

THE
Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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The New Parliament.

As we are going to press, on Wednesday morning, it does not seem likely that the new House of Commons will differ materially from the old one. There may be a shifting of half-a-dozen seats one way or the other. More than this is hardly to be expected, unless an unforeseeable change comes over the political temper of the unpolled constituencies.

The *Freethinker* does not concern itself with party politics. We shall not, therefore, express any opinion as to the general character and value of the new parliament. Moreover, it is pretty certain, while we have a free press and a free platform, that the government of this country will be carried on in fair harmony with the ideas and sentiments of the people. For this reason, if for no other, the moulding of public opinion is a far more important thing than the election of representatives. They really rule who influence the minds of the electors, and even of those who are not electors, including all the women in the kingdom. We would rather occupy the editorial chair of this journal than a seat in the House of Commons. We would rather be a force than a register—a cause than the most conspicuous effect.

Whatever is the relative strength of parties in the House of Commons, it is well that it should comprise some interesting personalities. This makes no difference on divisions; indeed, the time has passed when the most powerful and brilliant speech could turn a single vote; and this very fact lends a somewhat farcical air to the bustle and oratory of the House of Commons. Nevertheless, the dramatic interest of the proceedings—whether they lead to anything or to nothing—is a matter of some importance. A hard-working nation needs amusement, and as long as we read reports of what goes on in parliament we shall be pleased to have politicians there who are capable of sustaining its liveliness.

It is pleasant to note that Mr. Labouchere has retained his seat for Northampton. He is not exactly a statesman like the great Charles Bradlaugh. He is the Radical editor of a Society journal. He affords the public accurate information as to the prospective movements of royalty, and as to the way in which the "upper suckles"—as Jeames expresses it—manage to kill their time. All this is dear to the hearts of the people who dote on a monarch and love a lord; and it pays very well at the rate of sixpence a copy per week. We understand that it is worth some £7,000 a year. And when the editor of such a journal plays the part of an extreme Radical in politics, the contrast is piquant, and lends a certain charm to a composite (and impish) personality. We are also glad to see Mr. John Burns retaining his seat for Battersea by a small but sufficient majority. Such a sturdy and strenuous representative of the working classes is an excellent leaven in the assembly of "the gentlemen of England." His vigor and honesty are

refreshing. Not that he is by any means perfect. He can seriously reply to the astute Mr. Chamberlain (of all men), and talks of "answering a fool according to his folly." But this is one of the little mistakes of an enthusiastic temperament, and may easily be forgotten. What we do *not* forget, and *cannot* forget, is that Mr. Burns, who is reputed to be still a Freethinker, does not recognise, with any practical force, that the real, pregnant, decisive battle is the battle between reason and faith, between the free human spirit and the cramping influence of superstition. The truth is that all mere parliamentary action is mechanical, and therefore dead, in comparison with the vital power of education and principles. Had the member for Battersea assisted, even discreetly, in clearing theology and priestcraft out of the public schools, instead of throwing in his lot with the bastard Progressives, who keep the Bible in the schools and as much theology as suits the Nonconformist Conscience, he would have done more lasting good than he ever can do by means of little Bills in the House of Commons. While the beliefs which produce mischief prevail, it is only of partial and passing utility to attempt to correct some of their worst consequences.

Mr. Winston Churchill is another interesting personality. If we are to have Conservatives in parliament at all, and of course we *must*, it is a gain to have some of them with the advantage of youth and accessibility to new ideas.

Freethinkers may, at least in one respect, look with alarm on another long continuation of Tory government. Further sops will probably be thrown to the Church and the denominational schools, a Catholic University will be set up in Ireland, and religion will be supported in every other possible way. And if Lord Halsbury continues to sit upon the woolsack, we shall see the Oaths Act flouted by judges, magistrates, and coroners, whenever it is safe for bigotry to override the legal rights of freethinking citizens.

It is not very likely that a Tory Government will lend the least assistance to the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. Nor, for that matter, is much to be expected from the orthodox Liberals. We regret to see a man like Mr. Augustine Birrell, who is a lawyer by profession, and who actually reviewed Mrs. Bonner's biography of Charles Bradlaugh, professing not to know that Secularists labor under any disabilities. His legal knowledge is very imperfect if it does not extend to the laws relating to blasphemy and heresy. We hope he will take the trouble to learn the truth, and do something to promote the great principle of religious equality. It is not enough to extend the area of privilege. What is wanted is one level of freedom for all forms of opinion.

One important point remains. What attitude will the new parliament take up in relation to China? Will it favor unlimited missionary enterprise and the consequent wrecking by the Christian Powers of the oldest civilisation of the world? Or will it show justice, and even pity, to nearly a third of the human race?

G. W. FOOTE.

The Christ Story a Myth.

THE story of Jesus Christ has long appeared to me to be a curious record of credulity, perverted imagination, and theological machination. From the very inception of the story, the most wild, absurd, and contradictory views have obtained as to the nature and character of its hero. It is said that many in the early centuries entertained doubts as to the existence of the Jesus of the New Testament. It was denied by some that he was a man; "and that not by the enemies of the Christian faith, but by the most intelligent, most learned, and most sincere of the Christian name, who ever left to the world proofs of their intelligence and learning in their writings, and of their sincerity in their sufferings." Others contended that he was not a God; and the belief that he was a phantom, having no corporeal existence, found ready adherents. It will thus be seen that, in the primitive days of the Christian faith, very different views were held as to the nature of Christ. From this fact it is legitimate to conclude that the Christ story is based upon the idealistic, not the realistic.

The same diversity of opinion exists at the present day as to the personality and character of the alleged founder of Christianity. Certain "advanced" believers, while not prepared to endorse all the New Testament says of him, yet consider that the story of his life, whether it was real or imaginary, furnishes the basis of an ideal that is ethically useful. How such a conclusion can be reasonably arrived at is more than I can understand. It is quite true that an ideal founded on fiction may sometimes have its advantages, but to possess these it must be consistent and capable of having a possibly useful and practicable influence upon human conduct. But this is just what the conceptions that have obtained of Christ have not been. The idealistic notions entertained of him, so far as I have heard them expounded, are visionary and incapable of being realised in daily life. They are purely subjective, without having any objective reality. Hence, the ideas still expressed of Christ are throughout contradictory. For instance, the Trinitarians believe him to be God, but the Unitarians regard him only as a man; while the Swedenborgians think him a "divine humanity." The General Baptists maintain that he died for all men, and the Particular Baptists assert that he died for only an elect number. Many of Christ's admirers look upon his character as being perfect; others admit that, being human, he must necessarily be imperfect. Christian Socialists claim him as a great social and political reformer; but their more religious opponents aver that he was a spiritual regenerator, and that he spoke the truth when he said: "My kingdom is not of this world."

Personally I am driven, after a careful and impartial examination of the subject, to regard the story of Christ as mythical. The word "myth" is from the Greek, and means a fable, a fiction, an invention. Writers upon the subject have defined the term as meaning "a false hypothesis," "a form of traditional error." In this sense Christians have applied the word to the beliefs of ancient nations. The stories referring to the many Christs who are said to have appeared before the advent of Jesus of Nazareth are invariably described by Christians as myths. Now I allege there is no solid reason why an exception should be made with any of the supposed saviors of the world, Jesus included. The same mythical character pertains to them all; and the more I read and reflect upon the incidents, teachings, and doctrines of Christianity, the more do they appear to me to resemble what we are told of heathen mythologies. Emerson says that the doctrines of Jesus suffered distortion in the first and second centuries, and that Christianity became a mythus, as the teachings of Egypt and Greece had become before. This may be so, but it does not alter the fact that the entire person and character of Christ himself bear the marks of the mythical. Spencer put it that the mythical grew out of ancestor worship, and that primitive man credited objective nature with those faculties he found himself possessed of for the purpose of accounting for the

movements and characteristics manifested in phenomena.

There is no doubt but that the mind is capable, under certain conditions, of making things that are not appear as if they were. This doubtless will account, to a large extent, for much of the fabulous with which the New Testament abounds. The miracles which Christ is said to have performed could be wrought only when and where the people were in a particular mental condition. Before sceptical inquiries the miraculous could not take place. The virgin birth, curing diseases by faith, and restoring the dead to life are fictions belonging to ages of ignorance and credulity. No sane person believes that such events could happen at the present day. Of course, marvellous manifestations occur now, but they are generally acknowledged to be natural productions.

The following question has frequently been put to the present writer: "If there is any truth in the theory that the Christ story is a myth, how is it that the belief that he was a real person has been so long perpetuated?" The answers to this query are numerous. From my reading of history, and my personal experience of the claims of what is called Spiritualism, there is nothing more difficult than to destroy the effects of hallucination, and to eradicate errors from the human mind, which errors have been transmitted from age to age through channels of custom and emotional credulity. Take the case of witchcraft and the existence of a personal Devil. Both of these myths are taught as realities in the Bible. For ages the Church urged that the teachings in reference to each were true, and thousands of credulous persons have accepted the existence of witches and of the Devil as a verity. Their mythical character, however, has been discovered, and their fictitious nature exposed. And yet to-day both myths have their adherents. The story of William Tell, and of his shooting the apple on the head of his child, is another striking instance of how hard it is to disabuse the mind of delusions engendered during ignorant and superstitious ages. Although as early as in 1598 the story was pronounced a myth, and Tell, the hero, a non-historical person, we are told that the majority of the Swiss people believe the story to this day. Many proofs could be given to show that the continuity of a belief is no proof of its truth. The fact is that, so long as the notion prevails that all phenomena are the manifestations of some hidden supernatural power, adherence to any myth is possible. But as soon as a correct conception of nature and of her laws is firmly established in the human mind, any departure from a rigid uniformity of those laws will be deemed utterly incredible.

For centuries the Church in this country has been teaching the unthinkable doctrine that man and God were united in the person of Jesus; that he was the supernaturally-begotten Savior of the world; and that it is absolutely necessary to believe, without questioning, that such teaching is true, at the risk of being regarded as outcasts in this life, and being burned "for ever and ever" in "the life that is to come." As infants were taught this monstrous doctrine as soon as their receptive faculties were at all active, and as they were solemnly impressed in every stage of their development that it was a divine reality, to doubt which was criminal, it is not to me surprising that the multitude complacently accepted a ready-made faith. When once this error took possession of the human mind, and was supported by Acts of Parliament and national custom, its perpetuation was a matter of course. Fashion, self-interest, and intellectual indifference upon the part of the masses have tended to foster the delusion which priests and ignorance have caused to be associated with the name of Christ. Besides, even many intelligent persons do not concern themselves as to the accuracy of the records of ancient history, particularly when a knowledge of the truth of what is recorded would disturb their faith, which to them has been cemented by time and strengthened by priestly impositions. That this is true in the case of the majority of the professors of Christianity is evident to my mind from the fact that there exists no historical evidence that such a person as the Christ of the Gospels ever lived. This lack of evidence I will endeavor to prove in my article next week.

CHARLES WATTS.

China and the Missionaries.

