christians feel that they cannot survive the presentation in a concrete form, on a stage with living actors, of the Gospel incidents which form the basis of their faith. It is not a question whether the representation is accurate or inaccurate—the probability is that it approaches as near as can be to the reality as it may be imagined by simple minds. It is enacted by peasants, and Christ and his disciples were of the peasant class. But, curiously enough, these modern Christians, though they can endure the story as presented in paintings and partially in sculpture, seem altogether fight shy of it in the form of stage representation. It shocks them, mainly because it is so calculated to engender unbelief. The Gospel story is very well to read with pious eyes, and meditate upon with devout adoration, but dramatised—well, that is quite a different thing. Somehow, the incidents sink into their proper proportion, and, shall we say, into comparative insignificance?

One of the religious weeklies, discussing the subject and denouncing the Ammergau play, enlarges, as all Christians seem to find a delight in enlarging, upon the "terrible agony" of Christ prior to and during his crucifixion. But if that tragedy occurred, in what way does it differ from an untold number of tragedies in which the agony must have been equally great? How many heretics have been tortured and burnt at the stake in the name of this very Christ? Is it to be supposed that they suffered less than he? Some of them exhibited infinitely greater intrepidity. Crucifixion was the form of capital punishment at the time when he is said to have died. Two persons—thieves, it is said—were crucified with him. Nobody ever seems to think of them. Their agony was probably quite as great as his. Why is the sympathy of the centuries and of the world

all centred on Christ, who is by no means the only example we have of a man dying, as he believed, in the cause of truth and for the benefit of the world?

FRANCIS NEALE.

What is a Secular Reformer?

IN considering the answer which should be given to the above question it is really necessary to have a distinct idea of the sense in which those who use the term employ it. Where this idea does not exist misapprehension is likely to obtain upon the subject. During my journalistic career of forty years I have frequently designated prominent men secular reformers, and for so doing have sometimes been taken severely to task. It is supposed that there is a marked difference between a secular and a social reformer, and perhaps, as the two terms are popularly understood, there is some justification for the supposition. But practically, so far as their objects are concerned, the two phrases represent the same thing. One may not go quite so far as the other upon certain subjects, and their methods may vary; but both aim to improve the mundane conditions of society, and both rely for success in their efforts for reform upon human agencies, not upon alleged supernatural teachings. Two great social reformers, Robert Owen and Charles Dickens, employed nothing but secular means in their endeavors to ameliorate societarian conditions. The former boldly repudiated belief in "all the religions of the world," and the latter, being a Unitarian, avoided orthodox Christianity in his attempts to remedy the abuses of his time. In the proper sense of the word, Dickens was a secular reformer; that is, in his reformatory work orthodox theology had no part. Those of his characters noted for their noble generosity and their love for mankind are not religious; whilst those remarkable for their professions of piety are heartless individuals, working evil for their own selfish ends. In *Pickwick* the deputy shepherd is made the representative of a class, and not an exceptional individual, as an orthodox writer would have described him. Stiggins is a most unmitigated rascal and a pious, canting hypocrite, to be abhorred and detested by all honest men and women. Then the portrait of Uriah Heap, that very "umble" person, is little less than a burlesque of the orthodox professions of humility. The immortal Pecksniff shows that professions of piety and rascality can go hand in hand.

The Secular organisation must not, however, be confounded with individual propaganda. For instance, a member of the National Secular Society may hold views upon the various social topics of the day which are not enunciated in the Society's official programme. He is quite consistent in expounding such views, if he thinks they tend to human improvement; but he does so as an individual social reformer, whose desire to do good has been evoked by his Secular philosophy. Take Socialism, Individualism, and Anarchism; although the object in each case may be the same—namely, social advancement—the members of each differ in their method of seeking to obtain their object; still, all of them adopt means drawn from secular, not ecclesiastical, sources. A Secular reformer acts upon the belief that theological errors lie at the root of our social evils, and therefore he aims at removing those errors, leaving others to adopt what plans they consider best to eradicate the social evils. But it must not be overlooked that in every instance where reforms have been won the victory has been secured by secular, not theological, agencies. Further, a Secular reformer is one who recognises only that as being socially useful which tends to the physical, mental, moral, and political improvement of mankind as members of the general commonwealth. Considerations about matters that are said to transcend the province of reason, and that make the business of this life merely of secondary importance, the Secular reformer deems to be, at the most, only of theoretical interest, and of no real service in the social struggle in which society is at present engaged.

Whatever minor differences as to *method* may obtain among avowed Secular and Social reformers, there is one thing that ought always to be remembered—namely, that, in pursuing our own good in our own way, we

should strive not to unnecessarily damage the interests of others. Freedom of thought, of speech, and of action for all is a claim consistent with reason, and essential to human progress. The point here to be insisted upon is, that the exercise of personal liberty, which does not infringe upon the freedom of others, is the right of all, without any regard to class distinctions. This principle the Secular reformer maintains, without committing himself to all that is taught in the exercise of that right. If it is asked how true freedom is to be distinguished from that which is false, the answer will be that every individual should be free to give expression to his thoughts; but whether or not such thoughts represent that which will prove beneficial to society must be tested by comparison, and by fair and open discussion. Above all, the Secular reformer is thoroughly opposed, under the present conditions of society, to all violence which tends to the destruction of persons and property. Such conduct indicates either insanity or uncontrolled passion, instead of a clear insight into the causes of social advancement. Possibly in times past it might have been necessary; but the people did not then possess the means for redressing wrongs that they have at their command to-day. In the past they were kept down by a domineering Church and a despotic Government, and all political rights were withheld from the masses. Now the Church has lost its former power, and governments must "assume a virtue if they have it not." Besides, the people, although they have not all the political power that is their due, have sufficient to enable them, if they use what they possess wisely, to obtain further reforms in a peaceful manner.

One of the best of social reformers was Robert Owen, and no one can accurately deny that he was always actuated by the desire to enhance the secular welfare of mankind. For energy, pure intentions, self-sacrifice, and a fervent wish to augment the happiness of others, he cannot be surpassed by any of the world's benefactors. Yet, as I recently stated in these columns, Owen was a most determined antagonist to the errors of the Christian faith. For making this statement I have been called to account by, I presume, a Christian admirer of the great philanthropist. In a courteously written letter to me, Mr. E. E. Kitchener, of Clapham, writes:—

"When you claim him [Robert Owen] to be a Secular teacher, and a determined and outspoken antagonist to the errors of the Christian faith, are you not making gross misrepresentations? Nowhere in Owen's works or reported words have I found any attack on the accepted Christianity of the country.....He published in later years his own personal ideas of the Deity."

I have already explained in this article in what sense I apply the term "Secular teacher" to reformers of the type of the founder of the "Rational System of Society." As to my alleged "gross misrepresentations" of Owen's antagonism to the errors of Christianity, my correspondent is in error. Of course, *he* might not have found the report of such in the writings of Owen, but that may be his (my correspondent's) misfortune. The antagonism is recorded more than once "in Owen's works or reported words." It appears that the extracts I gave from the *New Moral World* were not sufficient to convince Mr. Kitchener of the correctness of my statement in reference to Owen's antagonism "to the errors of the Christian faith." It will, therefore, be a pleasure to me to furnish additional proof of the truth of my allegation. Here it is. Robert Owen said:—

"The mythologies of the Pagans, the mysteries of the Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and all the sacred and theological writings of Pagans, Hindoos, Christians, and Jews, were of no value—nay, instead of real value, they were the greatest evils existing among men, for they deranged or destroyed all the superior faculties and feelings of the human race, and made man, as he is at this day, more irrational than any animal of the creation.....He [Robert Owen] did not stand pledged to prove the follies of the Christian religion apart from other religions; to him they all appeared the same in principle and in general practice.....He believed that all the religions of the world were founded in error—the Christian religion was included in the word *all*." ("Debate on the Evidences of Christianity," between Mr. Owen and the Rev. Mr. Campbell in America, pp. 399, 336).

Mr. Owen repeated the same thing again and again in his debate at Reading with the Rev. W. Legg, B.A.;

and also in the *New Moral World* (see pp. 129 and 194).

As to Owen's "personal ideas of the Deity," they had no reference to the Christian's, or any other personal God. His (Owen's) notion was that in nature there is an "incomprehensible power" that is "yet unknown to man." Of a personal Deity and a personal Devil he wrote in the *New Moral World* thus:—

"There is not one single fact known to man, after all the experience of past generations, to prove that any such personalities exist, or ever did exist; and, in consequence, all the mythologies of the ancients, and all the religions of the moderns, are mere fanciful notions of men, whose imaginations have been cultivated to accord with existing prejudices, and whose judgments have been systematically destroyed from their birth."

Innumerable citations could be given from the writings and speeches of Owen to justify my statement that he was opposed to the errors of *all* the religions of the world, and that he made no exception in the case of Christianity. But I hope the evidence I have adduced will be sufficient to satisfy Mr. Kitchener and others as to the opinion of Robert Owen upon the folly and inutility of all the supernatural (so-called) religions of the world.

CHARLES WATTS.

Christian Endeavor.

ON Saturday last, after a preliminary day spent entirely in prayer, "The World's Convention of Christian Endeavor" opened its meetings at the Alexandra Palace. Although not quite so large as the clergyman imagined who prayed the other day for the three million and a half of "Christian Endeavorers" who would soon be coming to London, the gathering bids fair to leave nothing to be desired in the shape of quantity. There are to be many thousands of members, unlimited praying and preaching by a number of clergymen, amongst whom will figure Mr. Sheldon, of Topeka, Kansas, U.S.A., a gentleman who performed the almost impossible task of writing a book without a single decent sentence in its three hundred dreary pages.

"The Christian Endeavor" movement is of comparatively recent growth, and its object, as defined by one writer, is to induce its members to lead a Christ-like life, and carry the principles of Christianity into the ordinary affairs of life. So far as can be gathered from the published reports of the proceedings, prospective and retrospective, the only typical piece of Christ-like work was the day spent in prayer at Wesley's Chapel. With the praying the desire to be "Christ-like" seems to have come to an abrupt termination. When Jesus was about to undertake any important spiritual work, he fasted for many days. True, he fasted by himself, and there was no committee by to watch the proceedings. Still, he fasted. The Christian Endeavorers, on the contrary, make elaborate preparations for feasting. A whole army of refreshment caterers have been engaged, and the consumption of mineral waters promises to be abnormal. When a London clergyman was told that Mr. Sheldon was coming to England in one of the Cunard liners, his remark was: "Dear me, I should have thought he would have walked across." And one would have thought that the Convention provided an admirable chance for something in the loaves-and-fishes line, for the discomfort of unbelievers and the greater glory of the faithful.

