

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

God in Texas.

MR. GLADSTONE once remarked on the beautiful way in which Providence had fitted up the earth for man's habitation. He spoke as a dweller on an island, which is conveniently situated, enjoying a moderate and equable climate, and extremely free from all sorts of natural convulsions. Great Britain has no volcanoes, it seldom feels the slightest effects of earthquake, it is rarely troubled with violent tempests, and whatever noxious animals it may have possessed in former ages have been practically exterminated during many centuries of settled civilisation. Mr. Gladstone could easily talk as he did from a position of such advantage. But he had only to turn his mind's eye to distant parts of the world in order to perceive the folly of what he was saying. He might have cast a glance, for instance, at India, which is a part of the British Empire, and for the government of which he was more than once to some extent responsible. That country about 25,000 people are killed every year by reptiles, and about the same number by wild beasts. In another country, Japan, which has latterly been attracting much attention, earthquakes and tidal waves are of frequent occurrence, and sometimes cause tremendous destruction, involving the death of thousands of men, women, and children. Not even Europe is free from these "visitations," although they happen there in a modified form. Europe, too, is on the whole pretty free from blight, pestilence, and famine. But other parts of the globe are less fortunate. We are all aware how India has been suffering from lack of food, and how myriads of her dusky inhabitants have perished, slowly and miserably, of sheer starvation. This has been due to no fault of their own. Rain did not fall to fertilise the earth; consequently there was no crop, or a very poor one; and as the people lived down to the lowest level of subsistence already, they had no prospect left them but that of a sad and lingering death.

"Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn." The poet's words are only too true. But the inhumanity of God—for we are told that a deity presides over nature—is the source of far greater misery. What is death on the battlefield to the prolonged torture of death by cancer? What are the massacres of an Abdul the Damned in comparison with the annual slaughter in any single nation by the annual diseases, which are supposed to be under the control of Providence? The eyes that are put out by brutal tyrants are nothing to those that are blinded by weakness, malady, or accident. All the murderers in the world are feeble destroyers of life beside a natural destroyer like consumption. We read of infanticide being still practised in some countries, but nature—that is to say, God, if there be a God—practises infanticide all over the world. Even in the most civilised countries one-half of all the children die before they are able to talk plainly, and often after the most pitiable

suffering. It is easy, of course, to say that these deaths, and this suffering, are preventible. They would be so if man were wiser and better. But both his intellect and his character are determined by causes which were in operation before he was born. Man did not make himself. We are told that he has a Maker. Very well then, it is the Creator and not the creature who is responsible for all that is, and for all that happens. On the Theistic hypothesis, men are but pieces with which God plays the infinite game of the universe. Christians even allege that he has a great and skilful opponent, called the Devil; and between these two players man is as helpless as are the cards, pawns, chessmen, and dominoes in the games which he plays himself.

Christian Theism prevails in America as well as in Europe, and the theologians over there have the same problems to face that are the despair of intelligent divines over here. Some of them, no doubt, will have a good deal to say about the terrible tornado which has wrought such havoc in Texas. But in the end their sermons and apologies will only come to this, that God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. Theologians always finish in a cloud of mystery. Their final word—to quote Milton—is "Dark, dark, dark!" But when the calamity and the argument are forgotten, they pretend that their faith is as clear as daylight.

This Texas tornado was a terrible affair. Whole towns have been wiped out. Miles of country have been devastated. Hundreds of vessels have been wrecked. Thousands of houses have been destroyed. A multitude of people have been ruined. Men have perished in hundreds. Women with children in their arms have been drowned or crushed to death. The very graves have been turned up, and the buried corpses swept out to sea. Darkness completed the terror of the scene, and the most superstitious may well have thought that the Day of Judgment was at hand. The damage amounts to millions of pounds. But what is that beside the horror, the agony, the sufferings of the killed, and the awful misery of many of the survivors who move about in a strange world without wife, or child, or friend? This is the worst bitterness of such a catastrophe.

"A hospital was blown down" at Galveston. Of course it was. How could it be expected to withstand the storm? But that hospital was presumably full of the sick, and perhaps the dying. One would think that Providence might have made an exception in this case. Hospitals are not to be fired on in besieged cities. But when Providence lets loose the artillery of heaven, nothing is sacred; everything is overwhelmed in a blind fury.

We read that doctors made heroic efforts to help the injured, that the surviving citizens strove to save their fellow men and women, and that the sympathy of America is hastening to the relief of the homeless and destitute. All that is good. It gives a happy thrill to every tender heart. But does it not show that man is more merciful than his God?

G. W. FOOTE,

Ethical Confusion.

WITH certain ethical writers there appears to be great confusion of thought, both as to the nature of a moral act, and also as to the method which should be adopted to promote right conduct. There is an absence of any definite idea as to the real incentive to the performance of good actions. Unfortunately, it is a habit upon the part of many of those who profess to be ethical teachers to subserve too much to popular prejudices. Such persons, while avowing their desire to discard all allegiance to orthodox restrictions upon questions of morals, mar their advocacy by trying to impart to it a religious tone. That is, they announce their rejection of Christianity, and yet they retain one of its worst features—namely, setting up a false ethical ideal. They obscure modern truths by clinging to the influence of ancient errors. They boldly assert their renunciation of orthodoxy, and, at the same time, fall back upon the very basis of orthodox belief to support their ethical claims. It is such theories as these "that palter with us in a double sense; that keep the word of promise to our ear, and break it to our hope."

This truth has been impressed upon our mind by reading a pamphlet by Dr. Stanton Coit, and a recent article by another prominent worker in the Ethical Movement, Mr. George A. Smith. Dr. Coit, speaking on behalf of the Ethical Society, is particularly anxious to record that his Association is not Agnostic, and that it is "distinct from Positivism, Secularism, and Socialism." Of course, he is quite right in taking this position if he deem it the best course to adopt, but in doing so it would have been more ethical not to have sought to establish the superiority of his own movement by depreciating and misrepresenting other organisations, whose members aim to secure the moral elevation of the people by means free from all theological folly. The Doctor alleges (in his pamphlet, *The Ethical Movement Defined*, pp. 7 and 8) that his advocacy is distinct from Secularism, and to prove this he says:—

"They [the Secularists], as their very name implies, are reactionists against theology; whereas we demand simply that theology be not made the condition of spiritual fellowship. Moreover, the Secularists, while affirming the dignity and worth of this world, and attempting to reconstruct society, do not lay down good character and right conduct as the starting-point of all social reform; in this we are more definite than they; they are in danger of incoherence, now setting up political power and now industrial revolution as the true means of making society happy and just; whereas we would start from the moral sentiment and recognise that mechanical changes in institutions and the execution of better laws must be supported by the moral consciousness of the community. Environment and law also affect character; but the impetus towards the doing away with evil conditions of life must arise in men who are bound together for the spread of goodness in the world."

Here the Doctor fails to show his usual acumen. His statement of the Secularist's position is from first to last misleading and erroneous. Contrary to his statement, Secularists *do* "lay down good character and right conduct as the starting-point of all social reform." It is not correct to allege that we, as Secularists, set up political power, etc., as the "means of making society happy and just." Undoubtedly such means are useful in progressive work. But the Secular Society is not a political organisation, its efforts being directed to destroying the evils of theology, and to teaching that environment and law *do* affect character. The Secular idea of right and wrong is that neither is the mere accident of the time, and that these terms do not represent a condition which is the result of "chance"; on the contrary, they denote actions which are the outcome of a law based upon the fitness of things. The primary truths in morals are as axiomatic as those in mathematics. Moreover, there is in the mind of every properly constituted person an appreciation of right and a detestation of wrong. We urge that vice should be shunned because it is wrong to individuals, and also to society, to indulge in it; and that virtue should be practised because it is the duty of all to assist, both by precept and example, to elevate the human family.

Dr. Coit seems very desirous that his ethical propaganda should be considered as something distinct from

Secularism. But why? So far as the Ethical Movement is used as a medium to inculcate moral principles with a view of elevating the human race, its object is precisely the same as that of the Secularists. In fact, ethical teachers have adopted in this particular the very teachings of Secularism. For instance, the Doctor says the Ethicist's desire is "to change the physical and social environment of men, so that it shall be more favorable to a truly human life.....that right conduct is of supreme importance.....that the grandeur of the motive to be upright and just is not diminished one whit by omitting the ideas of personal immortality and of a personal God." This is exactly what Secularism teaches. It alleges that, with the extensive knowledge which now exists, allied with intellectual culture, it is not difficult to demonstrate that man ought to do his duty for reasons which belong alone to this life. We are told that our forefathers made this island inhabitable by destroying the wild beasts that once infested it; but it appears to the Secularist that a greater work than that remains to be done, which is to subdue the wild passions of man. Secularism further teaches that there are in nature certain laws, independent of any supposed supernatural religion, and that what we term the moral state is one wherein man is enabled to recognise the wisdom of compliance with such laws. It is quite true that men may refuse to obey the moral law; but, if they do, they must suffer in consequence. This is one reason why men should be moral, inasmuch as the fact of being so brings its own reward. It not only secures immunity from suffering, and adds to the healthiness of society, but it exalts those who obey the moral law in the estimation of the real noblemen of nature. A man of honor—one whose word is his bond, who practises virtue in his daily life—wins the respect and confidence of all who know him, and he thereby sets an example that will be useful to emulate; and he at the same time acquires for himself a tranquillity of mind known only to the consistent devotee of human goodness.

While probably agreeing with the Secular teachings here given, Dr. Coit says that Secularists "are reactionists against theology." Yes, we are, and so is the Doctor, if his words have any consistent meaning, as the following statements of his, which we take from his pamphlet referred to above, will show:—"All men know at least sufficiently well for practical judgment what goodness in human character is. But the idea of a personal Creator of the universe has baffled the speculative efforts of the best disciplined and philosophic minds.....In our view of life and the universe the worship of righteousness takes the place which God or Christ holds in the Christian view.....We demand that no one shall make the ideas of a personal God and immortality the bond of religious union.....that right conduct is more important than the worship of a personal God or of Christ in the heart." Surely those who believe in what Dr. Coit here says must be "reactionists against theology." Then why depreciate Secularism for teaching that which the Doctor himself propounds? An ethical teacher should be above fostering the weaknesses and prejudices of popular delusions. The Secularists consider it to be their duty to say what they mean, and to mean what they say. The great difference between Dr. Coit and ourselves appears to be that we, recognising the fallacies and evils of theology, frankly and openly attack them, while he, agreeing with us as to the fallacies and errors, prefers to favor them in a modified form. Which is the more ethical and better method of the two for preparing the human mind for the reception of moral truths we leave the reader to decide.

