

THE Freethinker

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The Holy Kaiser.

EMPEROR WILLIAM is largely responsible for the present trouble in China; first, by his monstrous exactions as reparation for the murder of two German missionaries; secondly, by his allowing, and even sending, German officers to drill the Chinese army. Those exactions have naturally inflamed the resentment of the Chinese against the "foreign devils," and persuaded them—especially in conjunction with the still greater encroachments of Russia—that nothing but immediate and resolute action would save them from the loss of all their valuable sea-ports, and perhaps the complete partition of their eastern territory amongst the Christian Powers. It was therefore a tragi-farcical sight to behold this same Emperor William crying "Vengeance! Vengeance!" on receiving the news that his Ambassador to China had been murdered by the fanatical Boxers or by the riotous mob of Peking. Being a devout Christian, and a notable reader of the Bible, he is doubtless aware of the text, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." But even a divine text is a very feeble obstacle to the hot passions and imperious temper of the War Lord of Germany. His legions have nothing to do at home except to keep themselves in constant readiness for fighting. They never see blood drawn or guns fired in anger. And as this is desperately tame work, it is not astonishing that the master of such an army should yearn to have at least a contingent of them employed in active service against the Heathen Chinese; who, if he beat and kill this contingent, is too far off to become a serious danger to Germany.

Considering the moral pretensions and pharisaic airs of the bulk of Christians, it would be laughable, if it were not so disgusting, to observe how readily they clamor for vengeance. The passion to which they yield is one of the most malignant and anti-social. It is characteristic of barbaric society, and is a direct inheritance from savagery. From its very nature it is peculiarly destructive, because it moves forward in an endless progression of mischief, unless it is arrested by reason, humanity, or lassitude. One act of violence leads to another, and that to another, and so on as far as the mind is able to reach. A Chinaman kills a German, and the Germans set it right by killing several Chinamen; then the Chinamen redress the balance by killing another German; and then the Germans prepare to make matters even by killing some more Chinamen. Where on earth is this process to stop? Unless common sense intervene the feud must last until the end of time. Bacon did indeed call revenge "a kind of wild justice," but he was philosopher enough to see that it was more likely to be wild than just; and he remarked that the "more man's nature runs to" it, the "more ought law to weed it out." Christianity professes to be above law, and above philosophy; yet, in spite of all its transcendent and impossible maxims—or perhaps because of them—it never produces a state of moral justice in the minds of its devotees. Where law and philosophy cease to operate, or operate only with slight force, as in the relations between distant countries, unconnected by common interests, it is found that Christianity leaves its devotees at the mercy of the most sinister emotions. This is not merely true at present; it has been one of the permanent features of Christian history. The various countries of Christendom have very rarely displayed any sense of honor in their dealings with each other. Where the social bond was absent, the

religious bond was of no avail. Even when Christendom was united in crusades against the Mohammedans, its constituent nations and governments displayed the utmost perfidy and villainy amongst themselves.

We are not surprised, therefore, at Emperor William's calling for vengeance. He is a pious Christian, and naturally talks that way. Nor are we astonished at the sentiments he expressed on dispatching four thousand German troops from Bremerhaven to China. "On coming into contact with the enemy," he said, "know this: Quarter will not be given, prisoners will not be taken. Use your arms so that for a thousand years to come no Chinese will dare to look askance at any German." Such is Christian morality in the mouth of an imperial pietist. It smacks of the Old Testament command to slay all and leave alive nothing that breathed. Emperor William assumes that, because the Chinese give no quarter, which is not strictly true, the Allies are bound to follow their example. But this is not necessary. No doubt the Dervishes in the Soudan would have spared not a single soldier of our army if they had defeated Lord Kitchener at Omdurman. This fact did not, however, oblige us to kill all the Khalifa's troops. We slaughtered enough of them, it is true, but that was done in actual fighting. We did not take the life, or shed the blood, of a single prisoner. It is to be hoped, then, that Emperor William will yet see the detestable folly of his advice to his soldiers at Bremerhaven. Perhaps, too, he will live to be ashamed of saying that the punishment of the Chinese must be such that they will remember it for a thousand years.

It seems to us a great piece of humbug for Emperor William to pretend that his soldiers have gone to China to "open the way to civilisation." They have really gone to open the way for the European Powers into the heart of the Celestial Empire. The real motive in operation is not morality, but cupidity. The massacre of the Ambassadors and the other Europeans at Peking is a very shocking tragedy, but the Powers are simply making it a pretext for the execution of their designs upon China. Had they merely desired to save the lives of their subjects, they would have hastened on to Peking. That is what Admiral Seymour gallantly tried to do with an absurdly inadequate force. But he was only a sailor, with no ulterior ends in view. He was a rescuer, not a politician. No doubt he was thinking chiefly of the women and children. His failure was not his fault. The only wonder is that he brought his little force back alive. Had the same spirit prevailed in other breasts, the allied armies might have broken through all obstacles before this. What paralyses them is their suspicion of each other, and their recognition of the terrible problem which will confront them at the end of their punitive expedition. What is to be done then? Will the European Powers agree upon a common policy? Or will they fall out and fight each other? Nobody knows, and only a very confident man could hold a definite conviction.

After that ridiculous and wicked language, Emperor William seems to have felt the spirit of the Lord strong upon him. He was wound up to the religious concert pitch. Accordingly he observed that "every civilisation that was not founded on Christianity was sure to be brought to naught." What an upstart utterance! Why, the civilisation of China is hoary with antiquity as compared with the civilisation of any Christian country. The civilisation of Germany is relatively a thing of yesterday. How long it will last is a question in prophecy, which no sane man will attempt to determine. But this at least is obvious to the student of

history, that the great civilisations of ancient Egypt, India, Assyria, Greece, and Rome enjoyed a longer life than has yet been reached by the civilisation of modern Europe; and that the religions they happened to profess had little, if anything, to do with their longevity. All of them arose, attained to their zenith, and descended to their nadir, under the sway of military and economical causes. The gods triumphed with their worshippers, and with them fell into disgrace or oblivion.

The final words of Emperor William's address sounded more like an episcopal benediction than a Kaiser's farewell. "The blessing of the Lord be with you. The prayers of the whole people accompany you in all your ways. May the blessing of God rest on your banners, and may he vouchsafe to you to find a path for Christianity in that far-off country." These are some of his pious ejaculations. Probably the blessing of God will rest on their banners, for Providence is always on the side of the big battalions, and a combination of all the European Powers, together with the United States and Japan, should be able to defeat the Chinese army and the Chinese rabble. But it is doubtful if they will open a way for Christianity. People are not usually in love with the religion of their oppressors and despoilers. And if the missionaries cannot convert China by themselves, they will hardly do it with the aid of rifles and bayonets. On the whole, we incline to think that Emperor William's religion is more skin-deep than perhaps he himself imagines. It is quite possible that he regards himself as a soldier of the Cross, but it is pretty clear to others that he is looking out for political and material advantages at the expense of the Heathen. It is also pretty clear that his morality is hardly up to the level of that of Confucius, the great Secularist, who taught the Chinese, more than two thousand years ago, the essential and eternal principles of private virtue and national greatness.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Bible Dangerous Reading.

THE advice given in the New Testament to "search the Scriptures" might be made useful if properly carried out. It would then certainly prove to the impartial mind a very entertaining occupation. The study of the contents of the Bible should be approached free from all theological bias, and also without any desire to arrive at conclusions as to the merits and demerits of its teachings, except those which are fair and just. Not long since a pious manifesto was issued, signed by about forty deans, canons, rectors, and other clergymen of the Church of England, in which the signatories alleged that human reason is incompetent "to deliver judgment on the authority of the Holy Bible." Here we have one of the causes of that credulous belief in the Bible which so extensively prevails amongst a certain section of the community. But I ask, if reason is not the tribunal of appeal in reference to the claims urged on behalf of the Bible, what is? Even some of the more intelligent authorities in the Church admit that reason should predominate in our examination of the book. For instance, Bishop Butler, in his *Analogy of Religion*, remarks: "Reason is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." Chillingworth says: "It is by reason alone that we can distinguish truth from falsehood." Dean Prideaux admits that the New Testament should be tried by reason, while Bishop Marsh states that "the Bible must be examined by the same laws of criticism which are applied to other writings of antiquity."

This is the position taken by Freethinkers, for with Bible idolatry we have no sympathy. The days of Bible rule are almost gone. Such domination was possible only when people were either unable or unwilling to think for themselves. Slavish submission to any book cannot co-exist with intellectual earnestness and mental activity. Suppose such a work as the Bible suited our forefathers centuries ago, it is now clear that it will not satisfy the needs and aspirations of modern times. It has played its part in the evolution of theology. With the past we have done except to profit by the lessons it has bequeathed to the present generation, and one of those lessons certainly is, that we should not allow the

progress that is now apparent in every sphere of life to be hampered and marred by the many absurd and questionable teachings of the Old Testament, or by the fanciful and impracticable injunctions of the New.

Orthodox believers content themselves with dwelling on the myths of the past and the imaginations of the future, leaving the ever-present comparatively unheeded. We, as Secularists, prefer the more useful course of availing ourselves of the value of *what is* allied with the serviceable of *what was*, and thus secure a better *what may be*. The Bible that would be acceptable to-day should be the brain-power preserved in ink of the great and noble of every age and of every country; a work clouded by no assumed divinity, mutilated by no ecclesiastical authority, and deteriorated by no theological contamination. The Secularist's Bible must be born of human thought, interpreted by cultivated reason, and justified by its adaptability to the requirements of the time in which we live. Being free from the orthodox limit of finality, its value will be enhanced by an ever-increasing knowledge, its usefulness will be augmented by the growth of experience, and its authority will be that it has truth for its credentials and utility for its recommendation.

With a view of affording the general public an opportunity for having the most objectionable portions of the Bible at their command, the Freethought Publishing Company has just issued a new and carefully-revised edition of *The Bible Handbook*, which contains one hundred and sixty-two pages of texts taken verbatim from the Bible, showing its contradictions, its absurdities, its atrocities, its unfulfilled prophecies, its immoralities, indecencies, and obscenities. In his preface to the *Handbook*, Mr. G. W. Foote states the purpose of its publication thus:—

"The object of this compilation is certainly not orthodox, and the general body of Christians will doubtless object to its method. They will probably deny the fairness of pulling the Bible to pieces in this fashion. But the apologists of the Christian Scriptures are constantly occupied in belauding them, and there is no necessity to duplicate their performance; on the contrary, there is room for something of an opposite description, and this is what is here produced. Not the best, but the worst things in the Bible are selected..... Unquestionably it would be grossly unfair to disembowel an ordinary book in this way. One would not so treat Shakespeare, or any other great classic, either of modern times or of antiquity. But the Bible is not an ordinary book. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament; it is forced into the hands of children in our private and public schools; it is used as a kind of fetish for swearing upon in our Courts of Law and our Houses of Legislation. People have been robbed of their children in its name, or excluded from public positions to which they were elected by their fellow citizens. Men are still liable at law, to imprisonment for bringing it into 'disbelief and contempt.' Surely, then, a book which makes, or has made for it, such extraordinary pretensions should be subjected to extraordinary tests. We may admit a mirror to be a good one, although we observe some blemishes; but we are entitled to point out its flaws when it is declared to be perfect."

This rather lengthy excerpt is given because, in my opinion, it furnishes ample justification for the republication of the *Handbook*. Having read every line of the work, I have no hesitation in saying that its contents should prove invaluable to those who desire to possess a fair knowledge of the Bible; and it should be of special service to Freethinkers, whose duty it is to combat the false and extravagant notions entertained by some professed Christians in reference to "God's Word."

