

THE
Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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The Priest and the Child.

ONCE every three years the people, or, to be quite accurate, a small proportion of them, awaken to the fact that there is an educational problem afoot, and that it becomes them, as citizens, to take some share in its solution. This year, owing to the threatened proximity of a Parliamentary election, the interest, so far as London is concerned, promises to be even weaker than usual. More's the pity; for, though the Parliamentary election creates the greatest interest, and brings a larger number of voters to the poll, it by no means follows that it is therefore the most important. For my part, I am inclined to regard the School Board elections as the more important of the two. If Parliament lays down laws for the general government of schools, it is the schools that determine the mental calibre of our legislators, and for that reason alone these should demand the most serious attention of all reformers.

And of all the questions in connection with our scheme of public education that can engage the attention of earnest thinkers, that of the maintenance of the Bible in, or its rejection from, the public schools takes a foremost position. For this is not merely a question of a struggle between rival Christian sects, nor even of a contest between Christianity at large and its avowed enemies. It is far more a question of the initial bent that is to be given to the child's mind, of whether the teacher is to have a free hand in the imparting of such instruction as all sections of the community are agreed upon as being essential, or whether he shall be for a portion of his working time the passive tool of church and chapel, indoctrinating his charges with views that future knowledge can but disturb, and a large portion of which is already rejected by numbers of educated men and women. It is in school that the child receives the stamp of its future intellectual life; it is to the teacher that it looks with trust and confidence for information; and it is nothing less than a crime against its whole nature, and against the welfare of the race, to force upon it beliefs which it is bound to modify as years pass, or to train it with an eye to its becoming a member of church or chapel rather than to its playing a useful part in the society to which it belongs.

To my mind it is a mere truism to say that, by leaving education to the control of the clergy, Dissenting or Established, we are striking a deadly blow at our hopes of a higher national life. Such a statement is not made without a basis in hard and bitter experience. The mere fact that the movement for popular education is essentially a modern one is, in itself, enough to shatter clerical pretensions in the matter. Had the Churches ever taken the question of education seriously to heart, the people who had covered the land with churches might equally as well have covered it with schools. But, far from that being the case, even the few Grammar schools and Foundation schools that had been opened were gradually appropriated by the upper classes, leaving the mass of the people, as late as the close of the last century, practically destitute of educational opportunities. And when the lead for a general educational movement to be undertaken by the State came, it originated, not with any of the Churches, but with the French Revolutionary writers, nearly all of whom were filled with the conviction that a democracy, to be stable, must be educated, and that education was

a far too important matter to be left to the vagaries of private charity or individual initiative.

To Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, is usually given the credit of initiating a wide scheme of popular education in this country at the beginning of the century—a circumstance constantly dwelt upon by Dissenters, who conveniently forget that he had for a firm friend Robert Owen, who declared that religions were only different forms of geographical insanities, and who helped Lancaster with both money and advice, one contribution alone being a cheque for a thousand pounds.* It is not quite clear to my mind how far Lancaster's action was dominated by religious propagandism and how much by educational zeal; but it is clear that when the National Society, representing the Church interest, was established, it was in the interests of religion, with education playing a bad second.

For the first seventy years of this century elementary education was practically controlled by the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society—the opposing camps of church and chapel—lately patronised during the latter portion of the period by the State. During this time it is easy to see that, while the competition of the two bodies was the direct cause of whatever improvement was made in the schools under their control, this competition was inspired not by any educational zeal, but by the desire to attract children in order to secure them as adult members of their respective churches or chapels. There were, of course, to be found men whose devotion to the cause of education was of a more single-minded character, but in the main the school was the morsel with which the religious hook was baited; and, so long as the fish was landed, the clergy paid but small attention to whether the schools were a good introduction to the duties of citizenship or not.

Only gradually did people begin to recognise the danger of allowing such an important matter as education to continue at the mercy of sectarian rivalries. Time, however, has a knack of teaching when all other methods have failed, and the steady insistence of palpable facts overcame even the sluggishness of the general public. Helped by the labors of Owen, Bentham, Mill, and the early *Westminster Review* group generally; moved by the fact that, after fifty years of religious rule in such important centres as Manchester and Liverpool, fifty per cent. of the children were either not receiving instruction at all or getting only what was a mere parody on the name, and that elsewhere, as inspectors reported, "of four-fifths of the children about to leave school either no account or an unsatisfactory one is given by an examination of the most strictly elementary kind," public feeling on the matter grew until the Government was driven to take definite action, which resulted in the Act of 1870.

From one aspect, the passing of that Act registered the inadequacy of the schools under religious control. From another point of view, it was a great triumph for the cause of Secularism. The Act asserted, as it was bound to assert, the primary importance of secular instruction; and, had the wishes of many of its promoters been carried into effect, the public schools would have been wholly secular from beginning to end. But the churches were strong, and Mr. Gladstone was in power. Instead of the Government of the day carrying

* Owen also offered, a little later, the same sum to the Church schools if they were opened to children of all denominations, but only half that sum if they were excluded. The proposal was debated for two days, and finally the smaller sum was accepted and Dissenters shut out.

into effect the principle of religious equality, and severing the State and the State schools from all connection with religion or religious teaching bodies, the very men who had assisted at the disestablishment of the Irish Church gave the English Churches what practically was a new form of endowment, and presented them with a new platform from which to teach their dogmas. A compromise was effected; a good one for church and chapel, a poor one so far as the general public were concerned. Instead of the religious schools being left to their own devices, arrangements were made by which a sum of money, amounting at present to about four millions annually, was taken from the general public and handed over to what are avowedly sectarian institutions, and which are kept open solely in the interests of a sectarian religion. It was a new form of endowment thinly disguised—an endowment in its most objectionable form.

But it is the famous fourteenth section of the Act, which regulates religious instruction in the Board schools themselves, and which provides that "No religious formulary or religious catechism which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school," that has proved the source of endless contention, and which will continue to cause trouble until it is swept on one side. There has been continuous quarrelling, because the clause was fundamentally illogical. This was pointed out during the course of the debate by Sir W. Harcourt, Sir Stafford Northcote, Mr. Disraeli, and many others, and the force and truthfulness of the criticism was fully admitted by both Mr. Forster and Mr. Gladstone. But the sects had to be appeased, the clause became law, and the interests of education were once more sacrificed to the interests of church and chapel. Not only was the clause ridiculous as it stood, but in the nature of the case it could satisfy no one for any length of time. It could only exist so long as no one religious body was strong enough to set it on one side in its own interests. It has always been the weakest religious body that has professed the greatest fondness for it, and their attachment has weakened as they found their power growing.

What, after all, does the compromise amount to? In a word, it is a compromise between a number of religious bodies, with designs on the public purse, and the public conscience, each one anxious to rule the roost in the interests of their own church or chapel, but agreeing to share the plunder because no single one is strong enough to commit the depredation single-handed. Not one of the religious bodies has any objection to definite religious instruction, only they each object to it being anybody's religion but their own. But none of them were strong enough, nor are they strong enough now, to get their own form of faith selected and all others excluded. Had they each fought for their own hand, it would have meant secular education right off, and that, as Cardinal Manning said, "dooms religion to gradual extinction." Under those circumstances, half a loaf was better than none at all, and as long as the Bible was in the schools it was a great point gained; each trusted, like so many theological Micawbers, for something favorable to turn up.

Such a compromise was bound to be a prolific cause of trouble. It completely satisfied none; it was deliberately unjust to many. It was a compromise between *Christian* bodies, and ignored all other classes of the community. It compelled Atheists, Jews, and all orders of non-Christians to pay towards the teaching of a religion in which none of them believed. It taught the religion of a few with money raised from the taxation of all. And, in perpetrating this act of social injustice, the Dissenter is more blameworthy than the Churchman. The Churchman believes it is the duty of the State to teach religion, and is only logical in wishing to keep it in State schools. The Dissenter denies the right of the State to teach religion to adults, but insists on it being taught to children. What is the difference between the two cases? Dissenters submit that it is unjust to compel them to pay towards the support of a Church they do not believe in. I agree with them in their contention; but is it less unjust to compel non-Christians to pay for the teaching of a religion in which they do not believe? Will not every argument that holds good against the payment of church rates by Dissenters hold equally good against the payment of

school rates by Freethinkers, a portion of which is used in teaching a creed they do not believe in? There are two answers to such an objection. The first is, the number of Freethinkers is small. I am not sure of that, and do not know how anyone else can be sure of that either. But suppose it were so; because only a few suffer under an injustice it is none the less an injustice. The question of numbers has no place in the discussion. The whole question is a simple one: it is whether it is right to tax people indiscriminately to support a set of speculative doctrines, which may be right or which may be wrong, but which many of those who are taxed believe to be both false and injurious. To that question there can be but one sound answer.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Secular Organisation.

A SPECIAL meeting of the National Secular Society's Executive met on Thursday evening, September 13, to consider a certain scheme of which I gave notice at the previous ordinary meeting on the last Thursday in August. This scheme had been carefully thought out, and I had no doubt that it would be, at least substantially, approved by the Executive. A long discussion took place, and some slight amendments were incorporated. The scheme as finally agreed upon is as follows, in the form of a many-claused resolution:—

That, in view of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund now being raised, it is resolved by this Executive of the National Secular Society, subject to the concurrence of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited:—

(1) That the limited propagandist force of the Secular movement has been, and still is, very largely wasted by sporadic action, each lecturer making his own engagements and visiting places at haphazard, without respect to whether his work has been preceded or will be followed by that of others.

(2) That continuity of effort in definite places, or over definite areas, would be both far less expensive and far more fruitful.

(3) That where such continuity of effort already exists, it should as far as possible be consistently promoted.

(4) That the power now expended on desultory work should be concentrated in the interest of effectiveness.

(5) That a first attempt at concentration be made in London, where nearly six millions of people are assembled together on a comparatively accessible and workable area.

(6) That the President be requested and authorised to organise this attempt for a trial period of six months, with such assistance as he may require from the Secretary, and with the co-operation of a special sub-committee of the Executive, consisting of four members, two of whom shall be members of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited.

(7) That all expenditure under this head shall, as usual, be transacted by the Secretary and the Treasurer who shall, also as usual, keep and file accounts of the same.

(8) That, in order to furnish the necessary services for this attempt in London, Messrs. C. Watts and C. Cohen be engaged at a weekly salary of £3 and £2 10s. respectively; in consideration for which it shall be understood that they hold themselves in readiness to lecture or attend meetings in London, on Sundays or week-days, under the directions of the President and the sub-committee.