There is also a corps of medical attendants engaged to look after any cases of sickness that may arise. This is the unkindest cut of all. Instead of "endeavoring" to give the world an object-lesson in the value of the promise of Jesus that all things should be granted to those who believe and pray, of the power of faith to work miracles, or of the benefit of calling in a few dozen of the assembled parsons and letting them cure the sick by "the prayer of faith," doctors are engaged, physic is prepared, and the Scriptures are allowed to go by the board. And this is what they call "translating Jesus into ordinary life"! Of course, it is only what one might expect. When a Christian talks of imitating Jesus, he seldom means more than reading into some of his reputed utterances as much of current common sense as is possible, and conveniently dropping all such as are

hopelessly impracticable. Such an expression is only another instance of the general hypocrisy into which people are forced when they attempt to guide their lives by ancient records and outworn ideals. And from this point of view the "Christian Endeavor" movement is interesting enough.

One of the daily papers noted as a piece of novelty that the usual notice, "Beware of pickpockets," has been transformed into "Pickpockets beware." Beware of what? Of whom? Of God? Of Hell? Well, if these were all they had to dread, one might venture to predict that the light-fingered fraternity would be well represented at the Convention. Once at rest concerning the terrestrial "Bobby," the average pickpocket would chance the celestial one. And as for hell, most are like the highlandman, who, being reminded by an old lady, from whom he had stolen enough cloth to make a coat, that he would pay for it at the day of judgment, retorted that it was such long credit he might as well take enough for a waistcoat at once. But the joke is that pickpockets are to beware because the Convention has made elaborate preparations for their detection and punishment. Which is their way of commenting on the texts enjoining non-resistance to evil, turning one cheek when the other is smitten, and giving one's cloak to the man who had stolen one's coat.

What, after all, is likely to be the result of such a gathering, or what will result from the movement it represents? From the Christian point of view, practically nothing. The three million and a half members, it claims are not recruited from the non-Christian world, nor do they exert the slightest influence upon it. They are gathered from the various Christian bodies, and, while receiving a new religious label, the Christian world remains as it was. Like the converts of a missionaries in India, who by getting converted at a number of different mission stations—at so much per month—finally reach Europe in a score of different reports, the "Christian Endeavorer" is only a duplication of the ordinary Church member. But the world of non-Christian or anti-Christian feeling goes on absolutely untouched by any such parades, and increasing in spite of them. There is small cause, therefore, for much of the self-gratulation one has been reading concerning the growth of the movement. Our converts are converts in the full sense of the term. They have been brought to take an entirely different view of life, and represent so much loss to the Christian community as a whole. But this and similar bodies are merely re-arrangements of existing Christians, and often enough a few are dropped in the shuffle.

And if the Christian Endeavor movement does not portend any increase in the numerical strength of Christianity, it certainly does not promise any permanent social benefit. People learn but slowly, or they would surely have recognised ere this that, if these religious revivals could accomplish anything at all, the world would have been saved long since. From the days of Wesley, at least, we have had enormous revivals that were going to revolutionise society and usher in the Millennium. They have appeared, run their course, and left the world as it was, or at most saddled with the presence of a new sect. Not long since the enormous sales of Mr. Sheldon's book—surely the most pitiful production that was ever dignified by such a name—sent the religious world into ecstasies, and wonderful results were promised from its large circulation. That boom has died out, and the world remains as it was, richer only by the possession of some scores of sermons that it could easily have spared. It is in the nature of things that the promoters of any movement should anticipate from it wonderful results; but at least one would expect that, as the outcome of frequent disillusionment in this direction, people would begin to see the plain teaching that the world requires something more than mere religious vapidness to solve its problems or to heal its woes. Social problems are not to be solved by any fantastical speechifying concerning the saving power of belief in Christ, nor by vague yearnings after a higher religious life—yearnings which usually produce a parade of self-righteousness, far more disgusting than anything that it displaces.

What, to take only one instance of these religious movements, has the Salvation Army accomplished in the way of contributing to a solution of social problems?

Practically nothing. A hungry man here and there has his immediate wants relieved, a woman here and there is lifted from a life of degradation; but, meanwhile, the same agencies are busily engaged producing others to take their place. And what do any of the religious bodies effect in the way of destroying these agencies? Again, nothing. Worse than nothing even, for, while there is no attempt made by any of these religious revivals to seriously consider and attempt the removal of the causes of the evils their charities are designed to palliate, the mere distribution of charity serves in a manner to keep the public mind quiet. We give nearly thirty millions annually to religion, and thank God for the kindness of human nature because we get a few thousands back in questionable charity. We withdraw 50,000 men from productive pursuits, and consider we are well repaid because a sermon here and there is preached dealing with social reforms that the clergy are not strong enough to resist. We subscribe huge sums to numberless religious organisations, and meanwhile trades unions are driven to pass special resolutions protesting against the scandalously low wages paid those engaged in the manufacturing of "Holy Bibles." Strike a balance between the good done by religious organisations and the evils they perpetuate, and I have little doubt that the latter will far outweigh the former.

The Rev. Silvester Horne, remarking the large membership of the "Christian Endeavor" movement, triumphantly observed that "No secular society has ever accomplished such triumphs." It may be so, but, if it is so, the fact reflects little credit on the influence of Christianity in the past. That no movement for the betterment of human life here could bring such a number of people into combination is in itself a sufficient proof of how little Christianity has attended to the social side of human life. And the pity of it is that facts give the statement at least a colorable air of truth. It is a grim commentary upon the claims put forward on behalf of the civilising power of Christianity that there should be needed a society for the prevention of Cruelty to Children. It is still more grim that there should be taken in hand every year nearly 30,000 children; but grimmest of all is the fact that the Society finds it a matter of extreme difficulty to raise the few thousands annually required for its work, while huge sums are raised with comparative ease for purely religious objects. It may be that Christians cannot be brought to combine for secular purposes, but a clergyman might at least have the decency not to boast of the circumstance.

It is by no means an insignificant feature of the movement that its members are chiefly young men and women. In this journal a few weeks ago, reviewing the statistics compiled by Professor Starbuck in his *Psychology of Religion*, I pointed out the close connection between the ages of conversion and the period of puberty. These two sets of phenomena run together so closely that it is impossible to refrain from seeing the nature of the connection between them. It is at puberty that the organism is in process of rearrangement; it is more mobile than at any other period of its career, it is more likely to be affected or attracted by any exciting influence it may encounter; and it is surely undesirable that at this stage the growing social sympathies should be directed into the channel of religious vapidness, instead of being trained to take a healthy human interest in a healthy human life.

The *Daily News*, in a special article on the Convention, observes: "It is really no use for sceptics to sniff and snort at a movement on so imposing a scale as this." Perhaps not, but if the sceptic does treat the movement seriously it is not because he is impressed by either its intellectual or moral worth, but because there is here such a serious misdirection of human energy as to demand the closest and most serious attention. That young men and women should feel some desire to participate in a larger life than that of their own individuality is in every way admirable. But that this fresh, healthful feeling should be exploited in the services of a demoralising supernaturalism is one of the saddest features of these movements. It is this fact that makes such movements of importance not to the sceptic merely, but to all who value the welfare of the race.

C. COHEN.

The Sacred Seventh.

God blessed the seventh day and "sanctified" it. For this reason, according to the fourth commandment, men are to work six days and rest on the seventh. Orthodox writers like Mr. Gladstone regard this as the first institution of the Sabbath. The more sagacious Paley saw the unanswerable objections to this view. There is not the slightest allusion to the Sabbath in the lives of the patriarchs, nor during the captivity in Egypt, and had it been known such a silence would be "unaccountable." Precisely the same argument, however, may be turned against Paley's position that the Sabbath was instituted in the wilderness. It is never alluded to during the rule of the Judges and the reign of the Kings before the captivity in Babylon. Indeed, the very language of the fourth commandment is conclusive on this point. The reference to "the stranger within thy gates" proves that the law was not given to desert nomads, but to a people dwelling in fenced cities. Nor could the Sabbath have arisen among nomads. Except when they shift their tents, and travel to fresh pastures, they have only to sit and watch their flocks. One day is exactly like another, and a day of rest in such circumstances is unintelligible. A periodic day of rest could only arise in an industrial civilisation where its necessity was obvious. And that the day of rest, whatever it was, should be associated with mythical events was inevitable, when every part of life was under a religious sanction.

Intervals of rest and recreation were common. The Egyptians had periodic holidays. On the festal days in Greece the shops and courts were closed, and the slaves rested from their labors. In Rome every ninth day was a holiday for all classes. The Persians had similar holidays. Even in Mexico the Spaniards found certain days set apart for idleness. In China the holidays are the new and full moon. In India there are prescribed days on which the superstitious Hindu dare not even clean his teeth.

The seven-days week was well known to the ancient Egyptians, who called the days after the seven planets. This practice spread from Egypt into the Roman Empire. Among the Greeks the seventh day was sacred as early as the times of Homer and Hesiod. It is also affirmed by Davis that the Hindus had a week of seven days named after the planets, and this is corroborated by Colebrooke.

The sacredness of the number seven, in so many parts of the world, sprang out of natural reasons. Moon-worship precedes sun-worship because man's attention is excited by the changeable rather than the regular. Now it was discovered that the full lunation occupied twenty-eight days. That was called a month—or moon, and everyone knows that the lunar month comes before the solar or calendar month. Indeed, to this very day, the prisoners in English jails call a month "a moon." Well, the twenty-eight days being halved, the result was fourteen. That number was halved again, and the result was seven. But this number could not be halved or divided in any way; it was indivisible and mysterious, and therefore sacred. Then there were the seven planets, from which, in Egypt, Babylon, and elsewhere, the days were named; and this greatly heightened the sacredness of the number. Behind this, even, there is something older and more vital, reaching to the roots of culture. Among savages the covering of the generative organs is often neglected by the males, but scarcely ever among the females. That covering was the beginning of decency, and it arose from the fact of menstruation. Now the sexual periodicities throughout the whole animal world, including the human race, run in seven days or multiples of seven days. Let this truth be connected with the indivisible quarter of the moon's total phases and the number of the planets, and you have an importance, a mystery, and, therefore, a sacredness attaching to the number seven which could hardly attach to any other number. This is the reason why the number seven appears and reappears in religious systems. It is found among savages, and among the European votaries of oriental mysticism who talk of the seven-fold nature of man. Thus, religion is like the mythical snake of eternity. Extremes meet; the head and the tail are united.