That the Doctor's mind is still influenced by theological absurdity is evident from his notions of Christ, who, the Doctor thinks, was perfect. He says: "I detect no fault in the life of Christ." He was "absolutely perfect, and the only perfect person that ever lived." To us such statements, to say the least, are astonishing. Will Dr. Coit kindly inform us upon what evidence he bases his erroneous ideas? All that can be known of Christ we learn from the New Testament. But, according to the character given of him there, he was in every particular thoroughly imperfect. Apart from the fact that he revealed nothing of practical value, and that he taught no virtues that were before

unknown, the emulation of many of the traits in his character would certainly not illuminate human nature to-day, nor would it remove the physical evils or dispel the dense mental and moral darkness which we find existing so extensively in our midst. He taught false notions of existence, had little or no knowledge of science; he misled his followers by claiming to be what he was not, and he deceived himself by his own credulity. He lacked experiential knowledge, frequently living the life of an ascetic, and taking but slight interest in the affairs of this world. Not only was his imperfection apparent in his being subject to such human weaknesses as hunger, anger, and uncontrollable passion, but his very limited experience prevented him from being a perfect man. Moreover, he exhibited no high degree of excellence, discrimination, or courage in any sphere of life in which he was placed. As a son, he lacked affection and consideration for the feelings of his parents; as a teacher, he was mystical and rude; and as a reasoner, he was defective and illogical. Lacking a true method of reasoning or uniformity of character, Christ exhibited a strange example—an example injudicious to exalt and dangerous to emulate. At times he was severe when he should have been gentle. When he might have reasoned he frequently rebuked. When he ought to have been firm and resolute he was vacillating and timid. When he should have been happy and joyful he was sorrowful and desponding. After preaching faith as the one thing needful, he himself lacked it when he required it most. Thus on the cross, when a knowledge of a life of integrity, a sensibility of the fulfilment of a good mission, a conviction that he was dying for a good and righteous cause, and fulfilling the object of his life—when all this should have given him moral strength, we find him giving vent to grief and despair. In this scene we have a true indication of the general character of Christ. Here was one who came on earth with a mission to perform, a part of which was to die on the cross; yet, when the time arrived for his destiny to be fulfilled, he sought to avoid his fate, and he shrank from that death which was said to give life to a fallen world. If Christ had been to his age what Darwin, Spencer, Clifford, and Huxley have been to the present generation; if he had written a book teaching men how to avoid the miseries of life; if he had revealed the mysteries of nature, and exhibited the beauties of the arts and sciences, what an advantage he would have conferred upon mankind!

Next week we will deal with the fallacies of Mr. George A. Smith.

CHARLES WATTS.

Another Prop Going.

A LITTLE while back the Methodist Church was lamenting the large leakage in its organisation. Every year thousands dropped away from its membership, and although the gross number of members showed a slight increase, yet, compared with the growth of the population, there was a substantial shrinking. The Wesleyan Methodist body is not peculiar in this respect. If a close examination were made, all religious organisations would be found to be in pretty much the same position. Their growth is more apparent than real; whatever increase there is in the numbers of any Church is trifling compared to the increase in the non-religious population. No strategy seems able to alter this condition of things. Pleasant Sunday afternoon services, sermons baited with the suggestive title "To Men Only," the offer to provide storage for bicycles whose owners may feel inclined to listen to a service by way of a rest; these and hundreds of other dodges are all more or less ineffective to stop the exodus from the Churches. This still continues, and the rising lamentations of the clergy concerning it seem to add to the trouble rather than to diminish it. A few weeks back the Convocation of Canterbury raised the question of the supply and quality of the clergy obtainable. Both were, it seemed, poor, and there did not appear to be any immediate chance of improving either one or the other. And now, added to all these troubles of the religious world, comes the doleful report of the Sunday School Union, which begs to call the prayerful attention of all devout Christians to the fact that

Sunday-schools, too, are in an eminently unsatisfactory condition. In common with the Churches, they show a marked decline of membership, so that it is clear that the same causes which thin the adult assemblage operate also in reducing the number of juvenile devotees.

When in 1782 Robert Raikes opened the first Sunday-school, the main object was to provide a little elementary education for the much-neglected laboring classes. Education had hitherto been under the control of the Church, and the Church understood its interest too well to pay much attention to the matter. The schools were opened on Sunday presumably because that was the only day on which the working class possessed a little leisure time. The Church regarded the enterprise of Raikes with anything but serene satisfaction, and, had it had its way, the movement would have come to an early termination. But, as the schools grew, the Church, pursuing its time-honored policy, found it convenient to patronise a movement that it had failed to destroy. One thing was in its favor. The schools were called Sunday-schools, and everything connected with Sunday was expected to be dimly religious, with the result that the schools, instead of being places where some attempts at general instruction were made, gradually became places devoted to the conning of Bible texts and the delivery of addresses far below in merit even the average sermon.

It is only to be expected that the fare served out in Sunday-schools should be of a much poorer quality than that dished up in the churches. With adults some little care and discrimination *must* be exercised; with young children and the immature of both sexes the case is different, and that it is no uncommon feature to find the clergy denouncing a set of beliefs in the pulpit, and conning at their being taught in the schools under their control. But there is a limit to the endurance of even Sunday-school teachers and pupils, and this has been shown by several events of recent date. Addressing the April meeting of the Yorkshire Association of Sunday-school Unions, the Rev. C. F. Aked, of Liverpool, speaking as one who had, "from the infant-class to the office of superintendent, graduated in the Sunday-school," said:—

"I have no hesitation in saying that the Sunday-schools of the land are too often the strongholds of obsolete ideas, of obscurantism, of reaction against progress and light, of cast-iron systems which have been repudiated by educated people outside the Sunday-schools for fifty years.....Theories and doctrines and methods which are discredited by every educated preacher in the land, and teaching which you have not heard from any educated pulpit for a score of years or more, are common in our Sunday-schools."

Of course, it might be urged in defence of Sunday-schools that people do not go there, as a rule, to obtain useful knowledge. That has certainly not seemed a powerful motive with the Sunday-school scholars that have come under my notice, nor, judging by the look of the teachers, do they seem capable of imparting it. Why children do go to Sunday-school is easy to discover. Hazlitt said that, if you asked the average middle-class Englishman why he went to church, he would tell you in strict confidence he went because his wife took him; and, so far as *young* children are concerned, they are at Sunday-school because their parents send them. And they are sent, I imagine, for the most part for reasons other than religious. Mr. Howard Evans, writing in the *Christian World*, remarks that "many thousands of parents who are seldom, or never, seen in the House of God have yet such a sense of religious duty as to send their children to our Sunday-schools with more or less regularity." Well, did it never strike Mr. Evans that parents with a strong "sense of religious duty" would have set their children an example by going to church themselves? Is it unreasonable to assume that these "thousands of parents" look on the Sunday-school teacher as a kind of volunteer nursemaid—a function which, I have little doubt, the majority are well fitted to discharge—and, therefore, send their children principally to get them out of the way while they enjoy their Sunday afternoon nap? If all the children sent for this reason were expelled, there would be a sad shrinkage in the number of attendances. And when we get beyond the young children, I am of opinion that the dawning consciousness of sex, with its thousand subtle influences,

has far more to do with bringing youths of both sexes to Sunday-schools than any interest in Biblical teaching or religious doctrine.

Not that even this is able to keep them there, for in the last annual report of the Sunday-school Union two things are mournfully admitted: first, that there is a tremendous falling off in the number of attendances, and, secondly, that the decrease is greatest among scholars above the age of fourteen years. Taking the figures as they are presented, we find that during the past year the Wesleyan Methodist Church shows a decrease of 5,400 scholars, the Baptists chronicle a decrease of 7,000, Calvinistic Methodists 4,200, United Methodist Free Churches 3,000, Presbyterians 1,400, the Free Church of Scotland 4,300, and the Established Church 7,000. Altogether these seven churches show a substantial decrease of 32,300 scholars—a phenomenon as cheering to the Secularist as it is depressing to the religionist. The above figures represent an actual decrease in the number of scholars on the registers of Sunday-schools, but their significance is increased enormously by two considerations. The first is that, as the population increases at the rate of about 300,000 per year, the loss is really far greater than it appears at first sight, since, even though there were no actual decrease, there would be a loss of ground relatively to population. Secondly, the figures given as to the number of Sunday-school scholars are not quite what they seem. The Education Department reckons the number of scholars in average attendance; the Sunday-schools take the number on the register, and these figures, on the testimony of men engaged in the work, represent at least a third more than the actual attendance.

But a still more significant sign of the times is the age at which the greatest decrease occurs. The attendance of very young children can hardly be urged as due to their individual inclination. They are there because they have been sent by their parents, and the motives dictating *their* action may be, as I have said, of a very mixed character. But if we take the ages of the children in actual attendance, it is found that the decrease is almost entirely accounted for by boys and girls over the age of fifteen. The Wesleyans lost 5,400, and out of that number 4,300 were above fourteen years of age. The Church of England lost 7,000, and, but for the enormous influx of infants, the decrease would have reached 17,000. The inference from these figures is plain. So long as the children are without any voice in the matter, they keep to Sunday-school for the all-sufficient reason that their parents send them there; but as soon as they are old enough to exert some individual choice they drift outside.

Mr. Howard Evans remarks on these figures: "It comes to this, that while the mothers of small children are as ready as ever to send them, very often for their own convenience, we are losing our elder boys and girls at the most formative period of life." Yes, it comes to that, and yet more than that. To say that the churches and chapels are losing control over the elder members of their flocks is a bold statement of fact. It does not, however, touch the kernel of the question. What it really means is that the revolt against supernaturalism, which has already infected all classes of adults, is sinking downwards to the younger classes of the community. The children are following in the steps of their elders, and, in losing its hold on them, Christianity is losing one of its most important positions.

As educational institutions, the Sunday-schools are valueless. They neither impart sound instruction nor awaken a desire for it. All that constitutes the real glory and greatness of life—the wonders of science, the beauties of literature, the glories of art, the duties of citizenship—are neglected in order to impress upon the child views of the Bible and of Christianity which, as even a clergyman admits, are disowned by all educated people. During the most susceptible years children's minds are impressed with the value of outworn fables and untrustworthy records, and are finally turned out into the world saddled with, to use Emerson's words, "the dead weight of a Sunday-school," to unlearn afterwards what has been forced on them against their will.

Happily, as the figures I have quoted show, this species of once-a-week mental chloroforming is losing

its hold on the people. Even the Sunday-school cannot altogether secure itself from the influence of the time-spirit, and the same forces that have weakened the general body of Christian beliefs are making themselves felt here. But of one thing I think we may be sure. As the clergy find themselves losing in the Sunday-schools, where children cannot be legally compelled to attend, they will fight all the more strenuously to keep their hold on the public schools, where all are compelled to go. A weakening of their power in one direction will involve an attempt to strengthen it in others. It is the prime duty of all Secularists to see that this attempt is not crowned with success. Once every three years there is given to nearly all the chance of saying something decisive on this matter; and when the opportunity does occur, we should see that there, at least, the agents of the Black Army shall not find the recruits they have failed to obtain elsewhere.

C. COHEN.

A Talk About Heaven.

EVERY now and then, when a child applies for admission into our Secular Sunday-school at Leicester, I have to call on the father or mother, in accordance with my invariable rule, in order to make sure that he or she quite understands our non-theological position. The other day I made one of these visits of inquiry, and wanted to know if Mrs. H. cared for her daughter Lily to attend our school. Our conversation ran something in this way:—

"You see, Mrs. H., our Secular Society does not teach the same things as the Churches and Chapels do, and I want you to see the difference before you send Lily to our Hall."

"Well, I should like to know what Secular means."