"EVEN the worm will turn if you tread on it long enough" was the manner in which a schoolboy lately delivered himself of an old proverb, and passing events in China give point to the maxim. Patient as the average Chinaman may be, there are points beyond which even he will not go. The recent outbreak has been violent, not altogether unexpected, and let us add, in justice to the Chinese, not altogether unprovoked. The shameless manner in which the great Powers have stolen slice after slice of Chinese territory, the moral reasoning in virtue of which a man who is already robbed of part of his possessions is compelled to share his remaining goods among all other possible thieves, and last, but by no means least, the irritating presence of thousands of missionaries of an alien creed and nation, setting the laws at defiance, and trampling upon the native religions, have all contributed to bring about the present eruption—an eruption all the more ferocious because it occurs with an Asiatic people, and is fed by religious zeal, always the most cruel of motives.

The present outbreak has, however, made one thing tolerably clear, and that is the responsibility of the missionary agencies for a great deal of the existing trouble. One need not go farther than the societies themselves for proof of this. The Catholics are energetic in asserting that it is Protestant methods that are reprehensible, the latter returns the charge with interest upon the former. Under these circumstances one may feel justified in assuming that both are tolerably correct in their charges, that it is simply a case of "When rogues fall out," etc. It is quite certain that the Chinese do not want the Christian religion, and that they will not have it. In spite of the most lavish expenditure, and the offering of bribes in the shape of free education and medical attendance, in addition to less honorable methods, the number of native Christians, on the missionaries' own showing, remains miserably small. Thus the Church Missionary Society, spending upwards of £30,000 annually, does not increase its Church membership at the rate of one convert per year per missionary, and of those returned half are children. The Baptists, with a staff of 208 missionaries and an expenditure of over £9,000, converted in 1898 209 adults and children and lost 156, leaving a net gain of 137. The London Missionary Society, which spends nearly £37,000 per year in China, has 43 agents at Hong Kong who can boast of having 225 Church members after 57 years' work, and of having 41 less on their rolls than they had four years since. At Peking, after 39 years' work and a staff of 26 men and women, their membership was lowered from 521 in '96 to 241 in '99. And this, not on independent and antagonistic testimony, but on that of their own published returns.

Of course, under these circumstances, a people who will not have the glorious gospel of Christ must be inherently stupid, depraved, and undeserving of any sympathy. Occasionally, however, the worm turns; and, although the Chinese have usually remained silent under the attacks of missionary reports, a recent article in the *Daily Mail* on "All the Trouble in China" brought down a really clever reply from the secretary to the Chinese Minister in London. The *Mail* does not like "either the tone or the matter of the article," which is only natural; although, to do the proprietors of that paper justice, I believe that if there was a chance of running a paper with profit in China they would be quite ready to encourage the Boxers and lead an attack on Christianity. The "regret" is simply a matter of business, its existence determined by the larger number of subscribers.

Mr. Ivan Chen is evidently a philosophical Confucian, and his reply to the *Mail* writer's sneers at the Chinese superstitious reads like a *Freethinker* article. All the trouble comes, he explains, from their having in their midst in China a religion "almost identical with the Christian religion, and who are very jealous of others who are bringing in what they consider a competing faith." The opposition the Christian meets with is the result of a temper and feeling akin to his own. Only the other day a London magistrate hoped that attacks on religion would be prohibited by law, and practically invited people to assault those who spoke against the

religious beliefs of others. We are not so far removed from the Chinese in this respect after all. But, of course, the Christian differentiates. You, he says to the Chinese, indulge in the foolish practice of a praying machine, a contrivance by which, after inserting a number of printed slips and turning a handle, you seek to get your desires. Mr. Ivan Chen's reply to this is too delicious to curtail. "Many years ago," he remarks, "it was discovered that if one wrote his prayer and placed it in a tea-cup, and gave it one turn, it was just as good as repeating the prayer orally. Ten turns were equal to ten prayers. This was also found to be true, no matter to what extent the apparatus was increased in size, or the number of prayers added to it; so at the present time they put 1,000,000 prayers written on thin paper in a large vessel mounted on a pivot. On giving the vessel one turn it registers 1,000,000 prayers, each of which is just as effective as any other prayer. If anyone doubts this, we challenge them to a competition. If your missionaries can show us any devices in Europe which are more efficacious in keeping off devils, or cheaper or more expedient in propitiating deities by prayers, than those that exist among our ignorant people to-day, then, and not till then, will it be time for you to send your missionaries, and the superstitions which you doubtless think are new, to China."

Here is a fair, straightforward challenge. Let a number of prominent European praying machines—i.e., the clergy—be selected, and also a given number of Chinese instruments. Let a test case be taken, and let the Chinamen grind away at his wheel, and the Christian utilise his voice. Then we can give our verdict by results. For myself I submit that the praying wheel is a great improvement on our own method. It is cheaper, it saves time, and it doesn't disturb the repose of devout but weary worshippers.

Mr. Ivan Chen declares that the Chinese have no objection whatever to European science, European medicine, or European engineers, so long as they do not threaten Chinese institutions; but that peace is impossible until the missionary has been eliminated from the Chinese problem. One portion, at least, of this assertion, that concerning medicine, is borne out by the missionary reports. The Church Missionary Society alone claims to have attended to 100,000 patients during the last year—which certainly does not look as though everything foreign were an abomination. Commercial relations, too, do not seem to be objected to. Sir George Goldie told a Reuter's correspondent, on his return from China in July last, that, apart from those interested in commerce, "the Chinese people—although, as a rule, most courteous to individuals—do not want us or our customs, or, above all, our religion. This last is the main grievance, and has been for a century. No doubt Europe has much to teach the Chinese in the art of war, in pure science..... But, apart from these subjects..... Europe cannot teach them much, while it has something to learn from them. Their code of ethics is as high as ours, and their system of local government (by parish councils) had, until the first intrusion of Europeans, a durability which Western nations must admire and envy."

No, it is the religion that the Chinaman raises the strongest objection to; and, judging from the admissions made by Christians as to the character of their converts, there does not seem much wonder at it. Here is a sample of one Chinese Christian community, taken from the last report of the C. M. S. (p. 380):—

"Of the six or eight Christian shop-keepers in Fuh-Ang city, not one closes his shop on Sunday. Gambling by 'Christians' is at present also a great cause of sorrow to us; not only gambling, but gambling in which they invariably win, proving they are professional tricksters. I am afraid, after some further trial, that a large number of names will have to be struck off the rolls at some of the Fuh-Ning stations."*

And it is hard to detect any great difference between the Chinese belief in devils and the practice of Christian agents described on the preceding page, where Christian agents engage in the task of casting out devils from a girl, who, "at the name of Jesus, sneered in a horrible way, and we really felt the presence of the evil one."

But there is one real grievance against which the

* As at present there are only 92 Church members, 13 of whom are missionaries, the outlook is cheerful.

Chinese rightly rebel. We have gone to China in conjunction with other Powers, ostensibly to put down a rebellion of the people against their Government. Yet, as a matter of fact, the missionaries themselves have been the principal agents in setting Chinese laws at defiance. We can take the case as stated by Protestants against Catholics, although I imagine it is the same, to some extent, with all. The C. M. S. report states (p. 360): "The anti-foreign and anti-Christian sentiment finds some palliation and some excuse for its existence, alas, in the arbitrary acts of interference with native tribunals.....on the part of Roman Catholic missions in China." A man commits some offence—a swindle or a robbery—and is brought before the local tribunal. Instead of submitting to its decisions, he hastens to the mission, learns a short catechism, is baptized, poses as a persecuted Christian, and is protected by the missionary, and, if necessary, by the missionary's Consul. In this manner he evades persecution, and continues his depredations. A writer in the *Daily News* for August 30 asserts that "thousands of such cases have occurred in China during the last few years."

It is this immunity from the law enjoyed by many of the "converts" that exasperates the Chinese. Mr. Ivan Chen asks the pertinent question: "Suppose a Chinese priest should come to England, and it should be known that every burglar, pickpocket, and thief, by becoming a Buddhist, would become exempt from arrest by the police. Suppose that the introduction of a new faith should give the criminal classes license to ply their trade in London with complete immunity from the action of the laws. Would the English people submit to such a state of affairs? And what is true of the English is true of all other nations. Why, then, should we Chinese be an exception to the rule?..... Before the missionaries visited our country there was less crime in proportion to population than even in Protestant Prussia, which is regarded as the most moral of European countries."

Clearly, there is here a real and a shameful grievance. And, in the face of cold facts, one has to admit the truthfulness of this writer's contention that "it will be quite impossible to have peace in China so long as foreign missionaries are allowed to interfere with the institutions of the country, and no Government at Peking can be strong enough to protect unpopular missionaries throughout so vast an empire. We may not be able to keep these missionaries out of China, because we are not a fighting nation. Anything will be better than the missionaries."

C. COHEN.

An Election Prayer.

THERE are three State officials who, by virtue of their office, feel called upon at national crises to inflict their more or less crude compositions on a long-suffering people. One of them is the Poet Laureate, who, in the person of Mr. Austin, has recently issued a poem on the end of the war. It is a poor effort, lacking in everything but a desire to provide something in justification of his ill-filled office. There are dozens—perhaps scores—of native poets who could have turned out infinitely superior verse. He has, of course, to maintain his position, of which he seems to be painfully conscious; and he has his emoluments, in some sort of fashion, to earn. The latter, we believe, include a yearly present of a butt of Malmsey wine. Far be it from us to suggest intemperance, but is it not possible that a few fairly deep draughts of that generous, old-fashioned liquid, if it is still to be procured, might have inspired the Laureate to a more spirited and sparkling composition?

The two other State officials we have in mind are Cantuar and Ebor—otherwise our most noble, right reverend, and gracious Fathers-in-God, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. They, for the paltry remuneration of £15,000 and £10,000 a year respectively, have kindly undertaken the charge of the Church in its two provinces and all their ramifications. Their manifestoes are easier made than the Laureate's, because they are confined to plain—very plain—prose, and fortunately few folks take the trouble to scan them

critically. But, whether easy or not, something must be turned out by these two servants of the State at important junctures in our national history. Their voices in solemn warning, counsel, appeal, or chastened jubilation, must be heard. Otherwise, how is the world to go on?

So we find that the Archbishops, about a fortnight ago, duly issued a special prayer *apropos* of the General Election. They recommended it for use, and no doubt it has been, and is being, used, though to what extent it is difficult to say. It would hardly be safe to judge of the extent by results, for, as we know, the best of prayers may "gang agley." Still, it is something to have a prayer drawn up for us by two such experts. For, if the Archbishops do not know how to approach the Throne of Grace, who does? They are seasoned courtiers, conversant with all needful ceremony. They have the ear of the Most High. Their exalted spiritual office must carry weight and influence in heaven as on earth. The Lord could hardly refuse to listen to them, or to those who address him in their words.

How nice, therefore, to have supplied, ready at hand, a prayer containing the wishes of two Archbishops, carefully phrased so as to arrest the attention of the Almighty, and designed to lead him seductively on to a gracious compliance. Here is the Archiepiscopal supplication:—

"Most gracious God, we humbly beseech Thee as for this Kingdom in general, so especially at this time for all electors of Members of Parliament, that, bearing in mind that their votes are a trust from Thee, they may faithfully and wisely make choice of fit persons to serve in the great Council of the nation, to the advancement of Thy glory, the good of Thy Church, the safety, honor, and welfare of our Sovereign and her dominions; that all things may be so ordered and settled that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety, may be established among us for all generations. These and all other necessities, for them, for us, and Thy whole Church, we humbly beg in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, our most blessed Lord and Savior. Amen."