—From "Bible Romances" (*The Creation Story*),
by G. W. FOOTE.

The True Liberal.

The true "liberal" endeavors to use the means at his disposal in effecting all the good he can. But he guards against attacking, with fire and sword, evils which are often unavoidable—striving by judicious progress to correct obvious defects without destroying an equal amount of good by violent measures. He rests contented, in this imperfect world of ours, with the "good," until time and circumstances favor the attainment of the "better."—*Goethe*.

The flatterers of kings and princes have ever been held in deserved hatred and contempt. In this country they seem nearly to have had their day; but their successors, the courtiers of the people, are equally contemptible, and much more pernicious.—*Thomas Walker*.

Acid Drops.

No news but ill news from China. It seems pretty certain that all the Europeans in Peking have been massacred, except perhaps the women and children, who were probably slain by the men in order to save them from falling into the hands of Chinese torturers. Altogether it is a very shocking business. But, after all, the Christian Powers must bear their share of the responsibility. They have allowed their missionaries to affront Chinese prejudices in the most flagrant manner. They have been insolent and brutal towards the Chinese government. They have stolen piece after piece of Chinese territory, and it looked as though every good port on the Chinese coast would soon be in the hands of foreigners. Moreover, in their jealousy of each other, the Christian Powers have been drilling the Chinese to fight, and supplying them with guns, rifles, ammunition, and battleships. And now the childlike and bland Celestials are wielding all these warlike resources against the "foreign devils" who supplied them. It is a tragedy, but it is also a comedy.

Sir George Goldie, after travelling for several months in the interior of China, has been interviewed in London by a representative of the *Daily News*. He says that the Chinese, as a rule, are "most courteous to individual travellers." But he adds that they "do not want us or our customs, or, above all, our religion." "This last," he declares, "is the main grievance, and has been so for a century." He affirms that "their code of ethics is as high as ours." But their religion of ancestor-worship cannot co-exist with Christianity, the two faiths being "essentially and necessarily antagonistic." This is well known to the missionaries, who are quite aware of the terrible prejudice they are creating against Europeans in China.

The editorial columns of the *People* have brightened up since the accession of Mr. Joseph Hatton as editor. The leader this week on "The Christian Lesson of Peking" is specially worth reading. Mr. Hatton says: "It is not to be wondered at that sceptical critics are inclined to regard Christianity as a failure in presence of the disasters that are the outcome of its campaign of preaching, and the terrible deeds that have been done in its name." Mr. Hatton thinks it an open question whether it is worth while to preach Christianity to the Chinese. "Anyhow, whether the missionaries are doing good or not in Oriental countries whose people were civilised and had a fine system of ethics when we were naked savages, the material cost is heavy on us, and the story of our few successes is red with the blood of a multitude of victims—among them many of our best citizens and our bravest troops."

Writing on the Chinese trouble, the *Rock* says: "It is mainly on account of our missions that the subject is deeply interesting to us." Yes, the missions will be found to have been mainly the cause of all that has occurred. Lord Salisbury saw it, and practically said so some weeks ago.

The most popular figure, apparently, amongst the Christian Endeavorers who are camping in Alexandra Park, North London, is the Rev. Mr. Sheldon, the author of that trashy book called *In His Steps*. Mr. Sheldon is preaching a very "high-toned" morality. He is telling people what they ought to do in business, and how scrupulous they should be in telling the truth and giving their customers the advantage, when there is any, instead of taking it themselves. One tradesman said to Mr. Sheldon: "If I did all that you tell me, I should be a martyr." "Very well," the preacher replied, "be a martyr." But that is very cheap advice, especially when the preacher has a nice pleasant job, with a nice snug salary, and various pickings in addition. Mr. Sheldon is a great believer in martyrdom—for other people; and is terribly exacting in the matter of other men's duties.

It is positively amusing to hear men of God like Mr. Sheldon holding forth to men at least as honest as themselves on the virtue of veracity. Why, the ministers of religion are the biggest liars on earth. More than half of them don't believe fifty per cent. of what they preach; others don't believe twenty-five per cent., and some don't believe ten per cent. All through history their profession has been the most dishonest and hypocritical. They have always bamboozled children in order to live upon the labor of adults.

By the way, these Christian Endeavorers are pretty well narrowing Christianity down to an attitude towards alcohol. But what humbug this is! They talk by the hour about following Jesus, who was far from being a teetotaler; in fact, he drank whatever was going, and on one occasion presented a huge quantity of wine to the half-fuddled guests at a wedding festival. Those who read Mr. Foote's *Bible and Beer* will perceive the utter absurdity of pretending that Christianity is a "temperance" religion. There is a teetotal

religion in the world, but it was not founded by Jesus of Nazareth. It was founded by the "infidel" Mohammed.

Mr. Sheldon wouldn't take a glass of wine with Jesus, nor would he smoke a cigar with Spurgeon. All such indulgences should be sternly repressed. There should also be no theatres, no music-halls, and, indeed, no entertainments of any kind except in churches and chapels, where Mr. Sheldon and his brethren in the Lord are the professional caterers.

Dr. Clifford spent last Sunday in Mr. Sheldon's company, and he says it was "a heaven on earth." Very likely. What was the menu?

One Endeavorer has been endeavoring too much. A well-dressed woman, named Caroline E. Keyes, who said she had come to England to represent a Minnesota church, pleaded guilty at the Marylebone Police-court to stealing a gold watch, bracelet, and clothing from the Norfolk Mansions Hotel, Wigmore-street. Her explanation was that she had been drinking brandy and was unconscious of her acts. But there was a good deal of method in her inebriation, for the stolen articles were found concealed in her trunk.

Even "gentle Jesus" must get savage at times. In his little earthly career, recorded in the Gospels, he broke out on more than one or two occasions. Several times he used language calculated to provoke a breach of the peace. His temper even carried him away into disorderly conduct. He drove out tradespeople from the Temple who had just as much right to be there as he had. Assuredly, if his violence had been exhibited in the present day, he would have been hailed before a magistrate and fined 5s. or 10s., with the alternative of seven days. But now he is sitting serenely at the right hand of his Father, who, curiously enough, is himself. There, he is just now listening to the Christian Endeavorers and a few millions of other pious folks. Of course he reads his *Rock*, and he learns from that print that, notwithstanding all his agony in Gethsemane and on Calvary, there are still about 800,000,000 heathens in the world, 300,000,000 Hindus, 250,000,000 Mohammedans, and only 140,000,000 Protestants. Roman Catholics don't count, according to the *Rock*; but they are only about 200,000,000. Taking Protestants and Catholics together, and leaving Mohammedans out of count, there are about 340,000,000 Christians against 800,000,000 heathen, and 300,000,000 Hindus. If that is not enough to make "gentle Jesus" wild, what else in the way of statistics could possibly disturb him?

Three women went to Brighton on Monday with a "Mothers' Meeting" excursion from St. John's Church, Drury-lane. But they did not return. The yacht in which they were taking a trip capsized, and they were drowned. Had they gone with the N. S. S. excursion to Brighton, they might have escaped this sad fate. A certain other party seems to be more watchful than "Providence" over the safety of his devotees.

The activity of the Lord's Day Observance Society is beyond dispute. The secretary of that Society assuredly earns his money, which can hardly be said of a number of other sectarian officials who draw handsome stipends and do practically nothing in return. This wide-awake secretary noticed that the Christian Endeavorers were going to discuss "The Day of Rest: its Necessity and Sanctity." That, of course, was a subject which commended itself to the secretary; but he observed that sermons were to be preached and meetings held at the Alexandra Palace on the Lord's Day. Thereupon he writes to the papers: "Unless purely local in character, these gatherings must promote Sunday travelling and other encroachments on the 'sanctity' and 'rest' of the day." The secretary adds that the Alexandra Palace is used to this sort of thing; but he hopes that Christian Endeavorers are not. The name of this vigilant secretary of a futile craze is Peake. It is worth while mentioning the name to avoid any confusion with that of old Mother Partington who undertook to mop back the waves of the Atlantic.

The Yarmouth Town Council have at length "caved in" on the question of Sunday trading. No longer are there to be any stupid prosecutions for selling fruit, oysters, and tobacco on Sundays. The Corporation has discovered that it is itself a Sunday trader by giving concerts of sacred music on the Wellington Pier and providing a band to play in the new Beach Gardens on the Sabbath. By eighteen votes to ten, it was resolved to instruct the Watch Committee to notify the chief constable that the prosecutions should cease.

The vicar of Llandrillo admits that he has had an awakening. He had heard a great deal from Sabbatarians in regard to the Sunday musical performances on the Pier and in the Victoria Pavilion. Like a sensible man, he went and personally investigated the subject for himself. Now he emphatically declares that Sunday evening concerts are

decidedly a great boon. A weekly review regrets that other clergymen are not equally "commonsensible."

The Sabbatharians are going it (says the *Topical Times*). At Pontypridd they are trying to make a Jewish watchmaker keep two Sundays in one week. He was actually caught cleaning a watch on the seventh—or is it the first?—day of the week. To clean a watch must be almost as wicked as to wind one up. Cleanliness is proverbially next to godliness; but the *unco guid* seem to be making a dead-set at all varieties of cleanliness. You must not have your chin cleaned; you must not clean your watch. Shortly, at this rate, there will be a chance for a religion of dirt, with the justices as its high priests. Already, in some towns, you must eat stale fruit on Sunday because the Sabbatharians have closed all the green-grocers; and if you run out of tobacco, you must run into the public-house to buy more. And yet the silly old sea goes on washing the earth every day in the week, and drinking itself full from the unlicensed skies; while the sun continues (sometimes) to shine on his name-day, tidying up the lower air. I hope the Pontypridd Bench won't stop these things, or—well, there wouldn't be a Pontypridd Bench at all for long. And what would virtue do then, poor thing?

