

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Agnostic Nonsense.

SOME years ago I said that an Agnostic was an Atheist with a tall hat on. Many a true word is spoken in jest, and I believe this is a case in point. It may be my obtuseness, but I have never been able to discover any real difference between the Atheist and the Agnostic, except that the latter is more in love with respectability; or, if not exactly in love, is anxious to contract a marriage of convenience. In the old Hall of Science days, I noticed that sturdy Freethinkers used to come and sit under Bradlaugh, and proudly call themselves Atheists. That was while they were comparatively poor, and free from domestic embarrassments. When they became better off, and their children (especially their daughters) grew taller, they gradually edged off to South-place Chapel, sat under Mr. Conway, and called themselves Agnostics. They did not pretend that their opinions had changed, and they were glad to sneak into the old place (minus wife and family) on a stirring occasion; but they had drifted, and they knew why, though they never liked to say so. Bradlaugh's strength lay amongst those who could, for one reason or another, afford to defy conventions; such as the skilled artisans and the lower-middle classes, with a dash of professional society. Two hundred a year was fatal to his front-seat people. When they reached that income they emigrated (with their womenkind) to a more "respectable" establishment.

I do not shrink from the consequences of the foregoing observations. Indeed, I will speak with the utmost plainness. Charles Bradlaugh was an Atheist because he was a man of invincible courage, and did not care twopence for the frowns of the Church or the sneers of society. Professor Huxley was an Agnostic because he had over a thousand a year, and moved in the "upper circles," and filled certain "honorable" positions. He was too honest to say that he believed what he disbelieved, but he could not afford to bear an odious name. So he coined the word "Agnostic," which was newer, longer, and less intelligible than "Atheist." And having got a label that suited him entirely, he devised many subtle reasons why other Freethinkers should wear it too. A number of them jumped at the opportunity. They were delighted to be at once heterodox and respectable. It was a new and unexpected sensation. They were able to criticise orthodoxy with great freedom, providing they did not touch upon the two vital points of all supernatural faith—namely, the belief in God and the doctrine of a future life; and they were also able to chide the Atheist for his vulgar dogmatism in calling certain religious ideas false, when the true philosopher knew that it was impossible to demonstrate the negative of anything.

I used to think that Mr. Holyoake was an Atheist. At any rate, he wrote a *Trial of Theism*, in which he made that ancient faith look a frightful old impostor. But I conclude that he now wishes this work to be regarded as an academic exercise, a playful effort of the theoretical intelligence. Many years ago—and still for all I know—he offered the British public the story of his prosecution and imprisonment for "blasphemy" under the title of *The Last Trial for Atheism*. He was really not tried for Atheism at all, and most of us took the word as a defiant expression of his principles. But we were mistaken. Mr. Holyoake explains in the new *Agnostic Annual* that he is not an Atheist now, whatever he may have been when he was young, ignorant,

and impulsive. He says that the Atheist is guilty of "preposterous presumption"—which I think I understood, although it is a very loose expression. He calls Atheism a "wild assumption." He professes himself an Agnostic; which, as he explains it, is our old friend Sceptic *redivivus* from the pages of David Hume.

"Theism, Atheism, and Agnosticism denote attitudes of thought in relation to the existence of a Supreme Cause of Nature. The Theist declares, without misgiving, that there is such an existence. The Atheist, without misgiving, declares there is no such existence. The Agnostic, more modest in pretension, simply says that, having no information on the subject, he does not know."

Mr. Holyoake says, further on, that the Theist and the Atheist alike have "no doubt that they knew the solution" of the "mighty problem of the cause of eternity." Well, I beg to tell him that I am acquainted with at least one Atheist who does not affect to know this "solution." This particular Atheist does not so much as know the meaning of "the cause of eternity." To him it is—as Hamlet says—words, words, words! But this is not enough. I will go further, and ask Mr. Holyoake to refer me to one Atheist who *denies* the existence of God. Of course there are many Atheists who deny the existence of this or that God, because the definition of such alleged beings involves a contradiction to obvious facts of universal experience. But what Atheist denies the existence of *any* God; that is to say, of any superhuman or supernatural power? All the Atheists I know of take the position that there is no evidence on which to form a valid judgment, and that man's finite intellect seems incapable of solving an infinite problem. And as I understand Mr. Holyoake this is the very position taken by the Agnostic.