It is assumed in this prayer that the Lord is cognizant of the fact that a General Election is taking place. That is a graceful recognition of his Omniscience, which, in respect to other matters, is apparently not invariably accorded by all who address him. Dr. Parker, for instance, never takes that kind of thing for granted. He makes his groundwork sure by retailing to the Lord a comprehensive account of events, and a terse description of the exact situation. That makes the prayer complete, it is true, though it rather implies that the Lord is not as well informed as the readers of the ha'penny papers. Their Graces of Canterbury and York are more courteous, and are therefore, probably, much more affably received. There is nothing lost by giving the Almighty credit for knowing what is going on.

The prayer of the Archbishops beseeches our "Most Gracious God" to bestow his attention on all *electors* of members of Parliament. That request is, apparently, thought sufficient for the time being. It will, however, be extremely incomplete if, on the assembling of the New Parliament, our "Most Gracious God" is not still more warmly petitioned to keep his eye on the members elected. They, perhaps more than the electors, are likely to go astray, forgetting their present "pie-crust" promises, and exhibiting an unfaithfulness for which there will be no immediate remedy.

But what is meant by the words "bearing in mind that their [the electors'] votes are a trust from Thee"? Is it a heavenly franchise, then, that we are exercising? And on the old register, too? This point needs a little consideration. If the franchise is, indeed, a trust from God, why did he withhold it so long from the masses, who were as well able to exercise it years ago as now? Why were the small householders and the agricultural laborers kept so long from the possession of this political right—this divine trust? And how much longer would they not have remained disfranchised but for the exertions of men mostly of their own order? Who were the bitterest opponents of the bestowal of this divine trust? Why, the clergy of course, led by the bishops—the "spiritual pastors and masters" at whose head are now His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and His Grace the Archbishop of York. What effrontery for these clerics, who withheld the right till the last

possible moment, to now speak of it with sanctimonious cant as a "trust from Thee." There would have been no such trust from *them* had not their unwilling hands been forced.

The next point in the petition is that the Archbishops seem to want to turn the Lord into an Almighty canvasser. He is to do his best to assist these electors to "make choice of fit persons." That is rather a large order even for the Lord. We don't know—not even Cantaur or Ebor knows—whether the Lord is a Conservative, Liberal Unionist, or Radical, or a Liberal Imperialist. The "fit person" is, of course, the man who votes with his party; nondescripts don't count. Of which party is the Lord? How can he interfere without throwing his weight and influence into the scales of one section or the other? The important question is, Ought he to be asked to interfere at all? Is it fair to him? Surely it would be more decent to treat the Lord of all as we do our peers, and ask him to kindly stand aside and remain neutral. He has defeated Kruger for us. Let us give him a rest.

No doubt, by the time this journal reaches the hands of many of its readers, a sufficient number of contests will have been decided to enable some opinion to be formed as to the ultimate result. Then we shall know the sort of persons and the political party favored by the Lord, if this precious prayer is of any avail. The constituencies who have got their trouble over may still pray for those who remain in the throes: They may pray to the Lord to return candidates who will "serve in the great council of the nation to the advancement of thy glory." That clause is obviously a little bit of Archbishopial blarney. What more can we do for "Thy glory"? We have our Bench of Bishops in the Lords. We provide them with beautiful palaces and handsome emoluments, though masses of our population are confined to one-roomed tenements, and are often hard up for a meal. We have hundreds of fat livings sprinkled about the land wherein God's ministers live well and do little beyond praising, as well they might, his holy and blessed name. We put up with a lot of clerical arrogance and ignorance, and allow clerical interference to an extent which another generation or two will indignantly resent. What more can any god want? Possibly he is himself perfectly satisfied with all that is done for him. Possibly it is only his servants—led by Cantuar and Ebor—who are clamoring for more.

This prayer is full of egotism and self-seeking. It is a Churchman's prayer mainly for his Church. It implies that the governor of the whole universe is interested in what must be, to him, mere petty political strife on an insignificant planet. It implies that not only is he interested in this Lilliputian conflict, but at the call, primarily, of two pigmies in lawn sleeves he must needs actively interfere, only, however, on the distinct understanding that his interference is mainly in the interests of an inconsiderable collection of other pigmies who have chosen to set up an establishment called a Church, and have made use of his name. Need we pray, "O Lord, gie us a gude conceit o' oursels"?

FRANCIS NEALE.

If there is such a thing as the "pride of science," it is obviously exceeded by the pride of theology. I fail to perceive humility in the belief that the human mind is able to comprehend that which is behind appearance, and I do not see how piety is especially exemplified in the assertion that the universe contains no mode of existence higher in nature than that which is present to us in consciousness. On the contrary, I think it is quite a defensible proposition that humility is better shown by a confession of incompetence to grasp the cause of all things, and that the religious sentiment may find its highest sphere in the belief that Ultimate Power is no more representable in terms of human consciousness than human consciousness is representable in terms of a plant's functions.—*Herbert Spencer.*

The sciences are not sectarian. People do not persecute each other on account of disagreement in mathematics. Families are not divided about botany, and astronomy does not tend to make a man hate his father and mother. It is what people do not know that they persecute each other about. Science will bring, not a sword, but peace.—*Ingersoll.*

Acid Drops.

COUNT LEO TOLSTOI, the famous Russian writer, if we may believe the newspaper reports, has at last been excommunicated by the Orthodox Greek Church. The document in which this is announced to the world is worth a little attention. Tolstoi is charged with not recognising the existence of the Trinity in Unity, with denying the deity of Jesus Christ, with blaspheming the holy mystery of the Incarnation, and with falsifying the sacred text of the Gospels. All this is bad enough, no doubt; but his greatest crime, evidently, is having "shown himself a declared enemy of the Church," which he regards as a "human institution." That is a great deal worse than any other form of heresy, because it cuts at the very root of the Church's authority and privileges—not to mention its profits. It makes a priest a mere convenience, that may be dispensed with by persons who are ready to do their own thinking. If the people were brought to regard their spiritual pastors in this light, it is clear that the clerical profession would soon go to the dogs. Accordingly, the Orthodox Greek Church puts Count Tolstoi out of its communion, and warns him that, in case of his death, it prohibits "the celebration of all divine services and of all expiatory masses." We dare say he will laugh at this harmless thunder, though it may be an affliction to his orthodox relatives. Indeed, there are words in the excommunication which show that the Church has an eye on this indirect compulsion; but Count Tolstoi is not at all likely to recant, unless he does it by proxy on his deathbed. A good many heretics have had recantations put into their mouths by their families after they had passed into a state of unconsciousness.

We thought the London *Star* was a true friend of free speech. During the war fever it denounced in hot language the breaking up of certain "peace" meetings, and we were with it in this denunciation, for it is a crime against civilisation to violate the liberty of the platform. But we are sorry to see that our gallant contemporary feels less indignation when Conservative meetings are broken up by Radicals. It made nothing but fun of the fact that Mr. Richard Garton, the Conservative candidate at Battersea, could not get a hearing in the Town Hall. Those who did want to hear him were overwhelmed by those who did not, and the *Star* seems to regard this as an excellent comedy. Mr. George Wyndham was to have spoken at that meeting, and he also had to give up the attempt in despair. This is more fun for the *Star*, which seeks to cover its neglect of principle by sneers at Mr. Wyndham's youth and incapacity. Mr. Wyndham, however, is not so *very* young; and in the matter of capacity he is not exactly to be sneered at by anyone on the staff of the *Star*. He is an excellent speaker, and a still better writer. His essay on Shakespeare's poems is quite admirable. But even if he were ever so young, and ever so incapable, he would nevertheless be entitled to a hearing. Certainly no one is bound to go to the hall where he is announced as a speaker, but those who do go are bound in decency to refrain from drowning his voice with shouts and interruptions. Let us hope that the *Star* has only suffered a temporary eclipse.

We are glad to see one protest besides our own against this rowdiness at Battersea. Dr. Dawson Burns, writing to a Liberal newspaper, says: "Allow me, as a supporter on temperance grounds of the candidature of Mr. John Burns for Battersea, to protest against the rowdiness of a section of his followers, who do him the greatest disservice by breaking up the meetings called by the opposite side. Such tactics are a disgrace to any party, and reduce the boasted freedom of public meeting to a farce."

Charles Bradlaugh was a much greater man than John Burns, and he suffered a great deal of persecution; but it never made him waver in his love of equal liberty for all. It is easy to imagine how scathing would have been his rebuke of his Radical followers at Northampton if they had taken to disturbing the meetings of their political opponents.

The late President of the Wesleyan Conference, the Rev. F. W. Macdonald, told a funny story at the recent Church Congress. He said that he went into a church once, and the vicar came up to him, noticing his clerical attire, and asked him to assist in the service. "I am a Wesleyan," replied Dr. Macdonald, "but I could read the lessons if you like; that would not compromise you." "Oh, thank you; but I fear it would hardly do," said the vicar, and slowly retired. Suddenly he returned with a bright smile on his face, and asked: "Will you take the collection?"

Miss Roche Quin, daughter of the late Sir Benjamin Hall, came before Mr. Fordham at North London Police-court with a complaint against a man of God. It seems that last autumn her mother and herself, being ill and almost

destitute, made a public appeal for help. A Nonconformist minister voluntarily took up the case, and collected upwards of £30. He handed over £6 ros., and vanished with the remainder. Nothing has been heard of him for six months, and the police and other inquiries have failed to find him. Applicant was told that it was a case for a civil court.

The Church Congress seems this year to have been a very dull affair. The General Election practically killed it. The sectional meetings were sparsely attended. The papers read were dull, and lacking in originality. Very few newspapers thought it worth while to give more than the briefest record of the proceedings. Even the local (Newcastle-on-Tyne) press dismissed the Congress in a summary fashion, to which it has not been accustomed in former years. Newcastle is not boiling over with love and zeal for the State Church. The general public have been too much immersed in political conflicts to pay any attention to Church matters, or questions affecting religious faith.

The only incident of any interest was the appearance on the platform of little Johnny Kensit. He supplied a comic interlude, creating a great deal of fun, and contriving to do his cause much more harm than good. His bombastic announcement that he had been adopted as a Parliamentary candidate for Brighton elicited roars of laughter. The notion seemed so comical that he could not resist laughing himself. Thus, as the *Church Times* observes, he reminded one of Charles Lamb, who lustily assisted in hooting down his own play.

The discussion on Old Testament criticism was tame and restrained. Speakers seemed afraid to say all that they thought. Dr. Wace appears to have been the most outspoken. He said that, as a teacher of candidates for Holy Orders, he could not, if he held the views of some modern critics, advise any young man to say solemnly at his ordination that he unfeignedly believed all the Canonical books. Similarly, he said, plain men and women could not read their Bible with the certainty of believing a single word of it.