(9) That Messrs. A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, and perhaps other lecturers, as may be found necessary or desirable, shall be engaged from time to time, and remunerated according to circumstances.

(10) That a special feature should be made of the sale and free distribution of Freethought literature at all meetings.

(11) That if this attempt in London succeeds, or shows reasonable promise of success, the N. S. S. Executive, with the concurrence of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, will endeavor to take steps for extending operations on the same lines in other parts of the country; working one district after another—such as South Wales and the West of England, the Midlands, the Eastern Counties, Yorkshire, Lancashire, the Tyneside, South-West Scotland, and East Scotland, including Edinburgh, Dundee, and Aberdeen.

(12) That in the meanwhile the lecturers engaged under this scheme may be permitted to visit provincial towns where continuity of work exists, and that the payment to be made by the Branches for the lecturers' services shall be adjusted as favorably as possible to such Branches.

A special meeting of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited, was held subsequently, and concurrence in the scheme as adopted by the N. S. S.

Executive was resolved upon unanimously. Both bodies are therefore in absolute agreement.

Let me here say, in passing, that this scheme will not absorb more than about one-third of the amount already subscribed or promised towards the Twentieth Century Fund; and the proportion will be considerably less by the time this Fund is definitely closed.

For a long time I have seen that, unless we could greatly increase our financial resources, and at the same time multiply our available platform advocates, some measure of concentration would be absolutely necessary. Lecturers who go about the country, east, west, north, and south, at haphazard, pay over most of their receipts to railway companies and hotel proprietors. What they have left for themselves is a miserable pittance. Moreover, their work is largely fruitless, because it proceeds upon no sort of plan. What is the real use of lecturing in some little town for a single evening, when no Freethought lecture has been heard there before for twelve months, and none will be heard there again for another twelve months? No business could ever be conducted in this way without ending in speedy bankruptcy. It must be obvious to anyone who will take the trouble to think that continuity of effort is a primary condition of success. Now, in our special circumstances, this means concentration; and it is easier to concentrate in London than anywhere else. In the first place, the six millions of people in the metropolis live closely together; in the second place, the principal lecturers live there, and hotel bills will therefore disappear, and travelling expenses be reduced to an inconsiderable minimum. Of course there will be the expense of halls and advertising, but the collections will break the back of such expenditure.

Where continuity of effort already exists in the provinces, the Branches will not suffer in the least, even during this trial period of six months. The lecturers will still visit places like Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham, as before. It is only the scattered work that will be cut off for that period in the interest of this experiment in concentration.

Some persons, and perhaps many, will notice that I am not included in the scheme. For this there are two reasons. First, I do not think it is advisable, at any rate for the present, that the N. S. S. President should be in the employment of the Executive. Second, I do not want the Twentieth Century Fund to be used in any way for my personal advantage, or even for what might be erroneously construed as such. Nevertheless, I intend to give this scheme my most earnest and zealous support. I shall lecture for it, though not at its expense.

Where courses of week-night lectures are arranged I will deliver my share, and more than my share, and do so gratuitously. In the case of Sunday evening lectures—and I hope to see a hall opened in the East End of London—I shall have to make a charge based upon a calculation of my average earnings in the Athenæum Hall. But I can only spare a few Sunday evenings. I cannot be expected to do more than give the other platforms the occasional advantage of the President's appearance upon them.

For the rest, I have simply to say that as this scheme is (so to speak) a child of mine, I am not likely to let it suffer from want of nursing. Perhaps I shall have more to say about it in next week's *Freethinker*. Meanwhile I ask the Freethought party to take it as an earnest of what will be done if they give adequate support to the Twentieth Century Fund.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Source of Moral Obligation.

ONE of the questions which constantly occupy the attention of ethical writers is, "What is the source of moral obligation?" After ages of experience, it is not difficult to decide what actions are moral; but the point to be considered is, *Why* are they so, and what are the best means to be employed to promote good conduct? The Christian's answer is plain, notwithstanding that it is thoroughly fallacious. According to orthodox Christianity, the moral source is supernatural, its sanction consists in obeying God's will, and its principal incentive is

the hope of reward in some future state of existence. Now, Secularists cannot accept these conclusions, inasmuch as they are all based upon individual speculation, and they lack the support of reason and experience, without which no moral code is adequate to meet human requirements.

The Secularist's answer is not only definite, but it is upheld by reason and justified by experience. From a Secular standpoint, human nature is the source of moral obligation; hence we urge that the more our nature is cultivated the better and stronger will be the moral source. Secularism teaches that the welfare of society, both individually and collectively, should be the true motive for moral conduct; while the incentive is to be found in the endeavor to promote the happiness and prosperity of the human race in *this* life, irrespective of any consideration of an existence hereafter. We, as Secularists, recognise that our obligation to live moral lives is derived from the fact that, as we are here and are recipients of certain advantages from society, we deem it a duty to repay, by life service, the benefits thus received. It has been well said by Emerson that "the mind of this age has fallen away from theology to morals." This is an obvious truth, for the intellect of the age is more than ever finding its justification for being moral in the results of action, rather than in the commands of creeds and dogmas. Still, it must be admitted that although, like trees, we grow and expand from within, there seems, as it were, an iron band around us, that prevents our free expansion and our full growth. The quality of our acts may be good to a certain degree, but it is not of the necessary strength. The quality has been impoverished through neglect and theological adulteration; and what is now required is persistent and intelligent conduct, that shall purify life, and rid it of the legacy of ignorance, folly, and superstition of the dark past. Our hope is in purification; we want earnestness and candor to take the place of the apathy and hypocrisy which have so long held sway. Then practical morality will illuminate the hearts of men, and virtue will shed its lustre upon the emancipated humanity of the world.

While we have ample reason for gratification at the progress of Secular ideas as to morality, we are not oblivious of the fact that the method of advocacy adopted by recent ethical writers has tended largely to confuse the issues pertaining to the moral question. These gentlemen have not entirely outgrown the inconsistency born of theological influence. For instance, they profess to be opposed to Christianity, and yet they favor and sanction some of its most palpable absurdities. They also avow that their teachings are distinct from Secularism, while the constitution of their "distinct" Association is based upon one of the fundamental principles of the Secular Society. We gave some instances of this last week in our article on "Ethical Confusion." We find a similar perturbation of mind manifested in an article by Mr. George A. Smith, which appeared in the *Ethical World* of August 11. The writer says:—

"The constitution of the Union of Ethical Societies affirms one of its objects to be, 'By purely human and natural means to assist individual and social efforts after right living.' The words descriptive of the means to be employed, though expressing an undeniable truth, seem to be really superfluous; for, whether or not there be a divine, and whether or not there be a supernatural, it is manifestly beyond the power of any society or union of societies of human beings to employ divine or supernatural means for the furthering of any object at all. To assert that our means for helping to righteousness are to be only human and natural is to allow that other people may perhaps employ means that are not human and natural—which appears to me to be an absurdity, and, moreover, an aggressive and dogmatic absurdity. It is an assertion that quite needlessly and gratuitously offends well-meaning workers, who perchance think that they have some power of evoking, if not of themselves employing, some means that are other than human and natural. Let them think so; what does it matter?"

Apart from the ambiguity of much of the above, it is a curious mixture of truth and error. Certain it is that the object given from the Ethical Union is not "distinct" from Secularism, for the same idea was propounded many years ago by Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, and is still inculcated by the National Secular Society. But Mr. Smith thinks that the use of the words "human" and "natural" is "superfluous," because, even if the

"superfluous" exist, it can be of no service in ethical culture. He forgets that the means of promoting the well-being of society have always been considered either as natural or supernatural, or as a mixture of both. Therefore, from an ethical standpoint, it is desirable to make it clear that moralists rely for assistance in their work upon purely "human and natural means." A distinction is made between "evoking" and "employing," but for what purpose it is not at all evident; for to evoke supernatural aid implies a belief in it. Although the prayers of human beings are "human efforts," their object is to obtain "divine" aid. Mr. Smith admits that the "object" of his Society expresses "an undeniable truth," and he does not agree with the assertion that the means should be considered only human and natural. Of those who think that aid comes through a supernatural source he says: "Let them think so; what does it matter?" We answer it matters very much if it is "an undeniable truth" that the opposite view is correct. When the Royal Society was established, it was said to be for the discovery and diffusion of natural knowledge, it being the custom at that time to ascribe almost everything that happened to supernatural causes. We allege it to be of the highest importance that men should understand that the means for their improvement are real and natural, not imaginary and supernatural, which Mr. Smith himself admits can never further "any object at all."

Mr. Smith thinks that a "case might easily be made out for prayer—not that cringing and grovelling form of prayer that appeals directly to an assumed power or mind different from and higher than man, but a prayer that expresses in poetic and rhapsodic language the highest and noblest aspirations of man." Of course, if society could be reformed by prayer, the object sought for would not be gained by "purely natural means." Intelligent persons, however, do not supplicate the invariable order of nature, but adapt themselves thereto, and comply with the natural conditions by which they are surrounded as best they can. Whether it be by prayer or not that society is reformed never enters the minds of those who understand those conditions of existence which really determine human operations, whether for good or evil. So long as people believed in supernatural interference in the affairs of every-day life, health, education, and social comfort were neglected, the study of these not being thought necessary to moral living. Besides, it is not reasonable to expect people to adopt purely human and natural methods if they believe that the world is governed by a supernatural being who is supreme over all. Neither can such believers be consistent workers in a society whose teachings allege that the conditions of existence can be modified and improved by purely human effort. Mr. Smith directs the attention of ethical societies to the methods adopted by the Churches, but his description of prayer would fail to find a sympathetic response in any church with which we are acquainted. This coquetting with the believers in Christianity, or "running with the hare and hunting with the hounds," is not ethical consistency; and, moreover, it deprives humanity of that moral courage which adds nobility to character.

That Mr. Smith, like many of his ethical co-workers, is guilty of this inconsistency is placed beyond all doubt by his following reference to Christ:—

"But, even more than in prayer and in ritual, the Church has found its main strength for uplifting the people in the preaching of Christ. It appears to me to be mere folly for the Ethical Societies to neglect that great life, which has been the most potent influence for good in the history of the world.....I do protest that Christians have no right to a monopoly of Christ, and that a body of men and women banded together for the furtherance of the ethical life cannot afford to ignore that life which, more than all others, sets before the world an ethical ideal.....I do urge that, whatever the dangers and difficulties the preaching of Christ by non-Christian people entails, that great lever for uplifting the race should be utilised to the fullest extent."