Canon Wilberforce, chaplain of the House of Commons, said the other day that until he had visited India he had always thought that kindness to animals "came in" with Christianity. Now he had found at a city in India the remains of a Buddhist hospital for animals established 300 years before Christ. And so the acquirement of elementary knowledge goes on.

A priest recently consecrated a bull ring at Barcelona. This seems to have been too much even for a Roman Catholic bishop. So he of Barcelona has published a pastoral letter expressing his strong disapproval of bull fights. Still, this particular ring has been blessed, and it is difficult to see how it can be *un-blessed*, especially if the Lord chooses to feel offended, as naturally he might.

"Divine calls" are not uncommon in the United States. An expatriated Englishman in Boston states that he got his "call" in his office in Basinghall Street in this unique manner:—"Suddenly I felt a force through my left side, which penetrated to the centre of my body; the force turned upward and came through my throat, and over my tongue, my body and face extending by the introduced power." Acting on his "call," he has addressed a letter to President McKinley, asking that the Sabbath should be observed on the seventh, and not on the first, day of the week. A further discovery he has made is that the beast referred to in the "Revelation" is no less than our old friend the House of Lords.

"Worms isn't man's work; they are an act of God," said a defendant in a Bow County Court action. After all, the notion of a Deity is useful; you can make him the peg to hang a great deal upon, even "worms."

Nine out of ten of the girls on the Liverpool streets are Romanists. So at least we learn from a voracious Protestant print, the name of which we need hardly say is the *Rock*.

There are indeed some credulous people about. A Miss Theresa O'Donnell, of Newtown Cunningham, County Donegal, is said to have shown a Miss McNulty letters from Heaven, signed "Your God," and authorising certain payments. She also announced the resurrection by the Pope of Miss McNulty's parents. Sixty pounds were extracted by these pious lies, and still the soothsayer is believed in.

Some pious person signing himself "A Missionary" writes complaining that last week £38 was collected for certain missionary work, and £22,000 was given by one man for four horses. Certainly the latter sum seems to be a large one to expend on four horses, but it must be remembered that it is necessary to keep up the breed, and that occasionally one has to pay a rather high figure to get the requisite "strain." As to the missionaries, the less said about them just now the better.

The author of *The Land of an African Sultan* confesses that he has a limited appreciation of missionaries. Writing of Morocco, he says: "It seems to be the fashion to try and raise the women from the only sphere they know, to try and Christianise the Moors, and introduce drink—in fact, by every means in our power to overthrow the social system of another country, in which we have no other interest than as an object of our philanthropy. If, instead, we would attempt to root out the seeds of evil that we Europeans have introduced into the country, then we might have some excuse for interfering with Morocco."

The author, Mr. Walter B. Harris, F.R.G.S. (Al Aissoui),

says: "A solitary missionary or two spreading the doctrine of the equality of men and women does no good; no, he does much harm. It but impresses on the minds of the women a fact that till now they have been totally unaware of—namely, that to our ideas they are degraded, coarse, and of no intellect. A very little sets the Moorish mind on fire, and a woman who has once heard these words shapes her life accordingly; she tries it on and she fails, and, if troublesome, is removed by sale or by poison."

"I have written strongly," says Al Aissoui, "as I feel strongly—far more strongly than I write—on these questions. I have seen the work in many lands, and I have found one fact—that where missionaries go, goes also drink. Now allow that the Mohammedan religion is in every way inferior to ours—an allowance I do not make in every case of the tenets of the two, allowing for climatic differences—yet the Moors live in tolerable peace. Crime with them is not nearly so rife as crime with us. Now let us, for a moment only, Christianise the whole Moorish nation. What is the result? The natives let their hair grow instead of shaving their heads; the result is disease. They drink wine; the result is crime and drunkenness and death. They eat pork and suffer from scrofula, and other horrible diseases. In fact, in introducing Christianity as it now exists, or is supposed to exist, we would only be hurrying a fallen nation more quickly to its grave.....I say without hesitation, and after careful thought, that it will be an evil day for the Arabs and Moors if ever they become Christians."

The population of this country is increasing at the rate of 300,000 a year. Meantime the number of ordinations in the Church of England is decreasing steadily. The ordinations to the diaconate last year were 110 fewer than they were ten years ago. In the three years, 1885-1888, the total number of deacons ordained was 2,324. In the corresponding period, 1895-1898, it was only 1,924, the difference being 330. Meanwhile the population multiplies—and fails to weep.

The Church can't understand it. But folks with half an eye open can. The fool of the family no longer cares to enter the Church. He would sooner go as a "super" on the stage. Or write a book reconciling evolution with "revelation."

The *Church Times*, in common with other religious papers, feels called upon to recognise the comparatively small number of candidates for "holy orders" and their lack of ordinary scholastic attainments. The *Church Times* says: "Many bishops, no doubt, would gladly raise the standard of their examinations. Many would like to make more searching inquiry into the spiritual state of those whom they are asked to ordain. But the plain, unwelcome truth is that they cannot afford, in the present state of things, to be too particular. It is no light matter to reject any but the most flagrantly unfit, while the need for recruits is so overwhelming, and the number of recruits diminishes year by year."

Loughborough is in serious trouble. It has a workhouse with 100 inmates, and, shocking to say, no chaplain. The complaint does not come from the inmates. They don't care, not they; but somebody outside does. He hopes to be appointed chaplain with a stipend. If the Guardians appoint him, they will be guilty of an atrocious misapplication of public funds. There are a number of ministers who are prepared to give voluntary assistance. They are not really wanted by the inmates, but their services are cheap, and may be tolerated. But if the ratepayers permit a chaplain to be foisted on the 100 inmates, with probably a stipend of £150 a year, no word in the dictionary is equal to describing the job.

Mr. Henry Seymour forwarded to the Home Secretary a memorial containing some fifteen hundred signatures, praying for the release of R. B. D. Wells, who was sentenced by Mr. Justice Darling, at Birmingham, to twelve months' imprisonment for alleged obscenity. The memorial set forth various reasons, such as were advanced at the time in our columns, why this sentence should be regarded as unjust and a serious interference with free discussion. Sir Matthew White Ridley has returned the stereotyped answer that, having, etc., etc., he does not feel justified in recommending any reduction of the sentence. Of course not. Who thought he would? The official policy is always to keep a man in prison until you are forced to let him out.

Some years ago the Rev. Benjamin Waugh, secretary of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, encouraged the Bishop of Chester in saying that working-class Secularists were the worst ill-users of their offspring. It was an infamous falsehood, and Mr. Waugh afterwards took it back, though the Bishop never did. When a Bishop tells a lie he sticks to it. He can't afford to let people think he is ever mistaken.

Mr. Waugh's Council has recently expressed its approval of Lord James of Hereford's Youthful Offenders' Bill, which provides for the whipping of juvenile delinquents. Whereupon the reverend gentleman is addressed in an open public letter by Mr. Joseph Collinson, on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Humanitarian League. "It is with deep regret," Mr. Collinson says, "that we find that the N. S. P. C. C. has expressed its approval of the objectionable clauses, the chief of which has for its object the extension of a cruel, indecent, and irrevocable punishment, while it has passed entirely over those which are really useful and humane." This is a case of the tables reversed with a vengeance!

In the *Freethinker* of June 24 there was an article by Mr. Foote on "Blank Atheism," with reference to some remarks of the late Mathilde Blind. That lady spoke of her rescue from the verge of "blank Atheism" by the influence of Buckle, and Mr. Foote said he did not understand this, as she certainly passed for an Atheist when he knew her, more than twenty years ago, and her friend, Professor Clifford, gloried in the designation of Atheist. "I cannot help thinking," Mr. Foote wrote, "that Mathilde Blind, writing perhaps in after years, when Clifford was dead, and the great Bradlaugh struggle had rendered 'Atheism' more odious than ever, used the word with that looseness which is only too common, but of which *she* ought not to have been guilty."

Will it be believed that anybody could construe this sentence as an insult to Charles Bradlaugh? We should not have thought it possible. Yet it has been done by Mrs. Bonner, who quotes eleven words, without the slightest reference to the context, and asks her readers to infer that Mr. Foote has deliberately aspersed her father's memory. She warmly denies that Charles Bradlaugh did anything to make Atheism odious. "This is the first time," she solemnly says, "that we have seen the suggestion made, and we trust that on reflection it is one which Mr. Foote himself would gladly abandon."

Certainly it would be gladly abandoned by Mr. Foote if he had ever made it. But he never did make it. Mrs. Bonner was really in too great a hurry. She saw her father's name, and her filial devotion was alarmed; and in that state of mind she had the misfortune to catch a false meaning. Mr. Foote did not say, or hint, that Bradlaugh had made Atheism more odious than ever. What he said was that "the great Bradlaugh struggle" had increased the odium of "Atheism." This last word was put within quotation marks, showing that the word was meant, in contradistinction to "Agnosticism," which Miss Blind apparently affected. Mr. Foote's obvious meaning was, to anyone who read his article calmly and impartially, that Miss Blind, like a good many other people, took to the word "Agnosticism" for essentially personal reasons. The word "Atheism" was always odious, and it became more so (as we think) after the great Bradlaugh struggle. At any rate, it was from that very time that "Agnosticism" became fashionable, and Agnostics took to sneering at Atheists as vulgar, dogmatic persons.

It was not Bradlaugh that made Atheism more odious than ever, but "the great Bradlaugh struggle." Bradlaugh was a giant in intellect and character, and Mr. Foote has said so a hundred times. He also had the honor of standing beside Bradlaugh (or behind him, if Mrs. Bonner prefers) during that struggle; and he said then, as he has said ever since, that Bradlaugh did not (as far as he knew) make a single mistake from beginning to end. This is not open to dispute, for Mr. Foote's words are in print, both in the *Freethinker* and in the *National Reformer*, and can be produced if necessary. Yes, Bradlaugh was always right, as he was always brave, in that great struggle. But there were other parties in the contest. Lord Randolph Churchill and the rest of them stirred up all the dregs of British and Irish bigotry, and until the ferment of fanaticism subsided the words "Atheism" and "Atheist" became a perfect abomination. Mrs. Bonner is, of course, free to think otherwise; but this is Mr. Foote's recollection of the period, and everyone must be guided by his own memory.