The *Church Times* observes: "The higher critics both here and on the Continent have done their worst. They have, to their own satisfaction, shown that the history of the Bible, as hitherto read and understood by all Christians and Jews, is untrustworthy, and, having done that, they are brought to a standstill." Well, suppose they are brought to a standstill, what more does the *Church Times* expect of them, or what more have they mapped out for themselves? Of course, when they have proved what they set out to prove, they naturally come to a standstill. There is nothing more to be done.

"We know," says this sapient print, "our New Testament better to-day than half a century ago; we shall possess a more accurate knowledge of our Old Testament. That, we take it, was the impression produced at the Congress, and we believe it is the right one." On this there is only one remark to be made, and that is, we hope, in the course of time—say another century or two—Bible-believers will arrive at some sort of a knowledge of what their book really is. In the meantime, their so-called "revelation" seems involved in a great deal of obscurity.

Feminine fashions have much to answer for. Fancy how grievously the poor Bishop of Liverpool must have suffered when he is impelled to make a solemn complaint. It is all about hair-pins. In the New Cut the young lady who fastens her hair up and her hat on with one of these modern stilettoes takes it out on occasion and jams it in her lover's or a policeman's eye. The superior young ladies who go to Confirmation are equally armed. And Dr. Chavasse, apparently from painful experience, has been forced to express a desire that girls coming for Confirmation "should refrain from the use of long pins in the hair, as the presence of such pins frequently results in the Bishop's fingers being lacerated during the 'laying on of hands.'" Poor dear man, how much he must have suffered! Has he confided his trouble to Mrs. Bishop Chavasse? If so, he has probably been told that he should not fumble so much in the young ladies' hair. The less there is of this "laying on of hands" the better.

Recently a corpulent clergyman, in a mining district, preached a sermon which was listened to by an attentive congregation. As the rev. gentleman left the church, and was walking towards the parsonage, he espied a group of miners in animated debate; and, as he drew near them, one of the miners left the little group, and made as though he would speak. Thinking, perhaps, that some of the theological opinions he had uttered had not been quite clear to his hearers, he stopped, and inquired if he could elucidate any point that required explanation. "Well, sir," said the miner, "we warn't discussin' the sermon. The fact is, we have a bet on about your weight, and they've asked me to come over to see if you'll help us to settle it."

"A million a year," says Mr. Arnold White, discussing foreign missions, "is now spent on doing vicariously what used to be done gratuitously by the Apostles, and is done very cheaply to-day by the Papists. Apostolic missions were supported by converts and friends on the spot. Modern missions are essentially vicarious. So great is the political power of the missionaries under these circumstances that in China, for example, it exceeds that of the traders, and missionaries are the aristocracy among the whites. Licence is given by our Foreign Office to Protestant preachers which is denied to the men who ship tea and import Manchester goods. Our Foreign Office has been constantly engaged in forcing the Chinese Government to repair the wrongs and redress the grievances of more or less tactless missionaries. Then, again, the position of an average missionary is far pleasanter than that of a curate or a dissenting minister in the East or South of London. I would much rather be an average foreign Protestant missionary than an East-end curate or pastor. The life of the former is not without sunshine and change, and is often one of power and romance, and sometimes advantages of a still more material nature."

Mr. Arnold White quotes very appositely the remark of the late Lord Elgin, that "the existence of profound divisions among ourselves is one of the first truths which we Christians reveal to the heathen."

The following official declaration by the Chinese Ambassador deserves to be placed on record: "It will be quite impossible to have peace in China so long as foreign missionaries are allowed to interfere with the institutions of the country, and no Government at Peking can be strong enough to protect unpopular missionaries throughout so vast an empire. We may not be able to keep these missionaries out of China, because we are not a fighting nation. Anything will be better than the missionaries. Peace, prosperity, and healthy commerce will be impossible until the missionary shall have been eliminated from our local problem. Recall the missionaries, and all will go well."

So it has fined itself down to this: there is, at any rate, "a distinct want of medical missionaries in China." And surgical missionaries, too, we should think, to bind up one another's wounds. No doubt the heathen Chinese is agreeable to take medical treatment if he can get it for nothing—and hardware and ornaments and cloth and calico, etc., at the same price. All this is very useful and acceptable, and so, my little dears in the Sunday-schools, save up your ha'pennies and pennies in your mission-boxes, and give poor John Chinaman a lift. He won't have the Gospel as a gift, but quinine, magnesia, Beecham's, and perhaps a little nourishing port wine will suit him down to the ground.

The latest thing in the way of ultra-enterprise is a scheme for retailing "holy water" on a large scale. Of course, it is an American idea. A number of steam-pumps have been erected on the Jordan, and are now supplying churches all over Europe with genuine Jordan water. There is no fear that any of it will be used for drinking purposes—even when disinfected with Scotch whisky. It is far too muddy and too expensive to take the place of Apollinaris. There seems, however, to be a pretty good demand for it for outward application. Sprinkled over the Christian hide to the accompaniment of a little pious mummery, it is supposed to be efficacious in cleansing from sin. Of one thing we can be ever limited the actual supply, there will be no lack of "genuine Jordan water" as long as ever there is a demand for it.

Recently the Rev. E. Cornwall Jones said that he came across at Pwllheli a party of Welsh working men uproariously drunk, and singing a Welsh hymn. This, he remarked, was "something impossible in England." Now a Welshman takes him to task, asserting that such a spectacle, sad though it be, is not at all impossible in England. Perhaps not. Judging by the character of some popular hymns, people who sing them must surely be intoxicated—either spiritually or spirituously. Sober-minded people would turn from the doggerel in disgust.

A Cape mounted policeman relates that when a Boer prisoner expressed himself to a British soldier as confident that the Boers would win in the end, because the Lord was on their side, Tommy said: "Garn! You've got no show! Ain't we got fifty bloomin' Lords on our side?"

It seems odd that the Church Army should have suffered by the war. In two months its funds have decreased by £6,500. But that comes of being the wrong sort of army. Our nobly open-handed Christian nation will readily find millions to slay fellow-believers; but to "save" them, even according to its own precious nostrums—well, that is "up another street."

The gifted Sheldon now wants to be a Chief-of-Police. He has tried his hand at being a novelist and an editor; he has

all along been an over-rated "crank." He wants to get appointed Chief-of-Police in Topeka, in order to put down the liquor traffic. He would, no doubt, like to combine with the appointment the office of magistrate on the Bench, and perhaps put in a little time as jailor. Topeka must be a long-suffering city to have tolerated him so long. It may strike the inhabitants that it is about time his amateur efforts were curtailed.

No doubt we live in the best of all possible worlds. India especially impresses us with that fact. After drought, flood, Northern India is deluged with water. Places as far apart as Delhi and Calcutta are suffering from too much rain. In the former thirty natives were killed by the collapse of houses, and in the latter twenty, while thousands have been made homeless. It was, of course, quite impossible for Omnipotence to order things differently.

The spirits of the dead have a mighty fine nose for the shekels. Through an American medium, they induced a Miss Vanderbilt to part with £16,000. Messages from the other world are expensive affairs. The departed are not to be roused up for nothing. Cheap ghosts ought now to have a chance. A little competition in regard to price might have a salutary effect on the market.

Some people never are satisfied. Here is the Rev. Dr. Bernard contributing to Dr. Hastings's Dictionary of the Bible an article on "Miracles" intended to reconcile us to all the prodigies and marvels of Holy Writ. Then there comes along a *Christian World* reviewer, who says that Dr. Bernard has treated the subject with his well-known learning and philosophical acumen. "But that he removes all the difficulties of this thorny theme is, alas! more than can be said. When, for instance, he says of the New Testament evidence that 'it is not like that for the miracles attributed to St. Anthony or to Ignatius Loyola, which are found only in the latter, and not in the earlier, biographies; it is as nearly as contemporary as we could expect,' he is, we cannot help thinking, a too sanguine apologist. We call to mind Bede's *Life of St. Cuthbert*, the earlier histories of Thomas Becket, and Bonaventura's *Life of St. Francis*, all crowded with miracle, and all as near in time to their subjects as the Gospels are to theirs." Dr. Bernard had better have another try.

The juvenile comprehension of Bible narratives is wonderful in the extreme. Thus we learn from an article in *Longman's* that a small-boy student, in an examination paper, thus embellished a familiar story: "When Moses's mother laid him in the ark among the bulrushes she did not forget to give the baby its bottle."

The clergy have discovered another grievance, says the *Topical Times*. This time they do not say that they are the worst-paid of all professional men; and they recognise that the present is an inopportune moment to ask for more doles. They—or several of them—have conceived the idea that the common people object to them in railway carriages. One would imagine that when the cloth enters a third (it travels second with the ladies usually) bad language would cease, and an atmosphere of sanctity pervade the compartment. However, this does not appear to be the case. On the other hand, the clergy declare that the British working man sometimes takes their presence as an affront, and "swears them out" of the carriage by the very strength of his language. Really the British working man should treat his servants (the Church is, of course, established and endowed) better.

A startling revelation was made the other day by Sir Edward Fry in his address to the Literary Association at Bristol. He said that "Satan knew well how to work the printing press, and he was the most successful member of the publishing community." This is said to have caused great consternation in Fleet-street. Everyone is suspecting his neighbor. Only Stead and Hugh Price Hughes (with his *Methodist Times*) seem to have escaped suspicion. As regards publishers, it is proposed to consult Marie Corelli, who is an authority on the tribe as well as on the sins and sorrows of Satan.

Perhaps the minister wished to retain his congregation for a specially long sermon. Anyhow, he had had the seats of his chapel at Cardiff newly varnished. First one member of the congregation stood up without apparent cause, then another, and still another, till all were on their feet, the loud, bearing noise all over the chapel as they rose indicating a serious danger to clothing, not to say a possible offence to decency.

Never was there such an instance of a man's foes being of his own household. The poor man—Rev. Mr. Stainforth, of Mount View-road, Highgate—applied to the magistrates for assistance. He wanted an injunction against his wife, his sons, and his daughters, and he had also a grievance against

his brother. The Bench didn't know what to do with him. So much Christian love had evidently driven him insane. He is, however, going to exemplify the Christian teaching of turning the other cheek to the smiter by summoning his family for assault.

This seems too good to be true. American deacons, we are told, are now in this country seeking pastors for some prominent pastorless churches in the United States. Let us hope to God they will take back with them a ship-load—nay, a dozen ship-loads—ay, and come again for some more. We will try and squeeze out a few crocodiles' tears; but, oh, do let them carry off a few cargoes soon. It is blessed to give—more blessed in this case than to receive—and right manfully will we put up with the loss.

The Bishops have returned from the Church Congress to their palaces, and the lower clergy to their snug rectories and vicarages to continue the preaching of the blessed Gospel: "Sell all and give to the poor." They have carried with them, if the recollection is not too dreadful, the following story told at the Congress by one of themselves:—He had just come, he said, from a house in his parish of Yarrow. A young girl lay there, dead from consumption, and in the same room four adults and five children were obliged to sleep. Happy Christian England!

A mad actor told the Bow-street magistrate that he had just been to heaven. When he returns thither he will have a thousand beautiful women. In the meantime he has a strait waistcoat, though, as far as his expectations of heaven are concerned, he is not a whit more insane than pious folk whose notions of eternal felicity are based on pulpit guesses that are absolutely without attraction.