Etymologically, as well as philosophically, an Atheist is one without God. That is all the "A" before "Theist" really means. It is not disbelief, but unbelief. Now I believe the Agnostic is without God too. Practically, at any rate, he is in the same boat with the Atheist.

Atheism may be called a negative attitude. No doubt it is so. But every negative involves something positive. If the Atheist turns away from the "mighty problem" as hopeless, he is likely to tackle more promising problems with greater vigor and effect. But it is admitted by Mr. Holyoake that Agnosticism is a negative attitude too. Wherein, then, lies the justification for all the super-fine airs of its advocates?

When you look into the matter closely, you perceive that Atheism and Agnosticism are both definite in the same direction. Bradlaugh and Huxley were at one in their hostile criticism of Christianity. Keeping the mind free from superstition is an excellent work. It is weeding the ground. But it is not sowing, and still less reaping. It merely creates the possibility of sound and useful growth. We have to fall back upon Secularism at the finish. Nor is that a finality. Secularism is the affirmation of the claims of this life against the usurpations of the next. But the affirmation would be unnecessary if the belief in a future life disappeared or radically changed. Secularism itself—whatever Mr. Holyoake may say—is an attitude. The face that was turned from God is turned towards Man. What will follow is beyond the range of Atheism or Agnosticism. Presently it is beyond the range of Secularism. It is not to be determined by any system. It depends on positive knowledge and the laws of evolution.

G. W. FOOTE.

What is Spiritualism ?

A STUDY of the many mutations of human thought reveals the fact that persons who have neglected proper critical analysis find themselves ready victims to all kinds of superstition. And even some of those who, to a certain extent, do exercise their critical faculties are not exempt from yielding to superstitious allurements. Having devoted many years to the examination of the pretensions of Spiritualism, I have arrived at the conclusion that it is not based upon demonstrated facts, and that the belief that spirits survive death and reappear to the living is the result of emotional feelings uncontrolled by reason and unaccompanied by a fair critical analysis. I fully endorse the following statements of Professor Haeckel, which are to be found on page 313 of his latest work, *The Riddle of the Universe*. He there states :—

“One of the most remarkable forms of superstition, which still takes a very active part in modern life, is Spiritism. It is a surprising and a lamentable fact that millions of educated people are still dominated by this dreary superstition; even distinguished scientists are entangled in it.....It is a frequent boast of Spiritists that even eminent men of science defend their superstition. In Germany, A. Zöllner and Fechner are quoted as instances; in England, Wallace and Crookes. The regrettable circumstance that physicists and biologists of such distinction have been led astray by Spiritism is accounted for, partly by their excess of imagination and defect of the critical faculty, and partly by the powerful influence of dogmas which a religious education imprinted on the brain in early youth. Moreover, it was precisely through the famous *séances* at Leipzig, in which the physicists, Zöllner, Fechner, and Wilhelm Weber, were imposed on by the clever American conjurer, Slade, that the fraud of the latter was afterwards fully exposed; he was discovered to be a common impostor.”

Such testimony as this from a recognised scientist should cause inquirers to pause before giving their adherence to the Spiritualist theory, which I believe to be destitute of all trustworthy evidence.

Spiritualism, as its exponents allege, means the belief that, in addition to our material bodies, we possess what is called a spirit that lives after we are dead, and has the power, which it frequently exercises, of manifesting itself to those who still inhabit the earth. Now the first thing to consider is: What is a spirit? I have frequently asked this question, but have never received a satisfactory answer. And yet it is indispensable that we should know what the term really means, for upon our possessing that knowledge will depend our ability to judge of the truth or falsehood of Spiritualism. The New Testament says: “A spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Luke xxiv. 39); but how such an existence can possess mobility and intelligence science and philosophy have failed to demonstrate. Spirit has also been described as “an intangible, invisible, intelligent power, capable of acting on, and influencing, physical organisms.” Such a definition is a manifest absurdity; for how that which is intangible and invisible can be seen, felt, and conversed with is beyond ordinary comprehension.