Here we have rhapsody with a vengeance. To use Mr. Smith's own words: "All this talking about ethics is mere waste of brain power and an idle squandering of life." The fact is, there is no conduct attributed to Christ that has the slightest useful bearing upon the requirements of English industrial enterprise. How

do social affairs stand to-day after this supposed lever, with its much-talked-of potent influence, has been operating for two thousand years? Mr. Smith admits in his article that society is at the present time a prey to vices of all kinds. He asks:—

"Are not the moral perils of vice, intemperance, and gambling, the social perils arising from overcrowding, sweating, lack of education, and a thousand other causes, a menace to civilisation of so grave a nature as to make it urgent upon all who have eyes to see and hearts to feel to unite in one common crusade against the common danger?"

We answer decidedly in the affirmative, and herein we see the failure of Christ as a "lever for uplifting the race." Whatever ethical teachers may preach, they do not attempt either to follow his example or to obey his precepts.

We respectfully suggest that Mr. Smith should study the estimate of Christ's character as given in our article in reply to Dr. Coit, which appeared in last week's *Freethinker*. In the meantime, we submit that, in our opinion, the picture drawn of the life of Christ and of his preaching being "a moral lever to raise the world" is entirely arbitrary, based upon imagination, and not founded upon fact.

CHARLES WATTS.

Journalists and Jesus.

THE Holy Ghost and the Angel Gabriel might be regarded as journalists. They have sufficient claims to be elevated even to the high dignity of Fellows or Vice-Presidents of the Institute of Journalists. The misfortune is that there is no certainty as to their existence, except in the imagination of the pious; and their addresses are vague. They are not even known to the police.

The four Evangelists, to whom it is supposed we are indebted for the Synoptic Gospels, might also be termed journalists, except that they have dealt so badly with their task. If alive now, they would not be entrusted by any respectable journal with the small responsibility of writing a paragraph about a vehicular accident in the next street. They would be certain to mix it all up.

Jesus must have miscalculated the period for his appearance on earth. Why didn't he wait until he could be interviewed and Kodaked? It would have been better for him and for us. We should then have known what sort of a person he really was. Somebody might have tempted him to speak into a phonograph, and then we should have had his accents permanently with us. We could also have seen his portrait in the *Penny Illustrated*.

It really does seem funny that Dr. Parker can be reported verbatim to the extent of three or four columns, whilst his Master is known to us only by some meagre and fragmentary records. As a matter of choice, one would prefer to know a little more about Jesus and a little less about Dr. Parker; but the Almighty, apparently, has ordered it otherwise.

The members of the Chartered Institute of Journalists have recently met in London. A little later, and some of them will be drifting to the Church Congress at Newcastle-on-Tyne. That will be in the way of business. Why on earth they want any preparatory sermons it is impossible to imagine. Journalists, as we know them, are not given to sermons unless they are forced to hear them and can make "copy" out of them.

When the present writer was a member of the Executive of the great Institute of Journalists, he always protested against any sermonising being introduced in the program. But he was overruled by Sir Algernon Borthwick, now Lord Glenesk, the proprietor of the *Morning Post*. It was thought that pressmen must have pious discourses delivered to them, whether they liked them or not. Some saw the possibility of "linage" in the pulpit utterances, and availed themselves of the opportunity. Others watched the speed of the preacher, and noted how often he achieved the rate of two hundred words a minute, and mentally made phraseograms when they didn't go to sleep. At the recent Conference there was the usual maudlin nonsense in the way of special sermons—at St. Paul's, the Brompton Oratory, and the City Temple. Some

journalists went to each. Or so-called "journalists" went thither, for the Institute now takes in anybody who will pay a subscription and who has distinguished himself or herself by writing a little humble "par."

Dr. Parker—they called him *John Parker* on their program, but they now know that his real name is Joseph Parker—preached a special sermon. He preceded it by a prayer, which is a choice sample of bad English and rambling ideas. The "Amen" which concludes it is the best part about it.

He says something about "creeping into Thy house," and bread sent from heaven, and blades of grass, and a feast in the wilderness, and deliverance by the Cross. "Oh, the miracle, the thrilling wonder of it all!"

Yes, indeed, the miracle and thrilling wonder of it all! The miracle is that such palpable nonsense could impose on rational creatures at all. The wonder is that they haven't resented such transparent humbug by throwing a stool at the praying idiot's head. Later on in his sermon he talks of the "mocking spirit that laughs at prayer and takes no interest in music." But why should a person who laughs at prayer necessarily take no interest in music? This kind of linking two absolutely separate ideas may suit Dr. Parker's rhetoric, such as it is; but it is obvious nonsense to any intelligent reader. Here is an extract from this special sermon of his to journalists:—

"Religion is not the only thing in which some men are infidels or unbelievers. You think that 'infidel' is an ecclesiastical term, a chapel word, a church vocable. No; it penetrates the whole substance of life. Men are infidel at many points; and infidelity never made any man strong or grand, a fountain of consolation or a Hercules of help; it robs man, utterly depletes and crushes man. Some men have said in written books, therefore I am not quoting from memory, that when they gave up their recognition of God they gave up pictures and music and the parabolic and symbolic aspects of the very nature they professed or endeavored to worship. When God goes, he takes a lot with him."

What nonsense! Why should a man, when he gives up his "recognition of God," give up pictures and music too? The man who suggests this is obviously a fool.

The *Rock*, which is usually very tender with Dr. Parker, finds itself compelled to make various serious reflections on this sermon. After referring to the sermon by Canon Scott Holland at St. Paul's, it says in an editorial: "It was left to Dr. Parker to depart from the beaten track of thought, and we must sorrowfully confess that, in doing so, he stumbled, to the possible gratification of some, but to the genuine distress of many more. To aim at originality is commendable in a world of common places, but even if the mark be hit the result is not always happy." The *Rock* further observes that this was not the first occasion on which the same preacher has given the enemy occasion to blaspheme. He was, the *Rock* admits, startling; but, it asks, was he fairly honest, and, if honest, was he wise?

Dr. Parker had something to say about "ideal journalism," of which he evidently does not approve. He says:—

"I do not want the ideal newspaper. I have no time to read it, and no desire to read it, and on the whole I can well do without it. I want to know the facts. If there was a murder yesterday, tell me about it; and if a man or woman was divorced last week, what is the story? Hold it in the sunlight and let the sun burn it. I want to know the facts, the events, or things which did really occur, and I want to study them from the religious as well as the social standpoint; they are to me lessons in human nature."

This is very sensible; though it might be put more forcibly and effectively. The extracts we have given cover the most important portions of Dr. Parker's address to the journalists. It is a pity that he spoiled his holiday by returning to town to deliver this discourse, which is far from satisfying. Though a silly old gentleman often, there are some good points about Dr. Parker. He is always in earnest, and now and then he is eloquent. But he is dreadfully egotistical. He has a sublime indifference to fact and logic; he has a flow, but not a command, of words; his rhetoric is mostly hysterical, and his ebullitions in regard to "infidelity" are childish and ridiculous in the extreme.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Clerical Cackle.

"'Tis oft religion does the foulest treason.—*Lucretius*."

ACCORDING to the *Daily News* of September 10, the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Ripon has been unburdening himself of his lordly views on science. This wealthy disciple of the poor Galilean Carpenter quotes with approval Fiske's remark that it is utterly misleading to talk of any conflict between science and religion. After this, we are not surprised to hear that this spiritual peer of England imagines that religion is now scientific, and science religious. Such reconciliation as his lordship hints at is clearly impossible. The impregnable position of science may be stated in a few words. Science claims, and will wrest from religion, the entire domain of cosmological theory.

Science and religion have ever been mortal enemies. Scientific teaching, scientific investigation, or, indeed, any form of intellectual liberty, has always been incompatible with assent to the dogmas of religion. The entire organisation of priestcraft has invariably been brought to bear against science on the ground that it is a powerful solvent of religious faith. Ignorant theologians, innocent of scientific training, have always sought to weed out the faculty of thinking in the rank and file of the faithful. Like Ulysses's seamen, their ears are to be filled with wax and deafened to the song of the Sirens. There is hardly a field of study which does not contain pales beyond which the true believer must not stray. Think of the obligation imposed upon Christians of taking not only their religion, but their science, politics, and sociology, from a band of priests, over-zealous and under-educated, whose only excuse for folly is their ignorance. Astronomy was opposed by the Church. The Christian fathers rejected, among other things, the notion of the plurality of worlds. Not on physical grounds, of which, in truth, they knew nothing, but on account of its supposed inconsistency with an imaginary scheme of revelation. As, however, they also denied the existence of the Antipodes upon a similar principle, their saintly decision is not likely to be pleaded as final.

The resistance of the Church of Christ to the prevalent opinion of scientists has no indisputable claim to our respect. When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory were all in turn received in the same venerable quarter with equal disfavor, we are inclined to attribute that resistance, not to any clear perception of the comparative weakness of the arguments of the scientists, but to a general dislike of knowledge. The priests always feared that a closer scrutiny might discover the absurdity of the doctrines of their so-called revelation. Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of God. The early chemists were charitably regarded as agents of the Devil. Physiology and medicine were furiously opposed on similar grounds. Geology and biology were also opposed tooth and nail by the beloved Bride of Christ. She bitterly resented inquiry. She preferred explaining natural phenomena by mythological invention. But, as the fairy tales of religion lost their hold upon the imaginations of men, scepticism took the place of blind belief. As in the great age when the whole world was first opened up to the enterprise of voyagers, and an impulse over all the coasts of the civilised world drove men abroad in the hope of discovery and adventure, the motive was the high curiosity of scepticism. Men were seized with a longing to satisfy the emotion of wonder, by which the unknown and the undiscovered attract daring men within their sphere. So, in the early ages, men were to be found—

"Yearning with a desire
To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bounds of human thought."

Knowledge was sought for its own sake, with little expectation or desire of turning it to personal advantage. The fearful struggle to establish intellectual liberty extends over the centuries. In that long war the Church of Christ hesitated at nothing in order to crush freedom. If she had been able, she would have strangled science in its cradle. It is too true that the world "grew grey at the breath" of Christianity. The

sun of Christianity was not fully risen till it had seen the paling of the star of Liberty. The scientific intellect was compelled, like an exhausted soil, to lie fallow for two millenniums before it could regain the elements necessary to its fertility and strength. What a record of unutterable guilt this monstrous and blood-stained Christian superstition has to answer for. Let the murder of the hapless Hypatia, the fiery martyrdom of Giordano Bruno, the prison cell of Galileo, bear witness. Even now, in the face of the "Galilean Serpent," scotched, but not slain, there are some weaklings who would surrender in the face of the foe. Can it be that Vanini, Campanella, Spinoza, suffered without results? Can it be that any have so far forgotten the history of our glorious past as to trust to priests for the future? Rather it should be that we attack with renewed vigor this hoary superstition, to fulfil the world-old desire, that man shall be free and priests shall no longer be permitted to set despairing limits to our knowledge and to blast our hopes.