A careful study of the *Handbook* will bring to view, in a clear and concise form, the following facts: That the Bible is not the only alleged sacred book; that portions of its contents are so immoral and obscene that they should not be in general and indiscriminate circulation; that many of its statements are so thoroughly absurd that they cannot be of any practical service to human progress; that the character it gives of its God is brutal in the extreme; that its teachings in reference to woman are cruel, despotic, indecent, and degrading; that most of its ethical inculcations are inferior to those taught by the ancient philosophers; that it is by no means the oldest book; that its record of events is so vague and contradictory that it is unworthy of credence; that its biographies are samples of

folly, deceit, and licentiousness; that many of its teachings are inhuman and opposed to the promotion of the happiness of mankind; and that it affords no adequate guide for human conduct. Upon all these points passages are given in the *Handbook*, with chapter and verse, both from the Old and New Testaments. The *Bible Handbook* should be in the library of every "seeker for truth." My advice to all readers of these lines is to secure the book at once and digest its contents, which will show that Bible reading is dangerous to the tastes and morals not only of the rising generation, but of all sections of the community. It will also demonstrate beyond a doubt that a book the history of which is doubtful, the nature mystical, the teachings contradictory and, in many instances, positively injurious, can never harmonise with the genius of material progress and intellectual development. Far be it from me to allege that the Bible has not a legitimate place in modern literature. Undoubtedly it has one: it reveals the weaknesses, the imperfections, and the errors which darkened the past by impeding personal improvement and by retarding general advancement. Moreover, it serves as a beacon warning us of the dangerous paths which were once regarded as being safe to tread. It is a history of superstition that for ages robbed life of its real value and beauty, and dimmed the mental glory of the human race. When we reflect upon the extraordinary hold this book once had upon its devotees, and contrast that power with its present non-influence upon the conduct of men, what a striking indication we have of the decadence of theological restriction, and of the marvellous expansion of intellectual freedom. The Bible should be estimated by its contents, and not by its supposed authority. To allow any book to be our master instead of our servant is to prostrate reason at the shrine of a humiliating idolatry.

CHARLES WATTS.

More About Missions.

JOHN BULL is beginning to feel more than a little disturbed about his once-blasted foreign missions. He used to think that one of the great achievements the Almighty depended upon him to bring about was the Christianising of the globe. Now he is not at all certain that the globe—or, at any rate, immense portions of it—are in any immediate need of his evangelising services.

"Go into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" now strikes him as a thing easier said than done. He is rather glad that recent warnings of one of his high public officials have afforded him an excuse for shirking the Divinely-appointed task. He would—at any rate, for a little time to come—prefer to leave the Christianising to foreigners. Meanwhile, he is by no means sure that he has not been a trifle over-zealous in the past. The May meetings at Exeter Hall next year will probably have to lament a considerable falling off in funds for converting the heathen. Laments of that kind are common enough, but there is likely to be a real deficit exhibited next May and June.

We infer much of this from the many comments and expostulations which have recently appeared in the press. In quite unexpected quarters observations have been published which would have been deemed by their readers rank heresy or ungodly indifference a few months ago, but which now seem to have met with more or less approval.

The unhappy events in China have revived and enforced a strong feeling of objection to Christian missionary methods. And that quite apart from any question as to the possibility that missionaries—Roman Catholic or Protestant—had contributed to an outbreak in this particular instance. The discussion opened has been on general grounds, affecting not China simply, but missions to India, Japan, and elsewhere. From diplomatic considerations it has drifted to the question whether missions are any use at all, even from a Christian proselytising point of view, except in regard to absolute savages who may be supposed to be contented with anything Christian if accompanied with presents of beads, feathers, and cheap Houndsditch togs.

The Bishop of London, as we know, disclaims, in regard to recent events, any responsibility on the part of Anglican missionaries. He thinks it unfortunate that all missionaries are classed together. He believes that "our" missionaries were careful not to seem to interfere in the internal affairs of the country, but he adds: "*I am not sure that the same could be said of all.*" Lord Salisbury indicated that missionary work should be carried on at the risk of those engaged in it, without involving action on the part of their Governments. With this I quite agree. The political difficulty arises when popular clamor demands that missionaries should be avenged. I do not think that this is a Christian way of regarding the matter." This is sensible enough, for though we have missions, almost numberless in our own country—even Freethought missions—there is the fact that we are on our own ground; whereas abroad we are visitors or guests, and are there only on sufferance.

In the July issue of the *North American Review* appears an interesting article by Mr. Poultney Bigelow on "Missions and Missionaries in China." According to his information, the prospects of real missionary success with the Chinese have always been infinitesimal. The testimony of Father Palladius, a late Russian missionary, confirms this. He says: "I have been here (China) forty years, and perhaps I have converted one Chinaman. When missionaries tell you that they have done more than that, do not believe them." This is a fine record, indeed; after forty years' residence the missionary can point to one Chinaman converted, and does not seem to be quite sure about him, for he simply says he *believes* this Mongolian unit to be converted. If this is really the average achievement of other missionaries in China, where, indeed, is the use of spending so much money and trouble on missions, with the possibility of being charged, rightly or wrongly, with causing internal dissensions in the country and creating European complications and terrible alarm?

Five weeks ago the *Freethinker* was asked pointedly by the *Church Gazette* whether it did not think that the Church Missionary Society was engaged in a good and useful work. A reply was made to that inquiry in these columns, which, needless to say, was not favorable to the claims of the Society. At that time our contemporary appeared to think it an illiberal notion, not to say an evidence of bad taste, to dispute the claims of the Church Missionary Society. Now it publishes other editorial notes which have reference to Church missionary enterprise, and which do not quite breathe the same spirit of admiration. To commence with, there is the statement that this is a "time when the utility of missions to countries like India and China is being discussed," and therefore it becomes pertinent to ascertain the spirit in which these are carried on. "Charges of 'stupidity,' on the one hand, have been made against missionaries—with what truth we cannot say," remarks, with a fine indifference, this former defender of the Church Missionary Society—"and, on the other hand, of arrogant and overbearing conduct. These charges, however, are denied."

Then adds the journal referred to: "There remains a charge which will brook no denial, because it has for its authority the *Indian Churchman's Calendar* for the current year, and refers to the quality of the teaching imparted. We hardly suppose, however, that any missions of the C. M. S. are responsible for the following methods of presenting Jesus to the Hindoo." But why not responsible? If the Church Missionary Society, with its yearly income of over £400,000, exhibits no interest in the *Indian Churchman's Calendar*, what on earth is it doing? Then the *C. G.* goes on to cite some absurd instructions which are there authoritatively given for reaching the Brahmin or Mohammedan mind. It adds:—

"Now, to a certain class of Anglican mind all this may be very interesting; but to the Oriental we doubt whether it is a fair presentation of Christianity. He will see in it nothing but a form of heathenism other than those he knows of; and as such he will not see the advantage of forsaking what is, to him, more congenial.

"We cannot conceive wherefore the Jews, who live peaceably among us, cannot be let alone in the enjoyment of a faith which seems to suit them, and to which they are devotedly attached."

This is rather an improvement on the suggestion that

the *Universe* was "narrow and uncharitable" in attacking the Church Missionary Society. But, then, of course, events have changed, and the *Church Gazette*, after all, sails as near the wind as possible, and is perhaps to be applauded rather than reproached for going as far as it does. There always remains the fact that it is an interesting paper. In its latest issue it inserts a second letter on missions from a well-informed writer who has had considerable experience in India, and who states what is common knowledge—namely, that "It is only, as a rule, the scum of the Hindoos who become Christians." He notes, what is also common knowledge, that any "purely educational" effort in regard to the natives is "only given with an ulterior motive"—namely, to "attract the natives to their teaching, and thus to make them Christians."

"The missionaries may be able men, but their intellects are not strong enough to combat the subtle arguments of the Hindoo. I have heard Swami Vivakunanda arguing with Christians, and it was extremely painful to me to see the way in which the latter were worsted at every point. In order to convert India, the very best men we can send would be needed, and not merely men of average ability. Then the manner in which we conduct our missions is open to much criticism. Our men would gain always a respectful hearing were they to become 'holy men' in the sense which the natives understand by the term. I expressed myself badly when I said the missionaries were arrogant in their behavior. Many of them are as meek and mild as their hearers. I should rather have said that their method is aggressive. They go in European dress entirely; they try to force a Western civilisation on an Oriental people; and they endeavor to crush the national spirit out of the people. Do the missionaries agitate to have the natives' grievances redressed? Do they enter at all into the life of the native? No; they are content to act as outsiders—as a superior people, in fact. I shall refrain from speaking of the things they preach—that were too painful."

The *Evangelical Christian World*, in an editorial note on another subject, casually alludes to "off-hand critics of missionaries"; but that journal is probably as well aware as most of its readers that the criticism, so far from being "off-hand," is deliberate and direct, and is backed by evidence which is indisputable.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Value of Christian Endeavor.

My article on "Christian Endeavor" in the *Freethinker* for July 22 has brought me quite a number of communications—some stupid, some stupid and abusive, and one or two argumentative. Those coming under the two first headings may charitably be consigned to oblivion. It is nothing fresh to learn that we of the Secular party are engaged in lowering men to the level of beasts (the drop would not be severe in all cases), or that our principles, if persisted in, would wreck society. All these charges are wearisomely familiar, the only remarkable thing about them being the stupidity of Christians in imagining that they can have any possible influence upon us.

There is a point in one of the letters I have received that may be noticed in passing. A correspondent, evidently laboring under the delusion that, because I bear a Jewish name, I must be a foreigner, reads me a long lecture on the "favors" the Jews have received in this Christian country, with the obvious implication that, in face of this, I must be terribly ungrateful to take part in an anti-Christian propaganda. Now, I do not admit for a moment that the better position of Jews in this country is due to Christianity. On the contrary, it is due to our being rather less Christian here than elsewhere that Jew-baiting is non-existent. So long as Christianity was all-powerful, the position of Jews in England was pretty much as it was elsewhere. The liberty they enjoyed under the Romans quickly disappeared under Christian rule. Canute the Great banished them altogether. William I. took them again into favor, but every Jew was legally the property of the Crown. The period of the Crusades witnessed their wholesale murder, and the tender mercies of the Christians were exemplified by the self-immolation of five hundred Jews and Jewesses at York, who preferred

suicide to falling alive into their hands. Under Edward I. they were once more banished the kingdom, and were only readmitted under Cromwell. And when, finally, we remember that not until 1846 were English Jews placed upon a legal equality with English Gentiles, one wonders what Christianity has had to do with their present position. Of course, if it is a "favor" not to murder, rob, or outrage men and women because they happen to be Jews or Jewesses, then they have much to be grateful for. Perhaps my correspondent will explain, if it is Christianity that places Jew and Gentile on an equality in England, what it is that disfranchises and ill-treats the Jew elsewhere.