"We tell the children about their daily duty to parents and playfellows and neighbors, but we tell them nothing about God."

"Nothing about God!"

"We tell them that if they act harshly or untruthfully it makes other people unhappy, and the unhappiness will come back upon themselves. We think that is reason enough, without saying anything about hell."

"Nothing about hell!"

"And we remind them of the bad things in the world, and impress on them that unless they—the boys and girls, and the men and women—join together and strive, the evil will never be changed. So we try to make them think about making this world pleasanter to live in, and we say nothing about heaven."

"Nothing about heaven!"

"We persuade them into seeing the need of self-help, and so, in our school, we never say prayers."

"Never say prayers!"

"Do you agree with this way of thinking, Mrs. H.?"

"I can't let Lily come, sir."

"No?"

"What you teach the children is all right, I daresay. But I feel I must have a heaven to look forward to, and I should like Lily to look forward to it as well. This world is hard enough, with all its worries and troubles, and we should be in a poor way if we could not afterwards go to a place of rest."

"But how do you know heaven will be any more peaceful than the earth? You know no one who has ever been there and come back?"

"No; but when my son lay dying he told me he knew he was going there."

"But, Mrs. H., when your rooms get dirty, you don't hope they will get clean; you know that unless you clean them, God will not. And are we likely to get a clean world or a sweet heaven unless we make it ourselves?"

"Ah, but God gives us the strength to work."

"If that is so, why does not God give strength to us all? Why does he allow many to go about crippled and palsied?"

"I don't know; but I couldn't do without the thought of heaven, and so Lily can't come."

The good woman was perfectly frank. She merely put into homely illogic what the theologians express in high-sounding and imposing, but not less illogical, affirmations. There is absolutely no proof of the existence of heaven, and yet thousands of suffering people

cling to the hope, and know it is only a hope. The hope is perfectly natural. It is no more unreasonable than hoping that the noonday's pain will have passed away at even. The evil is done when the hope is fostered and incited. Seizing on a weakness of human nature, the priest has transformed the hope into a dogma. He takes a fancy and feeds it with promises. Sadness weeps and prays for consolation, and the priest says, "Your consolation is assured in the Hereafter." Now, we all know what happens when a man begins to entertain a more or less vague expectation of a fortune. He broods, he dreams, he lives in the future. He hears not To-day whispering, "Do your work"; he hears only the lullaby of To-morrow, singing of unrealised riches.

It is chiefly the unfortunate who love the vision of heaven. Comfortable villadom prefers the substantial upholstery of earth to the ethereal accommodation of the skies. Anguish is the mother of paradise, and the New Jerusalem is built, not of pearls and jasper, but of tears and disappointments. I do not complain that the poor should try to deaden care with the narcotic of the hope of heaven. I complain that the sleek and well-provided should encourage this illusion. It is meanness made religious, and selfishness brodered with pious appearance. Every sigh directed to heaven is a loss of the energy of will which should be used in the remedy of evil. Heaven is a perpetual invitation to laziness. If we are prosperous and we meet the miserable, we ought to do two things. We ought to search for the causes of the misery, and we ought to induce the miserable to co-operate in the struggle against injustice or unhealthy conditions.

It is often said that it would be an unkindness to rob the ignorant and the wretched of the prospect of repose in a world to come. That is not true. Go to the ignorant and the wretched and tell them honestly (a still better word would be honorably) that there is no solvency in the heaven-doctrine; that a bankrupt world is no guarantee of divine credit in Zion; and that failure can only be redeemed by human effort; and that man—man who hates, slays, steals, and oppresses—is the only agent of salvation. This is a paradox, but it is not discouraging. It startles, but it does not numb. It drags us into the awful presence of facts, but there is a more deadly influence in an irrational hope than in a terrible truth. When suffering awakes to the knowledge of its real situation, it gathers up its little strength to grapple with its enemy. It silences the psalm and puts out its hand for the sword. It gazes no longer at the clouds for the advent of angels, but at the earth for stones to fit its sling. It inspects human nature more eagerly and closely. Is it not possible that this nature which hates, slays, steals, and oppresses, may conceal within its bosom a store of love and helpfulness? Can this better nature be appealed to? Can the hand of tyranny be made to bless, and can the eye that despises be kindled into tenderness? We pray in vain to God to give us our daily bread. May we not succeed better if we pray to publicans, sinners, and foes? Perhaps, after all, man is more likely to aid man than God is. Matthew Arnold tells in one of his sonnets how, in a West London square, a beggar woman "let the rich pass with frozen stare." She waited till some laborers went by; these were her kinsmen in sorrow; she sent her daughter to ask alms, and the girl came back with money in her hand. The beggar pleaded not with aliens, but with

friends and sharers in a common fate.

She turns from that cold succor which attends
The unknown little from the unknowing great,
And points us to a better time than ours.

It will be a better time when we turn from the alien
splendor of God to the modest, but real, friendship of
our fellow-man.

F. J. GOULD.

Burglars have visited Chester Cathedral and committed "sacrilege." They rifled the collection-boxes, and (worse still!) they used one of the altar candles to light them about the place. It is even said that when they had done they carelessly flung the candle on the floor. But what on earth were they to do with it? They couldn't eat it, and it wasn't worth taking away. Anyhow, the local police are making investigations, so the criminals may take it easy.

The Little "Beetle."

How doth the little "beetle" crawl
On life's progressive way;
Some centuries hence he'll reach the point
Where sceptics are to-day.

How doth the little spouter spout
On Sundays for an hour,
And gather money from the jays
He gets within his power.

How doth the Bible-banger bang
The pulpit with his paw,
To wake his congregation up
To hear him wag his jaw.

How doth the "Short-and-Codlin" "cod"
The folks that in him trust,
The silly flats that have to work
To earn an honest crust.

How doth the little pastor pass
The church collection-box,
To buy the "savages" some boots
And furnish them with socks.

How doth the chiselling "choker" choke
With laughter up his sleeve;
He knows he lives by telling lies
That jugginses believe.

How doth this world's maligner line
His purse with worldly dross,
In spite of what was taught by Christ,
A portion of his "joss."

How doth the little "pilot" pile
And lay the rhino up,
In order that "to-morrow" he
May breakfast, dine, and sup.

How doth the Sheol shunner shun
His promised trip to heav'n;
He likes to linger here below—
He's rather more than seven.

How doth the little curate cure
The ladies' souls' disease,
By mashing them at Church bazaars,
At picnics, and at teas.

How doth the clacking cleric clear
The pews inside his church:
"Once bit, twice shy," folks pass it by,
And leave him in the lurch.

How doth the soul-consoler sole
Or heal your worn-out boots?
Don't trust in him, or else you'll starve,
Have nothing on your "toots."

How doth the little humbug "hum
And ah" when he's attacked
And asked to prove a gospel lie
To be a naked fact.

How doth the devil-dodger dodge
Each fact that we adduce,
And bolster up his rotten case
With slander and abuse.

How doth the man of bunkum "bunk"
And vanish like a spark
When challenged by an "infidel"
On Sundays in the park.

How doth the wily wheedler we'd
Much better be without
Damn all the scientific men—
They're putting him to rout.

How doth the gospel-grinder grind
And gnash his teeth with rage;
He knows that soon he'll have to work
To earn a weekly wage.

ESS JAY BEE.

The Soft Answer.

A Chinaman of great dignity and some splendor of dress was getting off an elevated train in New York the other day, says the *Commercial Advertiser*, when a white rowdy called after him: "Are you a Boxer?"

Another rough added some abuse, and roared with laughter, and then the Chinaman, who had got off the car, turned. He waited till the gates were closed; then he answered in pretty clear English: "Good-bye, you Clistian."

Then the gateman and some passengers laughed, and the roughs slunk into the car.

—Daily Express.

Acid Drops.

"I HAVE no anxiety whatever for the future," says Emperor William, "for God is with us. He will help us through." Well, if "us" means Germany, a great deal of "helping through" is certainly needed. The astute attitude of Russia has made it extremely awkward for shouting William. "Me and God" seem to have a difficult job on hand in China.

Emperor William shines as an orator, particularly when under the influence of religion, which is often a more potent spirit than any manufactured by distillers. The stenographer whose duty it is to take down the imperial utterances verbatim says that William has delivered 700 of them since 1889; which beats the record of the late Mr. Gladstone. It also appears that the Emperor's volubility is a terror to reporters. He fetches out from 275 to 300 syllables a minute. It reminds us of George Meredith's saying about a charming French girl that "thought flew and tongue followed; or rather, tongue flew and thought followed." But what is pretty in a bright and lovely girl of seventeen is rather giddy in an almost middle-aged monarch.

Mr. J. Abbott, M.A., writing to a London newspaper from Cambridge, asserts that the Christian missionaries in China are very ill-equipped for their work. "Since 1887," he says, "the writer of this has tried to get University men and others to grapple face to face with the heathenism, agnosticism, and other vital questions in London and elsewhere, but every attempt has failed. Bishops, professors, and undergraduates, the clergy and Nonconformist ministers alike, have shirked the question. If we are not fitted to grapple with these questions at home, how can we grapple with them abroad?"

The recent criticism of foreign missions seems to have elicited some curious admissions and some very contradictory statements from the Christian camp. The *Catholic Times* was early in the field denying that the Romish missions had done anything to stir up strife. We can hardly believe that. Nor can the *Methodist Times*, which says: "It is sadly true that ever since the Jesuits went to China they have been political firebrands there, and have mischievously interfered with Chinese politics. After the last war the French (who are ultramontane abroad and Atheist at home) compelled the Chinese Government to give the Romanists one of the finest sites in Peking for a great cathedral. Quite recently the Romanists have been scheming to secure for their priests the status and authority of Mandarins."

Protestant missionaries, of course, have done nothing of that sort. The *Methodist Times* hastens to assure us that these latter have "held themselves entirely aloof from political questions, and have kept themselves strictly to their own business. It is the greed of merchants and the ambitions of politicians, combined with the mischievous intrigues of Roman Catholic priests, which have done all the harm." On the other hand, merchants say that if it were not for the missionaries, both Roman and Protestant, no great antagonism would have been excited. So far as commerce is concerned, they and the Chinese are on a friendly footing.

The *Methodist Times* goes one more, and asserts that "it is sheer waste of time for Agnostic journalists and mere politicians to suggest that there should be some restrictions upon the activities of our missionaries. On that point even the authority of Queen Victoria herself ceases in the presence of Jesus Christ."

What! are there no restrictions to be placed on the Roman Catholic missionary and the Jesuits, who, according to the *M. T.* itself, have acted so mischievously? Apparently it is only "our missionaries"—i.e., Protestant, and preferably Methodist, missionaries—who are to have a free hand in the Flowery Land. The introduction of Jesus Christ does not tend to elucidate matters. All the Christian missionaries go there in his name—even the Jesuits who have turned out such "firebrands." How is the poor heathen Chinese to distinguish between them? They all want to ram down his throat a religion which he regards, and perhaps rightly regards, as inferior to the faith of his ancestors.