Bradlaugh died all too soon, but he lived long enough to win the respect even of the Tories in parliament. Before he took his seat, however, at the end of the great struggle, the Tories positively loathed him, and many of the Liberals who voted for his right to sit in the House of Commons did so reluctantly, and merely on principle, as men do what they cannot help although they regard it as supremely distasteful. No insult was too gross to fling at him, no lie was too flagrant to tell about him. The orthodox state of mind for several years was simply shocking. And just for the reason that religious bigotry was inflamed, a heightened odium was attached to "Atheism."

We are sorry that a few plain words of Mr. Foote's have required such a lengthy explanation, and sorrier still that

Mrs. Bonner should have rendered it necessary. Mr. Foote does not intend to be drawn into any dispute with his old general's daughter, and if further misrepresentations should occur he will hardly feel called upon to notice them. He has a right to ask, once for all, that, as he always takes the trouble to express himself with tolerable clearness, his words may be allowed to bear their natural meaning. If he were a cryptic writer there might be some excuse for putting an alien significance into his sentences.

An Alnwick man of God, the Rev. J. J. M. Perry, has been preaching "an impressive sermon" on kindness to animals, in the course of which he said that "man in a state of nature is essentially a cruel animal." But is not man a cruel animal in a "state of grace"—that is to say, in a state of religion? The cruellest torturers in human history have been torturers in the name of God. There is no device for inflicting pain upon the human organism which has not been used by priests of the Christian religion. They employed the rack, the wheel, and the thumbscrew; they flayed people alive, cooked their feet in boiling oil, pressed in their ribs with heavy weights, dropped water upon their heads till they went mad, and did a multitude of other ingenious infamies. Yes, on the whole, we agree that Parson Perry, as a Christian minister, is an excellent authority on cruelty. It is a subject on which he should possess a vast deal of information.

It is said that Admiral Dewey's wife has left the Popish squad and gone next door to the Episcopalians. She is reported to have been first a Presbyterian, next an Episcopalian, then a Theosophist, then a Papist, and is now back to her second lodgings again. For variety the lady beats Mrs. Besant.—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

The Rev. F. Cooke, rector of Westbury Parish Church, Shropshire, had a quarrel with one of his parishioners, Mr. Rossall Sandford, and when that gentleman presented himself at the holy communion the angry man of God refused to let him have his share of the body and blood of Christ. Mr. Sandford is the son of a clergyman and the brother of a clergyman, and is reported to feel this slight "most keenly." The only party who says nothing, and who does not appear to be considered, is the one whose body and blood are passed round in the cannibalistic love-feast.

Under the heading of "Hints for the Home" the *South African News* gives a recipe for "Angels' Food," which our contemporary says is made with gelatine, milk, the yolk of eggs, and lemon juice. No doubt this is a very agreeable compound, but it is not Angels' Food. The Psalmist says that Angels' Food is manna. We daresay the *South African News* is an excellent paper, and a good authority on many things; but it seems to have an imperfect acquaintance (if any) with the Bible.

"The Decaying Curate" is the subject of a spicy article in the *Birmingham Daily Mail*. Our contemporary thinks the curate is a happy man while he fights shy of matrimony. As long as he is "eligible" he is bombarded with presents and attentions, the ladies of the parish gush over him, his "invertebrate sermons are voted as masterpieces of the English language, his figure is described as charming, and his expression in church is idolised." He is the pet of "simplering spinsters and maudlin matrons." But the moment he commits the crime of taking a wife, all his female idolaters treat him spitefully and say the nastiest things about him. Well, we suppose it is natural. The pious female has peculiar ways of her own.

Lord Salisbury is reported to have declined to take an umbrella to the Athenæum Club. "No, no," he said, "I've lost too many in the Athenæum. I cannot trust the Bishops."

Dr. Dambergis, Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry in the University of Athens, has analysed the three sacred springs near the famous temple of Asklepius, the God of Healing, at Epidaurus. It appears that the waters are alkaline, and beneficial to patients suffering from gravel, stone, and diseases of the stomach. Cures were performed, not by the power of Asklepius, but by the medicinal virtue of the waters.

There are fifty-two beneficed clergy in the City of London. Thirty are absentees, residing "in the country or at the seaside," as the *Daily News* says. And why not? As long as the public are foolish enough to find the money, you can hardly quarrel with the men of God for keeping their boots free from the City dust.

Ninety degrees in the shade! Yes, and ninety-four in some places. We are getting it hotter and hotter every summer. Perhaps, though, it is a case of providential mercy. Maybe the Lord is preparing us by slow stages for the extra-tropical weather that prevails in our ultimate destination. Tempering the heat, so to speak, to the well-haired goats.

N.B.

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

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, July 22, at 7, Hyde Park: Freethought Demonstration.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—July 22, at 7, Hyde 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.

A. H. T.—We have passed on your letter to Mr. Cohen, who will answer it in our next.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for the cuttings; also for your letter.

A. B. MOSS.—See "Sugar Plums." Glad to see you so interested in your work, but don't hurry up your funeral.

JAMES MEATE.—Thanks for your valued and encouraging letter. The Twentieth Century Fund will be dealt with at length in our next issue.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for your useful batches of cuttings.

F. RYAN.—Your letter shall appear next week. We are overcrowded in the present issue.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Thanks for the list. We note, as requested, that you have received three parcels of literature from anonymous donors for distribution at Birmingham.

W. H. DEAKIN (Calcutta).—We have received your donation of £1 towards the proposed Joseph Symes Fund, and are holding same till we hear from him. It will not be easy to send out a lecturer to take his place during his absence. With regard to your inquiry re W. W. Collins, we have to say that he is now representing Christchurch again in the New Zealand parliament.

SEVERAL correspondents write us respecting orders they have sent to Mr. Forder, which have not been executed, nor have their remittances been returned. We can only say that Mr. Forder has no sort of connection now with the Freethought Publishing Company, to which orders for literature should be sent direct, as is announced in this journal weekly.

TOM B.—We will try to act on your suggestion when we have leisure to do so. No doubt it would be very useful to Freethinkers to have profitable courses of reading pointed out to them. But many of the books would be expensive, and recourse would be necessary in most cases to Free Libraries, which are, unfortunately, not as well furnished as they should be with advanced literature.

JAMES READ.—Our articles on Grant Allen were not meant to be "unkind," but all criticism is apt to look like that to some readers. You appear to think that he was not "lawfully married." If that is your idea, you are mistaken. We believe in reform of the marriage laws as much as you do, but reform and abolition are two very different things. No doubt a large number of marriages are unhappy. People make mistakes in this direction, as they make mistakes in other directions. And many people are not good to live with, being callous, selfish, and exacting, and poor friends as they are poor husbands and wives. It is absurd to charge upon institutions the result of the common frailty of human nature. And every system has its disadvantages as well as its advantages. We can only judge by the balance in any case.

W. COX.—See paragraph.

OLD MEMBER.—Yes, it is very amusing. We don't think any Society ever had so much gratuitous advice as the N. S. S. People who don't belong to it, and some who are known to hate it, often show a wonderful interest in its welfare. It reminds us of what Colonel Ingersoll once said about the orthodox folk who used to tell him how much more effective he would be as a Freethought advocate if he took their advice. "Do you really want me to succeed?" he asked. "Suppose," he added, "the general on the other side in a battle sent in a messenger under the white flag, with an intimation that your men were all firing too low and hitting nobody, would you tell your men to shoot higher?"

T. FISHER.—We will deal with it next week.

J. RAWLINGS.—Glad to hear you are so pleased with *Bible Romances*.

H. L. ROJO.—Of course it is regrettable that a man like Max Adeler has found Jesus in the school of Sheldon and Co. But cases of degeneration will occur. Thanks for your letter and the cutting.

JOHN SUMNER.—Miss Vance has shown us your letter. Mr. Foote's two volumes of *Flowers of Freethought* contain selected articles of his from the *Freethinker*. Perhaps you wish to see a more recent selection, which you say would "form a volume of very much more than ordinary interest."

RECEIVED.—Newcastle Weekly Chronicle—What is Right?—Freethought Magazine—Crescent—Umpire—"Religion and Reason," by "Truth-Seeker" (Watts & Co.)—Ethical World—Yarmouth Mercury—Sunday Reader—Public Opinion (New York)—Boston Investigator—Brann's Iconoclast—Two Worlds—New Century—Liberator—Truthseeker (New York)—Manchester Daily Dispatch.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

THE second Freethought Demonstration of this season took place on Sunday morning on Clerkenwell Green. There was a capital audience, which grew into a very fine one as the speaking proceeded. Mr. Thurlow acted as chairman, and addresses were delivered by Messrs. Watts, Cohen, and Foote, who were all cordially received and warmly applauded. Fortunately, the threatened disorder was not even attempted. A more orderly meeting could not have been desired. True, a Christian gathering was rather too close to the Freethought one, and did its best to cause confusion by means of a harmonium and plentiful hymn-singing. But the Freethought platform held practised speakers who were not easily disconcerted.

The third Demonstration took place in the evening in Regent's Park. Mr. Wilson's brake served as usual for a platform, and his handsome pair of prize horses were freely admired by the crowd. Mr. Thurlow again acted as chairman, and there were four speakers. First came Mr. Heaford, who was bright and energetic, and made an excellent impression. Then came Mr. Cohen, who was witty as well as philosophical. He was followed with close attention, and loudly cheered. Next came Mr. Watts, who explained the nature of Secular morality, and whose speech was highly appreciated. Last came Mr. Foote, who wound up the proceedings with a half-an-hour's address, which was profusely punctuated with laughter and applause. It should be mentioned that two American friends, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson, of Chicago, were accommodated with seats on the brake. Such meetings are (we believe) quite unknown in America, and the visitors found it a most enjoyable novelty.