To return to the Society of Christian Endeavor. Several of my correspondents fall foul of me for "sneering" at people who are as earnest and as honest in their belief as I am in mine. But I did not "sneer" at either their earnestness or their honesty. I am willing to grant both, but still insist that honesty is no guarantee of accuracy, nor earnestness of useful work. A very large part of the world's troubles springs from faults of the intellect rather than from brutality of feeling. The softness of the human head is responsible for as much evil and suffering as the hardness of the human heart. The evils of honest zeal divorced from a corresponding intellectual development are writ large over the whole of human history. It is mainly responsible for all the evil that religion has caused. It led people to regard the extirpation of heresy as a service to God; it kept the witch-finder busy and the inquisitor fully employed. It has blasted the lives of thousands of men and women by the institution of celibacy. It fostered hatred and persecution, and bred immorality and bigotry. Honest conviction, steadfast endeavor to carry that conviction into practice, is good; but, divorced from adequate knowledge, it may prove far more dangerous than supine indifference or absolute dishonesty. It is from this standpoint that I complain of such movements as the Society of Christian Endeavor, not from that of impeaching the honesty of its members.

The whole question of such organisations is primarily that of accuracy, and, secondarily, that of utility. Primarily the question is, Are these movements based on a sound conception of human nature? To this the answer is emphatically, No. All of them take supernatural beliefs in some form or other as the essential condition of social activity. All of their members have instilled into them the notion that, apart from the belief in God and a future life, social effort for good is a freak of conduct that none but an idiot or a maniac would indulge in. The organic unity of the social structure, the mutual dependence of its parts, the natural consequences of actions as an adequate method of determining their relative value, are all lost sight of, with the ultimate result that, as these supernatural beliefs weaken with the growth of experience, there is only too often a weakening of the interest in social welfare, or, at best, chaotic and confused ideas on the subject.

For in but a small percentage of cases is the influence of such bodies permanent. It is safe to say that, of the young men and women who were so industriously singing hymns and saying prayers at the Convention, a large majority will, before they have reached thirty-five years of age, have dropped out of the movement altogether. Their interest in the supernatural will have weakened, if not have disappeared entirely, without their having gained a corresponding interest in social matters. The best years of their life—instead of having been spent in a mental discipline, a study of social facts and forces that will enable them to take a profitable part in the life around them—will have been employed in an intellectual dissipation that will leave them mentally destitute and the easy prey of the political or social sharper.

It is this tremendous misdirection and consequent waste of human energy that makes evangelical Christianity one of the gravest dangers to social growth. Imagine the benefit that might have accrued to society at large had the attention of the 25,000 or 30,000 who met at Alexandra Palace been centred on a single social problem, such as the housing question, the monopoly in land, or old-age pensions. True, each one of these questions was mentioned during the course of the Convention; but, in the long run, those who left the meetings would be spurred to little more than forming prayer

meetings or getting additional members to their respective Churches.

Another important point lost sight of by those who praise such movements as the Society of Christian Endeavor is that interest in social questions is only simulated so long as there exists outside all religious organisations a strong reform opinion that is non-religious. It is a truism to say that reforms never commence inside the Churches. It is outside that they are born; it is outside that they struggle through the infantile stage and are nursed into maturity. Advanced ideas only find a footing inside the different religious bodies when it is no longer either possible or profitable to ignore their existence. And even then the social reform is kept strictly subservient to the religious interest. In other words, when the social instincts have grown so strong as to threaten the welfare of religious belief, they are exploited by priests and parsons in the interests of their respective Churches.

And this last circumstance leads to an understanding of the cases of individual improvement that are said to follow association with the various religious bodies. The case against these associations does not by any means demand a denial that such instances of improvement do not and cannot take place. The mere association of a number of people is alone sufficient to induce the growth of a certain class ethic, and so far to work for the maintenance of a certain code of conduct. This is done not only in religious organisations, but apart from them. All that need be pointed out is that what the Christian habitually ascribes to the influence of his supernatural beliefs is properly attributable to the purely social feelings. The regrettable feature is that the supernatural beliefs with which these feelings are associated react disastrously on their subsequent cultivation.

It would be unwise to close this article without noticing the remark that no such gathering would be brought together for any purely social purpose. If that be so, it carries with it Christianity's condemnation. In one form or another—Catholic or Protestant—Christianity has governed Western Europe for upwards of fifteen centuries. It has controlled people from the cradle to the grave. It could burn men and women for a difference of opinion, and can hardly plead lack of power to regulate their conduct. And, as a result, we are told, not shamefacedly, but boastfully, that our social sense is so little developed that it is easier to get young men and women to sing hymns than engage in useful social work, easier to get them to attend prayer meetings than work for the purely social welfare of their fellows. So much the worse for Christianity. Ruskin said once that the statement that the clergy were the only friends of the poor was the severest condemnation of the priesthood he had ever heard. It proved how little they had attended to the education of the rich. May we not say, in the same view, that the indifference of men and women to the crying wrongs and injustices of our existing civilisation is an indication of how little attention Christianity has paid to the social education of the people it has had under its charge, and a warning that the remedy for existing evils has to be sought in other directions than those hitherto pursued?

C. COHEN.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

IMMENSE sums of money are being raised, under the name of Twentieth Century Funds, for the purpose of promoting the success of the Christian superstition in Great Britain. This money is independent of the ordinary revenues of the Churches, and will help to strengthen their hold upon the community; above all upon its younger members, who will be reached by some other of the various "social" agencies, which are found an effective substitute for the old dogmatic teaching.

This financial movement is initiated at a time when reaction is in the air, when the High Church is paramount in the Established Religion, when the Roman Catholic Church is growing ominously in wealth and power, when Denominationalism is triumphant in Elementary Education, and when the influence of Priestcraft

is intensified by plausible and surreptitious methods, which do not directly challenge attention or excite public alarm.

It does not follow that a religion which, from an intellectual point of view, is in a state of decadence is therefore doomed to an immediate decease. The Roman Catholic Church was intellectually discredited in France, and no one expected its revival; but by a masterly policy of organisation, by the steady accumulation of resources, by well-planned and consistent political action, and by the capture of the Higher Education, this Church has raised itself once more to a commanding position, and has become by far the strongest of all the public forces in that country. This phenomenon may be repeated in Great Britain; and, lest it should be, the friends of Freethought are under a serious obligation to take timely and ample precautions.

Good intentions alone will not suffice; nor will courage, ability, and enthusiasm, without resources. The principles of modern warfare are carried into the regions of politics and religion. Existing society is based upon property, and power accompanies wealth. The war between reason and superstition will therefore be very largely decided by the means at the command of the respective armies. This truth is fully recognised by the leaders of Christianity, and should be as fully recognised, not only by leaders, but by all the supporters of Freethought.

In this spirit the National Secular Society's Conference resolved that a Twentieth Century Fund should be raised to counteract the special efforts of the Christian Churches. No definite figure is aimed at, or even suggested—at least for the present. What is hoped is that all Freethinkers who have any practical love for their cause will give as liberally as possible, according to their means and opportunities.

With regard to the security of this projected Fund, I have to say that, while all receipts will pass through the hands of the N. S. S. honorary treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, they will be paid into the banking account of the Secular Society, Limited, which is a legal Incorporation, and affords a perfect guarantee against the money being lost or alienated. The N. S. S. Executive has learnt by experience the trouble and insecurity of the method of Trustees. Moreover, the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, accepts the responsibility; and, as it consists almost exclusively of members of the N. S. S. Executive, there is no possibility of any sort of disagreement. I may, however, add my own personal pledge that, as far as I am concerned, the interests of the popular, unlegalised body shall be fully respected, and that its Executive shall be consulted in all matters relating to this Fund.

By the wish of the N. S. S. Executive, and of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, I have already made a preliminary appeal by private circular on behalf of this Fund, in order that the public appeal in the *Freethinker* and elsewhere might be initiated under the most favorable auspices. I shall presently give a list of the promises, in reply to that circular, which have reached me up to date. But before doing so I have a word to say to the great mass of the readers of this journal. Many of them, I daresay, cannot promise to contribute a sum which they think large enough to be entered in a list of donations. In order to meet their case I am authorised to arrange for two Shilling Weeks, such as the older readers of the *Freethinker* are familiar with. During the first week in October, and the first week in January, the "rank and file" of the party are earnestly invited to send me at least one shilling, and as many more as they can afford. Any number of shillings from any number of persons will be acceptable, and every one will be acknowledged in these columns.

On previous occasions of this kind a considerable proportion of contributors have taken the opportunity to write me a letter, stating their views of the work of the movement, and throwing out suggestions for its improvement. If they do the same on these forthcoming occasions, I promise them that their letters shall all be read, carefully considered, and as far as possible answered. It is good to hear from time to time what the "masses" are thinking. We really want their opinions, and it is sometimes found that the "lookers on," if I may so express it, see a good deal

that escapes the attention of those who are zealously "playing the game."

And now for the list of donors up to date, with extracts in some cases from the letters conveying their promises.

The place of honor is due to the veteran Mr. J. Umpleby, of Blackburn. When this Fund was first mooted, some time ago, he forwarded his cheque for £20 towards it, which has since been held by Mr. S. Hartmann, the N. S. S. honorary treasurer. Mr. Umpleby is willing to make his donation £100 if four others will give the same amount, or £50 if nine others will give £50 each. Should his generous challenge be accepted the Fund will realise £500 in consequence.

The second place of honor is due to Major John C. Harris, R.E., who promised me £20 towards the Fund as soon as he heard of it, and forwarded me his cheque for that amount immediately on receiving my circular. That £20 is also in Mr. Hartmann's hands. Major Harris sent his donation at once as a stimulus to other friends to give promptly instead of merely promising. He thinks the money is sure when we have it, but never quite sure otherwise.

"A Friend" (a lady) promises £25, and Mr. Horace Seal another £25. Thus we have £90 from four contributors, which is a very good start.

I will now give the list of donations promised up to date, and then deal with some of the correspondence.

Donation List.

J. Umpleby, £20; Major John C. Harris, R.E., £20; "A Friend," £25; Horace Seal, £25; J. C. Banks, £10; W. Mumby, £5; J. F. Hampson, £4; D. Yule, £10; James Neate, £1; Mrs. Neate, £1; R. Davison, £2; G. J. Warren, £1; T. P. Stewart, £1 1s.; R. T. Nichols, £2 2s.; C. Girtanner, £10 10s.; David Watt, £1; C. J. Peacock, £5; A. H. Braine, £1 1s.; H. Trotman, 10s. 6d.; H. B. Dodds, 10s.; W. Garthwaite, 10s.; J. G. Dobson, 10s.; J. Barry, 10s.; T. H. Body, 2s. 6d.; J. Partridge, 10s. 6d.; Martin Weatherburn, 10s.; A. G. Lye, 5s.; E. Self, 5s.; L. Simpson, 5s.; T. Ollerenshaw, 10s.; W. Barks, 10s.; J. T. Ives, 1s.; J. Bullock, 5s.; A. F. Bullock, 2s. 6d.; C. Handley, 5s.; W. M. Constant, 3s.; W. R. Axelle, 10s.; D. Mitchell, £1; Mrs. Brown, 5s.; H. Payne, £1; D. P. S., £1; J. E. Kins, 5s.; C. D. Stephens, 10s. 6d.; W. H. Spivey, 10s.; M. Dye, 5s.

This represents a total of £156 4s. 6d., and I should very much like to see that amount doubled during the next week or so. There are scores, and perhaps hundreds, who could subscribe £1 or more to this Fund, and a multitude who could subscribe less, without missing what they gave. I beg them to send me their promises at once. The remittances can wait. It is not a question of what a Freethinker can give at this particular moment, but of what he can give some time before the close of the present year, which terminates the nineteenth century. Next year opens the twentieth century. Let it also open a new and bright period of Freethought activity.

One gentleman, who has not yet subscribed, has asked how the Fund will be expended. That will depend upon its amount. It is impossible to say anything definite at this stage. In any case, it will be expended in promoting and maintaining Freethought; and its disposition lies in the hands of two thoroughly representative bodies.