The *Review of the Week* recently had a most convincing article on "The Failure of Foreign Missions." It pointed to the case of Canton as a specimen of the general work. Here there are five missionaries and six stations, and, though the mission has been established ninety-three years, the present Church membership is only 253. Even such few converts as are made, says the writer, "come almost entirely from the less educated and poorer classes, whose adherence is influenced by appeals to their material advantage and by considerations other than those of religious conviction."

One observation which the writer makes will strike most people as very pertinent. He alludes to "the systematic filching of their pence from little children by such means as

'juvenile auxiliaries,' 'children's missionary bands,' Sunday-school collections, home boxes, 'mite boxes,' and all the rest of it, which savors too much of the methods of Mrs. Pardiggle to be pleasant."

A letter in the *Times* draws attention to some statements on missionary enterprise which appear in a work published in 1894 by Dr. Morrison, formerly the *Times* Peking correspondent. One of these statements is sufficiently striking. During the year 1893, says Dr. Morrison, 1511 Protestant missionaries converted 3,127 Chinese at a cost of £350,000. Very few of the 3,127 converts gained at this enormous expenditure became, in his opinion, genuine believers.

Mr. Arnold White contributes a lengthy article to the *Sunday Sun*, in which he advocates the appointment of an independent Commission to the chief foreign mission centres for the purpose of ascertaining the actual facts. As he significantly observes: "The world hitherto has received its information mainly from missionaries themselves, or from their supporters. Occasionally an individual traveller, like Dr. Morrison, in his *Australian in China*, attempts an impartial survey, but nowhere is there to be found an accurate survey or judicial opinion based on knowledge and authority of the actual results of a century of Christian missions. During the past hundred years £70,000,000 have been expended on missions by the Protestant societies alone."

If the public, says Mr. Arnold White, are deceived (as he believes them to be deceived) on the mission results as a whole, it is well that the facts should be established in the light of day. As a rule, with such exceptions as have recently occurred, missionaries have a much better time of it than they are usually disposed to admit. "The man without capital or saleable ability, who wishes to marry early—and, as Burke says, the desire for propagating opinion is closely related with the wish to propagate the race—can rarely do better than accept a call into the mission field with the girl of his choice. A hundred years ago a missionary took his life in his hands when he received his marching orders. To-day, whatever else he may encounter, his portion will include a certain income, the possibility of political power, protection by the Foreign Office and the Admiralty, with national revenge by gunboats if he loses his life, a pension in case of disablement or ill-health, and a rising income with the redundant cradle. He may have disagreeables to meet, but they are certainly no greater, and often not so great, as those of the gold-seeker, the pioneer planter, or the frontier farmer."

Marie Corelli's much-advertised and be-puffed new novel is out at last. It is entitled *The Master Christian*, and as Hall Caine is responsible for a novel called *The Christian*, besides being engaged on another dealing with the Church of Rome, the nasty word "plagiarism" is flying about. And the matter having been taken up by the *Daily Mail*, the great, yea, thrice-great, Marie Corelli explains that she has only seen Hall Caine once in her life, and apparently does not want to see him again. Moreover, she avoids reading his books "on principle"—the said principle being just her personal antipathy. It seems that Hall Caine was reader to Messrs. Bentley, the publishers, when Marie Corelli was trying to introduce her first novel to the world, and he did his level best to get that immortal masterpiece rejected. Hence she has "a very natural antipathy" to him, which she characteristically treats as a "principle." For our part, we should say that Marie Corelli lost nothing by not reading *The Christian*, and that Hall Caine will lose as little by not reading *The Master Christian*. Both books are trumpery exploitations of the silly sentimentalism of latter-day Christianity. "Sentiment without reason," said Charlotte Brontë, "is the washiest thing in the world." Were she living now, she would have no difficulty in finding two convincing illustrations.

Stands Scotland where it did? Hardly. The country hasn't shifted, but the people have. Heresy has permeated most of her religious circles, and the old standards of faith are being widely abandoned. Indeed, the mischief has become quite alarming to the more orthodox Scots. The Free Church of Scotland Defence Association, for instance, has just issued a four-page leaflet on the subject. Extracts are given from the lectures and writings of Professor W. Gray Elmslie, Dr. Ross Taylor, Professor Denny, Professor Martin, Dr. Whyte, Professor Marcus Dods, Professor G. A. Smith, and the late Professor Drummond. Finally, the Christian people of Scotland, or at least her Free Churchmen, are called upon to make up their minds whether they will follow such teachers to the perdition of unbelief, or "raise again the old Scottish watchword—For Christ, his Crown, and Covenant." It is a very pretty quarrel as it stands. It is ignorance against knowledge, credulity against criticism; the old night of bigotry frowning over the dawn of the new day of free inquiry.

The Established Presbytery of Dundee is alarmed at the growing desecration of the holy Sabbath. It has discovered that no less than 567 shops were open on one particular

Sunday. There were 36 ice cream shops, 68 Temperance bars, and 268 for confections, while 102 were "perhaps necessary," such as chemists and dairies. The Presbytery "deploras the prevalence of this evil," and is ready to co-operate with other public bodies in Scotland to secure such legislation as will stop or reduce this "uncalled-for and unnecessary Sabbath trading." How ready these "spiritual" guides are to call in the constable! And, after all, what is their object? Simply to put down whatever runs counter to their professional interests. When will the British public recognise that clericalism is a trade like others registered in the directories?

No doubt parsonic influence is at the bottom of the prosecution of a number of poor folks who try to earn an honest penny on Sunday mornings by selling plants, flowers, poultry, and various cheap articles of merchandise in East-street, Walworth, S.E. Locally, the street is known as "the Lane," apparently so-called as the southern counterpart of Petticoat-lane. It is not a thoroughfare in which obstruction to traffic would be felt. The residents and shopkeepers, as well as the costers who take up their "pitches" alongside the pavement, all look forward to Sunday morning when a little trade—useful to vendors and purchasers alike—may be done. The people who walk up and down are of the poorer class, but they are singularly well-behaved. The police would never have interfered with the costers on their own initiative. Why should they? Any noise and disorder about this part of Walworth are mostly created by Salvation bands and Bible-thumpers. Some bigoted church and chapel goers have evidently complained—not about the inoffensive sale of flowers, plants, birds, cast-off clothing, etc. The result is that a number of the small traders have been summoned at Lambeth Police-court for Sunday trading, and fined 10s. each.

Several hundreds of inhabitants in the neighborhood have signed a petition against this persecution, desiring, they say, "to maintain the Sunday trading, as it assists everyone, except in those places where a few try to do away with it under the miserable cloak of piety."

The Sunday League is "going it strong" the wrong way. Perhaps it is the atmosphere of the Alhambra that is demoralising. At any rate, the League is arranging to show some "excellent cinematograph pictures of the Passion Play at Ober-Ammergau" there on Sunday evenings. We suppose the next thing will be a Christmas sermon. No doubt the Bishop of London would oblige with that part of the entertainment.

Canon Newbolt, of St. Paul's, was recently reported to have said that the English people once firmly believed in three things—Sunday, the Bible, and hearing sermons—but are now fast coming to disbelieve in all three. The *Methodist Times* takes him to task. It cannot for consistency's sake say much about Sunday, because that would conflict with all its jeremiads in previous issues on the secularisation of the Lord's Day. As to the Bible, it says that certain "obsolete and mistaken ideas" concerning that book have been abandoned.

We should like to know, with some degree of definiteness, what these "obsolete and mistaken notions" are. How long have they been abandoned? And why? Are they, perchance, the "mistaken notions" which so-called "infidels" were the first to assail at the cost of fine, imprisonment, and every kind of persecution at the hands of the Bible believers of their time?

"If," says the *Methodist Times*, "the Bible Society would abandon its suicidal policy of clinging to the very inferior so-called 'Authorised Version' (which never was authorised), and issue the immeasurably superior Revised Version, wisely and attractively printed, its sales would be unprecedented." The idea is sanguine, but, as the Bible Society seems to be obdurate, why does not Price Hughes appeal to the Lord? It is his book, and he ought to be specially interested in the way in which it is presented to his creatures. We feel that we have a real ground of complaint against him for allowing us to be put off so long with an "immeasurably" inferior version. No other living author would be so lax.

One hundred thousand pounds a year more for the poor clergy! That is the tempting possibility held out by Mr. William Biddell, formerly member for West Suffolk, to workers in the Lord's vineyard (Church of England section) who now complain of being ill-paid. What a fascinating prospect! But, alas, how visionary it must appear to the "poor clergy" when they find that he proposes to secure this surplus by reducing the payment of bishops, and abolishing deans, resident canons, minor canons and archdeacons, and letting or selling the present canons' residences. If this is all the "poor clergy" have to depend upon, it will be an unconscionably long time before they find any alleviation of their sad lot.

Some time since, says the *Christian Budget*, a woman delivered a lecture in Lancashire against Christianity, in which she declared that the Gospel narrative of the life of Christ was a myth and a fable. One of the mill hands who listened to her obtained leave to ask a question. "The question," he said, "I want to ask is this: thirty years ago I was a curse to this town. The teetotallers got hold of me, but I broke the pledge so often that they said it was no use trying me any longer. Then Christ took hold of me, and now I am a member of the Church, a class leader, and a superintendent of the Sunday-school. How can Christ be a myth?" The lady, we are told, was silent. This latter statement proves the story to be a fabrication. No Free-thought lecturer would remain silent, except in momentary wonder how any man could be rescued from drunkenness by the worker of the alleged miracle at Cana.

Mr. H. Winter, of Middleton College, New Brighton, writes to the *Methodist Times*: "In my own opinion (and I have had some little experience as a young man and a teacher of young men), the difficulty of getting earnest, zealous, and educated young men for the ministry of our Church will increase with years unless, and until, the theological basis of the Methodist Church is broadened."

The wife of a Ceylon planter died, and the clergyman called to express his sympathy, and to make arrangements for the funeral. Neither the man nor his wife had been Church members. The husband was prostrated with grief, but he roused himself as the clergyman entered. "Is there any particular portion of the Scriptures you would like me to read at the funeral?" asked the clergyman. The husband sat up, mopped his eyes, and thought for a moment. "Well, you might try that bit about Samson and the foxes," he exclaimed finally. "I think that's about as funny as any of 'em."

The plague in Glasgow must, of course, be a "judgment" for something or other; the elect are not yet quite decided what. An Edinburgh saint discovers the sin in Sabbath desecration. He says: "About the plague in Glasgow it is right to discover secondary causes, such as sanitary arrangements, etc.; but there is no discussion of the primary cause—viz., Divine judgments for Sabbath desecration. Hence, if Leith desires to avoid the plague, let them say 'No' to the proposal of the Tramway Company to run trams on Sunday."

Commenting upon the above specimen of sanctimonious cant, the *Sunday Chronicle* caustically observes that "the pious writer does not realise that the absence of Sunday trams is worse even than the plague, and almost as bad as the plague of self-righteous nuisances who write to newspapers."

A gentleman observed his little son attentively studying a map of the world. "What place are you looking for, Willie?" he inquired. The small boy knit his brows, and travelled a circuitous route with his forefinger before he answered earnestly: "Twyin' to find Christendom!"