At a harvest festival at Kingston a tennis-racket, made of bread, was placed in the centre of the communion-table. Why doesn't some congregation go one better, and hang up a motor car in the chancel?

Someone has written to the *Christian World* giving a very good reason for the falling off in Sunday-schools. He says: "As long as the leaders of our Sunday-schools cling to the faith of our grandfathers, and teach our scholars that the world was made just six thousand years ago; that physical death was introduced into the world in consequence of Adam's sin; that every child is born into the world a sinner, a child of the Devil; that the Bible, from the first verse of the first chapter of Genesis to the last verse of the last chapter of the book of Revelation, is the actual word of God, specially revealed by Him, and true in every particular; that science and history and the Higher Criticism (of which, as a rule, they know nothing save the names) are, if they conflict with their views, inventions of the Devil—so long shall we have a leakage in our Sunday-schools."

"Sunday Literature for the Masses" is the title of an amusing sketch by Mr. Wentworth Smece in the *Sunday Sun*. He describes the evangelising performances in a railway carriage of a "man of God" clad in rusty black and a cavernous smile, with a shambling, toad-like gait and a voice which nearly lifted the roof off. The Evangelist distributee tracts to some little children, and at last handed to Mr. Smed a leaflet headed "Personal." It was very personal. "Please sign that," he said. This was what he wanted signed:—

"If I die to-night I will go to H—
Signed..... Date....."

"What does 'H' stand for?" the *Sunday Sun* reviewer asked. "For 'eaven or 'ell," the Evangelist replied. "But I want to go to —," "Eaven?" he asked hopefully. "Oh, my young friend, do you want to go to 'eaven?" "No, Wood Green."

When the compartment was rendered more wholesome by the departure of the man of God, Mr. Wentworth Smece says he gave the children sixpence for the pious literature that had been presented to them. He adds: "I am going to try it on a few reporters I have the honor of knowing. If anything can touch them, it will be those tracts—especially the blue ones." He wants to know why the devil should send "his black-coated emissaries to poison our innocent enjoyment—why children should be worried over their poor little souls—why, in short, these injudicious, black-coated, well-meaning, but mistaken, idiots can't give their tracts to each other and let people alone."

"Something wrong somewhere" was the comment of the Chairman of the Annual Convention of the Blyth Wesleyan Circuit. He has discovered the "strange and deplorable fact" that, though the population of the district had increased, Methodists were no more in numbers than they were twenty years ago. The newly-appointed minister to the Blyth

Circuit agreed that there had been no proportionate advance. "To his mind, there was an appalling indifference of the people to religion, and an appalling indifference of the population in that neighborhood to the services in God's house." May it not be that the services have ceased to offer attraction, and that the Methodist doctrines are failing to command belief?

"I have never met a naval officer, a Minister to other countries, or a traveller of any intelligence, who believed in foreign missions," says Winifred Black in the *Denver Post*. "When I was a very little girl I went to Sunday-school. The brother-in-law of the superintendent was a missionary to the Hawaiian Islands. Every Sunday I put a round, perspiring nickel in the box for the Sandwich Islander. When I grew up I went to those blessed islands. The first day I went out to drive I saw a magnificent country seat; great rows of palms led up to a magnificent mansion. 'Missionary So-and-So lives there,' said my driver. And then I saw another country place, and another, and yet another—magnificent homes, the like of which none but multi-millionaires can inhabit, much less own, in this country. All of them belonged to missionaries. A prominent missionary gave a picnic and invited me to it. He had twenty servants on horseback to help attend to the comforts of the guests."

The melancholy wights who think that religion consists in looking askance at everything that is pleasant and agreeable came in for a little gentle satire in a recent address by the Rev. H. R. Haweis at Margate. The Puritans, he said, denounced bull-baiting, not because it hurt the bull, but because it pleased people. That was very much the view some people took of religion. They associated it with the long-faced type, and with the generally looking askance at all that was beautiful and exhilarating. They were "Goody, goody"—that was the best term he could apply to the average commonplace opinion of Christianity.

The following is a true story: Ch.—"I'm afraid it's going to rain and spoil the hops." Sec.—"It won't rain if you pray hard enough, will it?" Ch.—"Oh, it's too late for prayers to do any good; the wind has got around into the south."—*Torch of Reason*.

In spite of Scriptural teaching, women *will* come to the front. Recently the congregation at the parish church of Wellington were more than a little startled. During the singing of the hymn before the sermon a lady left her seat at the back of the church, walked up the centre aisle, and ascended the pulpit. She then opened her Bible, with the evident intention of preaching a sermon. At that moment, however, she was approached by the churchwarden, and quietly escorted back to her seat.

According to the *Boston Journal*, U.S., the sect with the curious name of "Holy Ghost and Us" is developing its quota of lunatics. Recently a Miss Bell, who had been at Shiloh, the institution in Durham conducted by Evangelist F. W. Sandford of the Holy Ghost and Us Society, disappeared. A few days later she was found wandering in the woods in Green, ten miles from Lewiston, in an insane condition.

Rev. W. Morris, chairman of the Rhondda Valley School Board, has been asking: Do the cultured classes incline towards Agnosticism? This, he said, was the great question for the Church to-day, and it must be faced sooner or later. After an experience of thirty years of education in its elementary, intermediate, and higher grades, he was forced to the conclusion that there was a tendency in the educated classes in Wales to become estranged from religion in work, in service, in worship, in faith; not a mere desire to cross over the border of Nonconformity to the easier realms of Conformity, but to turn back on religion in every form. The Rev. Morris is much disturbed lest the University in Wales should become the home of Rationalism and Materialism, or a nursery of Agnosticism.

Fancy if all this General Election turmoil should be for nothing! A "saint" at Islington is convinced that the Day of Judgment will arrive between now and the end of the year. He solemnly gave this as his reason to a canvasser for not recording his vote. He said it would be all to no purpose.

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

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

THE first week in October will be a "Shilling Week" in aid of the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. During that period I expect to receive one shilling (or more) from hundreds—I would fain hope thousands—of Freethinkers in all parts of the country. All the envelopes will be opened with my own hands, and all letters accompanying the postal orders (or cheques) will be carefully read. A good many subscribers will doubtless, as on previous occasions, take the opportunity of saying whatever happens to be on their minds. I am really anxious to know what they are thinking, and to see what suggestions they have to make.

This time I hope there will be very few laggards. Let all act together. Let every one feel that his fellow Freethinkers are doing something, in common with himself, during that particular week. This alone should be a stimulus and an inspiration.

The poorest can send one shilling. Others can send several shillings. If all do their best, we shall raise an amount of which the party may be proud. Never mind how little you can send. Send it. Numbers tell. Drops enough will make an ocean.

Probably most of those who have promised certain contributions towards the Fund will forward their remittances during the same first week in October.

Now then for a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together—as they say at sea; and we shall get our craft into good, deep, navigable water.

G. W. FOOTE.

Subscriptions received by Tuesday, October 2.

Collected by Mr. Foote at Glasgow, 14s.; Mr. Sprout, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. F., 4s.; W. J. B. Anderson, 5s.; E. Kirton, 1s.; Miss Pizer, 2s.; David Powell, 5s.; J. C. SS., 1s.; Emma Bradlaugh, 2s. 6d.; L. N. Thorne, 5s.; F. Jones, 1s.; Mrs. Jones, 1s.; Legate, 2s. 6d.; Tom Batchelor, 2s.; T. H. Body, 2s. 6d.; C. Shepherd, 3s.; Mrs. Dye, 2s.; A. W. Jones, 1s.; W. Stourton, 1s.; A. Lye, 5s.; C. Bandon, 2s.; W. Garthwaite, 2s. 6d.; A. J. H., 1s.; T. Wombwell, 2s. 6d.; C. Elger, 1s.; C. Goddard, 2s.; R. Brown, 2s.; A. Guest, 1s.; J. T. Ives, 1s.; C. Moore, 6d.; H. Silverstein, 2s.; T. Ollerenshaw, 2s.; A. C. Brown, 5s.; J. Ferguson, 5s.; J. G. Bartram, 3s.; Jas. Richardson, 5s.; T. H. Elstob, 2s. 6d.; J. Easton, 1s.; J. Peacock, 2s.; R. Mitchell, 2s. 6d.; P. Weston, 1s.; T. H. Duke, 1s.; W. McDonald, 2s.; F. J. H., 5s.; T. Davison, 1s.; T. Shipperbottom, 1s.; W. T. Allfrey, 2s. 6d.; E. Bowen, 1s.; J. G. Dobson, 2s.; E. W. Scott, 3s.; Missus and I, 6s.; W. Rowland, 2s.; M. B., 2s.; J. Hockin, 1s.

We are made for co-operation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another, then, is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and to turn away.—*Marcus Aurelius*.

There is something pathetic in the simplicity with which a narrow student will judge the doctrines of a foreign religion by their antagonism or conformity to his own orthodoxy on points where utter difference of opinion exists among the most learned and enlightened scholars.—*Taylor*.

"Mother, don't the angels wear any clothes?" asked a little girl of her mother. "No, my daughter." "None at all, mother?" "None at all." There was a pause, and the little cherub asked, "Where do the angels put their pocket-handkerchiefs?"

Special.

The FREETHINKER has been for several months, and is still, published at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C., the office of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, where all orders and communications should be addressed. Readers are warned against sending orders to Mr. R. Forder, 28 Stonecutter-street, E.C. Those premises have for some time been definitively closed, and Mr. Forder has no connection whatever with the Freethought Publishing Company, who cannot be answerable for anything sent to him.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 7, Secular Hall, Manchester; 11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 3, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?"

October 14, Athenæum Hall; 21, Birmingham; 28, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—October 7, Athenæum Hall; 9 and 10, debate at Bolton; 14 (Sunday), Bolton; 21, Birmingham; 23, 24, 25, and 28 (Sunday), Glasgow and districts. November 4, Liverpool.—All communications for Mr. Watts should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

UNIT.—Your suggestions as to the *Freethinker* shall be borne in mind. With regard to Cromwell literature; you should read Carlyle's *Cromwell* first of all, then Forster's in "Statesmen of the Commonwealth," and then Guizot's. There are several interesting books on Cromwell written more recently. Among them may be mentioned one by Mr. Frederic Harrison, and another (now in the press) by Mr. John Morley.

INQUIRER.—We do not stand sponsor for Tolstoi's statements and opinions, or for those in extracts from other authors that may appear in our columns. There is no new fact that we are acquainted with that proves anything respecting "mind" and "spirit" as independent entities.

W. G. B. ANDERSON.—Sorry to hear you are a helpless invalid. Thanks for your remembrance.

T. FISHER.—Glad to hear that Sir E. Vincent, at Exeter, promised to support any Bill for abolishing the Blasphemy Laws. Also that you retain such a pleasant recollection of the evening when you introduced yourself to Mr. Foote at the Athenæum Hall. He is always more than willing to exchange a few words with provincial friends, if they will only make themselves known, after a meeting. We note your suggestion that Freethinkers might insure their lives—say with the Post Office—and nominate the President of the N. S. S. as the receiver. Perhaps it would be better, in order to obviate all friction, to nominate the Chairman of the Secular Society, Limited, that being a legal incorporation. We quite agree with you that more attention should be given to the matter of Secular interments. This is a strong point with the French and Belgian Freethinkers.