MIMNERMUS.

Secular Education in the People's Schools.

THE Conference on Secular Education in Board Schools, convened by the National Secular Society, and held in the hall of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union, will probably do little to influence the coming School Board election. Its conveners hardly professed to believe that it would or could. But it was, nevertheless, more significant than the London press appears to have understood. The delegates—from branches of the National Secular Society itself, S. D. F. Branches, Radical Clubs, and Ethical Societies—evidently represented a widespread dissatisfaction with the "compromise" of 1871—a dissatisfaction which the official leaders of the Progressive party have not hitherto taken sufficiently into account. There is no doubt that, but for the fear of the Riley faction, and the party pressure to which it lent excuse, the question of secular education would before this have been made an issue in School Board contests. It is plain that many of the London Radicals are determined that a straight fight on that issue shall not much longer be deferred to any consideration whatever.

There were some curious cross currents in the Conference. The Social Democratic delegates saw and used an opportunity for pushing the candidatures of the four candidates of the S. D. F., who are already in the field, all of them being frankly pledged to secular schooling. The delegates of the Ethical Societies (some of whom were rather afraid of Socialism) endeavored to obtain the approval of the Conference for a scheme of "moral instruction" to which they referred in somewhat vague terms; but the Conference would have none of it, and insisted upon confining itself to its one simple and declared object. In the end the Conference, including many of the non-Socialist delegates, felt bound to pledge its support, by a large majority, to the four S. D. F. candidates. So far as the information obtainable on the spot went, these are the only candidates who have as yet issued addresses which definitely pledge them on the subject. But it is characteristic of the apathy which distinguishes this election that information as to candidates and their professions was but scantily forthcoming.

Mr. G. W. Foote, President of the N. S. S., who occupied the chair, was careful to explain that by "secular" he did not mean "secularist." One delegate gave point to this by confessing himself a Churchman, whose public advocacy of secular education and opposition to the compromise dated back more than fifteen years. It is as well to recognise that among those who object to be rated and taxed for the maintenance of School Board religion are many Catholic Churchmen who do not in the least approve of the line taken by Messrs. Diggle and Athelstan Riley in the heated controversies of recent years. They simply object to having to pay for the teaching in public elementary schools of a form of religion which they regard as the least common measure of Protestant Nonconformity established and endowed out of the rates. "The Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants"; but it is, at least, a defective religion from the point of view of those who believe in a historic Church as the interpreter and custodian of Holy Writ. The Secularist, of course, objects to the teaching, in public schools and at the public expense, of any religion at all.

As we have already said, the promoters of the Conference do not look for great results at the November election, and the most important work undertaken on Tuesday night was the organisation of a permanent committee, which will devote its energies during the next three years to the education of the ratepayers on the subject. If the committee is made a really representative one, we may expect to see the well-worn "religious question" of the people's schools take on a new development. Such a development has, however, long been seen by close observers to be inevitable.

—London Echo.

Acid Drops.

"A MINISTER" writes to the *British Weekly* in reference to the recent letter published in that paper with the heading, "Atheistic Lectures." He recommends as the best "antidote for Secular Demonstrations" the systematic and vigorous preaching of the Gospel in public places. His advice is to "leave disputations for other occasions." What "other occasions"? He cannot mean in church or chapel. Perhaps he really means—leave disputation alone altogether. That is quite the feeling of many Christian advocates who have not emerged in any great triumph from controversies in which they have engaged with unbelievers. No wonder they now fight shy of discussion.

The sole representative of the Church of England at Pretoria was the Rev. J. Godfrey. After the escape of Mr. Winston Churchill this gentleman withdrew from religious services to the officers, and wrote a letter which they considered both improper and insulting. Parson Godfrey valued the safety of his position more than the immortal souls of the British prisoners. But that is, after all, by no means surprising. Historically, it is characteristic of the clerical profession.

The disaster at Galveston has resulted, apparently, in the loss of more than 8,000 lives. What a beautiful "act of God"! According to the Scriptures, "He doeth all things well." But somehow we don't see it.

Moody is dead, but Sankey lives. Some people say he is a Semite, and he certainly has that appearance. However, he sings the praises of the Christian Savior, and no doubt does very well at the business, for he is still extremely popular. There was a terrible crush the other evening at Exeter Hall, on the occasion of his reception. Many thousands of people were invited, and only 3,000 could get in. The result was the blocking of the Strand, the worry of the police, and a prodigal use of bad language.

The Pope doesn't mean to be out of the China scramble. He wants his share of what is going, and has put in a claim for 60,000,000 francs on account of murdered Catholic missionaries. That is a very big figure. The Pope and all his Cardinals might be polished off for such an amount.

Some day we shall know the truth about foreign missionaries. In China that end is being contributed to by the jealousy between the Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries. The Rev. Charles Inwood, recently returned from the northern provinces of China, has been addressing meetings in Ireland on the subject of foreign missions. He said the Roman Catholic missionaries were political agents and used carnal weapons. "They had contributed to a large extent to the present unfortunate situation." Of course, the Protestant missionaries had done nothing of this kind. "So far as the Protestant missions were concerned, there was no bitter antagonism on the part of the Chinese." All the same, we notice that the Protestant missionaries made a bolt for it wherever they were able. It is estimated that ninety-three British and American missionaries have been murdered in addition to several Swedish and Danish Protestants. At the same time, over 170 missionaries stationed in the provinces of Chi-li and Shan-si are unaccounted for.

A "Thirty Years' Reader" writes to *Reynolds's Newspaper* a scathing exposure of missionary methods. The letter cannot be dismissed as mere irresponsible chatter. The editor says that the writer holds a very important position in China, and has exceptional opportunities of knowing that country and its people. The writer thinks it "high time something was done at home to prevent any more missionaries entering China." He points out that it is hopeless to attempt to make real converts of the Celestials, and he distinctly discredits the "addresses and reports of glorious work" given by missionaries when visiting this country.

The missionaries, he says, "have the best houses in China, finely furnished, large staffs of servants, and a splendid table. They do no work during the summer, but go away to the hills, where they have fine summer residences built, and they are not long in the country before they commence to buy land and make money. This is not idle talk, as all foreign residents in China can bear out what I say. I have visited missionaries and dined with them, and can assure you that if they were in England they could not keep up the houses they do here and be able to go away to a summer resort for three or four months every year. Another great benefit they have is that they get so much for every child they have. Now, Mr. Editor, I beg of you to do your best to try and prevent any more money being sent to this country to support missionaries. I am sure the money can be laid out to much better advantage in England amongst the starving poor than to keep a lot of idle people here in luxury. The missionaries are flocking to Shanghai in hundreds, and many of them stay with their

families at the best hotels at seven dollars per day. This equals at least fifteen shillings per day each, so you will see it requires capital to do this. You can hear people remark on all hands what an enormous amount of money must be sent from England to keep these people going. Many say they are a curse to the country."

The *Cape Times* publishes an account of recent events in China, contributed by Mr. W. Wilmer, a Cape Colonist, who for some years past has been settled at Newchwang as steamship and railway agent. He says: "Anyone who has travelled in China will endorse my statement that it is an undoubted fact that the missionary body are entirely responsible for the present state of affairs. The Chinaman is naturally of a peaceful and law-abiding disposition, but will not brook any undue interference with his religious beliefs and superstitions, which were in existence long before Christianity was ever heard of, and he very sensibly wants to know why we are so desirous of thrusting our particular dogmas down his throat when he does not want them. The merchant and trader he welcomes everywhere, and is most scrupulously honorable in his transactions with them."

"These poor misguided missionaries," continues this resident, who is in an extremely good position to judge, "do ten thousand times more harm to trade and commerce than ever they do good to religion. They are most cordially detested by native and foreigner alike, and if the foolish people at home who support these missions could only be brought to realise this and keep them in their own country, it would be much better for the world in general, and we traders out here in particular. These 'Jesus Christ men,' as they are called, have been preaching the doctrine of hell-fire so long to these poor benighted heathen that they (the heathen) term us everywhere the 'foreign devils.' Then when any trouble comes the Gospel-mongers are the first to run away from the consequences of their folly. We have quite a number of these missionary refugees quartered upon us now for protection who have fled from up country."

"If," says Mr. Wilmer, "you talk to the Chinese of religion, of heaven, or hell, they will yawn; but speak to them of business, and they are all attention. I should like to place this problem before the fools at home who believe in converting the so-called heathen. In one province of China only there is a population of ten to twelve millions of friendly and peaceable people, and eighteen missionaries in eight years have converted eleven Chinese; how long, then, will it take to convert the remainder?"

Some enterprising idiot has sent us a tattered copy of *Hymns and Songs for Mission Services*, with the stamp of "Matthias Road Mission Chapel" upon it. A hymn is marked, No. 183, "Stop poor sinner." Well, we did stop, just to see what it was about.

Can you sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe?

Such is the first question we meet, and as it doesn't trouble us; we pass on to the meant-to-be startling statement that—

Ere you are aware, you'll drop
Into the burning lake.

But even this doesn't startle us. We have heard it so often.

Ghastly death will quickly come
And drag you to the bar;
Then, to hear your awful doom
Will fill you with despair.

Well, it all depends on what drinks are served at that "bar." Lemon squash or iced claret-cup wouldn't be a bad doom in this weather.

Writing to us on the withdrawal of the Crewe Wesleyans from the Free Church Council, because the Council passed a resolution demanding a School Board, Mr. Hirst Hollowell says Crewe is a borough where all the schools are denominational, where free education has been refused again and again, and where Nonconformist parents have been directed by the Government to get their free education at schools most objectionable to their conscience. The Crewe incident, unfortunately, does not stand by itself. In numerous districts a portion of the Wesleyan influence is too often thrown into the scale of denominational monopoly. At Hyde, Cheshire, a working man's child, for whom free education was requested at the Wesleyan school, was refused, and the Board of Education, being appealed to, directed the father, if he wished for free education, to send the child to St. Paul's Roman Catholic School. He replied to the Board that he would do nothing of the sort, and week after week sent his little girl to the Wesleyan school; but every time she was turned back. Then the father was actually prosecuted for not having sent his child to school, and was fined. He refused to pay the fine for an offence he had not committed, and thereupon, instead of distraining on his goods, the authorities had him arrested and marched through the streets between two policemen to the lock-up. The Northern Counties Education League became disagreeably active, and

the Home Secretary ordered the fine to be remitted. Mr. Hirst Hollowell regrets that there are other Free Church offenders besides Wesleyans. A Congregational minister promised the other day to attend a meeting in a large town of the North, to advocate a sorely-needed School Board; but, before the meeting, he received a letter from one of his deacons, who took a personal interest in a Congregational Voluntary school, warning him against doing so. Mr. Hirst Hollowell is sorry to have to tell, for the first time, such a story against his own denomination, but thinks it only right to do so while criticising the action of members of another denomination. Another correspondent calls attention to the action of the Wesleyan minister and officials at Worksop, who, in defiance of the Conference resolutions, united with the railway, drink, and other interests, who formed the anti-School Board party, to support the collection of a voluntary rate, to be collected by the ordinary rate collector, and thus keep out a School Board. Out of this rate the Wesleyans received £800 for their own school.—*Christian World*.