It looks as if the Sunday-school system, if not on the decline, is certainly not in a very flourishing condition just now. According to Mr. Howard Evans, the Church Sunday-schools show a decrease of 7,000 children; the Wesleyan schools have decreased by 5,400 children, Baptist are 7,000 less, Calvinistic Methodist 4,200, and United Methodist have 3,000 less. The leakage is regarded as the more serious because it has taken place amongst the older children.

That hopeful spirit of the High Church party, Lord Hugh Cecil, does not seem to be very choice in his illustrations. In regard to the law regulating public worship, he says it would be possible for five prostitutes, resident in the parish, to institute a prosecution of the clergy of St. Alban's, Holborn, for wearing vestments. Well, even modern Magdalenes may have a just objection to man-millinery. Certainly they are entitled to be heard on matters appertaining to dress. Why should the mere male parson try to outstrip them in costly, eye-arresting raiment, which may not, after all, suit his often ungainly figure?

According to a writer in one of the leading London dailies, the clergy are apt to make the most of the hospitality which is extended to them when they go to Church Congresses. An eminent judge, it appears, agreed to entertain a strange clergyman, and on the morning of the day on which the guest was to arrive there came the following telegram: "Shall arrive at midnight. Have beefsteak, hot bath, and bottle of claret ready. Be sure and warm claret."

"The great unhappiness of peoples," says the *Paris Figaro*, "is perhaps—who knows?—not to have sufficiently often dined together." This is *apropos* of the generous entertainment of the British Chambers of Commerce in the French capital. For our part, we believe the *Figaro* has hit upon one of the most important truths. Writing long diplomatic letters and newspaper articles, and delivering big speeches

on international questions, are simply wretched mistakes. Human vanity and mistrust come in and spoil everything. The proper thing to do is to bring people together, and let them talk face to face. But before they begin talking they should dine together. It is in no spirit of levity, but in real earnest, that we suggest the following way of settling disputes between nations. Let the representatives of each side spend a social week together before they begin business; and when they do begin business, let every conference be preceded by a good dinner, winding up with coffee and cigars. If that wouldn't lead to wise, honest, and just agreements, nothing on earth would; and quarrels and wars would be doomed to last for ever.

Trade disputes might be settled, cheaply and agreeably, in the same fashion. A good dinner wouldn't cost as much as a strike or a lock-out, and is ever so much nicer. Instead of making faces at each other through correspondence meant to appear in the newspapers, representatives of the employers and the workmen should sit down at a round dinner-table, and discuss their differences after eating and drinking together. We even venture to say that if they all got drunk—which we don't by any means recommend—their decisions would in all likelihood be still better for both parties concerned than a prolonged, bitter, and expensive wrangle.

In that delightful "Imaginary Conversation" between David Hume and John Horne, written by the great Walter Savage Landor, a somewhat similar idea is expressed beautifully. The philosophy, the humanity, the sly wit of Hume, all appear in the final sentences: "If men would permit their minds like their children to associate freely together, if they would agree to meet one another with smiles and frankness, instead of suspicion and defiance, the common stock of intelligence and of happiness would be centupled. Probably those two men who hate each other most, and whose best husbandry is to sow burs and thistles in each other's path, would, if they had ever met and conversed familiarly, have been ardent and inseparable friends. The minister who may order my book to be burned to-morrow by the hangman, if I, by any accident, had been seated yesterday by his side at dinner, might perhaps in another fortnight recommend me to his master, for a man of such gravity and understanding as to be worthy of being a privy councillor, and might conduct me to the treasury bench."

"Providence" does not keep vigilant watch over "General" Booth's establishments. One of them, at Whitechapel, has just been destroyed by fire. Prayer was of no avail, and the Fire Brigade had to put out the conflagration.

One thing befalleth them; yea, they have all one breath. Mr. Eden Harper, a master boilermaker, has been crushed to death at his own works. He was a prominent member of the Wesleyan Church. But the boiler that fell upon him took no notice of his denomination. It treated it as though he were a Secularist.

Archdeacon Hodgson, rector of Handsworth, slipped while climbing one of the great glaciers in Switzerland. He glided down the grassy slope towards a deep abyss, and in another minute or so he would have been in heaven. But not being in a hurry to go there, the reverend gentleman jammed his foot into the ground, and saved himself at the cost of a broken ankle. He walks about lame now in this miserable vale of tears.

"Nothing that is false can live." So says the *Lancashire Daily Post*. But there is not a word of truth in it. Some lies are thousands of years old, and are still fresh and vigorous. All religious creeds are lies—well-developed lies—and most of them beat old Methuselah. Christianity itself has existed for nearly two thousand years.

The American Women's Christian Temperance Union has declared against President McKinley's re-election, because he refused to abolish the Army canteen. It doesn't seem to have occurred to the zealous ladies that the American soldiers, not the American Christian Temperance women, are the principal persons to be consulted in this "canteen" business. Nor does it seem to have occurred to them that Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior, was (so to speak) twitted with frequenting the canteen himself. He was certainly not a teetotaler. He appears to have drunk what was going. And his first miracle, according to the fourth Gospel, justifies us in classing him amongst those who like to know there is a large supply behind the present consumption.

Stephen Crane, the brilliant young American writer, who died recently in England, was visited by Mr. Robert Barr, a brother novelist, a few weeks before the end came. "Robert," murmured Stephen Crane, "when you come to the hedge—that we must all go over—it isn't bad. You feel sleepy—and—you don't care. Just a little dreamy curiosity—which world you're really in—that's all."

A poor Irish harvester was found with his throat cut at

Connington, in Huntingdonshire. The jury returned a verdict of "Suicide, but no evidence to show the deceased's state of mind when he committed the act." Accordingly, the burial took place at night, in consonance with the Christian law of England. The body was conveyed in a cart from a stable to the churchyard, and, as it was dark, the bearers groped their way among the tombs. As it was being lowered into the grave in silence—for no Christian rites were allowable—a young woman came forward and dropped a few flowers upon the parish coffin. Her tender act made no difference to the poor dead Irishman, but it showed that she had a heart superior to her country's creed.

Dr. Parker is reported to be inconsolable for the loss of his third wife. He got over the loss of the other two more easily. Perhaps these misfortunes affect us more as we grow older. It is also reported that Dr. Parker refused to attend family prayers at a friend's house. "I want a thorough holiday," he said, "a holiday even from prayers." How the deuce will he get on in heaven?

"Pessimistic Secularism" is the heading the *Daily News* gives to its review of Mr. J. M. Robertson's *Introduction to English Politics*—a book which, it says, is "very eloquent, striking, and powerful, but not convincing"—rather "disenchanted." Mr. Robertson's politics, our contemporary finds are "the politics of cynical disbelief in the wisdom which guides mankind." This is a very roundabout way of saying that Mr. Robertson is an Atheist.

The *Daily News* has broken out again in another place. Referring to Sir William Turner's "eloquent" Presidential address to the British Association, it says that while dealing with "the deepest things and essentials in human life, nay, with the very origin of life itself," he never so much as alluded, from the first word to the last, to "Him, who, in the opinion of some of earth's wisest and greatest and best, is the Lord and Giver of Life, to Whom all hearts are open, and from Whom no secrets are hid." Is this another case of cynical disbelief in omniscience?

"Much of the work of a Church Congress," the *Daily News* says, "might just as well be done in a Social Science Congress." Precisely so. The Church is gradually discharging old cargo and taking in new. By-and-bye it will have nothing of its original stock left except the flag at the masthead.

How the times have changed! When the prophet Jonah denounced the city of Nineveh, and prophesied its destruction in forty days, if its inhabitants did not repent and turn to the Lord, the king and all his people put on sackcloth and ashes and obtained a reprieve. But the prophet who tried the same thing on in Fleet-street the other day, pronouncing the speedy doom of London, was soon surrounded by a crowd of boys, who shouted "There's 'air." Jonah himself would have met with the same reception from the boys of Fleet-street. Luckily for his reputation, he went to another city, a long while ago; so long, indeed, that many people think he never went at all. But that's blasphemy.

"Doing the civil thing to God" was the rather startling headline of a newspaper report of Canon Wilberforce's sermon in St. John's Church, Westminster. "Many," the preacher feared, "thought that a week of self-pleasing in town and irritability in their homes was completely condoned, by doing the civil thing to God on Sunday in attending service, followed by greetings at the door, and strong criticism of the sermon and music at the midday meal." We quite understand that Canon Wilberforce does not like criticism of the sermon, for his own effusions will not stand much of it, although he is popular and "eloquent." Still, he is ill-advised to grumble at people who go to church at all, under whatever conditions. There is a growing disposition to stay away from "the house of God," and very little may turn the scale with thousands who are still in the habit of attending, at least occasionally. Rating your customers is always bad business.

Vesuvius is active again, and people living on the lower slopes are becoming uneasy. They are appealing to the Virgin Mary and all the saints for protection. But they had better look out for themselves. Volcanic lava is no respecter of piety. It will settle a Catholic as readily as an Atheist. Rather more so, for the Atheist is likely to take precautions.

"The Scarlet Sin" is the flash title of a new play by Mr. G. R. Sims and Mr. Arthur Shirley. The principal character is a burglar who gets "reformed" by the Salvation Army. Evidently "Dagonet" is also among the prophets—probably for the sake of profits.

"You got into Parliament through the votes of the drunken cobblers of Northampton, who elected that foul atheist beast Bradlaugh." This elegant writing is from the pen of one of Mr. Labouchere's correspondents. It looks as though some Church-and-State Tory scribbler were out of a job.

Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published 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. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, September 16, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.C.; 7.30, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ."
 September 23, London; 30, Glasgow.
 October 7, Manchester; 21, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—September 16 and 23, Camberwell; 30, Athenæum Hall. October 7, Athenæum Hall; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton; 14 (Sunday), Bolton; 21, Birmingham. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valuable batches of cuttings.

JOHN ROSS (Liverpool), sending us £1 towards the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "If only all Freethinkers gave ever so little, the amount collected would be a surprise to us all."

"ALTCAR" writes:—"I have often read in the *Freethinker* your eulogies of Meredith, and I have lately read the *Ordeal of Richard Feverel* three times, and each time with increased pleasure. I can think of no novelist who so resembles Shakespeare in his knowledge of human character. But I am still doubtful as to the inner meaning of the work—the lesson the author means to convey. I mean more particularly as regards the wonderful system of the baronet. Will you tell me in answers to correspondents if the system is ridiculed or the reverse?" We are afraid that our correspondent's perplexity cannot be relieved by such a brief answer as we should have to give in this column. One of these fine days, and perhaps before very long, we shall write an article on this very novel; for which our notes have been ready ever since the issue of the people's edition. Meanwhile, our correspondent might read that beautiful book again, and perhaps he will then catch its full meaning without our assistance.

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S EXCURSION.—Miss Vance acknowledges: H. Seal, £1; C. Mascall, 5s.; M. Lovell, 5s.; R. B. Harrison, 1s. 2d.; S. Hartmann, £1; E. Jones, 2s. There is still a deficit on this function, and further donations are requested.

R. CHAPMAN (South Shields).—We regret to hear of the death of Mr. John Lamb, whom we had known for a great many years as a faithful Freethinker. Kindly convey our sympathy to the family.