F. JONES.—Thanks for your encouraging letter. Our compliments to your wife, who sends a shilling, though not a Freethinker.

LEGATE sends a subscription to Shilling Week, and hopes hundreds will do likewise. So do we. This correspondent is glad to see the *Freethinker* nicely folded, and hopes yet to see it cut and stitched.—"Our little life is rounded with a sleep" occurs at the end of Prospero's great speech in the last Act of the *Tempest*.

TOM BATCHELOR.—Contents-sheet shall be sent to your newspaper. Thanks for your promise to take or guarantee the six copies weekly. We note that you intend to send a subscription on the first of each month left in the nineteenth century. A good idea. We wish it were infectious.

D. YULE sends cheque for £10, his promised subscription to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

W. GARTHWAITE.—We note your wish for "a big success." Thanks for your share towards it. Miss Vance has sent you the *Bible Handbook*.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

A. H. TABRUM.—You continue to write nonsense on the subject. We cannot believe that you have read Darwin's *Life and Letters* at first hand. We advise you again to read Mr. Foote's little work entitled *Darwin on God*. You will there see, amongst other things, that Darwin (in a letter to Professor Dana) regretted having used the term "Creator" in the *Origin of Species*.

F. GOODWIN.—Thanks, but the subject has recently been treated at some length by Mr. Cohen.

ALFRED CORLEY.—Yours is an admirable letter—the letter of a thinker. We quite agree with you as to the value of such a book as you suggest on Atheism and Theism. The God theory and the soul theory are, as you say, at the bottom of all religious superstition. We have not forgotten the pamphlets you mention. We are sometimes in despair at the meagre time that is left us for solid and continuous writing. Now and then we feel like throwing everything else up and devoting a year or two to serious literary work. But the old calls repeat themselves, and —!

T. WOMBVELL.—We note your intention to "send more." Thanks.

F. J. GOULD.—See "Sugar Plums."

R. BROWN.—Such pious talk is too common in such circles.

J. G. DOBSON sends his promised 10s. to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

E. W. SCOTT writes: "I have the utmost confidence in your generalship," and more to the same effect.

W. METCALFE.—Your letter is delightful. Reading such things is a fine stimulus.

T. CLARKE.—Hope to use it in an early issue.

H. SILVERSTEIN.—Thanks for your letter. It is encouraging to know that our efforts are appreciated.

T. OLLERENSHAW.—Mr. Foote is in good health. Thanks.

A. C. BROWN says: "I should say that whatever funds may be forthcoming will be in excellent hands; in the hands of those who understand the whole question, and will doubtless make the best of what is at their disposal."

W. B. THOMPSON.—Letter received, and date noted. Will write in due course.

H. R. CLIFTON.—Overful of matter this week. May find it handy in our next. Thanks for your trouble.

J. FERGUSON.—Depend upon it, we shall "fire away."

E. KIRTON.—We take it that you mean £1 for the Fund list and 1s. for Shilling Week. Acknowledged accordingly. With yourself, we should like to see thousands responding to this appeal.

DAVID POWELL.—It will be successful, if all do their share, as you do.

EMMA BRADLAUGH.—Your "mite" is highly valued. Thanks for all your good wishes.

J. H. GILLILAND.—We hope there will be a revival in Belfast by-and-bye.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Mr. Foote writes you by post about lecturing at Newcastle. Subscriptions acknowledged in the list elsewhere. What you say on the other matter is well worth attention.

W. McDONALD.—Aberdeen is a long way north, and Mr. Foote's editorial and other engagements do not allow of his being long away from London, but he hopes to visit your city again at no distant date.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—E. Kirton, £1; J. Withy, £2 2s.; C. J., £1; K. G., £1; W. Garthwaite, 10s. 6d.; Alfred Corley, 10s.; W. Metcalfe, 10s. 6d.; S. Munns, £1 1s.

T. DAVISON.—Mr. Foote hopes to have his book on Shakespeare ready for publication early in the new year, at the latest. Of course, a number of friends would cheerfully pay threepence for the *Freethinker*, but a larger number would not, and an increased price means greater difficulty in reaching the outer public.

E. BOWEN.—Pleased to hear you are so glad that you came across the *Freethinker* twelve months ago.

RECEIVED.—Newcastle Chronicle—Newcastle Journal—Friedenker—Blue Grass Blade—South Wales Echo—Torch of Reason—The Liberator—Lucifer—Truthseeker (New York)—Thanet Times—Morpeth Herald—Secular Thought—Two Worlds—Crescent—Newcastle Daily Leader—Secular Thought—Ethical World—The Riddle of the Universe, by Ernst Haeckel, translated by Joseph McCabe (Watts & Co.)—Liberator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No word is oftener on the lips than "friendship," and, indeed, no thought is more familiar to their aspirations. All men are dreaming of it. It is the secret of the universe.—*Thoreau*.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE'S week-night lectures in the Glasgow district were abandoned in consequence of the elections, but his lectures in Glasgow itself were duly delivered on Sunday. Naturally the advertising suffered through the plethora of election bills on the city walls. Still, there were good meetings, particularly in the evening, when the hall was fairly crowded with a most attentive and appreciative audience, including a considerable number of "strangers." Some discussion took place both afternoon and evening. Altogether, the committee expressed themselves as "delighted" with the day's proceedings. We are glad to hear that the Glasgow Branch is doing very well in its new season, and that Mr. Baxter, the newsagent, reports a steady improvement in the sale of Freethought literature.

Mr. Foote delivers three lectures to-day (October 7) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester. His subjects are calculated to attract good audiences. We hope the local "saints" will try to counteract the lassitude that usually follows a parliamentary contest.

Despite the rain last Sunday evening, Mr. Charles Watts had a good audience at the Athenæum Hall. He lectured for over an hour to attentive hearers, who marked their appreciation by frequent and loud applause, which was repeated several times on Mr. Watts resuming his seat. He again occupies the same platform this evening (Sunday, October 7), taking for his subject "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?" No doubt the Spiritualists will gather in force to hear the subject dealt with from a Materialist and scientific point of view.

We call the attention of our Lancashire friends to a two nights' debate which will take place next Tuesday and Wednesday, October 8 and 9, in the Temperance Hall, Bolton, between Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. G. H. Billings, editor of *Psyche*, upon the question, "Is Spiritualism True?" The debate will commence each evening at eight o'clock.

The N. S. S. Conference agreed to the proposal of the Birmingham Branch that the Central Executive should find speakers for a Freethought Demonstration in the Town Hall of the Midlands capital on Sunday, October 21. Considering the importance of such a gathering, in such a hall, in such a city, the President determined to take the matter up and do it adequate justice. Accordingly, he arranged to go to Birmingham himself, accompanied by Messrs. C. Watts and C. Cohen. Mr. H. P. Ward, who resides there, will also be available; so that there will be a good, strong list of speakers on this occasion. In addition to the Demonstration in the evening, there will probably be a meeting in the afternoon, with Mr. Watts in the chair, and a special address to be delivered by Mr. Foote. The Birmingham friends are anxious to get one or two of the speakers, at any rate, to address meetings on the Saturday or Monday in favor of Mr. Ward's candidature on the "secular education" ticket for a seat on the Birmingham School Board.

At the last Board meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, a grant of £10 was voted in favor of the Birmingham N. S. S. Branch, which has been, and still is, doing a large amount of very useful work with rather inadequate means.

The N. S. S. Executive has decided to issue the *Secular Almanack* for 1901, and Mr. Foote has undertaken to edit it as before. While this publication is preparing, for issue in about a month, we beg to call the attention of Freethinkers in business to the fact that an advertisement in it is well worth a trial. The terms are fairly moderate, and the *Almanack* is not a thing which is hastily looked at and then cast aside. It is often kept for months, and sometimes altogether; consequently, the advertisements are sure to be seen. We may add that all the literary work on this publication is done gratuitously, and that all profits (if any) accrue to the N. S. S. exchequer. Advertisers, therefore, help the movement as well as their businesses by securing a space in it.

The *Liberator* (Melbourne), edited by Mr. Joseph Symes, reproduces articles by Francis Neale and C. Cohen from the *Freethinker*. *Secular Thought* (Toronto) continues the reproduction of our editor's articles on Shakespeare.

The late King Humbert of Italy was a good Catholic, although he persisted in treating the Pope as a citizen rather than as a sovereign. The new king, however, is said to have no religion at all. He is credited with being, "if not an actual Agnostic, at any rate a Freethinker." These are the terms used by "Ex-Attaché," the well-known press correspondent. If they correctly describe Emmanuel, he will be

opposed to the Papacy from principle as well as from policy.—*Truthseeker* (New York.)

Mr. F. J. Gould informs us that the Leicester Bazaar was a distinct success. More than £100 was cleared, and the Secular Society's members, who all worked very hard, feel amply rewarded. Mr. Gould asks us to say that Mr. G. J. Holyoake's name was accidentally omitted from the list of speakers at the opening ceremony on September 22.

Mr. J. G. Bartram, secretary of the Newcastle Branch, reports that splendid work has been done in distributing Freethought literature at meetings of the recent Church Congress. The *Freethinker* handbills put into circulation, together with contents-sheets posted up on the walls, have stimulated the sale of the paper. A single newsagent, who had one quire (27 copies), speedily sold out, and could have disposed of a good many more. We thank the Newcastle friends for their efforts in this direction, and we wish their example could be followed in other towns.

Mr. Charles Watts's pamphlet on *Education: True and False* was published in 1894. It was "respectfully dedicated to the London School Board," and might well be circulated during the 1900 School Board elections. It is a useful publication, well written, and neatly printed. The price is two-pence. Copies can be ordered from the Freethought Publishing Company.

The West London Branch means to continue open-air work in Hyde Park right through the winter. Mr. R. P. Edwards starts a course of lectures to-day (October 7) near the Marble Arch at 11.30 with an address on "The Science of Religion: Its Scope and Meaning." We hope the local Freethinkers—wind and weather permitting, as the sailors say—will do their utmost to make these meetings successful.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of Special Meeting, held on Thursday, September 13 (the President in the chair). There were present: Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, B. Munton, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, V. Roger, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, E. E. Sims, T. Shore, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, C. Watts, G. Warren.

The President reported the proceedings of the recent Conference *re* Secular Education, the view of the meeting being that the N. S. S. members should be asked to support those Socialist candidates who were in favor of Secular Education. The hope that the N. S. S. would run a candidate of its own was strongly expressed.

Mr. Moss moved, and Mr. Heaford seconded: "That Mr. Cohen be asked to stand as a candidate for the London School Board." Mr. Cohen having consented, it was put to the vote, the result being 8 to 7. The President felt this voting was too close to justify proceeding, and suggested that the matter be dropped for this year. It was resolved to send speakers to assist the candidates already in the field.

The President then read the draft of his scheme concerning the Twentieth Century Fund, and it was unanimously accepted. A sub-committee, consisting of Messrs. Roger, Shore, Leat, and Wilmot, were elected to assist in carrying out the details, and the meeting adjourned.

Ordinary meeting held Thursday, September 27 (Mr. G. W. Foote in the chair). Present:—Messrs. E. Bater, C. Cohen, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, J. Neate, E. W. Quay, V. Roger, F. Schaller, H. J. Stace, T. Thurlow, T. Wilmot, C. Watts. Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement read and adopted.