The Clerical Superintendent of the Protestant Reformation Society has written to the Home Secretary, protesting against the remarks of Mr. Plowden, magistrate at Marlborough-street Police-court, in a recent case which was before him. It may be remembered that a man named George Carroll was fined forty shillings for "using insulting language" towards the Roman Catholic religion in a lecture on "Christianity versus Romanism," delivered in Hyde Park. Mr. Plowden remarked: "If the people you were addressing, and those you were insulting by your offensive caricature of the Catholic Faith, had carried you to the nearest pump, I don't think anybody would pity you.....It is scandalous that a man with a grain of sense should attack religion in this way simply to pander to his own self-conceit.....I hope the day will come when all this kind of speaking in the parks will become contrary to law."

We protested at the time against these most injudicious and extra-judicial remarks of Mr. Plowden—who, by the way, seems to be singularly pleased when listening to his own voice. The Rev. Dr. Wright says, very properly: "I cannot but regard it as most dangerous to the public peace that an English magistrate should thus encourage the roughs to take the law in their own hands, and to lay violent hands on open-air speakers from whom they may differ." The Home Secretary promises, in reply, to give due attention to the subject of the letter.

There seems to have been a curious confusion as to the form of affirmation at an inquest held last week before Mr. Wynne E. Baxter, the East London Coroner, at the Mile End Vestry Hall. One of the jury, when about to be sworn, said: "I object to hold that book." The oath was then administered to the foreman; and the rest of the jury, with the exception of the objector, took hold of the Testaments, and were sworn in in the usual fashion, in a body. To the man who objected to take the oath on religious grounds, the Coroner's Officer said: "The same oath which your foreman has taken on his part you affirm on yours?" "Yes," replied the juror, and took his seat.

An Evangelical Church weekly, the *News*, says "we think Apostolic bishops could be readily found amongst our experienced and working clergy who would prove quite as efficient, if not more so, than some now on the Bench, with a stipend of £1,000, or at most £2,000." We think so too. Any way, there is nothing to be said in favor of the attempt now being made in Southwark to raise £133,000 to secure an income for a single bishop of £4,000.

Canon Philips, speaking at the Carlisle Diocesan Conference last week, said he thought there were far too many Sunday amusements—tennis, golf, cycling, and Sunday papers. Many people think there are far too few. But, if these were prohibited, are the Gospel-shops likely to profit by an increased attendance? The public-houses might.

Sabbatarian Christians at Ramsgate have called upon the Corporation to put down the Sunday trading at the entrance to the pier and on the sands. Apparently they cannot bear to see a man eating whelks or a boy drinking lemonade on the Lord's Day. They get their own grub indoors, and regard outdoor eating and drinking as flat blasphemy.

"Bruno" writes to the *Paisley Daily Express* on the question of Sunday trading, which seems to be agitating that town and neighborhood. He replies to a correspondent who quotes Exodus xx. and 8 to back up his Sabbatarian views. "Bruno" asks him whether he is "prepared to endorse other passages in Exodus such as Ex. xxxi. 14, 15, where it says all Sabbath-breakers are to be put to death; or Ex. xxxv. 2, 3, where it says: 'Those who kindle a fire on the Sabbath Day shall surely be put to death'; or if we go to Numbers, where it says the penalty for picking up sticks on the seventh day is death. I think," adds "Bruno," "I have shown the absurdity of going to Moses, or whoever wrote those books, for our guidance at this time of day."

In the same paper "Riada," dealing with a memorial from the Scottish National Sabbath School Unions to the Paisley Town Council, also on the subject of Sabbath trading, quotes Paul in his Epistle to the Romans xiv. 4, 5, 6: "One man esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." Also he quotes Colossians ii. 16 and 17: "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat or in drink or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days."

One has always been struck by this allusion in Colossians to the new moon. Has it, perchance, some reference, prophetic and half-hidden, to the lunacy which periodically assails modern municipal authorities when incited to Sabbatarian persecutions?

Messrs. Cadbury, the famous cocoa manufacturers, whose advertisements of their own goods generally contain reflections on those of their trade rivals, are Quakers, and therefore opposed to war. They are so much for peace at any price that they refused to tender for supplying the British soldiers in South Africa, but they supplied their share of the chocolate boxes which the Queen sent out as presents to her fighting men. They defend this action on grounds of "loyalty." So it seems to be the Queen first with them, and Jesus Christ (as they understand him) afterwards. A good deal of correspondence on the subject has appeared in the *Birmingham Mail*.

Someone has sent us a copy of the *Islington Gazette* containing a letter by John H. Mitchell against "Infidels" and "Infidelity." We must be excused from answering this person. His information, his ability, his manners, and his veracity, are all beneath contempt.

Churchyards are supposed to be more or less filled with the dead. But a certain parson has recently refused to let the word "died" appear on a tombstone in his "God's Acre." He says it doesn't square with his ideas of immortality. But did not Paul say that the seed must die before it can come to anything? Of course he was wrong in his biology, but that doesn't matter. It is hard that a Christian who agrees with Paul should be sat upon by a clergyman who says that Paul was inspired.

The *Church Gazette* is not a little sarcastic at the expense of the *Methodist Times*, which, it says, has its little way of putting things that sometimes reads rather strangely. For instance, the principal leader of the other week had the following heading:—

ONE MILLION { Guineas
Pledges
Conversions.

From which, says the *Church Gazette*, an ill-natured person might gather that the first thing is guineas, the next teetotalism, and the last "conversion." By the way, one wishes someone would define this last term.

I once had a female relative much given to tract-distributing (says a correspondent). She would stop anybody and everybody for the sake of getting rid of a tract. If a baby was born, its parents received tracts; if anyone died, the survivors were served with quite a handful of literature. The people round, being of a charitable sort, bore with her; but I fancy they had a notion she was not quite right in her head. I shall never forget how she interviewed a friend's gardener, and forced a tract upon him. He asked for several more, which she gladly supplied. "Thank'ee, ma'am," he said, being a most polite man. "I'm allus glad o' these. Bless you, it was only this morning as I said to my wife, 'I must be getting some more tracts soon,' ses I, 'for they be the best things I knows on for shaving-papers.'" "But don't you read them?" gasped the lady, who had kept him in this kind of literature for some time. "Read 'em, ma'am? Not me. I can't read." My relative collapsed.

The *Record* is asking why sermons are so often "ill-judged and inappropriate," especially those delivered in the churches of holiday resorts. And the *Church Gazette* alludes to the "vacuous and fatuous utterances which have evoked the cry about 'Why men won't go to church.'"

Ructions at Rhyl. Bills have actually been posted upon the doors and walls of churches and chapels announcing a theatrical performance. But the offenders have been caught, and the magistrates may be relied upon to avenge such awful sacrilege.

Catholic processions at Hull are exercising the mind of the faithful Protestants. The vicar of Garton points out in the local press that they are illegal. Still, he seems to be impartial, for he recommends the suppression of all "religious manifestations" in the public thoroughfares.

Rev. James Henry Thomson, curate of Fawley, is in trouble. The other party to the trouble is a very young servant girl. The rest may be imagined.

The Bible Christian Society at Whitemoor, near St. Dennis, was holding a harvest thanksgiving service, when John Trevenna, an "acceptable" local preacher, fell down in a faint, and expired in less than fifteen minutes. He was heard to mutter, "I'm passing," but did not add to what destination. He leaves a widow in delicate health, and a large family, so that his "passing" can hardly be regarded as "providential."

The Blackburn Parish Church was built in 1820-1826, at a cost of £26,000. The money was raised by parish rates, levied by a special Act of Parliament. We daresay a handsome Secular Hall could be built at Blackburn on the same easy conditions.

Francis Jackson, builder, of Coles-lane, Sutton Coldfield, has gone bankrupt. Assets £60, liabilities £6,432. Within a week of filing his petition he sent three guineas to the Wesleyan Century Fund. Just in time.

"Felix," of Pontardulais, contributes to the *Carmarthen Welshman* a smartly-written letter in criticism of the Rev. A. Keogh, whose orthodoxy seems to have involved him in a maze of puzzles and absurdities. "Felix" apparently writes so well that the editor of the *Welshman* appends a note, in which he says he has had to omit the latter half of the letter because the being of God, the accuracy of the Bible, etc., are questions too large to be discussed in his correspondence column. Well, the world is wide, and the subjects may be discussed outside the limited space of the *Welshman*, though the editor of that paper seems to be fair enough up to a point.

Every extreme of fanaticism is possible to people who read their Bible conscientiously, and set about putting its precepts into practice. In Illinois there is a sect known as Omish, which forbids that its members shall display any affection for their families, holding that all earthly ties are sinful. One of the Omishites was Sam Moser, who, on account of his love for his wife and family, was expelled from the sect. The terrors of excommunication made Moser insane, and he killed his whole family. The Scripture upon which the creed of Omish is based is Luke xiv. 26: "If any man come unto me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"—a passage that has broken up countless thousands of families, and prevents the father of Moser, who is a member of the sect, from pleading for the life of his son. The good that religion does in this world is a by-product. Its main crop is evil, which is harvested at all seasons. The latest "incarnation" is Mrs. Louis Figg, of Gretna, in Nebraska, who believes herself to be Christ, and to possess his divine attributes. Her delusion is shared by her husband and a knot of followers, and the sect has a creed made up of about equal parts of insanity and ignorance. Female Christs are not a new departure, although reincarnations of the Virgin Mary are more numerous, because physiologically less absurd and theologically just as orthodox. Like the men who have believed themselves other Christs, these women are uniformly insane, which suggests something about the probable mental condition of him of Nazareth.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Praying Mantis, an insect brought to the London Zoo from the Transvaal, is so called because of the prayerful position of its forelegs. "So divine a creature is this esteemed," says an old writer, "that if a child ask the way to such a place, she will stretch out one of her feet, and show him the right way, and seldom or never miss." After this eulogy, it is sad to read that these insects are very voracious and cannibalistic, and if kept together will fight to the death.