Another gentleman, who says he needs no assurance himself, and who thinks I am abominably ill-paid for my work, fancies that others may be pleased to know that none of the money raised will be spent upon myself. Well, all I can say is that this is extremely unlikely. It is certainly not contemplated. I think I have a right to point to the past. For more than ten years I have been President of the National Secular Society, in succession to the great Charles Bradlaugh. During that time I have worked very hard and done the party some service. No doubt I have made mistakes. The price of avoiding them is doing nothing. But one thing I have never done. I have not had a single penny of the National Secular Society's money. I have not charged it anything even for postages, and I have always paid my own expenses at the Annual Conferences. The Society's books prove

this, and I may be excused from saying more; except, perhaps, that I have raised hundreds of pounds for the Society through the *Freethinker*, without making the smallest deduction for time, trouble, letters, or advertisements.

A member of the N. S. S. Executive, Mr. James Neate, who is in a position to know the facts at any rate, says on behalf of himself and his wife:—

We trust your appeal will meet with the hearty response it deserves. We sincerely regret that the Freethought party in England has not more G. W. Footes to make such sacrifices and appeals for the cause. You stand out unique since the death of Charles Bradlaugh. All honor to you.

I would not have quoted this praise if it had not come from such a quarter. Mr. David Watt (Paisley) says:—

I do hope the party will rally round you and show what stuff they are made of. We want a good supply of the sinews of war to fight superstition.

Mr. C. Girtanner, writing from Trieste, says:—

I hope your never-ceasing efforts for the cause may be crowned with success, and I heartily wish you health and strength.

Mr. T. P. Stewart asks whether collecting cards or sheets will be issued. The answer is, Yes, as soon as the summer draws to a close. Mr. J. F. Hampson (Bolton) hopes to see "a long and strong list of donors." Mr. W. Mumby sends a long and pleasant letter, from which the following is an extract:—

There is great credit due to you for forming the Secular Society, Limited, to prevent the N. S. S. from being defrauded of legacies and bequests, though I hope we shall not work any the less for the total repeal of the barbarous Blasphemy Laws. Yet I fear there is just a danger of some saying that "the Secular Society, Limited, has funds bequeathed by the late Mr. So and So, and let these be spent first; besides, Mr. Foote says that other legacies will come along in time." If this attitude were to be adopted generally, the Incorporation would not be an unmixed blessing.....Do we make anything like the monetary sacrifices we should be expected to if we belonged to the Wesleyans, Baptists, or other Christian sects?

Mr. J. C. Banks (Wolverhampton) hopes the Twentieth Century Fund "will be (what it deserves to be) a thorough success." Mr. W. H. Spivey (Huddersfield) regrets that the war has made business so bad, but he subscribes something, and means to collect a few pounds in the district. Mr. T. Ollerenshaw (Linthwaite) says:—

I hope your appeal will prove successful, and that Freethinkers will not be behind Christians in finding the sinews of war. Let us hope that our opponents will not be able to say that we do not properly support our movement.

Mr. Martin Weatherburn (Cramlington), a veteran Freethinker, universally respected in his district, and everywhere else he is known, says:—

I trust the response to your appeal will be such as to ensure the success of the Twentieth Century Fund. There is a great deal of hard work to be done before Secularism can be introduced to, and appreciated by, the masses of the people. I wish you may receive from the party such support, moral and financial, as will enable you to get through a very large share of it.

But I must bring this long article to an end. I shall have occasion to deal with the subject again (and again) during the next few months. For the present it suffices to say that the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund is now publicly launched, and that every Freethinker should do what he can to ensure it a prosperous career.

G. W. FOOTE

(President, National Secular Society).
(Chairman, Secular Society, Limited).

July 31, 1900.

The Bishop of Stepney, according to a contemporary, is the busiest man in London; he writes his sermons in trams and buses. Now we know why his discourses always seem so slow and jerky. No doubt a bishop would appear to be a busy man when, as it has been suggested, "he composes sermons at the same time he is making tracks."

Acid Drops.

THE assassination of the King of Italy is a shocking occurrence. It seems useless to remonstrate with the fool friends of freedom, as Ingersoll called them, who imagine that their cause can be promoted by murder. Assassination only plays the game of reaction. Once convince people that human life is at the mercy of reckless conspirators, and they will, out of mere self-preservation, throw themselves into the arms of a Savior of Society. The mass of men always feel the truth of Hume's saying, that anarchy is the worst form of tyranny. Laws and regulations, however bad or unjust, are instinctively recognised as preferable to the terror of uncertainty. It was the excesses of the French Revolution that paved the way for Napoleon.

Since Mr. Foote's article on "The Holy Kaiser" was in type the newspapers have been discussing what Emperor William really said at Bremerhaven. It seems that all the local newspapers that reported his speech agree in making him speak as follows: "When you meet the foe you will defeat him. No quarter will be given, no prisoners will be taken. Let all who fall into your hands be at your mercy. Just as the Huns, a thousand years ago, under the leadership of Etzel (Attila), gained a reputation in virtue of which they still live in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China that no Chinaman will ever again even dare to look askance at a German."

This is a great deal worse than the words the Emperor is credited with in Mr. Foote's article. It seems that the Christian Kaiser wishes his German troops to imitate the exploits of the Huns under the terrible Attila. Perhaps he is looking forward to another pyramid of skulls. If this pious War Lord's policy is to obtain in the conflict with China, it will behave Englishmen to see that their contingent of troops are not placed under the supreme command of a German general—about which there is a strong rumor in the newspapers.

"Christian Socialism" was the subject of a recent address by the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse in the Wesleyan Chapel, Lowestoft. A correspondent of ours dropped in to hear what this colleague of the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes had to say, and he was greatly surprised at what he heard. It was more like a Freethought lecture than a Christian discourse. The reverend gentleman was very anxious that nothing he said should be reported in the papers, and no wonder. Our correspondent's summary of the address is certainly startling. The following are some of Mr. Pearse's utterances: "Church and chapel would not make any substantial progress unless they catered for the material needs of the people. What was the good of saving a man's soul if his stomach was empty? You might give him a tract, but that would only make him swear, and so you were the cause of unnecessary profanity. But if you wrapped some food in the tract, you would be acting more sensibly, and the food, if not the tract, would be acceptable. We must make the churches more like the public-house, without the drink—more cheerful, better lighted, less formal, and altogether more free and easy, so that the working man will voluntarily come in and enjoy himself, as he does at present at the public-house."

The Rev. Mark Guy Pearse, continuing his address, said: "It is often thrown in my face that no great reform was ever started or even aided by the Church. Unfortunately it is only too true. The education movement owes nothing to the Church, the emancipation of slaves owes nothing to the Church, and the Temperance movement owes nothing to the Church; indeed, in the early days of that movement, if a man wanted to sign the pledge, he was obliged to go to an Infidel hall to do so, so much was the Church opposed to the movement. I am anxious, therefore, that the Church should do something to alter the present social evils and inequalities, and so prove that it really is of some use in the world. I am confident that the needed reforms will come—in fact, the air is full of them; but I am dreadfully afraid that they will come from agencies outside the Church, and the Church will be left high and dry. The Church has grown selfish, without any vitality, and each member thinks only of saving his own paltry soul, oblivious to all the misery and suffering around him. A Revolution is only a Reformation delayed, and if the Churches do not bestir themselves they will be overwhelmed by a gigantic avalanche which will sweep them away. The new orthodoxy is 'Love,' and the new heresy is 'Selfishness.'"

Our correspondent vouches for the substantial accuracy of this report, and he is a person on whom we can rely. It is easy to understand why the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse did not want that particular address reported. Unfortunately there was an unsuspected "chiel" amongst them "takin' notes" for the *Freethinker*. We have given our readers some of these interesting notes, and we should much like to see them reproduced in the *Methodist Times*.

The August number of the *Literary Guide*—an excellent publication, by the way—refers to the *Bible Handbook* as

"written by Mr. Foote in collaboration with Mr. W. P. Ball." This is a curious blunder. The volume was really written by the Holy Ghost, if we accept the orthodox theory of inspiration; for it consists of a host of texts from the Bible, printed in a way to show its contradictions, absurdities, immoralities, obscenities, and unfulfilled prophecies. Messrs. Foote and Ball are not the authors, but the editors, of this collection. Their contribution to the volume consists of a preface, headlines, and occasional notes. And it may be said that the real value of the *Bible Handbook* lies in the fact that the Christian Scriptures are allowed to speak for themselves.

Bible Romances is described by the *Literary Guide* as "racy and scathing." "The more philosophic Rationalists," our contemporary says, "may deprecate such direct and uncompromising attacks upon the popular faith, but it is difficult to contest their necessity in these days of organised reaction." Difficult, indeed! After all, who are the "more philosophic" Rationalists? Is it meant that "direct and uncompromising" thinkers and writers are necessarily lacking in philosophy? If so, we must amend our judgments of Voltaire, Paine, and Ingersoll, to say nothing of Bradlaugh, who had more "philosophy" than the vast majority of his critics and detractors.

Persons who call themselves Rationalists should stick to the plain appellation, and not preface it with laudatory and invidious adjectives. It takes all sorts of people to make up a world, and it is very foolish to quarrel with the variety. It also takes all sorts of workers and advocates to make up a movement; and those who are fond of placing a special value on their own tastes and temperaments, generally forget that they differ from others precisely as much as others differ from them. Here, as elsewhere, a golden rule is "Live, and let live."

Our Tory and Christian government can spend heaps of money in all sorts of ways, but cannot afford to vote even the smallest sum to save millions of poor Hindus from a long and horrible death by starvation.

Christian Endeavorers are discussing whether drinking and smoking are sinful, but none of them refer to their only authority on the subject. Jesus Christ certainly did not smoke, but he had no opportunity of doing so, as smoking was apparently not invented then. Smoking is, therefore, an open question as far as his example is concerned. But drinking is not at all an open question. Jesus Christ drank what was going in his age and country. He took wine habitually. His last meal before his crucifixion was washed down with that liquor. Three years previously, according to the fourth Gospel, though the other evangelists say nothing about it, he was at a marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, where he turned a huge quantity of water into wine to prolong the spree for the regulation period, which seems to have been the best part of a week amongst the Jews. Now, in our opinion, that settles the question. Every teetotal Christian sets himself up as more moral than his Savior.

The late Mr. Spurgeon gave up his glass of wine, under strong pressure from his church, as an encouragement to the weaker brethren, who probably tippled all the same. But when he was invited to discard his cigar also, he rebelled. He said that he drew the line of abnegation somewhere, and, so far from dropping his cigar, he intended to "smoke to the glory of God." And he did.

Several years ago a Salvation Army captain was at the head of his Sunday procession, marching backwards himself, with his face to the faithful, and his other part (presumably) to Old Nick. Suddenly he observed a big hulking fellow on the pavement smoking a short clay pipe, and looking rather contemptuously at the Blood and Fire show. "Take that pipe out of your mouth," the captain cried; "if the Lord had meant you to smoke he would have provided you with a chimney." "Well," said the lost one, "if the Lord had meant you to walk backward he would have turned your feet round." The captain collapsed.

By the way, the Rev. Mr. Sheldon, of Topeka, the well-paid hero of the "following-Jesus" battle, appears to hold a very precarious position in his own city. He says that his influence and reputation would be lost if he were once seen smoking. Dear, good, immortal Charles Lamb, if he were living here, would want to feel the fellow's bumps. Carlyle would wither him with an unprintable sarcasm. Tennyson would give him a most superb stare. Ingersoll would smile at him between the whiffs of a good Havana.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made, says the Psalmist. But what would he have said if he had known how a man may be patched up by modern science? A German army surgeon has been calculating the cost of repairing a man maimed in every conceivable way. Here is the bill:—False arms, £29; false legs, £28; false nose, £20; false ears, with artificial drums, £26; set of false teeth, £18; glass eyes, £6. Total, £127.