Another answer as to what is a spirit is that given by Sergeant Cox, who says: “Spirit is not, and cannot be, immaterial.” The soul “is a refined Body”; “its substance is vastly more refined than the thinnest gas” (Podmore’s *Studies in Psychological Research*, pp. 35-6). If this were a correct definition of spirit, it would be, like all matter, subject to change and disorganisation, which, it is said, spirit is not. I should like to be informed how fine matter must become before it ceases to be subject to laws of integration and disintegration, distribution and re-distribution. If spirit is refined, sublimated matter, there is no possibility of immortality of any one form, unless at a certain stage of refinement matter ceases to act in accordance with those laws which we now observe in all material operations; which is an absurdity. The latest attempt to define Spiritualism has been made by Mr. G. H. Bibbings, editor of *Psyche*. According to him, Spiritualism is “the art or science of communing with exanimate intelligence.” Now, this is not only no definition, but the use of the words “art or science” in the sentence is entirely out of place. J. S. Mill, in his *System of Logic* (vol. i., p. 2),

says: “To define is to select from among all the properties of a thing those which shall be understood to be designated and declared by its name.” The word “thing,” here mentioned, represents what, in Mr. Bibbings’s supposed definition, is called Spiritualism; but there is no evidence that “art or science” is among its properties. Therefore, Mr. Bibbings’s definition is logically defective. Mill further says that the properties “must be well known to us.” The fact, however, is, that art and science are not known to us as properties of Spiritualism. Art is a term used to indicate the modification or improvement of things by human skill for a particular purpose. But how can art be applied to that which is immaterial? And what purpose can it serve in connection with a spirit which has not nerves, muscles, flesh, nor bones? What skill has Spiritualism manifested in dealing with mundane affairs? Has it made known to the world a single fact that has not been discovered by other means? Moreover, how can art be employed where the object upon which it could be exercised is absent?

As to science, it is certainly unscientific to positively assert that there are other than natural causes operating in the universe. The function of science is to discover and classify facts, and to enable their importance to be recognised as being superior to mere speculation. Karl Pearson writes: “The scientific man has, above all things, to aim at self-elimination in his judgments, to provide an argument which is as true for each individual mind as for his own.....He will demand a high standard of reasoning, a clear insight into facts and their results” (*Grammar of Science*, pp. 7 and 11). Spiritualists have not hitherto done this, for their arguments refer to the subjective, and are therefore true, if at all, to their own minds only, and not to others. All physical science is based upon verified facts, which is the basis of all scientific experiments; it has nothing to do with conjectures of what is said to exist apart from the natural. Science does not teach that we are dual in this life and monistic in some other. If man has a continued existence after death, in which he manifests the capacity to think and to make his thoughts known, he must, judging from our knowledge of the requirements of mentality, be subject to the same laws of thought then as he is now. Hence to assume, as Spiritualists do, that man, when he has lost his material perceptive faculties, can retain the power of recognition, of thought, and of speech, is not science, but conjecture.

We are told that Spiritualism means “communings with exanimate intelligence.” But what is that? Does it differ from carnate intelligence? If yes, in what particular? If no, is it reasonable to believe that intelligence, as at present understood, can be manifested when the conditions indispensable to such manifestations no longer exist? Moreover, is it scientific to allege that intelligent communications can be made when the organs necessary for such communications are destroyed? By the word “intelligence” I mean the totality of mental activity; the ability to form and impart ideas. Of course, intelligence does not exist *per se*. It is not an entity, but a property or quality of a material organisation. It implies bodily senses and the power of perception. But this involves organism and environment, with action and interaction between the two. Besides, as we know intelligence, it is always associated with conscious beings, whose consciousness depends upon functional activity which is called life, which I regard as the result of the combination of different parts of matter. I define matter as being that which can be recognised by the senses. In the words of Professor Clifton, of Oxford, “it is that which occupies space and is cognised by the senses.” Thomson and Tait allege that “the Naturalist may be content to know matter as that which can be perceived by the senses, or as that which can be acted upon by, or can exert, force” (*Natural Philosophy*, vol. i., p. 161). Now, as life is necessary to intelligence, and organisation is requisite to life, it is legitimate to conclude that when life and organisation are gone intelligence will cease.