V. ROGER and T. WILMOT.—Pleased to hear you had a successful evening at the Camberwell Hall on Sunday, and that Mr. Watts was in such good form. We note that thanks are due to Miss Collins for "presiding" at the piano.

C. ANDERSON.—Sorry we cannot tell you the commercial value of your copy of Shakespeare. Illustrated editions are not so much in vogue at present.

M. F. FINDON.—Received. Thanks for your kind attention. Mr. Foote is in perfect health again. The neuralgia was due to a chill, not to microbes.

A. G. LYR.—Sorry we cannot tell you how many Free Libraries accept or buy copies of the *Freethinker*. We have no such list by us, and could not easily make one up. We note your address—89 Vine-street, Coventry—and that you will be glad to hear from any Freethinkers in the town who are willing to co-operate in arranging for the delivery of some lectures.

HARBORNE.—Have put it to the Twentieth Century Fund. Hope you are better.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—W. W. Roberts, 2s.; J. Garven, 10s.; J. Robinson, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Griffiths, 2s.; John Ross, £1; Harborne, 5s.; T. Whiteley, 5s.; J. Phillips, 5s.

EMMA BRADLAUGH.—It is, as you say, regrettable, and sometimes disgusting, to find men who believe in "secular education" deserting it to catch votes and win a seat. What a poor, despicable vanity it must be that leads a man to gain an unpaid public post at the cost of his convictions! He would really be more excusable if his bread-and-better were at stake.

RECEIVED.—Blue Grass Blade—Boston Investigator—Truth-seeker (New York)—Huddersfield Examiner—Two Worlds—Sunday Chronicle—Light—Yorkshire Evening Post—Torch of Reason—Sunderland Echo—Ethical World—Shields Gazette—East Anglican Times—Chatham Observer—Freidenker—Liverpool Echo—Manchester Evening Chronicle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

LONDON Freethinkers are requested to note that the Athenæum Hall (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.) will be reopened this evening (Sunday, September 16) for the winter season. The platform will be occupied by Mr. G. W. Foote, who will deliver a special lecture on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"—*apropos* of this lady's new and much-talked-of novel entitled *The Master Christian*, in which her "Savior" is reincarnated, and with some reference to her former novel entitled *Barabbas*. The doors will be open at 7 o'clock, and the chair taken at 7.30. Mr. Foote has not lectured in London (or elsewhere) for three months, although he has been busy with the Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in various parts of the metropolis; and there will doubtless be a large audience on this occasion. Friends are asked to give the reopening as much publicity as possible amongst their freethinking and liberal-minded acquaintances.

We beg to call our readers' attention to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, and shall be glad to hear from a large number of persons who will contribute to it in the course of the present year. Collecting-cards and sheets are being prepared, and will be supplied early in October to N.S.S. Branch secretaries and other trustworthy members of the party. Applications for these should be sent to Miss Vance, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C.

Mr. John Downing has set a good example by promptly redeeming his promise to contribute £200 to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. He has forwarded us his cheque for that amount. "I am glad to find," he says in his accompanying letter, "that you are quite recovered, as you are one whose efficient services we always require." We are glad he thinks so. It shows that we do not labor in vain.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience at the Secular Hall, Camberwell, last Sunday evening, and that he was greeted with an enthusiastic reception. This evening, Sunday, September 16, Mr. Watts again occupies the same platform, taking for his subject: "The Defeat of the Cross." This should evoke an interesting discussion.

The *Chatham Observer* gives an excellent and lengthy report of Mr. Watts's recent lecture in New Brompton on Secularism, and says the "audience listened with evident appreciation."

The Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in London this summer have been very successful. Immense audiences have listened in the London parks, and other open spaces, to the leading speakers of the Freethought party. Those who have been present at any of these gatherings know that our report is true. Still, we are glad to find corroboration in the columns of an important journal like the *British Weekly*. The following letter appeared in the issue of our contemporary for September 6:—

ATHEISTIC LECTURES.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH WEEKLY.

SIR,—May I be allowed, through the columns of your paper, to call the attention of the Christian public to a matter of grave importance, but which seems, nevertheless, to pass unnoticed by the majority of the people? The growth, spread, and success of atheistic lectures in our parks and other public places has of late assumed positively alarming proportions. Only last Sunday I chanced to stroll into Brockwell Park, and my notice was attracted by a huge crowd of listeners to a "demonstration" of the National Secular Society. The audience was composed not only of working men, but also of both sexes of the well-to-do classes. The most painful part of the matter was the applause the infidel demagogues received, and not a word of opposition was offered to their gross misrepresentations and blasphemous caricatures of Christianity.

Such scenes as this are not of infrequent occurrence; and besides the regular secular lectures, these "demonstrations" are held all over the metropolis. Surely it is time for all Christians to unite and endeavor to do something to counteract the

baneful influence which this atheistic teaching exercises on the people, and especially on the young.—I am, etc.,

VIGILANS.

We do not propose to criticise this writer's adjectives. We merely quote his letter as evidence that we have been telling the plain truth about the success of these Demonstrations. And this success goes beyond the size of the crowd of auditors. A Demonstration is more imposing than a lecture by one person, however eloquent or brilliant. It suggests greater resources. Moreover, it has the advantage of novelty. And every movement has to vary its methods of propaganda in order to avoid the deadliest of all evils, a wearisome feeling of monotony. Fresh efforts arouse fresh enthusiasm in all concerned.

The Birmingham Branch took time by the forelock at the N. S. S. Conference. It procured, with no great difficulty, the carrying of a resolution that a Freethought Demonstration should be held at Birmingham on Sunday, October 21—the use of the great Town Hall having been secured for the occasion. The resolution also declared that the N. S. S. Executive should provide speakers for this Demonstration. It was not suggested how the considerable expense of doing so might be met. That matter was left, as usual, to "providence" in the form of the President. Fortunately, he has not been wanting in practical desire to see this enterprise through. Mr. Foote has determined that the thing, if done at all, should be done in the best style; accordingly, he will attend the Demonstration himself, and take Mr. Watts and Mr. Cohen with him. We do not yet know whether there is to be one meeting or more in the Town Hall. If only the evening meeting is arranged for with the City authorities, it would perhaps be well for Mr. Foote to lecture elsewhere in the morning or afternoon. This would probably help a good deal in paying the N. S. S. expenses.

The Manchester Branch has also written to the President, asking whether a Demonstration can be held in Cottonopolis. And why not? Something seems wanted there to stir up fresh interest. Mr. Foote has requested the Manchester secretary (Mrs. Pegg) to ascertain what large central hall would be available for such a gathering.

The Leicester Secular Society, having spent the £500 raised in 1893, is now endeavoring to raise another £500. Probably the Bazaar will realise a considerable proportion of this sum, but donations will also be needed; and Mr. F. J. Gould, on behalf of the Committee, is appealing for support to the Twentieth Anniversary Fund. We note that the Gimson family are well to the front in the subscription-list up to date, and that Mr. Sydney A. Gimson has promised to give £100 when the remaining £400 is subscribed, or to add one quarter to any less sum collected. The institution at Leicester is one that deserves all the assistance that can possibly be rendered it. In the course of time, no doubt, England will be studded with such homes of Secularism. Meanwhile, those who have no opportunity of contributing towards the maintenance of one in their own locality might do a great deal worse with any money they have to spare than by sending it on to help the one which is bravely and usefully kept going at Leicester. Address: Mr. F. J. Gould, Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate.

The Glasgow Branch favors us with a copy of its Annual Report for 1899-1900, which is a healthy, encouraging document. In spite of the war, which has absorbed so much public attention, the work of the Branch has been well sustained, and audiences have been larger than might have been expected in the circumstances. "The past session," as the report justly says, "was one in which to lose nothing was to gain much." Financially, the Branch is in a very prosperous condition, thanks to a "Christmas Box" of £100 from an anonymous donor. "Never in the history of the Society," we read, "has it finished its financial year with such a substantial balance in hand." This is a most hardworking Branch, and we are pleased to see that its labors are attended with success.

By the way, it is not Secular Societies only that have suffered from the public interest in the South African war. All "advanced" movements, and a good many others, have had a similar experience. We see that the Birmingham Sunday Lecture Society, for instance, reports a considerable falling off in attendance, while a favorable balance has been turned into a deficit. We are not congratulating Secularists on such facts, but merely pointing out that the disadvantages of the past year have been due to general causes.

Mr. C. Cohen is holding a special meeting this morning (Sept. 16) at Stratford Grove. He will lecture at 11.30 on "The Bible and Board Schools." Local "saints" please note.

In the afternoon, at 3.15, Mr. Cohen delivers his last lecture for the season in Victoria Park. No doubt his friends will flock round him in large numbers on this occasion.

Mr. Wilmot reports that the September series of lectures on Clapham Common have thus far been fairly successful. On the first Sunday the Secularists were regarded as intruders; on the second Sunday they were taken as a matter of course, although some C. E. S. people shouted themselves hoarse at a small opposition meeting. Mr. Cohen was the lecturer.

Messrs. Watts & Co. are publishing what seems to be an important work by Haeckel, the great German evolutionist, on *The Riddle of the Universe*. We don't know that there is a riddle; or that, if there is, Haeckel has solved it; but what he writes on the subject is sure to be full of interest and information. An advertisement of this work will be found on another page of this week's *Freethinker*.

Brockwell Park audiences are generally very orderly, but there was a disturbance at Mr. Heaford's meeting on Sunday afternoon. A clique of well-dressed Christian rowdies did their best to drown his voice by shouting, booing, and giving "Three cheers for Jesus." In the end they succeeded, unintentionally, in getting a tremendous audience for the lecturer. Thanks are due to the park-keepers for the prompt manner in which they dealt with one or two of the ringleaders.

A good many friends have sent us the names and addresses of newsagents who are able and willing to display a weekly contents-sheet of the *Freethinker*, which we dispatch to them by post on Wednesday evenings. We are still anxious, however, to obtain more such names and addresses. We therefore beg all who can help us in this respect to do so forthwith. It is not a very difficult matter for those of our readers who buy their weekly copy of the *Freethinker* of a newsagent to ask him whether he will display a contents-sheet if it is forwarded to him. There is no doubt whatever that the striking headlines on this placard are of great use in exciting attention and curiosity, and consequently in promoting the sale of the paper.

Wonder and Reason in Man.

THE fact abides that the great mass of supernatural beliefs which have persisted from the lower culture till now, and which are still held by an overwhelming majority of civilised mankind, are referable to causes concomitant with man's mental development—causes operative throughout his history. The low intellectual environment of his barbaric past was constant for thousands of years, and his adaptation thereto was complete.....Man wondered countless ages before he reasoned; because feeling travels along the line of least resistance, while thought, or the challenge by inquiry—therefore the assumption that there may be two sides to a question—must pursue a path obstructed by the dominance of custom, the force of imitation, and the strength of prejudice and fear. It is here that anthropology, notably that psychical branch of it comprehended under folk-lore, takes up the cue from the momentous doctrine of heredity; explains the persistence of the primitive, and the causes of man's tardy escape from the illusions of the senses, and the general conservatism of human nature. "Born into life, in vain, opinions, those or these, unalter'd to retain the obstinate mind decrees," as in the striking illustration cited in Heine's *Travel-Pictures*: "A few years ago Bullock dug up an ancient stone idol in Mexico, and the next day he found that he had been crowned during the night with flowers. And yet the Spaniard had exterminated the old Mexican religion with fire and sword, and for three centuries had been engaged in ploughing and harrowing their minds and implanting the seed of Christianity." The causes of error, delusion, and of the spiritual nightmare of olden time, being made clear, there is begotten a generous sympathy with that which empirical notions of human nature attributed to wilfulness or to man's fall from a high estate. Superstitions which are the outcome of ignorance can awaken only pity. Where the corrective of knowledge is absent, we see that it could not be otherwise. Where that corrective is present, but either perverted or not exercised, pity is supplanted by blame. In either case, we learn that the art of life largely consists in that control of the emotions and that diversion of them into wholesome channels which the intellect, braced with the latest knowledge, alone can effect.