It always seemed a trifle too much to believe that the spirit of prophecy was confined to Israel. If the *Peking Times* may be trusted, prophecy is not even confined to the human race, for they have a prophetic dog in the Celestial Empire. This marvellous animal foretold—in tones understood and interpreted by its owners—a recent storm. And the animal further predicts "gory encounters for the Chinese in the eighth moon." Probably, on investigation, that dog will turn out to be some "sad-dog" of a journalistic joker who has imposed on the *Peking Times*.

The *British Weekly* is disturbed that cricket nowadays seems to be a greater draw than Christ—even in these days of Christian Endeavor meetings. It says: "We Christians have room in our sympathies for cricket, and football, and boat races. One wonders when there will be as much sympathy at 'Lord's' and Henley with our enthusiasm as there is at every great gathering of Christians with theirs." And the *British Weekly* may go on wondering till it realises that Christianity has alienated the masses by its own absurdities, and that one of the great public idols is "sport."

Fox-hunting parsons are apparently not extinct. The new master of the Cattistock Hounds is the Rev. E. A. Milne, and his most notable colleague is the Rev. E. M. Reynolds, who hunts the Coniston pack.

They don't seem to care much for the Mosaic law in the County Court at Rhyl. A plaintiff's pony had been kicked to death by a horse belonging to another man whom he sued. Plaintiff cited a verse in Exodus xxi., and suggested that a settlement should be made in accordance with its terms—namely: "If one man's ox hurt another that he die, they shall sell the live ox and divide the money of it, and the dead ox also they shall divide." This proposal was refused, and the case fought out on its merits, with the result that the plaintiff was non-suited.

The idea of asking "divine guidance" for a London music-hall seems to have shocked the *Sunday Companion*. Certainly it looks like superseding the authority of the London County Council, which has hitherto regarded itself as God Almighty in this connection. The matter has arisen in this way: The foundation-stone of the New Theatre of Varieties in Euston-road was recently laid. Amongst the company present at the ceremony was the Rev. J. H. Anderson, rector of Tooting, who invoked Divine guidance in the direction of the enterprise.

The *Sunday Companion* describes this as "extraordinary." But what is there really remarkable in it from a Christian point of view? If the Almighty concerns himself as intimately as we are told he does with mundane affairs, surely a new music-hall is one of the very institutions for which his guidance should be solicited.

Much criticism has been excited even in church circles by the programme for the Newcastle Church Congress. It is pointed out that almost every important social and moral question is avoided, and that politically and socially there is going to be little to differentiate it from a meeting of the Primrose League. There can be little surprise at this, for year after year the Church Congress contrives to distinguish itself by the utter inanity of its deliberations.

Professor Marshall-Hall, the occupant of the Ormond Chair of Music at Melbourne University, and brother of Marshall-Hall, the well-known barrister, has been creating a stir at the Antipodes, according to a correspondent of the *Topical Times*. Not only has he helped more to popularise good music in Australia than any living man, but he has occasioned several heated controversies by his pronounced heterodoxy.

First, we are told, he began to sandwich Nietzsche into his lectures to the students of Wagner; afterwards he published some poems of his own composition, which he entitled *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. Some time ago the University Council passed a resolution in which, after alluding to the alleged character of the poems, they condemned his "ostentatious parade of disbelief in Christianity or any form of theism, and of his contempt for those who hold such belief."

Nevertheless the Council decided the other day to ask him to stay on for another five years—a decision which has occasioned a great outcry on the part of the unco guid. Meanwhile, adds the *Topical Times*, Marshall-Hall's concerts and lectures are attended by enthusiastic crowds of admirers; and not Paderewski himself receives more ardent applause from the fair sex.

Mr. Joseph Hatton continues in his "Cigarette Papers" his caustic criticism of certain professed religionists, especially the Sabbatarians. In regard to the latter he observes that, "at Eastbourne the town magnates will not permit buses to run on Sunday, nor persons to bathe except very early in the morning. Eastbourne, delightful at other times, is a sad

place on Sunday. You can't even get a Sunday paper, unless you order it long beforehand, or sneak into some back street to buy one surreptitiously."

In another note Mr. Hatton deals with the Rev. Dr. Lorimer, of Boston, U.S.A., and his views upon "turning the other cheek" to China. As Mr. Hatton rightly says, if we turned the other cheek in our day, the smiters would be always in the ascendant. He adds: "More than any other agency, it is the missionaries who have developed, to their harm and ours generally, the worst side of the Chinese, and if Europe is as wise as one hopes, she will prohibit in the future the entrance into China of any of her subjects for the purpose of preaching a religious propaganda endeavoring to make converts. As for England, if the whole of the missionary funds were diverted to the honest and Christian use of our own people, to the poor and destitute, to the disabled soldier, and to the families of the men who have laid down their lives for the Empire, the money would be put to a holier and better purpose than forcing a new religion upon ancient peoples."

The *Umpire* comments on the singular fact that the Sunday Closing Act of the amorous Charles is most popular with the authorities of towns by the sea. We have had instances of this in the North, the South, the West—very lately at Swansea—and now at Yarmouth in the East. Seriously, says the *Umpire*, it is more than time that this odious enactment was wiped off the Statute-book. We have many silly laws of one kind or another, but for egregious absurdity none equals this against "Sabbath-breaking" barbers, fruit-sellers, and tobacconists.

Sunday papers. What a dreadful "bogy" they are to pious Sabbatarians who read their Monday morning paper with apparent unconsciousness that it was practically produced on Sunday. The *Christian Herald* has the following note of lamentation on this subject: "The guaranteed circulation of the Sunday secular newspapers warrants the assumption that 4,000,000 or 5,000,000 people in this country devote part of the Lord's Day to a review of the stress, turmoil, sorrows, and vice of the week."

Well, perhaps there is not so much wickedness after all in reading a Sunday paper. There are working men who have been too busy during the week to read the "dailies" with their frequent efforts to appear to be supplying news when there is no news. The *Christian Herald* probably overlooks the fact that the *Freethinker* is nominally dated for Sunday, and is therefore specially a "Sunday Secular newspaper." Our pages are not filled with the "vice of the week," except occasional references to the vice of clergymen and ministers.

The real meaning of the whole of these protestations is this: In recent times, and particularly during the last few months, the Sunday papers have, with charming accord, made a dead set on various superstitions. Not simply the so-called sanctity of the Sabbath, but faith in foreign missions, has been attacked, and other kindred matters have been subjected to wholesome criticism. That is really where the shoe pinches in regard to Sunday papers.

Commenting on a letter addressed to the *Spectator* by Mr. T. B. Horsfall on the decline in the supply of clergy, the *Church Times* says it does not believe the falling off is due to unreadiness on the part of young men to offer themselves for a service in which there is no scope for the social reformer. "In our judgment," it says, "the advance of secularism lies at the bottom of our present troubles."

Golfing in a graveyard is a little rough on the native sentiment wherever the encroaching pastime may occur. It has happened in this instance at a Chinese burial-ground in Singapore. It is interesting to learn from the *Christian devotee* of the pastime that "the links are very sporty, the tombs serving for bunkers and other hazards." After some other details, it is not surprising to be informed that "the tombs are being slowly hacked to pieces by the wild efforts to get the balls out of the crevices in the bricks."

As the Chinese have a special regard for their ancestors—their memories and remains—this kind of desecration might have been supposed to be likely to occasion indignation. But what did that matter to Christian golfers? Nothing. And so they have slowly hacked the tombs to pieces with their "wild efforts."

The "old gentleman" is a polite way of referring to the Devil. He used to be called "Old Nick," etc., and there is a terrible indictment against him, especially in regard to his alleged temptation of Eve. Of course, he is now generally supposed to be dead, or rather never to have existed except in imagination. Notwithstanding these modern views, which seem to prevail mostly amongst laymen, it is rather astonishing to find the Bishop of Salford referring to Satan as an "old gentleman." Query: Is it right for a bishop to describe "the author of evil" as a gentleman—old or young?

N. B.

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

To Correspondents.

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

F. E. WILLIS.—Always pleased to receive cuttings.

F. J. GOULD.—Advertisement next week. See "Sugar Plums" this week.

R. JOHNSON (Manchester), in sending his promise of donation to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "I hope every Freethinker will try to do his very best, if the amount is ever so small, to make this Fund a success. If every reader of the *Freethinker* contributed only one shilling, you would realise a considerable sum. Surely they can all do that, if not more, once in a century."

R. CHAPMAN.—See "Sugar Plums." Mr. Foote hopes to visit Shields again in the fall of the year.

M. DYE.—Mr. Foote will act on your advice as far as possible. He cannot but work hard, but he does not mean to kill himself. There is no immediate prospect of his being "lost" to the movement through the over-zeal you dread.

W. MUMBY.—Thanks for your encouraging letter, as well as for the promise. See our special article on the subject.

R. DAVISON.—Hope you found time when in London to call at the Freethought Publishing Company's new premises. When you call again, please ask to see us. We should like to see you.

D. P. S.—Yes, the heat has been excessive. Thanks for cheque and good wishes.

THERE was a blunder in our last issue. Mr. G. J. Warren was mentioned in connection with the Bethnal Green Branch, instead of the East London Branch.

E. ANDREWS.—You appear to have overlooked our article, in which the chief points of your letter in reply to the Rev. H. J. Alcock were already raised.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Late arrivals, since the list in our special article was closed:—F. W. Donaldson, £1 1s.; A. W. Hutty, 2s.; Minnie, Willie, and Teddie Hutty, 3s.; R. Johnson, £2 2s.

H. A. T. suggests that we should print a list of newsagents who are known to supply the *Freethinker*, so that persons into whose hands a copy falls accidentally may be able to purchase others without undue trouble. We have long meant to do this, but the difficulty is to get a good list of such newsagents. Perhaps our readers throughout the country will help us in this matter.

T. OLLERENSHAW.—Remittance received with thanks.

A. W. HUTTY.—Cheque placed to your credit. Never mind the smallness of the amount. The Fund will do very well if all contribute as much.

H. HULM.—Abridgments of great works, like Hume's *History of England*, may be useful to students preparing for our curious modern "examinations," but other persons should leave them severely alone. Refer to Hume himself, and you will find the story of Elgiva, which we referred to last week, narrated by a master hand. Ask the other question, please, when Mr. Foote returns from his holiday.

MARTIN WEATHERBURN.—Your good opinion is always valued.

E. SELF.—It is an excellent way of advertising this journal to pass it on to others after reading it. Thanks. Mr. Foote is in good health, though a bit tired.

W. BARKS.—Of course the donation can be paid in two instalments, or any other way you please. We are sorry to hear of your personal troubles.

T. C. F.—Certainly working men should contribute, if only a trifle. All should do something. Those who can only contribute a shilling or two will find a good opportunity during the Shilling Weeks. See our Freethought Twentieth Century Fund appeal.

J. H. L.—Much obliged. See "Acid Drops."

ANGLO-INDIAN points out that Mr. Neale was apparently mistaken on one point in his otherwise excellent article on "Christ on the Stage." He seems to have thought that the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play was enacted yearly, whereas it is enacted every ten years, and has been so since 1634. This correspondent, who is thanked for his kind and encouraging letter, does not like to see any errors in his "favorite paper."