Strange Funeral Fancies.

Few know that a considerable number of people provide themselves with coffins, and sometimes with shrouds. They would generally be regarded as very eccentric, but their only eccentricity appears to be that they wish their last appearance on earth to be in accordance with their own tastes and feelings. "Yes," said an undertaker, "it is a singular fact that there are many people who are interested in the question of how they will be treated after death.

"Many will go so far as to not only be measured for their coffins and shrouds, but actually have both made according to their directions. I have in mind a case of the lady who, years before she died, had her coffin and shroud made and sent to her home, where they were kept under her bed. Whenever a fit of 'meditation,' as she called it, seized her, she would robe herself in the long white gown and lie down in the coffin. Such examples as this are, of course, rare."

Sugar Plums.

THERE was a fine audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote delivered the opening lecture for the 1900-1901 season on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ." The lecture—a fairly long one—was followed with close attention, and was evidently much appreciated. A considerable number of ladies were present, which was a very agreeable feature of the meeting.

Mr. Foote occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again this evening (September 23), taking for his subject "Does Death End Us?"

Mr. Charles Watts had a capital audience last Sunday evening at his lecture in the Camberwell Secular Hall. We are informed that he was in his best form, and that his lecture was enthusiastically applauded. This evening, Sunday, September 23, Mr. Watts again occupies the same platform. This will be his last appearance at Camberwell at present.

We have had a visit from an old friend of Mr. Joseph Symes. He is over here on a visit from Australia, where he has been settled for fifty years. He is nearly ninety, but looks much younger. His name is H. G. Hodgson. He is a wonderful old veteran, and is still jolly and full of humor. This gentleman reports that Mr. Symes was looking as well as ever when he left him. He thinks the prospect is improving at Melbourne, and that the circulation of the *Liberator* is increasing. He says that Mr. Symes would much like to visit the old country again, but he wants a lecturer and editor to fill his place during his absence. Well, that is the difficulty. Mr. Symes might be brought over without a great deal of trouble, but we have no lecturer and editor at present whom we could export to Australia. We wrote to our far-off colleague after the Whit Sunday Conference, and we are expecting to hear from him daily. As soon as we do so, we shall see what can be done to make his proposed visit to England an actuality.

We are glad to hear that Mr. C. Cohen had very good open-air meetings on Sunday. To-day (September 23) he lectures at the Ridley Road Station, Kingsland. Time, 11.30 a.m. No doubt he will have a large audience.

Mr. Ward delivered his first address as a "Secular Education" candidate at Birmingham, in the Prince of Wales's Assembly Room, on Sunday evening. He was listened to very attentively by a large audience, and a vote of confidence was passed with only five dissentients. We hope he will come out as well at the poll.

Mr. H. Percy Ward debates with Mr. J. W. Mahony on the question of a Future Life. The discussion is to take place at Birmingham, in the Temperance Hall, Temple Street, on Monday evenings, September 24 and October 1. Mr. Mahony, who is a Spiritualist, will maintain that "The intelligent part of man survives physical death." Mr. Ward will maintain that "The present life is the only one of which human beings have any knowledge."

The *Freethinker* is folded this week, and will be so regularly hereafter. This is one improvement, and others are in contemplation. Henceforth, at any rate, subscribers will not have to complain that the paper comes into their hands in bad condition. The folding will be done by machinery at the printers, and this will reduce to a minimum the chance of copies being ill-used in transit and distribution.

The Conference on the question of "Secular Education" and the approaching London School Board elections, convened by the National Secular Society's Executive, took place on Tuesday evening, September 11, in the larger hall of the Club and Institute Union. It did not attract the attention of the London press, although one notice of it, and that a very good one, appeared in the *Echo*, and came, we believe, from the pen of a delegate. Still, the Conference itself was fairly successful. In addition to the N. S. S. Executive and some of its metropolitan Branches, several Branches of the Social Democratic Federation, the Metropolitan Radical Federation, and two Ethical Societies were represented. A representative of the Trades Council was present with a watching brief only. Mr. G. W. Foote was voted to the chair, and in a brief speech explained the object of the Conference. Mr. Cohen, on behalf of the N. S. S. Executive's sub-committee, moved the first resolution, which was seconded and carried unanimously. It ran as follows: "This Conference of London Societies is of opinion that, as an act of justice to all members of the community, and as the only method of effectively ending the religious controversy on the School Board, the time has arrived when the instruction given in Board schools should be completely severed from all forms of theological belief, and pledges itself to do all that lies in its power to return candidates at the forthcoming elections who will support the principle on the School Board of London."

Two representatives of Ethical Societies, including a daughter of the late Mrs. Harriet Law, tried to edge in a reference to "moral instruction," but the Conference refused to complicate the issue, and resolved to leave "moral instruction" for what it was worth, as a subsequent question.

Reference was then made to candidates already in the field who were pledged to support Secular Education, and the Conference resolved that the following four candidates should be worked and voted for by *real* Progressives—namely, G. Hewit (Tower Hamlets), H. Quelch (E. Lambeth), W. J. Barwick (Finsbury), and F. J. Jones (Chelsea). These candidates all belong to the Social Democratic Federation. Still, they should be supported by the friends of Secular Education, whether Socialists or anti-Socialists; for the only *actual* difference *now* between their program and that of the Chapel party—the so-called Progressives—lies precisely in this very article of Secular Education.

Mr. Thomas Shore moved, and Mr. F. Verinder seconded, a third resolution. Both held that it was too late to do much at the approaching School Board elections. They therefore proposed—"That a permanent committee be formed for the purpose of preparing the way for a determined and general fight for Secular Education at the elections of 1903." This was carried; but the appointment of the committee was left until another meeting of the Conference, which the N. S. S. undertook to call as soon as possible; Miss Vance, in the meanwhile, undertaking to act as secretary.

A hope was expressed that the N. S. S. would see its way to placing a candidate or two in the field, where none are yet standing in the interest of Secular Education. The matter was discussed two days later at a special meeting of the N. S. S. Executive. Mr. Cohen was asked whether he would stand as a candidate in some London division. He replied that he was not eager to do so, but he would undertake the job if they wanted him to. During the discussion it was held by several members that it was too late then to enter the lists with any chance of success. When the vote was taken, there were seven in favor of Mr. Cohen's standing, and seven against it. In these circumstances, the President thought the matter should be dropped, as it was hardly advisable to proceed without something like practical unanimity.

Should any enthusiastic friend of Secular Education be prepared to plank down £40 or £50, the President would not only get Mr. Cohen to fight for a seat in some London division, but throw himself into the struggle on behalf of his young colleague's candidature. It is impossible for Mr. Foote to stand for a seat himself. He has quite enough obligations already, and a seat on the London School Board involves two or three good days' work every week. The open Board meeting is a simple affair. It is the committees that call for so much time and attention.

The following is a complete list of the Societies represented at the "Secular Education" Conference:—National Secular Society's Executive, Edmonton Branch, East London Branch, Camberwell Branch, Bethnal Green and West London Branches, North Camberwell and Lansdown Liberal and Radical Club, Metropolitan Radical Federation, Bradlaugh Club, East London and South London Ethical Societies, London Centre S. D. F., Kentish Town Branch, Marylebone Branch, Clerkenwell Branch, Bethnal Green Branch, Clapham Branch, Stoke Newington Branch, Shoreditch Branch, North Camberwell and Mile End Branches, People's League, London Trades Council, and a representative of Mr. Barwick's Committee.

The *Shields Gazette* reports the funeral of Mr. John Lamb, notes that he was "very highly respected by a large circle of acquaintances," and refers to the presence of a "large gathering of relatives and friends" at his burial, where the *Secular Service* was read by Mr. S. M. Peacock.

We are always pleased to receive the *Freethought Magazine*, edited by Mr. H. L. Green at Chicago. It is one of our most welcome American exchanges. The September number contains a good supply of varied and interesting matter; not the least readable being the editorial "All Sorts." We note that Editor Green has still to solicit financial aid for his publication, and we hope he will receive it adequately until the magazine is self-supporting.

Mr. Foote's first article on "Shakespeare: the Man" is reproduced from our columns in *Secular Thought* (Toronto). Professor Goldwin Smith has long been resident in Canada.

In our next issue will appear a review by the editor of Mr. J. M. Robertson's new book on *Christianity and Mythology*. Mr. Foote will also contribute the first of two articles on Marie Corelli's new novel, *The Master Christian*.

Readers of the *Freethinker* are requested to bear in mind that we are still anxious to receive the names and addresses

of newsagents who will display one of our weekly contents-sheets, copies of which are forwarded by post to such newsagents on Wednesday evenings from our publishing office. We should be glad if the friends who send us these names and addresses would take the further trouble to see whether the contents-sheets are displayed.

The Bible of Nature.*

FREETHOUGHT.

THE Brahmans have a legend that the first children of man ascended Mount Gunganoor, to visit the castle of Indra and inquire into the secrets of their origin. Speculations on the source of life, on the mystery of creation, the cause of good and evil, and similar problems which we might sum up under the name of religious inquiries, seem, indeed, to have occupied the attention of our ancestors at a very early period. An irrepressible instinct appears to prompt the free discussion of such questions, and in a normal state of social relations the attempt to suppress that instinct would have appeared as preposterous as the attempt to enforce silence upon the inquirers into the problems of health or astronomy. A thousand years before the birth of Buddha the Sakyas, or ethic philosophers, of northern Hindostan, visited the mountain-passes of Himalaya to converse with travellers and seek information on the religious customs and traditions of foreign nations. The book of Job, probably the oldest literary product of the Semitic nations, records a series of free and often, indeed, absolutely *agnostic* discussions of ethical and cosmological problems.

"Canst thou by searching find out God?" says Zophar. "It is as high as heaven: what canst thou do? It is deeper than hell: what canst thou know?"

"Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress the work of thy own hand?" Job asks his creator; "thine hands have made me; why dost thou destroy me? Thou huntest me like a fierce lion. Wherefore, then, hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh, that I had given up the ghost and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. Are not my days few? Cease, then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death."

And again: "Man dieth and wasteth away; man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fall from the sea and the flood dryeth up: so man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more he shall not awake nor be raised out of his sleep. . . . If a man die, shall he live again? . . . Wherefore is light given unto them that are in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? who long for death, but it cometh not; who rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find the grave?"