The most noticeable feature of that Regent's Park Demonstration was its size. It was a large gathering when Mr. Heaford spoke, and it went on increasing and increasing until it was a vast assembly. It grew still further while Mr. Foote was speaking, and his voice, which is none of the weakest, had to be forced to its utmost power to reach the people on the edge of the crowd. And the meeting was orderly and sympathetic from beginning to end, with just two slight exceptions. One grey-bearded Christian, who was at least old enough to know better, insisted on asking for "explanations," until the park-keeper came up and explained to him that he had better get outside; and, as the park-keeper was a resolute-looking man, who wore the Victoria Cross upon his breast, his "explanation" was accepted with great alacrity. Another interrupter was allowed to remain. This was a dark-eyed, eager-looking little woman, who was very anxious about the souls of the speakers. About every ten minutes she uttered a pious ejaculation. Finally, she said that she "ought to have an hour or two on that brake." Whereupon the people around her were nearly convulsed with laughter. One or two hours! What a lot she must have had to say! And what she must have suffered with all that message from the Lord pent up within her!

Collections are not allowed in the Royal Parks, otherwise the ladies—Miss Vance and the rest—might have taken up a good collection on behalf of the N. S. S. For the tremendous

crowd consisted for the most part of well-dressed people, and some of them could obviously have contributed more than coppers without missing what they gave. We mention this in order to show how necessary it is for Freethinkers to provide the sinews of war for such campaigning.

The fourth Demonstration will be held this evening (July 22) at 7 o'clock in Hyde Park, near the Marble Arch. Messrs. Foote, Watts, Cohen, Moss, and other speakers, will address the meeting, which is sure to be a very large one. We know for a fact that Freethinkers bring friends to these Demonstrations whom they cannot persuade to enter a Freethought hall. Hence—as well as for other reasons—the wisdom of putting our best advocates on the Demonstration platforms.

Besides speaking at Clerkenwell Green on Sunday morning, and at Regent's Park in the evening, Mr. Cohen lectured at Finsbury Park in the afternoon. This is really too much in broiling weather. We strongly advise Mr. Cohen not to presume upon his youth. He may have to pay the penalty when he is older. And we have too few platform advocates to encourage any of them in deliberate (if slow) suicide. Besides, Mr. Cohen has for some time been a husband, and is now a father, and the future has a personal as well as a theoretical claim upon him.

Mr. A. B. Moss was also overdoing it last Sunday, lecturing in the morning at Station-road, Camberwell, and in the afternoon and evening at Brockwell Park, where he had fine meetings. We offer him, in all kindness, the same advice that we have given to Mr. Cohen. We don't want to see a line on Monday's newspaper bills, "Sunstroke to a Secular Lecturer."

Mr. R. P. Edwards had a large audience in Victoria Park on Sunday, and his lecture on "The Teachings of Jesus" was much appreciated. Opposition was offered in the shape of questions by the C. E. S. chairman, who steered clear, as the lecturer remarked, of every vital point.

"Pulpit and Pew" is a standing heading in the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, and number nineteen of the series, in the July 14 issue, was devoted to the open-air meetings in the Bull Ring. It was brightly and cleverly written by an evidently well-practised hand. The young man of earnest mien and respectable black coat, with the red tie, opening fire on the Thirty-nine Articles, was presumably Mr. H. Percy Ward. There was an opposition meeting of Christian Endeavorers, but the "congregation" only included a few small children, who only wanted to hear the singing, while "here was the Secularist with a fast-increasing audience." The reporter tells the gospel truth, and his attitude is strictly impartial. What he most admires is the English way in which the difference is confined to arguments. In Ireland there would (he says) be a bad shindy, in France the rival speakers would have soon quarrelled, and in Germany the police would have prevented the Secularist meeting altogether. We congratulate Mr. Ward on the good impression he made upon this reporter.

The *Church Gazette* replies to Mr. Watts's article on Christianity and Social Evils. We cannot say that our contemporary answers the vital arguments in that article, but we cheerfully acknowledge the courtesy of its tone and attitude.

Jerome K. Jerome speaks out pretty freely in the *Sun* on the taking of "Our Religion" to China. He refers to the inhumanity of tug captains recently near New York, of lynchings in the Southern States, and of the Grimsby man who poured a can of paraffin over a negro cook and then set light to him. After these examples of Christianity, he says, one "grows a little tired sometimes of reading slosh about this same Christianity and civilisation. Eighteen to nineteen hundred years of it. Result—see daily paper. Were the old civilisations so much worse?"

John Burroughs, the delightful American essayist, in his recent volume entitled *The Light of Day*, speaks out boldly and plainly on the subject of religion. "The old theology," he says, "has few, if any, fast colors, and it has become faded and worn under the fierce light of the intense activity of our day. Let it go; it is outgrown and outworn. What mankind will finally clothe themselves with to protect them from the chill of the great void, or whether they will not clothe themselves at all, but become toughened and indifferent, is more than I can pretend to say. For my own part, the longer I live the less I feel the need of any sort of theological belief, and the more I am content to let the unseen powers go their way with me and mine without question or distrust."

The majority of the virile minds have already deserted the old faith, Mr. Burroughs says, and he continues: "And like

the other emigration, the men go first; the women and children stay behind. Woman, more tender and emotional, cannot give up the old faiths; she shrinks back from the new land; it seems cold and naked to her spirit; she cleaves unto the past, and to the shelter of the old traditions. Probably the bravest among us do not abandon them without a pang. The old church has a friendly and sheltering look, after all, and the white monuments in the rear of it, where our kindred sleep—how eloquent is the silent appeal which they make! But what can be done? Thou shalt leave this land, the land of thy fathers, is a fiat which has gone forth as from the eternal."

Liverpool friends are requested to note that the N. S. S. Branch excursion will leave the Alexandra Hall to-day (July 22) at 2 p.m. A prompt start will be made, and those who wish to join the party should, therefore, be in good time. It should also be noted that the Alexandra Hall is closed on Sundays during the summer. Open-air meetings are being held in another part of the city.

Mr. Herbert Spencer has sent a donation towards the Ingersoll Chair in the Liberal University, Silvertown, Oregon, U.S.A.

Naturally the conductors of the University are delighted. But their organ, the *Torch of Reason*, might have been better inspired than to exclaim that the University cannot now help becoming "a great, grand, glorious go." Ingersoll was a master of beautiful English, and it is to be wished that those who employ his name could catch a little of his quality.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund will be the subject of a special article and appeal by Mr. Foote in our next issue. Friends who have replied to his preliminary circular will there see their communications acknowledged, and in some cases dealt with. Those who have received the circular, and mean to reply to it, but have not yet done so, are earnestly requested to write to Mr. Foote by next Tuesday morning (July 24).

Dishonest Critics.

[There have been many "Thanksgiving services" for our recent successes in the Transvaal War.]

Why thank the Lord for bloody graves,
O Christians pharisaic?
Why praise Him, pious fools and knaves,
Professional and laic?

In praising God we criticise
As much as in arraigning;
And if, when thanking, we are wise,
We're ditto when complaining.

If God we praise for what is good,
With Reason for our master,
We ought, when in a thoughtful mood,
To blame Him for disaster.

If Reason argues from success
To God with commendation,
It also argues from distress
To God with condemnation.

To praise and blame as facts suggest
Is rightly using Reason;
Ignoring "worst" and praising "best"
Is fear and mental treason.

Our praise to God for sieges raised
Implies this fact egregious:
That God must surely be dispraised
For letting foes besiege us.

The pious person is an ass
Who praises God for glad things,
Unless he thinks it right to pass
His censure for the sad things.

These fruitless God-belauders fill
The thoughtful man with pity,
As though he saw them try to till
The kerb-stones of a city.

Bestow your praise and blame on men
Who profit by and need them,
And not on ghosts beyond your ken,
Who neither need nor heed them.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

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

Arks.

THE child will show us the origin of sacred arks. He loves to gather up his toys, his stray treasures, marbles, buttons, beans, etc., into a box which he can carry about with him, or put under his pillow at night. These little trifles are cherished with a kind of religious enthusiasm. We have no right to smile at the child until we have ourselves ceased to reverence flags, maces, relics, Eucharistic bread and wine, and the rest of the miscellany of political and religious symbols.

The first arks ever used for a sacred purpose were perhaps those constructed by the ancient Babylonians. Where did the Babylonians come from originally? From the shores of the Persian gulf. They were a seafaring folk, and they carried men and treasures in ships. Naturally they carried their gods in ships also. The Babylonian priests made models of boats in which they placed the small gods who were supposed to bring luck and kindly arrange the universe so as to suit the needs of their worshippers. Old inscriptions in the arrow-head language tell us of the holy ships which were carried in the public processions. They were ornamented with brilliant stones; for gods, like men and women, have always had a taste for jewelry. In Egypt, likewise, the gods patronised the small ships, and the coffers which contained the images of deities were borne by the priests in boats. The early Hebrews, who dwelt between the Babylonians and the Egyptians, picked up this primitive custom, and believed that their ark afforded them special favor and protection. According to their national legend, the first objects to be deposited in the ark were the two tables of stones inscribed with the Ten Words or Commandments. It is not likely that a people with very little culture would conceive the idea of a precious stone manuscript. But we know that stones have been everywhere worshipped by the human race in its fetishistic stage. We can readily imagine that the forefathers of the Jews preserved one or two stones in their sacred ship or box as tokens of the divine presence. Meteorites fallen from the upper air would be regarded with profound respect, and embodiments of the gods themselves. People would be forbidden to look into the holy coffer, just as aristocratic persons withdraw themselves from the gaze of the populace; and the higher the rank of the dignitary, the larger is the park that surrounds the dwelling, and the more difficult are the approaches and ceremonies necessary for access. There is an Old Testament fable which relates how a great calamity fell upon the rude villagers of Beth-Shemesh who dared to lift the lid and look into the ark of God. The squire objects to the vulgar yokels peeping in at his dining-room windows; and the gods want their privacy respected.