I do not deny that intelligence is shown at some of the so-called spiritual *séances*; but such intelligence is always associated with living beings. Whatever manifests intelligence must be something. If it is material,

it is not separate from matter; and if it is not material, what is it? The verdict of science is, that force and matter are inseparable; that all the phenomena of nature are visible only in, and through, matter; that life is but a form or mode of motion; that thought, consciousness, the ego or self, are but resultants of force in matter; and that when the change called death ensues there is an end to that individual consciousness.

Professor Tyndall, in his "Belfast Address," writes:—

"The mind runs along the line of thought which connects the phenomena, and from beginning to end finds no break in the chain. But when we endeavor to pass, by a similar process, from the physics of the brain to the phenomena of consciousness, we meet a problem which transcends any conceivable expansion of the powers we now possess. We may think over the subject again and again; it eludes all intellectual presentation."

Such is the teaching of science, and it appears to me to be based upon facts and to be justified by experience.

CHARLES WATTS.

English Missions in India.

It has been calculated that no less than one million and a-half sterling is spent annually in Great Britain on the support of foreign missionary enterprise. The exact number of missionaries engaged in the work is not stated; but, judging from a number of annual reports that lie before me as I write, there cannot be less than 25,000, while it is more probably nearer 30,000. One body alone—the Church Missionary Society—spends upwards of £400,000 annually, and employs no less than 8,000 agents in different parts abroad. The expenditure is therefore lavish, the workers are numerous, and, as the public at large are invited to contribute to their support, they have a clear right to know to what extent this enormous expenditure of energy and cash is successful.

Unfortunately, this is no easy matter to determine. True, yearly reports are issued by most of the missionary societies, but, apart from the fact that these reports do not contain much of the information one would like to gather, they are *ex parte* statements, compiled by the missionaries themselves, and there is not much opportunity of testing their truthfulness. It is plain that these statements are not likely to underestimate either the quality or quantity of the work performed; and there is direct evidence, as will be seen later, that, on comparing the different reports, a great deal is written with the deliberate intention of misleading people at home.

It is my intention to publish shortly a somewhat lengthy examination of missionary enterprise in all parts of the world; at present I intend limiting my criticism to India alone. The only thing I wish my readers to bear in mind is, that all the statistics given below are taken from their own reports. I cannot guarantee their accuracy. I can guarantee mine in summarising the results, and I think I can safely assume that the case is not *better* than they represent it, but that it is, in all probability, much worse.

It is also worth bearing in mind that, in selecting India, I am by no means taking a country where the conditions of missionary enterprise are specially unfavorable. They are decidedly the reverse. The Government of the country, to mention only one circumstance, is professedly Christian; and this must rank as an important recommendation of its religion to the native population. In other countries, where there is not the same governmental patronage, the annual reports show poorer results. I have selected this field so as to take missionary work with everything in its favor; and, with everything in its favor, foreign missionary enterprise stands, on its own testimony, as one of the most colossal pieces of folly and knavery existing:

What, then, is the result of missionary work in our Indian Empire? The agents are numerous; the expenditure is lavish; the conditions are, as I have said, peculiarly favorable. What are the results? We will take, first of all, the question of the *number* of converts reported. First in order of size and expenditure comes the Church Missionary Society. This Society had, in India, for the year ending March 31, 3,424 agents—406

Europeans and 3,018 natives; while the money transmitted from England for their use reaches the colossal sum of £113,630 17s. 6d. The general returns give, under the vague heading "Baptisms for the Year," the figure of 8,423. Out of this number, however, 5,978 are children, and there is nothing in the report to show whether these are the children of existing Church members, the children of the current year's converts, or simply children that have been induced, by methods more or less honorable, to undergo baptism. As, however, on looking through the report, it is clear that a large number of the converts are unmarried, it is evident that either these children belong to existing Christians—in which case the report is deliberately misleading, since it suggests the idea of actual conversions—or they are children baptised *without their parents*, a circumstance which gives rise to grave doubts concerning the method adopted to secure them. I emphasize this point here in order to avoid constant reference to it hereafter.