Or Elihu's interpellation: "Look up to heaven and see the clouds which are higher than thou: If thou sinnest, what doest thou against *him*? If thou be righteous, what givest thou to him, or what can he receive of thine hand?"

Could a committee of modern sceptics and philosophers discuss the problems of existence with greater freedom?

For a series of centuries the monkish custodians of the literary treasures of Greece and Rome expurgated the writings of the bolder Freethinkers, and, for the sake of its mere parchment, destroyed more than one work that would have been worth whole libraries of their own lucubrations; yet even the scant relics of pagan literature furnish abundant proofs of the ethical and metaphysical liberty which the philosophers of the Mediterranean nations enjoyed for nearly a thousand years. The marvellous development of Grecian civilisation in art, science, politics, literature, and general prosperity coincided with a period of almost unlimited religious freedom. Speculations on the origin of religious myths were propounded with an impunity

which our latter-day Freethinkers have still cause to envy. The possibility of all definite knowledge of the attributes of the deity was boldly denied two thousand years before the birth of Emmanuel Kant. The Freethinker Diagoras travelled from city to city, propagating his system of Agnosticism with a publicity which seems to imply a degree of tolerance never yet re-attained in the progress of the most intellectual modern nations. The sceptic Pyrrho ridiculed the absurdity of all our modern Secularists would include under the name of *other-worldliness*. A Roman actor was applauded with cheers and laughter for quoting a passage to the effect that "if the gods exist, they seem to conduct their administration on the principle of strict neutrality in the affairs of mankind!"

Democritus, Euhemerus, Anaxagoras, Epicurus, Aristotle, Libanius, Pliny, Lucretius, and the latter Pythagoreans, almost entirely ignored the doctrines of Polytheism, which, indeed, never assumed an aggressive form, the attempted suppression of the Christian dogmatists being an only apparent exception, dictated by motives of political apprehensions rather than by religious zeal; for, at the very time when the followers of the life-hating Galilean were persecuted as "enemies of mankind," a large number of other Oriental religions enjoyed privileges bordering on licence. The Grecian colonists of Asia Minor never interfered with the religious customs of their new neighbors. They studied and discussed them as they would study the curiosities of other social phenomena; and a purely naturalistic system of education would undoubtedly lead to analogous results. Intelligent children often evince a remarkable tact in avoiding certain topics of conversation, such as allusions to personal or national defects, scandals, the *arcana* of sexual relations, private affairs, etc., and the experience of after years may confirm such habits of discretion; but no conceivable motive but deference to an arbitrary precept could dictate a similar reticence in the discussion of purely metaphysical topics, or of dogmas which, by their very pretence to a mission of extreme importance, should justify an extreme frankness in debating the basis of their claims.

Senator Hoar tells a very amusing story about Professor C. C. Felton's younger brother, who stood very high in the class at Harvard, but forgot himself so far as to use profane language. Young Felton, in consideration of being the professor's brother, received the mercy of private instead of public admonition, and the professor himself was commanded to administer it. He called the youth to his room and said: "John, I cannot express to you how horrified I am that my brother, in whose character and scholarship I have taken so much pride, should have been reported to the faculty for this vulgar and wicked offence." John said, with much contrition: "I am exceedingly sorry. It was under circumstances of great provocation. I have never been guilty of such a thing before. I never in my life have been addicted to profanity." "Damnation, John!" interposed the professor, "how often have I told you the word is profaneness, and not profanity?" The admonition ended there.—*Buffalo Courier*.

Captain Jack, the chief of the Modocs, gave the country a bad quarter of an hour, and was executed for it. A clergyman waited upon the tough old chieftain to offer consolation. He ended up a long exhortation by saying: "And if you repent of your wickedness in fighting good white men, the Great Spirit will permit you to go to heaven." With all the politeness in the world, Captain Jack inquired: "Do you think you will go to that place?" "Certainly," said the minister; "if I should die to-day, I would be there before night." Quick as a flash came the answer: "If you will take my place and be hanged to-morrow, I will give you forty ponies." The offer was not taken, and the clergyman sought heaven by a less direct route.—*Chicago News*.

Is God a policeman, that he is never around when wanted? In Worcester, Mass., on a recent Sunday, Theodore Plausse, a four-year-old boy, was burned to death while his parents went to church. The boy played with matches, igniting his clothes. His screams attracted the attention of his aged grandfather, who is a faith-cure advocate. The latter fell on his knees and prayed. While the boy's clothing was still blazing, neighbors broke in and put out the fire, but too late to save his life. And still the old man, and other old men and women, believe that God answers prayer.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

* From *The Bible of Nature*; or, *The Principles of Secularism*, by Felix L. Oswald.

Missions and Missionaries.

It is a natural impulse of generous minds to desire to extend the benefits acquired by knowledge and experience to fellow-men living under less favorable circumstances, and this desire becomes particularly strong when the advantages are supposed to have reference chiefly to the condition of the individual in a future state of existence.

All developed religions have been more or less missionary in spirit, the most active in proselytizing being the Buddhistic and the Christian. Buddhism is purely benevolent; its chief glory consists in its entire freedom from the persecuting spirit. Christianity, being founded upon the principle that those who do not believe shall be damned, is apt to display an aggressive disposition in trying to enforce its creed upon unwilling or recreant subjects. However, the prevailing animus is supposed to be an unselfish desire to rescue benighted human beings from ignorance and sin, and secure for them after death a place in the Christian heaven, where they will be blessed and happy for ever and ever.

In former times, when the Christian inhabitants of Europe and America knew comparatively little about remote countries, and still less about the origin and history of their own religion, it was natural that individuals among them should be fired with zeal to "save souls," and should go forth upon what they considered a sacred errand, taking their lives in their hands and avowing themselves ready for any sacrifice which might be involved in that untried and hazardous enterprise. It was also in the nature of things that societies should be formed at home for the direction and maintenance of these missionaries of the gospel, and that pious persons living in civilised countries should give of their substance to their wandering brethren exposed to suffering and danger for the Lord's sake.

The records of these spiritual pioneers, especially the Jesuits, are full of instances of individual heroism and of single-hearted zeal in what was then the only way to further what seemed a righteous cause. But all that is different now. The application of scientific discoveries and inventions to practical uses in steamboats, railroads, etc., has opened the whole world to our knowledge; the extension of commerce has tended to civilise formerly savage peoples, and assimilation between alien races proceeds gradually and naturally through the frequency of travel and the mutually beneficial interchange, not only of material products, but also of customs and ideas.

The International Conference of Religions, held in Chicago at the time of the World's Fair, ought to have opened the eyes and the minds of Christians everywhere to the fact that human beings can be physically healthy and intellectually wise and morally good without the help of Christianity, and that each branch of the human family must be left to develop itself according to the conditions of its being. Considering the time and money and labor expended in attempts to convert what we call "the heathen," the result is woefully small in numbers and, for the most part, inferior in quality. The majority of real or pretended converts are attracted by the temporal advantages of the change, and where the improvement has been made it is mostly apparent in the adoption of better methods of living, which have no connection with religious beliefs. The most successful missionaries are those who possess medicinal and surgical skill. Ignorant natives everywhere are ready to crowd around a stranger who relieves their sufferings and heals their diseases without money and without price; but here, again, the benefits conferred have nothing to do with Christianity, and the influence of the benevolent missionary does not usually reach beyond the physical needs of the grateful recipient. And why should it?

It is all very well for a foreign intruder to justify his presence by dealing out pills and potions to suffering neighbors, but he has no right to choke his Bible down their throats by way of recompense for his trouble. In fact, this "carrying the word of God to the heathen" is, in the light of our present knowledge, a great impertinence, and is regarded and resented as such by the most intelligent endurers of the nuisance. These people have their own Bibles and their own deities, which are as sacred to them as ours are to us, and have as much foundation, in fact; the believers in them will by degrees recognise the falsity of such creeds, just as we are beginning to do; there is really no need of our teaching fellow mortals another faith which they must later unlearn and renounce. Not many years ago a Christian missionary, on his way to India, fell in with an intelligent and educated native, who listened politely to the stranger's exposition of his doctrines, and then replied: "If your chief argument is the incarnation of the Son of God, you are wasting your time in coming to India. That is an old story with us. Almost every village boasts of a divine incarnation."

There we have the secret of missionary failures, as well as obvious proof of the needlessness and absurdity of missionary endeavors. We break into foreign dominions to teach the inhabitants our way of viewing things, which is not necessarily the best way, and now that they know more about the working of our system at home they are less than ever disposed to follow our lead. We condemn the oriental harem, and the orientals point to the prostitutes who swarm our

streets; we are horrified at opium smoking, and they are horrified at whisky drinking; we call them lazy and deceitful and superstitious, and they call us cruel and treacherous and superstitious. It is evident that whatever prestige earlier Christian missionaries may have enjoyed and profited by through the ignorance of the people to whom they ministered is now withdrawn, and, what is more injurious, not only to the cause, but also to the safety and welfare of the nations which persist in sending them where they are not wanted, is the growing recognition on the part of the natives that worldly interests are mingled with spiritual zeal, and that the attempt to overthrow their national religion means also a desire to appropriate their national dominions.

For many years the troubles in Eastern countries have been largely due to complications arising from the encroachments of the missionaries who have become more bold with the extension of their activities through the immense resources furnished by the societies at home. It is no wonder that Turkey delays and hesitates to comply with the arrogant demands of America in reference to a matter which certainly has two sides. It is no wonder that China is rising up to rebel against the aggressions of foreign armies which are invading the empire under the pretence of protecting a band of religious interlopers who have no business to be there. If the present dangers can be conducted off, so as to result merely in the permanent abolishment of the Christian missionary system, it will be a boon to the whole civilised world and a powerful guarantee for universal peace among the nations.

ELIZABETH E. EVANS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Tolstoi on Missions in China.

THE husband believes in Confucius. The religion of his forefathers is the one sacred thing of which he is supremely conscious. Behold the wife of his bosom a proselyte—twice a Christian, for the female proselyte's ardor is without bounds, it knows no reason. Man and wife each think the other eternally lost. Everything that he considers permissible, lawful, good, is a crime in her eyes—a terrible, dangerous error, at the very least.

He thinks her faithless, a traitress to his ancestors; she calls him blind, walking in eternal darkness. And when they meet in the common evening prayer, holy to the memory of their beloved dead, then the husband prays to them as to his patron saints, while the wife mourns them as sinners and lost. The husband thinks them in heaven; the wife believes them to be in hell's deepest cavern. So the Christian world has gained a soul, and society one more broken and unhappy marriage! Woe to the family torn by fanatical, religious strife.