No doubt, as time elapsed, the more intelligent people would begin to see the grossness of this conception of God enclosed in a box. Some such supporter of a higher religion wrote a verse into the book of Samuel (2 Sam. vi. 2) as follows: "David arose, and went with all the people that were with him from Baale Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, which is called by the Name, even the Name of the Lord of Hosts that sitteth upon the cherubim." This description of the ark would seem to be a gentle hint that the Lord possessed a larger personality than could be put into the ark, and that the box only had a value because it bore the Name of the Deity and was traditionally connected with his worship. But it is quite clear from the Bible that the mass of the Hebrew people could not, for a long time, get so far forward on the way to Rationalism. They were sure that God and the box went together. The legend of the Wilderness represents the priests lifting the ark at each fresh stage of the journey of the tribes, and Moses then cries: "Rise up, O Yahveh, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." And when the ark rested and the wanderers camped for the night, the Leader said: "Return, O Yahveh, unto the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel." Thus, to the imagination of the Hebrew tribesmen, the Lord was bodily contained in the ark like a passenger in a sedan-chair. From this confined chancellerie he directed the course of the

planets and planned the rise and fall of empires, in the manner of the great Napoleon, who wrote despatches and transacted the affairs of government while travelling in his coach from one battle-field to another. Yet he did not always find it possible to evade capture. When the Israelites were grappling with the invasion of the Philistines from the sea-coast, they suffered a defeat. A council of war was held, and the resolution passed: "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of Yahveh out of Shiloh unto us, that it may come among us, and save us out of the hand of our enemies." The chest was borne into camp amid immense demonstrations of joy, and Israel went out to fight with a feeling of invincibility. Unfortunately, the ark, with its august Contents, fell into the hands of the enemy. It proved to them as bad a property as the Wooden Horse to the Trojans. Out of the Wooden Horse sprang the armed Greeks, and out of the ark issued a train of disasters to the Philistines. Their god Dagon collapsed into ridiculous fragments; uncountable swarms of mice furnished the ladies of Ashdod with a topic for lively conversation; and an outbreak of skin-disease exhausted the medical resources of the government. Yahveh and the ark were humbly restored to their native soil, and, for many years, the sacred coffer was preserved with peculiar honor. King David placed the ark in a tent on Mount Zion, and Solomon transferred it to the inner sanctuary of his Temple. That part of the Old Testament which critics call the Priestly Code (a document which can be traced through the first six books of the Bible, and which dates from the period of the Exile in Babylon) shows an attempt to raise the dignity of the ark. This priestly account describes the sacred chest as covered with gold, overshadowed by golden cherubim, and as concealed in a chamber which was entered only once a year by the High Priest.

Finally, the ark disappeared altogether. What became of it? Some say it was carried off by the Babylonian conquerors of Jerusalem in the year 586 B.C. Others say it was hidden at that time of trouble and ruin by the prophet Jeremiah, who buried the ark and the altar of incense in a cave; and there, according to the dream of pious seers, these holy objects would remain until the last days. The Apocalypse (Rev. xi. 19) says that when the seventh angel sounds his magical trumpet the heavens will open and men will see the temple of God, and in the temple that very ark which was lost to view for so many centuries.

But the obvious fact is that the religion of Israel had become more refined. The higher teaching of prophets like Isaiah and Micah had prevailed, and the Jews could no longer believe in a God who resided in a species of portmanteau. The old fetish was discredited. God always has to follow the track of the human mind. When the human mind rises and broadens, God also rises and broadens. The deity who once dwelt in a model boat expanded, like the genie in the legend of the Arabian Nights, until he covered the starry heavens and embraced all the complexities of time and history. This was a natural and healthy development of the religious intellect, and it is a development which is still to be completed. A remnant of the ancient fetishism lingers in the belief that the Primal Cause, or the Divine Essence of things, resides in a circumscribed heaven, or can be specially interviewed in shrines and churches. Reason will gradually force theology from these last refuges. For a long time to come the theistic idea will stay in the shape of pantheism—the doctrine which regards the whole cosmos itself as the habitation and substance of God. This creed—which I do not accept, but which is at least dignified and austere—will at last give way to positivism pure and simple.

F. J. GOULD.

Minorities.

All that is great and judicious is found in the minority. There have been ministers who have had the people and the king against them, and have carried out their great plans alone. It must never be supposed that reason can be popular. Passion and feeling may become popular; but reason will ever remain the possession of a few eminent individuals.—*Goethe.*

Man and Evolution.

WITH the second of the series of lectures by the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, entitled "Evolution and Man," we find ourselves in agreement on many points; but from many of his conclusions we dissent most heartily, and they seem to us to utterly invalidate his chief arguments. It is, however, a source of satisfaction to us to find that Mr. Lidgett sweeps aside the ordinary orthodox notion of the teachings of Darwin as a "caricature"; and he proceeds to state the conclusions of Darwin with more scientific precision than we are in the habit of getting from less trained and more bigoted controversialists. He quotes the words of Professor Alfred Russel Wallace as follows:—

"On the whole, then, we find no one of the great apes can be positively asserted to be the nearest to man in structure. Each of them approaches him in certain characteristics, while in others it is widely removed, giving the idea so consonant with the theory as developed by Darwin that all are derived from a common ancestor, from which the existing anthropoid (man-like) apes, as well as man, have diverged."

In support of this view we think that there is not only "abundant and well-nigh irresistible evidence," as Mr. Lidgett admits, but we claim that there is overwhelming proof. The late Professor Drummond in his *Ascent of Man*, Professor Haeckel in his *Pedigree of Man*, as well as Huxley and Darwin, have demonstrated this up to the hilt. Take first the embryological evidence. Haeckel says:—

"The phylogenetic importance of ontogeny, the value of the study of the embryo as an evidence in regard to pedigree, is in the first place based upon the fact that every organism, in its development from the egg, runs through a series of forms, through which in like succession its ancestors have passed in the long course of earth's history. The history of the embryo, therefore, is a picture in little, an outline of that of the race." (*Pedigree of Man*, page 270.)

The Rev. Scott Lidgett, then, admits that, as far as man's physical structure is concerned, man has come up from some lower animal form, and that his nearest known progenitor was an anthropoid ape; but while he argues that evolution teaches that all phenomena—whether physical or mental (and mental, after all, are physical)—are "the result of a gradual, orderly, self-continuing evolution or development," he wants to make an exception to this rule (which admits of no exceptions), and to agree with Russel Wallace in his belief that the higher nature of man—the spiritual—has been super-added by a special divine act. But what evidence has Mr. Lidgett for this? He advances none. The fact that Mr. Russel Wallace is a "spiritist," and believes that man has a spirit in him that can exist apart from the body, is no evidence that this assumption is true. Besides, we may ask, at what stage in the evolution of the animal does the spirit come into him? And what is it doing before it comes in? Does it exist eternally, or does it begin to be? If it begins to be, there is a reasonable presumption that it will cease to be. And if it always was, in what sense can it be said to be super-added? We once remember asking Colonel Olcott, then president of the Theosophical Society, whether he believed that all men possess a spirit within them that would endure when the body was dust, and he answered "Certainly." When we further pressed him to say whether he believed that idiots possessed this spirit, he replied: "Yes; only in this case the spirit has had the misfortune to get into a rotten tenement." Now this we hold to be a perfectly logical answer, for the spirit or soul in this case has a separate existence, apart altogether from the body, and has not been the result of any evolution of the mental faculties, nor has it been super-added by any divine act, but is an eternal existence; was alive before the child was born, and will endure after the child has developed into manhood, and gradually passes into second childhood—"sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything," and finally dies and is buried. The Rev. Scott Lidgett says:—

"Two things may be broadly affirmed. In the first place, there are marvellous approximations here and there between the higher animals and man. Man has much of the animal about him, and, on the other hand, many of the animals display striking foreshadowing of

many of the intellectual, emotional, and moral characteristics of man."

With this affirmation we are in complete agreement, but the affirmation which follows is open to objection and worthy of critical examination:—

"Secondly, it is equally true that an enormous interval—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual—lies between man and the higher animals. In his self-consciousness, in the grasp and range of his reason, in his spiritual and moral nature, in his pursuit of the ideal, in his mastery of the world by growing knowledge, and in the use of it as the instrument of the higher life, in his power of language, and, above all, in what we call progress, man belongs to a totally different realm to the whole animal world beside, even though the difference may be one of degree (and vast in this respect), and not of kind."

Now the essence of the above sentence is contained in the last few words. Wonderful as man's mental powers are, they differ from those of the higher animals only in degree, and not in kind. Animals think and remember, and carry on whole processes of reason. Moreover, all animals that can be taught to go through any kind of performance—such as horses in the circus, dogs, elephants, etc.—require the faculties of perception, attention, memory, and imitation well developed. Animals, it must be remembered too, have language, as Darwin has shown, and it is absurd to deride their powers of expressing their emotions because we do not understand them.

But what does Mr. Lidgett mean by spiritual as distinguished from moral nature? Does he mean the poetical and the æsthetical? And surely these faculties are naturally evolved, and if they are purely natural it is a little egotistical for man to put himself "into a totally different realm" when the difference is only one of degree, and not of kind.

There is a marvellous difference of degree between the intellect of a Hottentot and that of a Herbert Spencer, yet they are both men; and we have not yet heard of anybody classing Herbert Spencer as belonging to a "totally different realm" from his less favored and less developed brother, the Hottentot. And when Mr. Lidgett is speaking of the enormous degree of difference between the intellect of man and the lower animals, it is only fair that he should compare the intelligence of the highest among the lower animals with the lowest man; and he will then find that there is far more difference between the brain power and intelligence of the highest man and those of the lowest man than there is between the lowest man and the highest ape. Observe what Darwin has to say on this head:—

"A difference of degree, however great, does not justify us in placing man in a different kingdom, as will be best illustrated by comparing the mental powers of two insects—namely, a coccus and an ant, which undoubtedly belong to the same class. The difference is here greater than, though of a somewhat different kind from, that between man and the highest mammal. The female coccus, whilst young, attaches itself by its proboscis to a plant, and sucks the sap, but never moves again; is fertilised and lays eggs; and this is its whole history. On the other hand, to describe the habits and mental powers of the worker ant would require a large volume. I may, however, specify a few points. Ants certainly communicate information to each other, and several unite for the same work or games of play. They recognise their fellow ants after months of absence, and feel sympathy for each other. They build great edifices, keep them clean, close the doors in the evening and post sentries. They make roads as well as tunnels under rivers and temporary bridges over them by clinging together. They collect food for the community, and when an object too large for entrance is brought to the nest they enlarge the door, and afterwards build it up again. They store up seeds, of which they prevent the germination, and which, if damp, are brought to the surface to dry. They keep aphides and other insects as milch cows." (*Descent of Man*, page 147.)

Thus we see that the vast difference of degree in intelligence, between these two insects, does not place one in a "different kingdom" from the other, according to Darwin; and neither can we allow a similar difference between man and the higher animals to be a sufficient reason for placing man in a "totally different realm." The question of the alleged intellectual, moral, and spiritual difference between man and the higher animals is a very large one; and we, therefore, propose to devote a special article to its consideration.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

Correspondence.