Putting on one side the conversion of children—which can hardly rank as a serious performance—the year's results would stand at 2,445 adult conversions as the fruits of the labor of 3,018 missionaries. Poor as this result is, a still further deduction has to be made. The report says nothing of losses, and these form no inconsiderable item, as we shall see. In the previous year's report (1899) the number of communicants was returned at 33,804. Adding to this the 8,423 baptisms recorded in this year's report, the number should now be 42,227, whereas the actual figures are 35,640; thus registering a loss of 6,587. This would reduce the net gain—including children and adults—to 1,836 as the result of the labor of over three thousand missionaries and an expenditure of £113,630 17s. 6d.—an all-round cost of over £60 per convert, without reckoning the money raised and spent locally.

The little impression made by Christian missions on the people of India is still more apparent if, instead of taking last year's figures alone, we go back a matter of three or four years. In 1896 the number of communicants stood at 32,009. Thus in four years the number has only increased 3,631, which, instead of giving us even 1,836 per year, averages only a little over 900, or about one convert per year to every three missionaries; and these latter backed up by numerous charitable agencies, schools, medical dispensaries, etc.

Let us see how the matter looks in detail. The work in Bengal was commenced in 1814. Last year there was a staff of 443 agents, who received from England over £15,000. During the twelve months they baptised 101 adults and 554 children—one adult convert to every four missionaries. But here, again, a discount has to be made; for during the past four years the net increase in the number of communicants has been only 334—an average of 84 per year, the 334 costing in round figures £60,000. And after 86 years' work the total number of communicants stands at 2,895, or an average of just over 33 per year. Madras, with a staff of 66 agents, has increased its communicants by 93 in four years. In Tinnevely there are 1,018 missionaries who last year baptised 373, and have realised a net gain of 227 in four years.

It is the same, if not worse, with other missions. The London Missionary Society has in India a staff of 1,844 missionaries, who received from England last year over £47,000. The number of people baptised or converted each year is not given, except incidentally—a circumstance that reflects more credit upon their "cuteness" than upon their honesty. But as in 1895-6 the Church members stood at 9,809, and in 1899-1900 at 10,998, there has been consequently a gain of 1,189 in four years. This gives us an average of about 300 per year, or, to look at the matter from another point of view, each convert represents the united labor of six missionaries for twelve months and an expenditure of £158.

This is the general result; let us look at some of the details. At Bellary, after 90 years' work, and with a present staff of 46 agents, there are 166 Church members—an average gain of less than two per year, while there is an actual *decrease* from 172 to 166 members during the past four years. Last year the 46 agents baptised 15 adults and children out of a population of 736,000. At Salem there are 239 Church members after 76 years' work,

and with a present staff of 28. Four years ago the Annual Report said: "The hostility so painfully manifest a couple of years ago has now almost entirely ceased, and Mr. Devasagayam has been much encouraged by the attentive bearing of the crowd, and also by the friendly and sympathetic attitude of the educated classes" (Report for 1896, p. 95). The result of this "attentive bearing" and "sympathetic attitude" is that, whereas in 1896 the Church members numbered 240, they are now 239. In Madras there are 201 Church members after 70 years' propaganda. The staff of missionaries numbers 63. "There are distinct signs of progress" in Madras, is the cheering statement in the current year's report (p. 164). The only evidence of its presence is that the Church members have dropped from 221 in 1896 to 201 in 1900.