It was resolved to issue a Secular Almanack for 1901. Mr. Foote was asked to again undertake the editorial responsibility, and kindly consented.

The secretary was instructed to arrange for the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant. Messrs. V. Roger and W. Heaford gave a report of their attendance at the Paris Congress, and a vote of thanks to both delegates was unanimously passed.

Mr. S. Hartmann moved, and Mr. Moss seconded: "That Mr. Cohen be asked to run as a Secular Education candidate." Mr. Gorniot moved, as an amendment: "That the matter be adjourned." This was seconded by Mr. Leat, and, being carried, was again put as the substantive resolution, and also carried.
E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

We are all tattooed in our cradles with the beliefs of our tribe. The record may seem superficial, but it is indelible. You cannot educate a man wholly out of the superstitious fears which were early implanted in his imagination, no matter how utterly his reason may reject them.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*.

What One Misses in the New Testament.

THE New Testament is a bundle of tracts written as an expression of the beliefs and hopes of a poor community of religious enthusiasts. It is not, and was not meant to be, a literary masterpiece. On the whole, it answers its original purpose sufficiently well. Its legends are told with simplicity, and its convictions stated with earnestness. A careful study of its documents reveals the mind of the early Christians, their heroism, their dreams, and their faults. But, when foolish people maintain that the New Testament is divinely inspired and edited, there is a very distinct change in the music, and criticism is immediately challenged.

I shall not re-travel the worn line of controversy, and point out contradictions and absurdities; but I shall confine myself to exposing one special defect in the New Testament considered as a literary achievement. I mean its lack of liberal culture. Of course, I should not expect liberal culture in the uneducated persons who put together the first fragments of the Christian myth. But, when I am assured that the book has received the touch of a divine hand, I have a right to look into it for a breadth of view and a certain magnificence of phrase which should surpass the stateliest productions of the world's authorship. This breadth and this magnificence do not exist. And, in proof of my censure, I will allege certain directions in which the New Testament fails.

The New Testament is wanting in æsthetic elements—*i.e.*, in appreciation of the beautiful in nature and art. There is, indeed, a sense in which the entire gospel may be regarded as a poem. For instance, the story of the Christ-child born in the manger may be counted as a not ungraceful metaphor, by which it is suggested that genius may enter the world under very adverse circumstances. Taken in that signification, the gospel myths have some fertility of artistic ideas; and the great painters—especially those of Italy and Flanders—have made rich use of the material. Agnostic as I am, I sincerely admire the pictures in which Raphael and Rubens have made the Christian fables beautiful to the eye and responsive to human sympathies. But when the theologians insist that the gospels, and the other New Testament writings, must be accepted in their literal meanings, then the whole thing becomes prosy and feeble. Myth always remains charming until it is believed. Then its brilliancy fades.

The writers of the New Testament are so exclusively occupied with the problems of the soul that they have no time to look up to the sky, or around at the landscape. It may be replied that their object is necessarily limited, and that they wish to concentrate our attention wholly on the spiritual; and that when the spiritual world is restored to harmony the natural or material world will soon receive its due homage. But this shows a misunderstanding of the human constitution. The education of man must proceed along a double line—the subjective and the objective. Man must be made aware of his own faculties and powers; and he must, at the same time, be made aware of the character of his environment. He must evolve the beautiful that is within him; he must also learn to perceive the beauty that is without. The New Testament ignores the beauty that is without. If God created the heavens, surely it would not be beneath the dignity of an evangelist to linger awhile on the majesty of the stars that keep watch over night and slumber. If God created the vegetation, the Christian Bible might have revealed to us some of the secrets of the flowers, and some of the delights of the many-tinted forests. If God created the rocks, a word of praise might have been spared for the exquisiteness of crystals, the colors of marble and agate, and the chaste hues of the nautilus. Shall Ruskin enchant us with the sunset, and Paul be silent? And Cuypp may persuade us into loving the very cattle in the riverside meadows, but Mark and Matthew must be dumb on the subject of rural loveliness. It may be answered, perhaps, that the New Testament writers could never have adequately described the glories of the cosmos which God made,

unless they had composed a vast library of works on scenery and natural history. But a vast library was not needed. A few skilful lines would have sufficed to set the tone and disclose the sealed splendors of nature. Shakespeare did not demand an excess of words to portray the storm amid which the tired sailor sleeps:—

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
And in the visitation of the winds,
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
With deafening clamor in the slippery clouds,
That with the hurly death itself awakes?

And Milton, with a few short sentences, succeeded in making the moonlit earth a thing of grace for all English memories:—

Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
Had in her sober livery all things clad;
Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests,
Were slunk; all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung.
Silence was pleased. Now glowed the firmament
With living sapphires. Hesperus, that led
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,
Rising in clouded majesty, at length
Apparent queen unveiled her peerless light,
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw.

Brief as the gospels and epistles are, they contain many repetitions, and the literary space is not well economised. In place of a miracle narrated three times over, we could have better endured a hymn to the snowy peak of Hermon, or a lyric in honor of the maids of Galilee.

While nature is neglected, so also is the greatness of human art. Even the British nation (which is not singularly æsthetic in temperament) could see the value of the Elgin marbles, and more or less honestly transfer them to its Museum. Paul visited Athens when the frieze of the Parthenon was yet unspoiled by time and war. Yet he could not drop one niggard syllable to prove that he was moved by its genius. Were all the Christian Churches established in squalid mining villages or fishermen's hamlets? Did the early Saints never behold a Greek mausoleum, or handle an Athenian vase? Could the temples of Adelphi, Ephesus, and Rome leave their taste and imagination unaffected? Had the lute no magic, and the choir of Apollo no message? With Egypt on this side, Hellas on that, and Italy on the horizon, could the spirit of Christianity stand rigid, indifferent, and insusceptible? It could, and it did. The poor, gaunt Christians of the first two centuries had neither the capacity nor the training to see Aphrodite in the foam, or hear the voice of Echo among the old grey hills. They were ill-fed, ill-educated. They had fine moral qualities, no doubt; but they had little or no instinct for the artistic and the musical. Their imagination was weak, and its weakness deprived the New Testament of color, rhythm, and style.

F. J. GOULD.

Seer and Singer.

"For proud and fiery and swift and bold—
Wine of life from heart of gold,
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
Full-billowed through his veins."

—JAMES THOMSON.

THE personality of Lucretius, the great Roman poet, is at once the most extraordinary and the vaguest of any in the world of letters. He comes before us in his works as distinctly as any other writer; he is, as it were, always present, but the details of his life are so shadowy and so misunderstood. Yet, in some ways, this old-world Freethinker may come more home to our modern sympathies than many others of those of the far-off time in which he lived. Across the gulf of twenty centuries, across the far deeper abyss of an older civilisation and an alien language, we recognise in him a brave soldier in the army of Freedom.

According to Lucretius, the great curse of human nature is religion, which priests still use to fool and degrade mankind. No lingering doubt, timidity, or affected reverence for what his virile reason condemned as false, restrained him in his masterly denunciation of

religion as unworthy alike of philosophers and men. He treated with scorn and earnest indignation the priestly cant that attempted to shield the contradictions, puerilities, and immoralities of religion, by denouncing those who submitted unauthenticated fables and theories to the test of reason. He fiercely denied the immortality of the "soul," on arguments founded on Materialism. He also denied the doctrines of a divine creation of the world, and of a superintending Providence. Couched under other forms, arrived at by other courses, the principles of this brave old Roman are the same, or almost the same, as those accepted by the Freethinkers of to-day. The attitude of Lucretius was Rationalistic. He came forward as the champion of reason. Indeed, at times we might almost fancy he was a prehistoric Voltaire, confuting the arguments of the priests, or an old-world Huxley deriding the pseudo-science of theologians interested in defending an organised hypocrisy. Lucretius mocked at the clerical idea of a future retribution with which the old priests of Paganism terrorised the multitude. The fairy-tales of the tortures of the damned, he said, were merely the projection into futurity of that blind cowardice, those craving passions, that baulked ambition, that restless dissatisfaction, those penal inflictions that cause the misery and the degradation of human life.

Now and again his cheek flushes with anger, as when he records, in lines of great beauty, the terrible guilt, prompted by religion, against the most sacred ties of human nature. No poet has presented us with a picture more finished and exquisite than that of the awful Sacrifice of Iphigenia. It stands before us as if it had been transferred to canvas. It is a story "too deep for tears." We see the hapless maiden, trembling by the altar, without power of speech, the murderous priest, the sorrowing father, the strong men powerless, and the bloody end. Lucretius concludes his account with passionate bitterness:—

"Learn thou, then,
To what damned deeds religion urges men."

This is the one idea that runs through his whole poem, *On the Nature of Things*. He is man's champion against priestcraft. He tilts like a knight-errant against every form of religious terror, one by one unhorsing them, and leaving them disarmed and prostrate. He charges first at the most important and formidable, and then, having cleared the ground about him, demolishes at his leisure the lighter and more scattered squadrons. His very method is but part of the modern method, or, rather, it is the modern method in its infancy. We may gain some notion of the general effect of his great poem, *On the Nature of Things*, if we conceive Tennyson to have devoted his talents to versifying Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy*, or Swinburne to have subordinated his genius to the poetic presentment of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Everywhere Lucretius treats priestcraft with passionate invective. In his contests with the clerics, an atmosphere as congenial to the old Roman as the breath of battle, he proved himself the sublimest of his country's poets.

As a sign of his wonderful soundness and integrity as a thinker, it is not sufficient to say that he is like the moderns. Writing about half a century before the alleged birth of the mythical Christ, he anticipated many of the most special individual scientific ideas of this nineteenth century. With most remarkable foresight he perceived the truth of evolution, the indestructibility of matter, the struggle for existence, the survival of the fittest, the origin of language, the progress of society. To us these things are but recent tidings. Twenty long centuries ago they dawned on the prophetic mind of this great Roman poet, "brooding on things to come." The most marked characteristic of Lucretius was his passionate ardor for all knowledge. It was simply unbounded. His pathos and tenderness in contemplating the more awful phases of life have already been noticed. His was the tenderness of a strong and manly character, self-reliant, and feeling sympathy with the weak and helpless, even with the animal world, as well as humanity. He voices the dumb, helpless, grief of brutes, sorrowing for their young. His allusions to children are exquisitely touching and beautiful. His love of science,

his austerity of character, the magnificence of his genius, rank him among the really great poets, who, like fixed stars, shine for ever in the firmament of time. It is with no common interest that we regard this most gifted genius as a Freethinker. When we think of the present condition of priest-ridden Ireland, Spain, and his beloved Italy, when we reflect on the struggle of reason and religion, written in blood and fire, during the centuries, we feel it but just to acknowledge that this old-world Secularist, twenty centuries ago, fought the battle for humanity. Lucretius helps us to understand the magnitude of the struggle between reason and unreason. In his days, each, as it were, armed with simpler weapons, fought together. Now, science, armed with weapons so much more formidable and deadly, marches to battle in the confident hope of final victory.

MIMNERMUS.

Catholics and New Testament Ethics.