THE FALL OF MAN.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In your last issue you have a long article entitled "The Clergy and Debate," which implies clergy are afraid to discuss their beliefs. This description does not suit me; and, therefore, both as a clergyman and a subscriber, I ask permission to give you a Christian view of the Fall, which in this issue you ridicule under the heading of "That Pippin."

To spare your space I will condense my remarks, and will be most happy to reply to any objections. Orthodox Christians believe Adam and Eve lived in a state of childlike innocence, with no evil inclinations of either mind or body. If we take the Ten Commandments as illustrating moral law, it is hard to see where they could have gone wrong. They knew of no other God, or of making graven images, nor had they any reason to blaspheme or decline to rest on the seventh day. They had no parents, would be sorry either to kill the other, and could not commit adultery, or steal, or slander, or covet.

Still creature perfection requires us to realise and rejoice in a felt dependence on our Creator. To test Adam's subjection to this law, the tree of knowledge was placed in Eden, and a more excellent test under the circumstances cannot be imagined. Amid much mysterious, we hold there is a species of knowledge which the Creator can safely know, but which created beings cannot. This is the knowledge of evil. God loathes it; we cannot help loving it. Why this should be I cannot tell; I state the fact. When we recollect how short is our time in this world, and how small our knowledge of the boundless universe, we should not be surprised at the mysteries connected with Christianity; more especially when we are aware the mysteries and difficulties connected with Agnosticism are tenfold greater.

The sin of Adam and Eve was deliberate. Their object was to render themselves independent of God, by learning all that Deity knew. It would be as absurd to say that a man who committed murder by gunshot was hanged for pressing with one finger a bit of metal, as to say all trouble befell us by merely plucking an apple. It was an attempt to set God at defiance which produced this awful result.

Scripture states it was the craft of a serpent which led Eve into this guilt. It further discloses, subsequently, that the reptile was on this occasion the unconscious instrument of Satan. I will continue to believe this until I am shown the Devil could not have employed a snake for such a purpose.

Now, I ask, can you or any of your readers give a better explanation of the condition in which we find ourselves than that of Genesis, which comes down to us from the earliest historic ages? If so, let us have it. Remember we find ourselves with contradictory instincts. We have inclinations to sin, and a conscience which forbids us to indulge them. No such mixed mental and moral condition is found elsewhere, and it agrees wonderfully with the theory of our having been once perfect. If you give a better account than that of Scripture, you will make me an Agnostic. But assuredly no scoffing or jeering is a worthy method of dealing with the question.

HENRY J. ALCOCK, M.A.

195 Portsdown-road, W.; July 12, 1900.

OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Ball is continually hinting that I invented the term "Objectionable Religion." If he will kindly refer to the *Freethinker* of April 29, he will see that it originated with Mr. Gould himself, and I hold it only ordinary politeness to employ the labels which people apply to themselves. I do not know what this religion is, and its adherents seem unable to give any information about its doctrines and ritual. As to its meaning; well—

Its meaning we'll quickly dispose of.
It has no mortal meaning that anyone knows of.

As to the ordinary variety, that fellow "Chilperic" maintains that "religion" signifies "a system of faith and worship." But everybody is aware that "Faith" is a woman's name; while "worship" is a title applied to magistrates. When you address a magistrate, you say "Your worship," so that, according to "Chilperic's" definition, "religion" consists of a lady and a magistrate. This is a very convincing style of argument, and has quite a Christian Evidence ring about it.

Mr. Ball has written a number of entertaining and instructive letters, but I may be permitted to remark that they deal with a vast variety of subjects that have no bearing on the question of the meaning of the word "religion." There have been numberless religions in this world of ours, and the adherents of each have felt themselves privileged to quarrel with all the others. The followers of the religion of Mohammed felt constrained to carry war into the territories of nations that had never injured them. The European religions sent out crusades

which gave rise to a great deal of misery. The Spaniards introduced a Holy Inquisition to torture and murder people in the cause of religion. The French massacred 40,000 persons in one night on account of their religion. The Germans had a war for thirty years on the question of religion. We have professors of religion among us to-day whose chief amusement is to tell falsehoods about those who differ from them. And we should be really obliged if Mr. Ball would explain what "religion" is, that it should give rise to all these wars, murders, and massacres; or why it should generate such a spirit of evil-speaking, lying, and slandering among its adherents.

Then we have to pay 12½d. in the £ for School Board Rate; and hear a great deal about the necessity for "religion" in the Board schools. Perhaps Mr. Ball will explain what this "religion" is, and how much it will add to the rates when we get it in the Board schools.

Lastly, we have a number of people (doubtless misguided beings) calling themselves Atheists, Agnostics, Secularists, and Freethinkers, who are all agreed in opposing "religion." We should be gratified to learn what "religion" is, that these individuals should take such pains to oppose it.

CHILPERIC.

WOMEN AND FREETHOUGHT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reading your valuable paper I am often struck with the optimistic view taken by certain of your writers as to the future of Freethought. So long as the greater part of mankind, and that part those who have the training of the young at the most impressionable period of their lives, have their imaginations fed on Sundays at the expense of their reason, I cannot see much prospect of a change for the better in the condition of things. What a decoction of improbabilities is served up in all churches for our delectation!—tales so wild and impossible that the stories of our childhood, *Little Red Riding-Hood, Beauty and the Beast*, etc., are reasonable in comparison.

It is surprising that "the sex" which, as a rule, is smart at a bargain and quick to seize an advantage in shopping expeditions, cannot put two and two together in church, nor reason their way out of the maze of words which hypnotises them. Is it the mechanical standing up and sitting down, or the monotonous voice of the minister descanting on the same old themes, or is their sole attention given to the finery of their neighbors, and thus their higher faculties become somnolent? The mischief begun on Sunday is continued during the week. Only works of imagination are read by women and girls as a rule; even newspapers, except the silly ladies' papers, are passed by, while they pore by the hour over works of imagination by authors of the type of Marie Corelli, Mrs. Henry Wood, etc. Can we wonder that so few women find time to think their way out of the bondage of superstition into the ways of "sweet reasonableness"? It is "an ill bird that fouls its own nest," but I must say we are not fit for the franchise nor to have equal rights with man. All the power given into our hands would be incontinently given over to the ministers of religion. It would mean a setting back of the clock to the time of the Middle Ages. I used to think equality for women meant more merciful treatment for the downcast and the unfortunate, but one cannot forget that women took part in the *Auto da Fés* and burning of heretics of old; and in these times, in America, where an advanced civilisation is supposed to obtain, women look calmly on while an untried negro is lynched and tortured. Not one has been known to protest, and put herself between the baited wretch and his tormentors. The raising of women must come from the outside. First of all, counter attractions are wanted to the church on Sundays. We must snatch back that seventh part of the week which, somehow or other, the clergy have taken for ages past as their own. Then, most of all, will come relief to children from the intolerable dreariness of the seventh day. May you prosper in your crusade against this and all other oppressions.

ELIZABETH.

The Editor Rebels.

When a man is busy, and trying to make a modest living, nothing irritates him more than to have a bearded woman rush in and take up his time in trying to get a subscription for the establishment of missions that are not needed. Men dislike this sort of women very much; a sight of one of them makes a man cross for half a day. Women of this character may think that they are doing good work, and that men have great respect for them; but they are mistaken.—*Atchison Globe*.

"What did the minister do when you inadvertently dropped the buckshot into the plate?" asked one Kentuckian. "He was very much annoyed," said the other; "he looked at me severely, and said that this was a church collection, not a campaign contribution."

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.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 7, Freethought Demonstration.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.
 BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, W. Heaford; 6.30, R. P. Edwards.
 PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
 FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.
 VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.
 BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.
 CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.
 KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. Heaford.
 MILE END WASTE: 11.30, F. A. Davies; 7.15, A lecture. July 25, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.
 EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A lecture.
 WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, C. Mowbray.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward; 7 (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms), H. Percy Ward, "The Dishonorable Policy of the Liberal Education Eight." Mr. Ward will also lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.

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

LIVERPOOL: Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, closed until September 2. Outdoor lectures at the Monument, bottom of London-road, on August 12, 19, and 26, at 7 p.m.; and on September 2, at 3 p.m.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A Friendly Gentleman Visitor, Lecture or Reading.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Final arrangements for Picnic.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—July 22, a., Victoria Park; e., Hyde Park Demonstration. 29, m., Station-road, Camberwell; a., Peckham Rye; e., West Ham Demonstration.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—July 22, Northampton. 29, m., Mile End; e., Stratford. August 26, m., Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—July 22, Birmingham. 29, Manchester. August 5, Birmingham; 12, Failsworth; 19, Northampton; 26, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—July 29, m., Station-road; a., Peckham Rye.

Ingersoll's Last Lecture.

"WHAT IS RELIGION?"

An Address delivered before the American Free Religious Association, at Boston, June 2, 1899.

Freethinkers should keep a copy of this Lecture always by them. It was Ingersoll's last utterance on the subject of religion. It shows him to have been a "rank Atheist" to the very end. Moreover, it is a summary of his life's teaching, and embalms his ripest thought.

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(Shares may be paid up in full if convenient.)

Registered Office—1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.

Secretary—E. M. VANCE (Miss).

[*The Prospectus has been printed in the FREETHINKER, and its contents are well known to the readers.*]

APPLICATION FORM FOR ORDINARY SHARES.

TO THE DIRECTORS OF THE FREETHOUGHT PUBLISHING COMPANY, Limited.

GENTLEMEN,—Having paid to the Company's Secretary the sum of £....., being a deposit of 2s. 6d. per Share on application for Shares of £1 each in the above-named Company, I request you to allot me that number of Shares, and I agree to accept the same or any smaller number that may be allotted to me, subject to the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and upon the terms of the Company's Prospectus; and I authorise you to place my name on the Register of Members in respect of the Shares so allotted to me, and I agree to pay the further instalments upon such allotted Shares as the same shall become due, as required by the said Prospectus. In the event of my not receiving an allotment, the amount to be returned in full.

Name (in full)

Address

Description Date.....

All Cheques, etc., to be made payable to the Company, and crossed.

Freethinkers are invited to fill in the above Form, and send same with their remittance to the Secretary.