REV. G. BROWN, also referring to Mr. Neale's article, begs to say that "Joseph Mayer, the late Christus, is not dead, from any complaint, vulgar or otherwise, but still acts in the Passion Play, taking the part of the Choragus." Mr. Neale is generally so well-informed and accurate that we can only conclude that he was misled by some newspaper report, which had not been corrected. As a veteran journalist, he knows how far the press is from being infallible.

R. AXELLEY.—We note that your 10s. to the Twentieth Century Fund will, if possible, be made into £1.

W. H. SPIVEY.—We are far from desiring anyone to contribute beyond his means. No doubt a good many have suffered through the war.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

MESSRS. FOOTE, Watts, Cohen, and Moss were duly at Stratford Grove on Sunday evening at 7 o'clock for the West Ham Freethought Demonstration. Miss Vance, Mrs. Foote, and two of her daughters, were also in the brake, to give it a cheerful appearance. But, alas, the Demonstration did not take place. The rain was as punctual as the demonstrators. Precisely at 7 it began its antics. First there were a few drops, by way of raising a hope that the storm might pass over. Then it grew worse, and in less than five minutes the heavy clouds were pouring down a perfect deluge. No shelter was near, and in spite of coats, mackintoshes, and umbrellas, the whole party were speedily swamped. The ladies were in a pitiable plight, and the men were wet through to their shirts. One could hardly call it rain; the drops ran all together, and the wet descended in sheets. Mr. Wilson's fine horses cowered under it, and could hardly relish the consolation of their nosebags. In the circumstances, the Demonstration had to be abandoned. The speakers could not stop there with drenched clothes and water in their very boots. Moreover, when the rain abated, after more than half an hour, the sky was still threatening, and it would have been folly in every way to persist.

Mr. Sims and other members of the West Ham Branch committee quite agreed that the Demonstration should be postponed. They too were drenched. Mr. Foote could do no more than promise that a Sunday afternoon should be spared for a Demonstration later on in August.

Towards 8 o'clock, it appears, a good many people gathered at Stratford Grove. They had kept indoors during the storm and were not wet through, and we hear that some of them were indignant at the absence of the speakers who were wet through. One anonymous correspondent has favored us with a rather abusive letter on the subject. But the complaint is really ridiculous. There is a limit to the endurance (some would call it foolhardiness) even of Secular lecturers. It was not their fault if the Christian Evidence people turned out dry and held a meeting there subsequently. Those people were nearer home, and the Freethought speakers had great distances to travel before they could get rid of their sopping raiment. Let us have a little common sense, if you please. The Demonstration will be held yet. We have held several highly successful ones, and a single hitch is hardly worth a jeremiad.

The Brockwell Park and Victoria Park demonstrations are also postponed until later in August. Miss Vance is making the necessary arrangements with the County Council, and a definite announcement will appear as soon as possible, probably in next week's *Freethinker*. The postponement is in consequence of Mr. Foote's annual holiday, which he is obliged to take a little earlier than he intended.

Mr. Foote's holiday will not be a complete one. Unfortunately he cannot as yet drop work altogether for the briefest space of time. He will be at the seaside, but he will contribute his usual quantity of writing to the *Freethinker* and also deal with such correspondence as demands immediate attention. A holiday in these circumstances is better than nothing, but it is not an ideal one. It is thirteen years since Mr. Foote had a clear week away from his work, which is in many ways very exacting.

The N. S. S. Annual Children's Excursion, under the auspices of the Executive, is fixed for Saturday, September 1.

The youngsters, of both sexes, will be driven to a suitable farm, northwards from London, in brakes; and ample provision will be made for their feeding and recreation. Full particulars will be published in due course. Meanwhile the friends who are in the habit of contributing towards the expenses of this function are invited to forward their contributions to Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C. Whatever differences may exist on other matters, we can all agree about giving the children a long happy day in the country, away from the smoke and noise of London, with the great free sky over their heads and the delightful springy turf under their feet. For the children, if you please. Find the money for their ride, their cakes, milk, and lemonade, and their games and prizes.

At the last meeting of the N. S. S. Executive the matter of the approaching School Board elections came up for consideration. It was felt that a fight for "secular education" should be made, but it was also felt that both money and candidates would have to be found if the fight were to be at all worthy of the cause. But the holiday season is scarcely the time to deal with a problem of that size. What the Executive resolved to do at once was to call a Conference in London, early in September, of all bodies favorable to "secular education." Upon the result of that Conference will depend the action which the N. S. S. Executive will take before and during the elections. A sub-committee was appointed to see to the calling of the Conference, consisting of Messrs. T. Shore, G. J. Warren, and C. Cohen. They met on Monday evening at Mr. Foote's office, he sitting *ex officio* as President, and drew up their plans, as to which more will be said in our next issue.

Mr. W. Heaford lectured on Sunday afternoon in Victoria Park to a large but noisy audience. Certain members of the Christian Evidence Society have for some time made a dead set at him, for what reason is not apparent. At every lecture of his in Victoria Park this summer the same half-dozen or so of C. E. S. rowdies have been guilty of villainous noise and interruption. If the police don't interfere to keep order, the Freethinkers will have to do the job themselves—as they mean to if necessary. Freedom of speech is one thing; licence of disorder is another. Mr. Heaford attended in the Park to lecture in the evening, but the deluge settled his meeting on that occasion.

The South Shields Branch excursion last Sunday was a record success. Five brakes and waggonettes turned out full for the picnic to Holywell Dene. Unfortunately a smart fall of rain drove all the party under cover on their arrival, but that was the only drawback. After a substantial tea, music, etc., at Hartley Mill and Silver Hill, instead of the usual speeches under trees, a drive was arranged by Seaton Delaval Hall and Avenue. Visitors were present from Newcastle and Sunderland.

Mr. S. Hartmann, the N. S. S. honorary treasurer, has gone for several weeks' holiday in Germany. His health had not been of the best for some time, and the hot weather did not improve his condition. His doctor ordered him away from London as quickly as possible. Mr. Hartmann's many friends will be glad to see him home again all the better for the rest and change. The Freethought movement has no truer servant.

Mr. C. Levi, of Cincinnati, who entertained Mr. Foote and Mr. Watts when they were together in that city, in November, 1896, is now on a visit to England, after "doing" Germany and Paris. Mrs. Levi accompanies him, but we are sorry to say that she is suffering from indisposition. She and her husband came with Mr. Watts to West Ham on Sunday evening, but the rain compelled her to take shelter some distance from the meeting-place, and she had a very unpleasant experience without the compensation which she hoped to enjoy, of hearing several of the leading Freethought speakers in England together.

Mr. Levi pressed Mr. Foote to come over to America this year and attend the Freethought Congress, which is fixed to take place at Cincinnati. Mr. Foote was obliged to decline the invitation. He has too many irons in the fire at present that want careful watching. Some other year the conditions may be more favorable for a brief visit to the United States.

The Leicester Secular Society has for some time been organising a bazaar to take place in its Hall from Saturday, September 22, to Tuesday, September 25, inclusive. Freethinkers are invited to send all sorts of articles, books, pictures, etc., though useful articles would be preferred. Whatever is sent should be in by the end of August. Address to Mr. F. J. Gould, Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, Leicester. Freethinking tradesmen might assist, with profit to themselves perhaps, by advertising in the Bazaar book-

program. The object of the bazaar is to raise money for the continuance and development of the Society's work. We hope it will be thoroughly successful.

Mr. and Mrs. George Cross, whose advertisement will be found in the *Freethinker*, finding that photographs of Mr. Foote are difficult to obtain, have offered to supply copies of a cabinet photograph at one shilling, and also a large size, twelve by ten inches, when mounted, at half-a-crown. Miss Vance has constituted herself a judge, and declares both portraits to be excellent. Orders should be sent to her direct. The proceeds of the sale will be handed over to the Twentieth Century Fund.

Some weeks ago we invited friends to send us the names and addresses of newsagents willing to display a weekly contents-sheet of the *Freethinker*. A good many were forwarded to us, but we are anxious to obtain a good many more. Will our friends all over the country kindly give this matter their attention? We are prepared to post the contents-sheet to newsagents every Wednesday, so that they may display it concurrently with the earliest sale of the paper. We may add that the contents-sheet always contains some striking headlines, calculated to arouse curiosity and excite interest; and newsagents who display it afterwards find an increase in the number of purchasers.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of Monthly Executive Meeting, held on Thursday, July 26, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, E.C. (the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair). There were also present Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, B. Munton, J. Neate, H. Stace, F. Schaller, T. Shore, G. J. Warren, C. Watts, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Seven new members were admitted: from Birmingham five, Bethnal Green two.

The President reported that, as a result of the circular he had been asked to issue concerning the Twentieth Century Fund, he had already received cheques and promises amounting to about £150. It was moved by Mr. Heaford, seconded by Mr. Gorniot: "That the President be asked to appeal through the *Freethinker* on the basis of the preliminary circular, and that the editor of the *Freethinker* be asked to arrange for two shilling weeks." Carried unanimously.

The Secretary was instructed to arrange the Children's Excursion by brakes to Barnet, on Saturday, September 1.

The forthcoming School Board Election was discussed, and on the motion of Mr. Shore, seconded by Mr. Warren, it was moved: "That a sub-committee be appointed to organise a Conference, as early as possible in September, to discuss the question of Secular Education, and the policy to be adopted at the coming School Board Election." This being carried, Messrs. T. Shore, C. Cohen, and G. J. Warren were elected as a committee for this purpose.

The residuary matters in connection with the delegation to the Paris Congress were adjourned, and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

Are Englishmen Irreligious?

"In some respects," says the *Church Times*, "Englishmen are the most irreligious people in the world. There is probably no other nation of which so large a proportion of the adult population entirely neglects the form of public worship. Fifty years ago there was already some uneasiness on this score, and the rough census of 1851 was thought to reveal a deplorable state of things. Every attempt at enumeration made more recently has shown a decrease in the number of worshippers—a decrease which, in face of a rapidly-increasing population, is enormous. We speak of adults, for children are sent to church and to Sunday-school in large numbers. They are packed out of the way by the mothers. But for the vast majority their religious practice ends with their school-days. The statistics of Dissenting sects in particular show a numerical relation of Sunday-school scholars to adult members which is full of suggestion." Well, if the case is so bad as all this, a pertinent inquiry is: What are the clergy and ministers doing?

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.

Baal and Astarte.

WHEN a man takes lusty delight in eating, or basking in the sun, or bathing, or amorous caresses, he is exercising a more primitive part of his nature than that which finds a pleasure in helping a cripple or in contemplating the sky and its stars. These activities engage his physical, moral, and intellectual qualities respectively. The physical qualities must be first developed, in order to form the base and stimulus to the rest. The man must eat and digest before he can enjoy the sweets of friendship, and poetry itself would never have issued from the lyre if men had not drawn the blood of enemies and courted the favors of maidens. In religious evolution, therefore, we find the worship of physical nature before we perceive the rise of moral and intellectual forms of deity. Baal and Astarte preceded—and necessarily preceded—the Redeemer who loved mankind and the God who (according to the doctors) planned the structure of animals, sketched the orbits of the planets, and mapped out the course of history in the Old World and America.