—Edward Clodd, "The Pioneers of Evolution."

Obituary.

SOUTH SHIELDS.—On Sunday last Mr. John Lamb, for many years newsagent, and one of the oldest members of the above Branch, died at his residence, 82 West Walpole-street, High Shields. Deceased was a well-known figure at all local lectures and meetings, and was highly respected.—R. CHAPMAN.

Elusive Pietists.

Not more than a casual dip into the religious literature of our time is necessary to convince us that a remarkable change has taken place in the matter of Christian tactics. Everywhere we find attempts, more or less disingenuous, to throw new light on old nonsense, in the hope of preserving at least some remnants of the ancient faith. Pietists are no longer concerned to defend much of that for which their forefathers professed themselves ready to die. Venerable doctrines which were supposed to be of vital importance to saving faith have been quietly abandoned. Biblical history has been subjected to new forms of interpretation, whereby its accuracy has been of necessity impugned in the vain endeavor to make it acceptable in another sense to the spirit and knowledge of the age. Views of the present life and of futurity have undergone a process of broadening which would have made believers in the earlier centuries stare in absolute amaze. In nothing so much as in Christian belief do we find an exemplification of the fact that the "old order of things changeth."

The influences that have brought about this change must be evident to every unprejudiced observer. They have not arisen in the Christian Church itself. They have operated from outside. They are the outcome of the independent and intrepid thought of heretics whom the Church persecuted with remorseless malignity, and whose memory it slanders and reviles to this day. Modern criticism and scientific discovery have furnished some additional weapons, but their results are not more effective than those which were employed a century or two ago. The surprising thing is to notice how largely the old arsenal is drawn upon by "advanced" believers to-day, who, either from ignorance or forgetfulness or an absurd pretence of dignity, fail to acknowledge the source to which they are indebted. When will the Christian Church rise to some sense of honor and honesty, and do justice—tardy though it be—to Voltaire and Paine and Carlyle, not to mention some modern and still living pioneers whom she did her best to martyrise by terms of imprisonment which will stand in history to her everlasting disgrace?

These heretics have proved, not only by their self-sacrifice, but by unexampled magnanimity, the honesty and integrity of their ideas. Can the same be said of Christians who are now profiting by that heroism, which, by the way, is not altogether of the past, because religious prejudice still necessitates its display? We think not; for the attitude and the methods of modern "advanced" Christians leave much to be desired. To put it broadly and colloquially, believers of this class are playing a double game. They are trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. They cannot really accept the Bible and many Church doctrines founded thereon, and yet they protest, with a sort of righteous indignation, against any suspicion that they are unbelievers. But, of course, they are unbelievers, whether they openly admit it or not. We do not want to claim them. We disown them. If they lack the courage of their opinions, let them remain nominal Christians. They are better suited to that camp than to ours, where at least there is no inducement to be dishonest.

Very amusing it would be—if it were not for the displeasure one always feels at dissimulation—to note their efforts to reconcile the irreconcilable, to appear faithful when they are in reality sceptical, to exhibit a reverence which they do not, and cannot, possess; to affect assent when their utterances, if they mean anything at all, breathe vital dissent; to cloak their heresy by the use of terminology which, from their mouths and with their ideas, is utterly misleading. They are traitors—both to Christianity and Freethought—tergiversators, time-servers, jelly-fish, hermaphrodites—anything you like to call them which conveys the idea of those weak and erratic, not to say hypocritical, people whom John Bunyan collectively described in Mr. Facing-Both-Ways.

In a recent article we gave some remarkable instances of elusive pietism from a newly-published work, *The Dawn of Revelation*. A presiding member of the Mothers' Union took grave exception to that book. And no wonder, especially as it is being used as a kind

of text-book for schools. The authoress—for it is a lady who has written it—replied to the criticism in a spirited fashion, and was effective enough in supporting her rejection of miracles, more particularly those of the Old Testament. But nothing could be weaker than her claim of Divine origin for the remainder of that book and of the New Testament. In the *Church Times*, in which a notice of the book originally appeared, there were published last week three letters from correspondents who seem to have been deeply moved. One writer controverts her statement that her disbelief in the historical accuracy of the traditional narratives is shared by almost all thinking Christians of the present day. "Were it possible for the opinion of all thinking Christians of the present day to be taken, it would probably be found that the number in agreement with your correspondent is not nearly so large as she assumes it to be." We will not pretend to decide this question. The word "thinking" somewhat qualifies the statement as to Christians generally, but then there are a great many Christians who may be described as "thinking," but whose thinking is all in one direction—limited to an area which does not comprise Rationalistic theories and ideas. The critic of the *Dawn of Revelation* continues:—

"Does it not occur to her [the authoress] that she has on her side the opponents of Christianity as well? Has she never read, for instance, the works of the famous Deistic writers of the last century, or the answers to their attacks on the Bible, proceeding from thinking Christians such as Leland, Watson, Charles Leslie, and others? It is really interesting to compare the productions of the eighteenth-century Deists with those of the new school of Biblical critics. To take a single example, the miracle of the manna in the wilderness is a case in point. Both in the *Dawn of Revelation* and in Paine's *Age of Reason* the miracle is dismissed as untrue. The reasons given are different. But what is the difference in the result?"

One does not see how the cause of revelation is assisted by the citation of Leland, Watson, and Leslie, who were palpably ineffective in their time, and are now quite out of date. It is true that the *Dawn of Revelation* disposes differently from the *Age of Reason* of the miraculous manna, and in this instance modern criticism may be said to have progressed or rather deviated. But to what purpose? The author says:—

"The beautiful story of the manna is most likely an allegorical way of expressing how God gave them day by day their daily bread. Manna is found in various parts of the Sinaitic desert, but it does not fall from heaven, but exudes from the resinous shrubs which grew in some of the mountains."

This is, indeed, a "beautiful" way of explaining what is not a "beautiful allegory," but the record of what was obviously regarded as a miracle. The narrative will be found in Exodus xvi. Suppose the manna to exude naturally from the resinous shrubs, how does the author explain verses 26 and 27: "Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none"?

It is easy enough to rationalise and explain away Scriptural stories if you elect to pay not the slightest attention to the text. The "beautiful allegory" salve is humbug. Who is to say what is meant as allegory and what as matter of fact?

The Rev. Algernon C. Lucey, rector of Westmeston Rectory, Hassocks, who writes the second letter to the *Church Times*, seems quite delighted with the *Dawn of Revelation*. He says:—

"The sooner we clergy realise that what the present age requires is the re-presenting of religion, the better it will be for us and religion. It is most difficult for us to shake ourselves free from old-fashioned prejudices and knowledge, and to know how to acquire sound methods. This the author of the *Dawn of Revelation* helps us to do with regard to the Bible, and I only hope the rising generation may be better instructed than the past in the true position of the Bible in the sphere of God's providence."

Another writer—"Leba"—suggests that the results of the Higher Criticism should be gradually instilled into the minds of children—not all at once, but bit by bit. Children, he says, "accept the facts of the Bible

so absolutely that I am sure there is a real danger of moral upheaval and great unsettlement if parents allow them to remain too long in ignorance of present-day controversies."

So much for the controversy on the *Dawn of Revelation*. In this connection, one may add a word about a new book called *Catholic Evolution*, by N. E. Egerton Swann, B.A., Oxford. We know what a stumbling block to teetotallers that miracle of Christ at the wedding feast at Cana has always been. The author of *Catholic Evolution* solemnly suggests that the guests were "hypnotised," and deluded into thinking they were drinking wine! No doubt, there is delusion somewhere; either it must have been with those who thought they drank wine miraculously made from water, or it is with those who believe the naked, bald story as it stands in the New Testament. No good comes from these attempts, however ingenious, to rationalise the Bible miracles. In most cases the plain meaning of the text is dead against the attempted explanation.

FRANCIS NEALE.

The Sleep of Death.

A CUE FROM SHAKESPEARE.

SHAKESPEARE, the supreme genius of literature, has told us that "our little life is rounded with a sleep." The materialistic similitude of death to sleep is a thought which appears to have possessed a peculiar fascination for great writers, ancient and modern, but more particularly for Shakespeare, whom it always prompts to utterances of more than usual sublimity. With this sublimity is mingled a touch of simple pathos which strikes home to every heart, as, for example, in the saying: "Tired we sleep, and life's poor play is o'er."

Sleep! All that the human fancy can conceive of refreshing and delightful is assuredly comprised in that gentle monosyllable. Poets in all ages and in all countries have sung its praises; but of all panegyrics ever uttered on this enchanting theme the most truthful and striking is probably that which fell from the lips of Sancho Panza: "Sleep! It covers a man all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak. It is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot."

William Hazlitt, a fine author unduly neglected, is never more magnificent than in writing on this subject. His essay on the *Fear of Death* shows the extent of his freethought. To die, he there discourses, is only to be as we were before we were born; yet no one feels any remorse, or regret, or repugnance, in contemplating this last idea. "It seems to have been holiday-time with us then. We were not called to appear on the stage of life, to wear robes and tatters, to laugh or cry, be toasted or applauded. We had lain *perdus* all this while—snug, out of harm's way—and had slept out our thousands of centuries without wanting to be waked up; at peace and free from care in a long nonage, in a sleep deeper and calmer than that of infancy, wrapped in the softest and finest dust."

"Rounded with a sleep! These words created whole volumes in me," says Jean Paul Richter, acknowledging the power of the master-mind of Shakespeare.

De Quincey, a very unequal, if powerful, writer, is uniformly sublime when he treats of this subject. At a bound he reaches something like Shakespearean splendor of imagination. What is life? asks Thomas De Quincey, and answers, Darkness and formless vacancy for a beginning, then next a dim lotos of human consciousness afloat upon the waters, then a few smiles and tears, a little love and infinite strife, dust and ashes, and once more darkness circling round, rounding or making an island of our fantastic existence.

It is of Prospero's metaphor of this sleep-rounded life of ours that Mr. Andrew Lang writes in his fine poem on *Omar Khayyam*:—

So still were we before the months began
That rounded us and shaped us into man.
So still we shall be, surely, at the last,
Dreamless, un'ouched of blessing or of ban.

This philosophy of life and death must not be thought identical with the Mephistophelean:—

A life of nothings, nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth
To that last nothing under earth.