Do you wonder that the missionaries were the first to suffer by rope, by the stake, and by torture when the slaughter of foreigners began way down in China? They were killed for revenge—as professional arch-destroyers of the family—the Chinese holiest of holy. The missionaries carry on their propaganda mainly among women; that means they set wife against husband. The Chinese regard them as immoral. They go further—they call us liars for saying that our God makes us love all men as brethren, while at the same time we treat the Chinese as dogs.

—*Chicago American*.

The Church and Children.

WE have become so accustomed to the religious lie that surrounds us that we do not notice all the atrocity, stupidity, and cruelty with which the teaching of the Church is permeated. We do not notice it, but children do, and their souls are irreparably maimed by this teaching. We have but clearly to understand what we are really doing, when we teach children so-called religion, in order to be appalled by the dreadful crime thus perpetrated. A pure, innocent, and as yet undeceived and undeceiving child comes to you, to one who has experience of life, and who possesses, or might possess, all the knowledge now accessible to mankind—and inquires about those fundamental truths by which man should be guided in life. And how do we answer him? Very often, indeed, we do not answer, but anticipate his questions, so that he may be provided with an incited answer ready for the time when his question arises. But that is not the case. The child has a vague idea of that source of all, that cause of his existence, that force in whose power he finds himself, and he possesses the elevated idea of this source—indefinite and inexpressible in words, but of which his whole being is conscious—natural to all rational men. And suddenly, instead of this, he is told that this source is nought else but some sort of personal, self-willed, and dreadful evil being—the Jewish God.

—*Count Tolstoi*.

Who Will Answer Prayer?

A Congregational Minister Who at Last Sees the Truth that the Providence of Man is Man.

THE Rev. William T. Brown, of Plymouth Congregational Church, in Rochester, N.Y., has reached and announced the conclusion that prayer to God is superstition, and that we must look to human association for the accomplishment of all good things. In a recent sermon on the text, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" he asked the question, "Who shall answer our prayer?" and spoke as follows:—

"The one thing that perpetuates prayer in the sense in which that word is used in the Bible is the assumption that there is a supreme being who possesses all power, who is able and willing to answer human petitions, and whose one purpose is to do right. The significance of that fact is not due to the mere circumstance that it appears in the Bible. It is due rather to the fact that it still characterises the bulk of the human race. Mankind cherishes to-day almost as generally as it did 2,000 years ago this faith that there is a supreme judge who will do right. That is the faith which accounts for these churches and temples scattered by the thousands all over the earth. That faith is implicit in all our religious services, in all the activity of our missionary societies, in almost innumerable actions of our life and customs of our civilisation.

"It is hardly necessary to multiply illustrations to establish the truth of this assertion. This is a world of prayer. Our hymns are all prayer. Our Sundays are days of prayer. At least once every seven days millions of voices are mingled together in prayer for almost every conceivable thing.

"And is it not true that nowhere in all human experience is such earnestness, such longing, such whole-souled concentration of mind and will and affections, to be found as in this act of prayer? It is at the supreme moments of our life that we pray—at the moment of our highest happiness and at the moment of our deepest sorrow. Here at this very moment, while we are under this roof where hundreds of prayers have been uttered, all over our world are men and women of all races and religions pouring out their souls in an agony of prayer; the millions of starving people in India praying for food; the Boers praying for their independence; the Filipinos praying for deliverance from what they regard as an oppression; fathers and mothers with streaming eyes and breaking hearts beseeching God to spare the lives of their dying loved ones.

"Let it be freely admitted that prayer has fulfilled a useful function of the life of men. No doubt that thousands of men and women have been better for their praying. Prayer has made men brave in battle. It has afforded relief to human hearts in times of sorrow and danger and loss. And yet it rests, as we all know, upon a pure superstition. No amount of praying will make the slightest difference in the lot of the starving people in India. There is no judge of all the earth to do justice for them. They will echo this cry in vain. Millions of them are dying, and many millions more in the years to come are going to die of famine, and their prayers are no more effective than the blowing of the wind. No God can do anything for them. If they are ever to find relief, if they are ever to find the fulfilment of their hopes and prayers, that fulfilment must come by human hands. To many millions of them such fulfilment can never come. No God has so far put in an appearance who can hear the cry of starving India. No God exists who can do anything for them.

"The prayers of the Boers are also vain. Had they not perfected themselves in the use of the rifle, they would have been reduced to subjection long ago. All their praying is of no avail. Their nationality is a thing of the past. No such thing as a Boer Republic will ever again be heard of. A few years hence not a hundred men will be found outside the survivors of the two African Republics to regret their extinction. The faith of those men is a delusion. No one questions its sincerity. No one will dispute the depth and earnestness of their religion. But it has no foundation laid deep in eternal truth. The God to whom they have prayed does not exist.

"Here are men and women praying for rain, beseeching the Almighty to save them from drought. And they still remain outside our asylums for the insane! Does anyone believe their prayers will have the slightest effect on the weather? Certainly not. And yet it lies within the power of the nation, within the power of organised society, and nowhere else, to determine that question, to answer those prayers. We are only reaping what we have sown. In pursuit of gain we have not hesitated to denude our land of its great forests, and we are slowly coming to see that, by that process, we are making disastrous changes in the distribution of moisture over this continent. So have flood and drought and cyclone followed in the footsteps of our national avarice, until we find ourselves face to face with many grave problems. But we are also discovering that it is perfectly possible for us to remedy this condition of things and solve our problems.

"We are discovering slowly, and it is highly probable that in the future we shall make far greater progress in that respect that man is the real master of nature, that nature

has been waiting for man to assume his rightful place before responding with her greatest resources. No sensible person believes that we have gone beyond the kindergarten stage in the discovery of the forces of this world, and in the mastery of those forces. The coming centuries are, no doubt, to witness the operation of a vaster chemistry than any other has so far been dreamed of. It is a mistake to say that we are the servants of nature. Such a position is contrary to all reason. And we shall some time know that it is truer that men make climate than that climate makes men. The science of forestry is, in the near future, to answer our prayers for protection against at least two great calamities. A knowledge of the laws of health and the laws of sanitation, and the establishment of normal and just conditions of labor and recreation and leisure, will, beyond all question, solve many another problem over which men and women in other days were accustomed to pray.

"What this world needs to-day, and what each individual in it needs, is sanity and light. We need to put it far from our minds that we are violating some divine law when we affirm the supremacy of man. We are simply asserting the divinest law the human mind can conceive of. We men and women can make the sovereignty of love and the reign of justice a reality. Within ourselves, and not elsewhere, does that sublimest possibility lie. Not in the skies, not in the life to come, nor in any reputed representative of Jehovah, for no such representative exists, nor ever did exist, but in humanity. We men and women have it in our power to determine and establish what is right. We men and women are clothed with the only divine attributes that exist, or ever can exist. We men and women can answer every genuine prayer that swells in our hearts. We men and women are in our corporate capacity as the people, as humanity, as a nation, as society, the manifestation in time and on the earth of omnipotence and infinite benevolence. In our hands, on our souls, rests all that tremendous responsibility which we have been wont to invest the being of a God with. To human association, and to that alone, are we to look for the accomplishment of any just or loving purpose in this world."

Correspondence.

"CHRISTIAN FALSEHOODS."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have been away from London on a holiday, or should have written sooner in reference to your remarks which appear in the *Freethinker* dated September 2. Let me at once say that I had no wish to "waste" your space, but only desired to present the facts as I understood them. But as you have criticised my letter without publishing it, I now venture to ask you to insert these few lines in reply to that criticism.

(1) You write: "It is nonsense to repeat that Dr. Horton's sermon may have been published without his knowledge or sanction in such a journal." I assure you it is *not* nonsense; it is the truth. The sermon, unless I am misinformed, appeared entirely without the Doctor's sanction, and, therefore, the accusation of "deliberate falsehood," made by Mr. Cohen, is quite unwarranted and unjustifiable.

(2) My statement, that Darwin was "at least a nominal Churchman," is *not* "a falsehood" of mine, or the "careless echoing of a falsehood of someone else," as you assert. It is Darwin's own admission, which you will find by referring to his *Life and Letters*, vol. iii., p. 178.

(3) Speaking of his Christian burial, you observe: "He was dead then. That farce was arranged by others." Well, when living, he did not regard it as a "farce." In a letter to his friend, Dr. J. D. Hooker, when writing of Lyell's burial, he said: "I am deeply rejoiced.....and nothing could be better than Westminster Abbey" (*Life and Letters*, vol. iii., p. 197). As Darwin thought that nothing could be better than for Lyell to be laid in the great Christian Abbey, what right is there for the suggestion that he would have wished for something else for himself? A. H. TABRUM.

[This correspondent seems to think that repeating nonsense makes it less nonsensical. We care nothing for his mysterious "information." If the report of the sermon by Dr. Horton was unauthorised and inaccurate, let Dr. Horton disavow it. Until he does so, we attach no importance whatever to Mr. Tabrum's explanations. With regard to Darwin, he was a nominal Christian in his early days, but not after the age of forty. We have his own word for it, in his Autobiography, that he ceased to be a Christian and became an Agnostic. Sir Charles Lyell was a Unitarian, and his burial in Westminster Abbey was not such a farce as that of Darwin.—EDITOR.]

Minister—"I am sorry I didn't see you at church yesterday, Tummus." Tummus—"Weel, ye see, it wis siccan a wat day it wisna fit to turn oot a dog in. But I sent the wife, sir."—*Tit-Bits.*

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, "Does Death End Us?"
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, C. Watts.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3.15, C. Cohen.
FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The late Charles Bradlaugh and Colonel Ingersoll."
MILE END WASTE: 11.30, E. Pack; 7.15, W. J. Ramsey. September 26, at 8.15, R. P. Edwards.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, Mr. White.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, C. Cohen.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Schaller.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 11, S. E. Easton; 7.30, F. A. Davies.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, F. Schaller.
KILBURN (corner of Victoria-road): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11 (Bull Ring), "The Coming School Board Election"; 7, see Saturday's *Daily Mail*. Mr. Ward will lecture in the Bull Ring on Wednesday and Friday evenings at 8—weather permitting.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, E. M. Pack, "Pious Sceptics."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, S. Reeves, "Education."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Mr. Lill, "Robert Owen, the Precursor of Social Progress."
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, Readings.

Lecturers' Engagements.

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

ARTHUR B. MOSS, 44 Credon-road, London, S.E.—September 23, a., Victoria Park. October 7, a., Victoria Park.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—September 23, Birmingham; 24 and October 1, Debate in Birmingham. December 9, Glasgow.

F. A. DAVIES, 65 Lion-street, S.E.—September 23, e., Stratford.

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