Who was Baal? The term Baal signifies owner or possessor. In Semitic regions (Arabia, Palestine, Syria, etc.) the worship of various Baals was widespread. Each town or district had its divine president. There was a Baal of Tyre, a Baal of Tarsus, a Baal of Mount Hermon, etc. The god Melkart was the Baal of Tyre, and to the ferocious Baal of Carthage human sacrifices were presented. It is often supposed that Baal is a sun-god, and no doubt the god very frequently takes on that character. We note, for instance, the story of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. These prophets expected the god to fling fire from heaven in order to consume their slaughtered bulls, and it was at noonday—the point when the sun attains its height—that they redoubled their prayers, and cut themselves with knives in the hope of rousing Baal's feelings by the sight of blood. But, in a general way, Baal represented the gifts of the physical world—flocks, herds, crops, rain, a numerous family, and good luck. Occasionally he would assume a more special function, as in Baal-zebub (or Baal-zebul), the Lord of Flies, the god who controls the swarm of summer insects. But Biblical scholars, who are as fond of new interpretations as a child of new toys, are now of the opinion that Baal-zebub is a mocking name applied by the Jews to a Canaanite god whose real title was Lord of the High House. The "High House" might refer to his temple, or the mountain-crags over which he sat enthroned. Another divinity of this group was Baal-shamem, the Lord of Heaven, who seems to have resembled the Zeus of Greek mythology, and whose dominion extended over the clouds, the thunder, and the measureless blue beyond. Apart from all the niceties of the commentators, it is clear enough that Baal was the bountiful lord who provided for all material wants. His worshippers begged from him the treasures of the spring and the luscious fruits of autumn. They offered him choice samples from their flocks and sheaves from their harvest in token of their gratitude. On hill-tops ("high-places") especially they gathered to celebrate his praise; for there the air was sweetest, the view most exhilarating, and the sense of mastery over the earth the keenest; and there the sons of the village piped on the reed, whirled in the dance, shouted with the hilarious song, and exchanged rude jokes with the women-folk. In the festivals of Baal the blood ran riot, and the pulse beat in harmony with the vital waves of air and sun and generative instinct. No wonder that, at such times, the eyes of youths and girls shot fire, and rustic arbors were set apart for the couples who deemed love the richest gift of kindly Baal.

One easily concludes, from the merest glance at these rustic arbors, that Baal must be yoked with a goddess. Accordingly the worship of Baal was linked with that of Astarte, the Queen of Heaven (also called Ashtaroth). This Astarte originally came from Babylon, where she was known as Istar, the patroness of the planet Venus. She was adored by the multitudes of the Mesopotamian plain, the peasants of Syria, the mechanics of Phœnicia, and the islanders of Cyprus. In her person were combined the ideas of motherhood and protection. From

her womb poured the life-giving supplies for human needs, and her strong hands defended the rights of her children. In other words, she was the image of early woman, the child-bearer and the strong and passionate guardian of the primitive home. Istar had temples at Uruk (on the Euphrates river) and elsewhere, and at these temples certain priestesses were retained as sacred harlots. Orthodox writers are accustomed to speak of the office of the *Kadesha* or consecrated harlot as an abomination and obscenity. In this case what one sees depends upon the eye. Where some people see repulsive prostitution, I can see only a simple, crude custom, expressive of men's wonder at the phenomena of generation and maternity. A later piety succeeded in veiling the sex-functions under a curse of embarrassment and shame. I should prefer the frank phallicism of the priestess of Astarte to the desperate lapse of womanhood in the streets of European cities.

The worship of Baal and Astarte prevailed among the early Hebrews. Names of famous personages in Jewish history included the very name of the god. Thus the warrior-judge Gideon was also known as *Jerub-baal*; Saul had a son *Esh-baal*, and David gave the name of *Baal-jada* to one of his children. When the prophets angrily denounced the religious ceremonies practised on "high places," they were pioneers leading the Jewish people to a new, and, in some respects, more refined conception of the deity. The *Kadesha* was a familiar figure in primitive Israel, and the reformers who expressed their protestantism in the book of Deuteronomy endeavored to abolish the sacred harlot (Deut. xxiii. 17). Even down to the times of Jeremiah and Ezekiel the older creed and ritual lingered on, cherished by the less enlightened sections of the population, and condemned in the vigorous orations and writings of the stricter Theists. Hebrew philosophy conquered nature-worship. The robust old Baal and his strenuous queen had to retire before a paler and more ethereal divinity. The Yahveh of the reformed Hebrew theology had no consort at his side, and the feminine element was for some considerable time excluded from the Christian heaven. At length the figure of Mary appeared, and Roman Catholicism made the Madonna into a tender and attractive goddess. Singular to remark, the religion of Rome did not take the further necessary step of restoring virility and health to the person of the God-man. In the legends of the Middle Ages, and in the modern crucifix, one beholds Christ in the form of an emaciated and agonising victim on the tree.

The restoration must be accomplished. Baal and Astarte have not perfected their mission. If they erred too much on the side of the rude joy of appetite and expanding life, the Christian system erred too much on the side of mortification and unnecessary (because unprofitable) discipline. Human nature cries out for free play; it also, in its profounder depths, asks for training and chastening. Puritanism, from the time of the Pharisees to the age of Methodism, has had its masterful period. Within the limits of refinement and mutual respect, we must now widen the active range of our sport, music, dance, and merriment. Once more we must rejoice in the sunlight, and take a pleasure in the exercise of natural function and capacity. No longer need we bestow Christian culture on the soul, and we may not relapse to the coarse plane of ancient Baal and Astarte. We want a religion that shall care neither for the soul nor the body, but for manhood, womanhood, childhood, health, happiness, progress, love. In the new order of thought the physical and the intellectual will seek a beautiful junction, in which both shall be free and both of service. When that happens we shall all think more of William Blake and Walt Whitman.

F. J. GOULD.

The Parson—"Learn to be content, my good man. The little mouths are never sent without food to feed them." The laborer (father of ten)—"Ah, parson, but the mouths are sent to my home and the food to yours."—*Chicago News*.

"I hate this day," said an Irishman to an Englishman in the course of an ocean voyage. Then, at the latter's look of surprise: "It's Friday, and I hate fish. I'll tell you what," with a sigh, "I'll be pretty badly sold if you fellows get to heaven, after all."

Correspondence.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—As I am about to leave England for a short time, I shall be unable to continue this discussion with Mr. Ball; but perhaps I may be permitted to offer a few valedictory remarks.

To review the matter, Mr. Gould informed us some time ago that the word "religion" denoted certain moral qualities. I therefore took the liberty of pointing out that, if this were true, then he, as an opponent of religion, styled himself an opponent of these moral qualities. To this he rejoined, somewhat irrelevantly, that he distinguished between religion and theology, which are really two states of the same thing. Mr. Ball then took up the parable with his favorite phrase about somebody having said that religion was "morality touched with emotion." It seems a funny thing to touch it with; and the phrase labors under the disadvantage that it does not describe the characteristics of any religion known to history. After ridiculing my citation of "Religion a system of faith and worship," Mr. Ball tells us that this is "one of the widely-accepted definitions of the word." What other widely-accepted definition there is I do not know; and, if it is admitted, there is nothing left to argue about.

Mr. Gould gave to his conception of "religion" the title of "Objectionable Religion." The only discoverable tenet of this religion is disregard of the Queen's English, not to mention certain vague philological assumptions about words habitually changing their meanings, or having no fixed meaning at all. On May 27 Mr. Ball informed us that language was "more or less figurative, poetical, metaphorical, etc.," which would appear to imply that it was incapable of being definite about anything. Nevertheless, after thus apparently denying that words had any meaning, he has written 5,120 of these meaningless words in discussing the subject.

However nebulous "Objectionable Religion" may be, it yet seems needful to advocate it in precisely the same way, and with the same words, as the ordinary religions we are bothered with. Mr. Ball assures us that the adherents of Objectionable Religion are the only people who attempt to further the good of others; that the opponents of O. R. are flippant, are destitute of moral emotions, without faith in high principles, destitute of conscience, holding nothing sacred, etc. We are furthermore assured by the same gentleman that it is irrelevant to mention the crimes and atrocities which have always been associated with religion. Readers of the *Freethinker* will recognise that all this is the ordinary stock-in-trade of the religious controversialist.

If I understand Mr. Ball rightly, the adherents of "Objectionable Religion" are the only Secularists who have ever done anything to benefit mankind; in fact, the only Secularists who have any spark of virtue left in them at all. I might be permitted to suggest, therefore, that they should assemble in their thousands in the Alexandra Palace, in order to afford the world the elevating spectacle of such a galaxy of righteousness. And if they would include a few trophies in the shape of reclaimed drunkards, reformed burglars, and converted parsons, who have experienced saving grace through the misuse of the English language, they might even influence such abandoned publicans and sinners as myself.

In the meantime, however, I would point out that the object of defining anything is to enable one to recognise the article when it is met with. For instance, if we are told that a "quadruped" is an animal with four legs, we may know that an animal with two legs is not a quadruped, and an animal with six legs is not a quadruped either. Mr. Ball has favored us with several epigrams about "religion," none of which is of the slightest assistance in identifying a religion when we meet with one. To state a case. The vikings had temples, and had various ideas about the gods as described in the Eddas. But did they have a religion? If religion consists in "morality touched with what-do-you-call-it," then the vikings had no religion. If religion consists in "a feeling of absolute dependence," or "faith in the moral order of the universe," or "morality become conscious of the free universality of its concrete essence," or "the worship of humanity," then the vikings had no religion, because all these ideas were quite foreign to them. If, however, religion be "a system of faith and worship," then the Eddas give us a system of faith, and the temples prove the worship. Consequently the vikings had a religion. And I rather fancy that even Mr. Ball will agree that the vikings had a religion, notwithstanding that all his epigrams would expressly exclude them. At any rate, everyone who has written on the subject has mentioned the Religion of the Eddas. If anything is not a system of faith and worship, it is not a religion. Even Mr. Ball has a glimmering of this truth, though somewhat obscured, as usual, by side issues, for he would rightly exclude pure Buddhism from the class of religions, though ordinary Buddhism is admittedly a religion. And he also remarks that it is doubtful whether Shamanism and the superstitions of the lower races are really religions; the doubt, of course, being as to whether they can be described as systems of faith and

worship or not. No one ever asks if Shamanism consists of "Thingummy touched with emotion."

If people have any difficulty in framing definitions of "religion," it is because they are trying to frame something that will serve for edification, and because they are endeavoring to disregard the actual facts of religion, and the actual history of religion.

Mr. Gould and Mr. Ball both seem to imply that they have a vague notion that "religion" stands for virtue or benevolence. The origin of this erroneous association of contrary ideas is, of course, to be found in the ordinary polemical assertion that those who do not profess any system of faith and worship are thereby marked off as immoral. Constant reiteration of this falsehood has such an effect on the minds of some people that they are unable to shake themselves free from it and look the facts fairly in the face. But it is most astonishing of all to find persons calling themselves Freethinkers so dominated by mendacious theological labels as to imagine that they are justified in employing the word "religion" in the sense of virtue (virtue! of all things). Such an aberrant state of mind, and such a source for the error, will explain, though it will not excuse, Mr. Ball's anxiety to charge other people with the usual theological list of bad qualities. It is an unailing characteristic of religion that its professors invariably substitute abuse for argument.

The periodic discussions upon this word show us that people can read about "religion" every week in the *Freethinker* without ever discovering what it means; and we need not be surprised that it takes so long to convert the world to Freethought when it is so difficult to convince those of our own household. Theologians are naturally solicitous to raise false issues about "religion," because it prevents people from grasping the real facts of the case; but it should be the object of the Secularist to acquire a definite idea of the meaning of the word, and to comprehend why honest, moral, and benevolent beings should conceive it their duty to oppose "religion" in all its phases, and under all its disguises.