ONE of the favorite propositions of the neo-Christian school is that the New Testament contains the Alpha and Omega of morality. Jesus may have been nothing more than a man, says this school, but he was an extraordinary man. Mr. Gilbert has satirised the *dilettantes*, whose fad was that

Art stopped short
In the cultivated Court
Of the Empress Josephine.

It would require a Gilbert to satirise the people who think that ethics and philosophy stopped short some nineteen hundred years ago in a little town in Judæa.

But an interesting commentary on this polite superstition is furnished by a recent article in the *Catholic Times* on Marie Corelli's new novel, *The Master Christian*. The Catholic leader-writer works himself into a great fit of indignation over the book—an indignation that is apparently compatible with a healthy ignorance of ordinary current literature. It is no part of my present purpose to deal with Miss Corelli's book, but the *Catholic Times* writer asks with surprise:—

"Who but Marie Corelli would have dreamt of re-incarnating the Redeemer and making him live again as a waif and stray of a nineteenth-century town?"

Well, whether or not anyone else would have dreamt of this device, the fact is it is comparatively common in modern fiction. James Russell Lowell in his well-known poem, Olive Schreiner in *Trooper Peter Halket of Mashonaland*, Robert Buchanan in *The Wandering Jew*, and, one may add, Mrs. Lynn Linton in *Joshua Davidson*, have all more or less adopted it, to mention a few. Whether the Catholic gentleman is aware of it or not, Jesus was always a favorite with the fictionists. But, after reciting how he was "disgusted" and "deeply amused" at a book which is "extraordinarily clever" and also "extraordinarily illogical," and after further suggesting that it should be placed on the Papal Index, the writer proceeds:—

"Does Miss Marie Corelli seriously believe, or does she wish her readers seriously to believe, that the morality of the New Testament will survive the abolition of the Churches which are generally supposed to preach it? If so, we fear she is deceived. The questions now affecting men's minds are no longer concerned with differences between Churches. Every thoughtful man recognises that those differences never should have arisen, and that the sooner they are abolished the better for Christianity at large. But thoughtful men recognise something further. They recognise the sad fact that, in our times, the prevailing irreligion springs not so much from the differences dividing the Churches as from the difficulties underlying the revelation which those Churches profess to teach."

This is pretty frank, and, whatever thoughtful men may "recognise" about the "differences" which have arisen between the Churches, the more honest amongst them certainly know that the statement as to the cause of the current irreligion is indubitably true; and the phrase about the revelation which the Churches "profess" to teach is particularly good in a Catholic print.

Evidently the *Catholic Times* is under no delusion as to the possibility of permanently erecting a system of ethics on a book, or collection of books, which possess

what influence they have by virtue of the organisation which puffs them. It goes on:—

"Miss Marie Corelli would destroy all the creeds; she would build the spiritual life on the New Testament alone. Can she be really aware of the folly of such a program? If she is not aware, let her ask the first intelligent man of her acquaintance, and she will learn how little the New Testament is likely to support a code of morals, once she has destroyed the authority which has elevated the book to the position of a moral code."

With all respect to the neo-Christian moralists—and many of them, no doubt, are men of sincere moral enthusiasm—we submit that the Catholic writer here hits the nail on the head. It is the "authority," the Church, which has "elevated" the New Testament to the position it occupies; it was the Church which made the New Testament. And men would never have persuaded themselves that it embodied the most lofty moral teaching if they had not first been persuaded it was divine. When it is conceded that the New Testament is merely a collection of human documents of doubtful historical authenticity, it merely takes its place amongst the other literature of the world, to be criticised and appraised at its human value. Nothing of good that it may contain is any the better for being found there, nothing of evil any the less pernicious. If we pick out bits here and there of the teaching of Jesus, and say that they evidence a relative perception of a side of moral truth, we merely do so because such moral propositions appear to be validated to us by our human observations; just as our observations and study might similarly seem to validate bits or phases, say, of the teaching of Nietzsche. And equally in the one case as the other we might claim that certain phases and aspects of both teachings seem to us the negation of moral truth. Once the New Testament ceases to be regarded as a supernatural product, the whole question becomes one of human judgment. The *Catholic Times* thus sums the matter up:—

"She [Miss Corelli] must remember that the Church has made the Bible, not the Bible the Church. Mr. Mallock thinks the Church will endure, no matter what fate overtakes the Bible. Miss Corelli fancies the Bible would last, even if fate swept away the Church. Both are wrong. The Bible and the Church will stand or fall together, and only people with an incorrect conception of what Catholic teaching really is dream anything else."

"The Bible and the Church will stand or fall together." So says Catholicism—and so say we. But we add the corollary: they will fall together; nay, they are falling, as this very Catholic writer unconsciously demonstrates. He expressly refers, indeed, to the "irreligion" which is prevalent amongst thoughtful men. But in itself the article—and it is only one of hundreds—indicates the change. Can anyone conceive the Catholic Church of, say, two hundred, or even one hundred, years ago publicly discussing in its accredited organs whether or no the New Testament was capable of being detached from the Church? Can anyone imagine the Church of the Middle Ages stopping to argue with fashionable novelists that it could not be dispensed with? Argument was sterner in those times, and frequently came to closer quarters than newspaper lucubrations.

"We will stand or fall together," cries the dying Church through her press. You are falling, *messieurs*, falling by the dead-weight of your out-worn creeds, falling because your foundations are being eaten away by the processes of time.

FREDERICK RYAN.

The Paris Freethought Congress.

THE International Freethought Congress at Paris, which took place on the four days from the 16th to the 19th September this year, was in every respect an important and encouraging event in the history of our movement. The splendid hall of the Grand Orient de France—the world-wide order of French Freemasonry—in the Rue Cadet was placed at the disposal of the Congress, and the spacious rooms adjoining were utilised for the sittings of the six Committees appointed at the opening meeting to report on the various questions submitted to the deliberations of the Congress. All the meetings were full of animation and enthusiasm, and the interest of the large numbers of delegates never flagged throughout the eight sittings, notwithstanding that early morn (at 9 o'clock) saw their coming, and dewy eve (at 6 o'clock) saw their going to and from the scene of discussion.

Delegates were present from all parts of France and Belgium. England was represented by Mr. Roger, Vice-President N. S. S. and President of the Camberwell Branch, and by the present writer; Germany by a young and extremely able lady, Ida Altmann, of Wiesbaden; Belgium was brilliantly represented by M. Fourémont, member of the Belgium Chambre de Deputés; Spain sent the genial Señor Maglia; and Switzerland a very hard-working toiler for Freethought, M. Fuepius, editor of a Freethought journal at Geneva entitled *Lumiere*, and President also of the Freethought Society at that city.

A gratifying feature at the Congress was the large number of women delegates, and the eloquence and good sense with which they approached the varied problems set before us for discussion.

In all, there were present more than 200 delegates of various nationalities, comprising representatives of various National Federations, like the N. S. S. and the French and German Federations, and numerous independent Freethought Societies in France and Belgium. More than twenty delegates, representing towns like Charleroi, Liège, Nasniv, and elsewhere, came from the latter country. Delegates were also present from some of the Masonic lodges of Nance, from various Socialist groups, and from the French societies connected with the women's rights question.

Six questions in all were presented to the Congress—viz., (1) Freethought in relation to religion; (2) the bases of morality; (3) complete education and the program of Freethought; (4) the rights of women; (5) Socialism and Freethought; and (6) special propositions having particular relation to the different nationalities.

The first serious business of the Congress was the appointment of Commissions to examine and report on the above questions. Mr. Roger was elected to sit on the Commissions dealing with questions 3 and 5, and I sat with the Commissions dealing with questions 1, 5, and 6.

In anticipation of the Congress, a number of valuable statements, reports, and documents bearing on these varied questions had already been prepared by individuals, and by the Committees of various Freethought Societies; and these materials, after being properly collated and arranged, were duly presented to the Commissions and considered at the sittings, and formed in several instances the basis of the Report. Each item of the program was separately considered, and a valuable body of materials and ideas was thus brought together in elucidation of the questions under discussion. Each Committee appointed its own reporter, who presented the conclusions of the Committee at the general meetings of the Congress.

M. Victor Charbonnel, who presented the Report upon Question 1, is a notable convert from the Catholic Church. The whilom priest has become journalist, and holy water gives place to unholy ink. Since his emancipation he has identified himself with Freethought and Socialism, and our principles have gained an active and eloquent representative in the man who once ministered at the altar of superstition. He is still young, and a brilliant future doubtless awaits this able and earnest man. A little while ago he was married, and the good wishes of the Freethought party, universally, will go out to him and the partner of his life. M. Charbonnel's Report was a masterpiece of powerful exposition. Combatting all religions, and scouting even the hypothesis of a God, the Report proclaimed the moral supremacy of Science and Truth. The delegates were recommended to study the signs of the moral and intellectual decay of the purely Christian elements in our social life, and to embody the results of their inquiries in the various Freethought journals. The scandals and crimes of the priestly order, inasmuch as they evidence the decrepitude of the creeds, should be made a special feature in our Freethought work, so that all the world may witness the nakedness of our spiritual pastors, and be ashamed of its servitude to a system administered for God by such types of men.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

OUR LEGAL CANDIDATES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On September 27 Mr. Augustine Birrell, Q.C., addressed a meeting in St. Luke's Schools, Manchester, in favor of his candidature for N. E. Manchester. At the close of his address he urgently invited written questions, socially or politically. Taking advantage, I wrote down and handed up the following question: "Are you in favor of Secularists receiving and holding bequests left to them by will, the same as Christians enjoy under the present law? Secularists are debarred from receiving and holding any bequests left by will." The reply from this legal luminary was as follows:—"He was surprised at the question, for he did not think that the law was to that effect. He was in favor of Secularists receiving and holding bequests. He was a lawyer himself, but he did not think the law was as stated in my question. And the audience marvelled at his greatness.

LLOYD PASSANT (N.S.S.).

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, C. Watts, "Is Spiritualism a Delusion?"
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY Masonic Hall, Camberwell road: 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "Morality and Art."
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione, for members and friends.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

FINSBURY PARK: 3.30, A lecture.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, A. B. Moss.
CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, A lecture.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.
EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. Leggatt.
WEST HAM BRANCH (Stratford Grove): 7.30, S. E. Easton.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.
HAMMERSMITH (outside the Lyric Opera House): 7.15, R. P. Edwards.

COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): J. H. Gilliland, "Mr. Balfour's Foundations of Belief."
BRADFORD LABOUR CHURCH (Peckover-street): 3 and 6.30, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, Councillor J. Godbold, "A Comprehensive Religion and its Social Responsibilities."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): October 7 (6.30), F. J. Gould, "William Blake: Poet and Artist."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture—for subject see Saturday's *Football Echo*.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote—11, "China and the Christian Powers"; 3, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 6.30, "Does Death End Us?" Tea at 5.
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): H. Percy Ward—11, "The Foolishness of Prayer"; 3, "Religion in Board Schools"; 7, "The Delusion of Spiritualism." Weather permitting, the first lecture will be given near the Monolith.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 7, Cardiff. 9, New Tredegar. 14, Pontypridd. 21, Birmingham. 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

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

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—December 9, Glasgow.

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