This is pure intellectual nihilism, such as Byron introduced to relieve the sardonic laughter of his most cynical poem:—

Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Twillt night and morn upon the horizon's verge;
How little do we know that which we are,
How less what we may be!

Shelley, in the opening lines of his *Queen Mab*, speaks of death and sleep being brothers. But most of all does Shelley look on death with longing and audacity in his great dirge *Adonais*. The dead are "made one with nature." Dante, under the dominion of mediæval superstition, leads us in his *Divine Comedy* to the grinning death's head of the charnel house. Calderon, whose genius was hampered by Catholicism, regards death as the brink of a possible penal abyss—for heretics. Even Milton is alternately filled with a narrow Puritan and unreal classical sense of death. But Shakespeare is beyond them all. Beyond a ghastly imaginary Styx; beyond priestly mummery, the hateful hell, the painful purgatory, the paltry paradise of Christian thought; beyond the absurd judgment day and the reign of Puritan saints. Death with him is perfectly natural and allied to sleep, "nature's gentle nurse."

Rationalism dictated Shakespeare's noblest thoughts and richest fancies, and wherever his mighty genius soars above all rivals it has been inspired by a sane philosophy.

Lucretius, that grand old Roman Freethinker, has a long passage in the third book of his immortal poem, perhaps of more sustained depth and solemnity than any other he has written, in which he endeavors to "fight the fear of death" by considerations founded on its deep, insensible, and uncomplaining rest. Lucretius writes as one who had a heart to feel the priceless blessings of life, and who knew and valued the truest source of happiness to man. Very tender and touching, and rising into far purer regions than the atmosphere of his time, is the feeling of the lines of this old-world Secularist. Nowhere could the human heart find words of support so strong and so grandly earnest.

From the dreamy East, Omar Khayyam says the same thing as Lucretius. Both have the same message; but whilst Lucretius sings with an earnest and grave content, Omar chants it in lines of passionate bitterness. The highest minds of bygone ages were fortified by the same philosophy.

Freethought everywhere destroys the terror of death. The Secularist is aware of the truth that death is but an incident of life. He no longer allows the tomb to cast its chill shadow over the pleasure of life. He lives without hypocrisy, and when the time comes he dies without fear—

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

MIMNERMUS.

A Mad Prophetess.

A Madrid telegram says: "A terrible drama has just been enacted at Algaiba, in Murcia, with a mad prophetess as its central figure. She is a young peasant woman of twenty-four, named Teresa Guillen, who took to prophecy and preaching several months ago, and after stirring up many disorderly pilgrimages, was locked up as a religious maniac. A fortnight ago she was allowed to return home, and once more crowds began to assemble, spell-bound by the impassioned ecstasy of her harangues. Last Thursday she was preaching before a large concourse of people, when five gendarmes arrived to arrest her. The ignorant peasants, worked upon by the wild appeals of the sibyl, attacked the police with fury, and in the fight which ensued four of the gendarmes were mortally wounded, while sixteen persons in the crowd were seriously hurt. The woman's father and brother were killed."

Cardinal Manning went one day to his publishers for a copy of a book of his own, *Confidence in God*. The order was shouted down to the stock-room, whence came the reply: "Manning's *Confidence in God* all gone."—*Clarion*.

Behind the Veil.

THERE is no more curious study than the different ways in which the differing minds of men approach the dark veil hanging before each of them—the mystery which we call death. The great classical scholar, Porson, was chiefly terrified by the certainty that he could not carry with him the learning which had cost him so dear.

"Forty years I have given to the study of Greek," he is reported to have said. "And what if they do not speak Greek there beyond?"

A German writer says: "To go through the portal of death is like a horse passing into a low barn-door. All superfluous packages on his back are scraped off and left behind."

"To die, to sleep," says Hamlet. "To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub!"

Among the philosophic Asiatics so great is the repugnance to this dread, unsolvable problem that it is never mentioned by name. No one says that his neighbor is dead, but that he "has gone away—has saluted the world."

Men of cheerful temperament have thrown the reflection of their pleasant thoughts even beyond the verge of the great darkness. Charles Lamb, to whom home and friends were dearer than to most men, asks wistfully: "Sun and sky, and breeze.....and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields.....and fireside conversations and innocent vanities and jests.....do these things go out with life? Can a ghost laugh.....when you are pleasant with him?"

Hardly a man lives who is not afraid of death, yet every man once in each day falls without fear into a state of temporary death, the mystery of which no physician can adequately explain.

An Unverified Uprising of Citizens.

THE Ascension is not mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke says simply that Jesus, in blessing his disciples at Bethany, was parted from them and carried up into heaven, and in the Acts of the Apostles it is asserted that "he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight."

This miraculous disappearance was not any more wonderful than his miraculous appearing and disappearing at his several meetings with his disciples; but, if such a thing had really happened, it would not only have been noted down with minuteness by all the lookers-on, but it would have been known and commented upon by outsiders.

The question of immortality is one of equal interest to the whole race, and the chief priests and the Roman governor would have been as glad as anyone else to be assured that a man had really risen from the dead. Just here comes in the testimony of Matthew's gospel, that "many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city and appeared unto many."

Whatever degree of prejudice might have prevented the enemies of Jesus from believing in such assertions respecting him, there was nothing to hinder the recognition of that company of resuscitated citizens, and the promulgation of the glad tidings of their continued existence.

Such an event would have been heralded over the whole known world, and could never have been forgotten by secular history. Yet, beyond that daring assertion of Matthew, there is not a word in any record, and the phenomenon appears to have left no trace among the witnesses.

—From "The Christ Myth," by Elizabeth E. Evans.

What is a Miracle?

THE lawyer asked the witness if the incident previously alluded to wasn't a miracle, and the witness said he didn't know what a miracle was.

"Oh, come!" said the attorney. "Supposing you were looking out of a window in the twelfth storey of a building, and should fall out and should not be injured. What would you call that?"

"An accident," was the stolid reply.

"Yes, yes; but suppose you were doing the same thing the next day! Suppose you looked out of the twelfth-storey window and fell out, and again should find yourself not injured. What would you call that?"

"A coincidence," said the witness.

"Oh, come now," the lawyer began again. "I want you to understand what a miracle is, and I'm sure you do. Just suppose that on the third day you were looking out of the twelfth storey window, and fell out and struck your head on the pavement twelve stories below, and were not in the least injured. What would you call it?"

"Three times?" said the witness, rousing a little from his apathy. "Well, I'd call that a habit." And then the lawyer gave it up.

Just Like Their Elders.

THE Episcopal Bishop Anderson has a daughter of four. The other day the family entertained some friends from Denver. In the visiting family there was a little girl of the same age as the Anderson child. Her family were Presbyterians. It was proposed that the two little girls share the same bed, which was assented to by the children. When bed-time came, they both knelt down to say their prayers in unison.

When little Miss Anderson was saying, "Forgive us our trespasses," she heard her companion say, "Forgive us our debts," and she said, sharply:—

"It's 'trespasses!'"

"No it ain't," said the Denver Calvinist. "It's 'debts.'"

"Trespasses!"

"Debts!"

"Trespasses!"

"Debts!"

Out flew a chubby Anderson fist which struck a Presbyterian eye. There was a mixup immediately.

"Now it's 'trespasses,' ain't it?"

"No," said she, stoutly. "It's 'debts.'"

Peace was restored, and the two consented to go on with the prayer. When they came to the end, the little Presbyterian said "Amen," giving the flat "a" of the Dissenters, while the little Episcopalian intoned "Ah-men," with the broad sound to the first vowel.

"Amen," repeated the Presbyterian.

"Ah-men," said Miss Anderson, with conviction.

They were only saved from another encounter by being bundled into bed. As the door was closed upon them, each was still maintaining her idea of pronunciation.

—Chicago Chronicle.

Ingersoll on Clover.

THE late Colonel Ingersoll once sent the following letter of regret in answer to an invitation to dinner by the Clover Club:—

"I regret that it is impossible for me to be in 'clover' with you to-morrow, first anniversary dinner, 1883. A wonderful thing is 'clover.' It means honey and cream—that is to say, industry and contentment; that is to say, the happy bees in perfumed fields—and at the cottage gate 'Old Boss,' the bountiful, serenely chewing satisfaction's cud in that blessed twilight pause that, like a benediction, falls between all toil and sleep. This clover makes me dream of happy hours, of childhood's rosy cheeks, of dimpled babes, of wholesome, loving wives, of honest men, of springs and brooks and violets, and all there is of stainless joy in peaceful human life.

"A wonderful word is 'clover.' Drop the 'c,' and you have the happiest of mankind. Take away the 'c' and 'r,' and you have left the only thing that makes a heaven of this dull and barren earth. Cut off the 'r' alone, and there remains a very deceitful bud that sweetens the breath and keeps peace in countless homes whose masters frequent clubs. After all, Bottom was right, 'Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.'"

—ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

Pious Pompey's Plea.

I STOLE dem breeches, I 'knowledge de corn,
But 'twarn't no crime, ezsho's you're born!
Ef de motive is right, den whar's de sin?
I stole dem breeches ter be baptize' in.
Fur my onliest pa'r wuz clean wored out,
Dey gib up der ghos' when I 'gun ter shout;
But r'ligion is mighty en mus' pervail,
Do' it lan' er darkey in de county jail.

De chain gang's got me en de coal mines too,
But what could er 'fenseless colored man do
When de jedge en jury lowed it wuz sin
Ter steal dem breeches ter be baptize' in.
Tell de folks all howdy en good-bye too,
I'll meet 'em in hebben when my wuck is fru,
Fur my heart is white do' my skin is black,
En I'm gwine ter trabbel de shinin' track.

When de Lawd is jedge, I kno' he gwine say,
"Pomp's straight ez er shingle en fair ez de day."
He'll shout ter de worl' dat it 'twa'n't no sin
Ter steal dem breeches ter be baptize' in.

—Truthseeker (New York). BELLE R. HARRISON.

According to the Bishop of Ripon, who has been preaching at Bradford in view of the meeting of the British Association, we must all "be crucified in Jesus Christ." A good many people would be glad to be crucified like this smug preacher. A sure job, a big salary, and a handsome residence make a very desirable "cross."

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.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ."
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Defeat of the Cross."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A. B. Moss.
PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, W. J. Ramsey.
BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack.
CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, F. A. Davies.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, F. A. Davies.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, E. White.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, E. Pack.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 11, C. Cohen, "The Education Question"; 7.30, A. B. Moss.
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford; 7.15, F. A. Davies.
September 19, at 8.15, C. Cohen.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A. B. Moss.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11 (in the Bull Ring); 7 (Prince of Wales' Assembly Rooms, Broad-street). For subjects see Saturday's *Daily Mail*.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A lecture.
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, D. Black, "Is there a God?" 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, "Why I am a Secularist."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, B.Sc., "Marcus Aurelius."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Adjourned subject, "Industrial Problems."

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—September 16, m., Stratford Grove; a., Victoria Park. 23, m., Ridley-road, Kingsland; a., Clapham Common.

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—September 16, m., Battersea; e., West Ham. 26, a., Victoria Park. October 7, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—September 16, Birmingham. 24 and October 1, Debate in Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—September 16, Mile End; e., Hammersmith. 23, e., Stratford.

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