CHILPERIC.

"OBJECTIONABLE RELIGION."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Chilperic's defence, that he used the term "objectionable religion" out of "ordinary politeness" as a label which Mr. Gould applied to himself, would be a good joke in a farce. In the course of his letters "Chilperic" has spoken of his own "obtuseness" and of his "inherent Philistinism"; but I cannot see that "ordinary politeness" requires that I should seek to pin these labels on him in as prominent a position as possible. Mr. Gould, moreover, certainly did not mean that he regarded his own kind of religion as "objectionable." He only represented opponents' views of the matter, just as we might if we spoke of ourselves as "dreadful infidels" or "terrible Atheists."

I may, perhaps, be pardoned for explaining yet once more that the word "religion," when adopted by secular reformers like Mr. Gould or John Stuart Mill, is not a meaningless term, as "Chilperic" continues to assert in spite of all protests and explanations to the contrary, but is the equivalent of such phrases as *emotionalised morality, devotion to the moral ideal (i.e., to what one regards as highest and best), practical worship of goodness or moral beauty, love of righteousness or right conduct or virtue or duty, a moral and emotionalised system of belief and conduct founded on fact (i.e., on human nature, science, philosophy, etc.) instead of fiction, and so forth*. Perhaps "ordinary politeness" may at length induce "Chilperic" to notice his opponents' main point of view, as well as the uncomplimentary label which his paradoxical kind of politeness leads him to employ so readily.

The request to explain what ordinary religion is may be met by defining it as (1) a system of belief and conduct founded on supernaturalism or superstition, and (2) the subjective emotionalised state of mind, virtuous or otherwise, induced or enjoined by that system.

The challenge to explain why the ordinary or superstitious kind of religion has been so mischievous may be sufficiently met by pointing out that its basis is falsehood or delusion, and that error is naturally the parent of serious evils.

I fail to see why I should be called on to explain how much religion "will add to the rates when we get it in the Board schools." The fact is that it has been there for many years. What it has added to the rates is not easily ascertained; but if "Chilperic" really thinks the information essential for his arguments, he should hunt it up or calculate it for himself, and not expect me to do the work for him.

The references to the lady and the magistrate are mere caricature, and need no reply.

In answer to Mr. Frederick Ryan's letter, I may say that I do not admit that the word "Christian" could be adopted on exactly the same grounds as the word "religion." The derivation of the word forbids in the one case, and not in the other. "Christian" is, moreover, a narrower and more sectarian term than the broad and comparatively universal term "religion"; and I am not aware that any prominent members of our Secular Party are annexing the word. We have to draw the line somewhere. I, for my part, draw it at the word "Christian," but would not erect any absolute barrier against the admission of the word "religion."

As to Mr. Ryan's second point, I fail to see that my argument implies that we may "use words indiscriminately." To show by examples, as I did, that Mr. Ryan's appeal to the verdict of the majority was not decisive, is neither "meaningless" nor the same thing as justifying unrestrained licence in the use of language. The distinction between "usage" and "inference" appears to me to be of little moment; for the inference that godlessness means immorality determines the sense in which such words are commonly employed. By means of this distinction Mr. Ryan practically sets aside his former contention that common usage must settle the value we attach to words. He then appeals to a superior minority on the question of the meaning of the word "religion." But if "most educated persons and most dictionaries do define religion as involving theological belief," such a limited and exclusive definition is not binding on anyone, seeing (as I have several times pointed out) that it would exclude Buddhism, ancestor worship, etc., which know nothing of *theos*, and that many educated persons suggest and accept definitions of religion which are independent of all forms of superstition.

"Verbal scrupulousness" is good, but may easily be carried to excess. Convenience, conciseness, expressiveness, etc., are of great practical importance, and often carry the day against mere verbal scrupulousness. Astronomical almanacks still have columns headed "sun rises," "sun sets," etc., although every intelligent schoolboy knows that such terms embody exploded errors. I imagine that the inconvenience involved in the abolition of such expressions would hardly be repaid by the more "rapid advance" in astronomy that might possibly ensue.

When I spoke of the "critical or fault-noticing turn of mind," I included myself in the remark, so that it was not directed solely or exclusively against those who object to the use of the word "religion." According to Mr. Ryan's rather conflicting statements, it is "extraordinary" (or out of the common), and also at the same time "not uncommon," that a critic should disparage criticism. That I *disparaged* "the more exclusively critical or fault-noticing turn of mind" as compared with the constructive, hard-working, non-disputatious character, is true to a certain extent—for I see nothing extraordinary or reprehensible in preferring deeds to words, or goodness to cleverness—but I cannot at all agree with Mr. Ryan that I condemned criticism. I condemned unfairness and illiberality in criticism, and I deprecated internecine criticism of a kind calculated to weaken our none-too-numerous party by wounding and estranging many of its most valuable members.

I fail to perceive that I used the words "constructive" and "destructive" improperly, but I cannot undertake to discuss all side issues that may be brought forward by opponents.

W. P. BALL.

CHRIST AND THE STAGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reading the article in a late number of the *Freethinker*, "Christ on the Stage," I observe that the writer—at least, by omitting to note the fact, if aware of it—implies that the "Passion Play" has not been exploited in contemporaneous times on the professional stage with a professional cast of characters.

It has occurred to me, if it is not generally known, that, following verbatim—albeit some scenes were of a necessity eliminated—the "story" of the New Testament, a play has been evolved from the "supposed" life and death of Christ; has been produced in a theatre, and enacted by a company of professional players. It might be interesting to your readers to hear something of the history of the production, and the startling sensation it made.

However, should you, Mr. Editor, find that what I shall write savors of ancient history, you may be able to make room for my communication in your—I am sure—capacious, and often-times plethoric, waste-basket.

The "story" of the "Passion" was dramatised by Mr. Salmi Morse, a then well-known dramatist and playwright (since deceased), and was "brought" out in San Francisco, Cal., U.S.A., at the San Francisco Theatre, some eighteen years ago. The play was entitled, as is the "Ober-Ammergau Festival," *The Passion Play*, and "ran" for exactly seven consecutive nights (the theatres are open on Sunday evenings in the Western States of America), when its projectors were forced by the authorities to "take it off the boards."

Popular opinion and prejudice, incited by the clergy, who it was claimed by those favoring the production, were jealous of the "conversions" made by the play and, incidentally, the actors, became too strong, and the play was withdrawn. Before its first representation a representative clergyman of a representative church called upon the clergy of America to appoint a special hour of prayer, bidding all Christians to unite in a petition to God that he send one of his thunderbolts upon the "San Francisco Theatre" at the moment when the actor, who was to personate Christ, stepped before the footlights; that the thunderbolt be so charged that it not only crush the actor—Mr. James O'Neill by name, and himself a devout Catholic—but also his associates in the play and the audience assembled. Actual prayer-meetings (special)

took place, not only in San Francisco, but in many churches throughout the States, and the crazy *elect* (?) outvied each other in the awfulness of their denunciations, and those of the "elect (?)" who were known to be "liberal" objected, but in a milder manner.

That the *prayers were not answered* is superfluous to add, otherwise the world would need no reminder of the spectacle of thousands of good men and women, and innocent children, crushed by a good God's thunderbolt. It is, however, a commentary, coincident and remarkable, that the rectory or parsonage of the pastor who conceived that "special hour of prayer" was some months after burned to the ground, leaving not one stick or stone upon the other.

I would like, and you had space, to give your readers a brief *résumé* of the "Passion Play" as I witnessed it, and speak of the *supposed* influence it produced upon the public of San Francisco; for it so happens I was, and still am, what some years ago many "unco guid" people called (and many have not even now cured themselves of indulgence in the little pleasantry (?)) "an actor-woman," although I was not in the cast of the "Passion Play." I was filling an engagement at an opposition theatre in San Francisco at the time, and was given the opportunity of seeing Mr. Morse's Passion Play through the courtesy of the manager of said play, who gave a professional matinee to enable other visiting companies and the clergy to see the "best-cursed" play of the hour, and I can speak from ocular and auricular demonstration; but maybe I will anon.

L. C.

Vulgar Lout and Vulgar God.

WHEN the Sabbath bells are pealing, and the Sabbath hymns intone
(O, the luckless, luckless heathen with his idols made of stone!)—

When the spirit of the Preacher riseth up on wings of prayer,
And the soul of him who worshippeth is rapt in visions fair,
There's a lump of clay a-kneeling—in the Shrine there bends a clod—

'Tis the Vulgar Lout a-pleading with his Little Vulgar God.

When the pure of heart are yearning to their Priest, the Purified—

When the Lowly beg the Lowly that he purge them of their Pride,

There's a creature making bargains with the Lord who lives on high,

"If I give thee silver shekels, wilt thou pass my trespass by?
Shall I prosper in my selling? Wilt thou aid me with a nod?"

—'Tis the Vulgar Lout a-haggling with his Little Vulgar God!

Never dream hath he of Glories in the Glamor Land to be;
Little maketh he of Mansions by the gleaming Jasper Sea;
For the things of Earth are dearer to his sordid vision far
Than the honey-dews of Aidenn and the light of every star.
So he whispers: "Let me flourish as a fatling on the sod—
I, a Vulgar Lout, am pleading with my Little Vulgar God!"

For in sooth the Lord who liveth, He will hearken to the call
(O! He marks the Stocks a-rising as he sees the sparrows fall!)

He is potent to reward us if we come with willing feet,
And the cash upon his altars sendeth up a savor sweet!

And to them who spare not incense He is sparing with His rod,

And the Vulgar Lout is pleasing to the Little Vulgar God!

Yes—we make Him in our image—yonder GOD we all adore;
He is even just as we are, if we read his record o'er;
He's a slayer red with slaughter to the sullen brood of Cain.
To the pedlar He's a pedlar with a mighty greed of grain;
He's a huge eternal schemer to the tribe who plan and plod—
To the Vulgar Lout and puny He's a Little Vulgar God!

—*Sydney Bulletin.*

P. L.

Obituary.

A TABLET has just been erected at the Woking Crematorium in memory of the late Mrs. Ann Seal, of Brighton, who died in December last at the age of seventy-six. Deceased was a great admirer—like her husband, the late Mr. Samuel Seal—of Thomas Paine and his writings. She was a convinced and steadfast Freethinker; her remains were cremated, and no service of any kind was held, by her desire. Mrs. Seal was the daughter of a Middlesex magistrate. She was one of nature's elect in body and mind, and many still living have reason to remember her kindness and consideration. She might have lived longer if she had not spent herself so freely in the service of others.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): Closed during the summer.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A lecture; 6.30, A lecture.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, E. Pack.

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. A. Davies

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

KILBURN (Glengall-road): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, E. Pack.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, F. A. Davies.

VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen; 6.15, A. White.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture; 7.15, W. J. Ramsey. August 8, at 8.15, E. White.

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen.

WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (in the Bull Ring): 11, H. Percy Ward, "Has Man a Soul?" Mr. Percy 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.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—August 5, m., Kingsland.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—August 26, m., Mile End.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—August 5, Birmingham; 12, Failsforth; 19, Northampton; 26, Birmingham.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—August 5, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 12, m., Hyde Park; a., Victoria Park; e., Kilburn. 19, m., Battersea; e., Hammersmith. 26, a. and e., Brockwell Park. September 2, m., Clerkenwell Green; a., Finsbury Park. 9, Hyde Park; e., Kilburn. 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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(Continued from p. 496.)

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[Continued on p. 495. Look There!]

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