At Berhampur, "in all parts of the district, and in all branches of the work, there is movement" (Annual Report, p. 110). The use of the non-committal word "movement" is a stroke of genius. There are now ten members less than there were four years ago. Still, there is "movement." True, it is movement in the wrong direction, but no inaccuracy can be charged against this portion of the report. The total number of Church members is 28 after 76 years' propaganda. At Benares "the native Church is steadily growing in numbers" (Annual Report, 1896). Very steadily, I imagine, as, after eighty years' work, the Church membership reaches the enormous total of 36; and the 37 agents, while failing to secure a single convert during 1899, have actually managed to lose one of the 36. Still, "we believe a quiet work is going on among the women" (p. 115). The "believe" is distinctly humorous.

Next to the London Missionary Society comes the Baptist Missionary Society, with a staff of 552 agents and an expenditure of £25,989 12s. 2d. There are all the usual reports of the wonderful effects of the preaching, with the customary insignificant results in the shape of actual converts. The report for 1899 contains the following from one of its agents in India: "I have never before experienced such a general desire on the part of vast multitudes of the people to listen attentively and thoughtfully to the preaching of the old, old story of Jesus" (p. 16). From another: "I have seen an audience of out-and-out idolaters and Mohammedans held spellbound many times since I came to India." And the result of this "spellbound" attention of "vast multitudes" to the preaching of the Gospel? Well, last year 552 missionaries gained 369 converts and lost 389, spending nearly £26,000 over the operation. One of two things is certain, on comparing results with promises. Either the stories of the burning desire of people to listen to the Gospel—stories common with all, and repeated year after year—are deliberate falsehoods, uttered for the purpose of tickling the pockets of subscribers at home, or they betray a lack of judgment and common sense perfectly appalling—even in a missionary.

In what has gone before I have not only taken for granted the general accuracy of the returns given; I have also assumed that the conversions tabulated are those of people who, previous to conversion, were not Christians. Certainly this is the impression most people have of these "conversions." This impression is, however, entirely erroneous. In a large number of instances the cases of conversion given are not those of non-Christians, but of converts belonging to other missions that have been captured or bought, and who have already figured in numerous reports. Some years ago (1888) Canon Isaac Taylor pointed out that the rivalry of the different missionary agencies induced "converts" to put themselves up for auction, and sell themselves to the mission that offered most. He cites, in support of this statement, the case of one "inquirer," who was already getting £1 per month from the Church Missionary Society agent—no inconsiderable sum for India—who struck for higher pay, and went off to a rival mission to "inquire" at an increased salary. (*Fortnightly Review*, October, 1888.) By thus going from missionary to missionary, figuring first as a hopeful inquirer, and afterwards as an actual convert, a single individual may be transformed into a dozen or more by the time he reaches the British public, not one of the reports making any mention of the fact

that many of their cases have been "converted" by many other missions before reaching their hands.

That this is no exaggeration I shall prove in my next article by running over the charges of stealing converts, brought by the different agencies one against the other.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Angels Around.

THE Protestant has, for the most part, dismissed the angels from ordinary life. We see their figures in church windows and on Christmas cards; but no one expects to meet them in the street. The age of angels, like the age of miracles, is past. The Protestant is content to believe that angelic visitants occasionally interrupted the monotony of the past; but he has given up the hope of himself entertaining them unawares. His general impression seems to be that angels are confined in heaven by a strict quarantine, and until he himself is fitted with wings and a halo he is unlikely to see them or be influenced by them.

To the Catholic, however, the angels are, or ought to be, an ever-present thought; for he is taught that it is a point of faith that they are entrusted with the special care of men. They are not mere abstractions, sitting on rainbows, twanging harps, but beings constantly meddling in mundane affairs. And it is the general teaching of the Catholic Church that each soul, upon its first entrance into the world, is entrusted to one of these faithful guides, who accompanies it throughout life. It has been profoundly debated as to whether Jesus Christ possessed such a guiding or guardian angel; but it is generally assumed that he did not require one, although he had the legions of heaven constantly at command. Ordinary people, however, are each allotted a guardian angel, and all the favorable accidents of life are attributed by the devout Catholic to the influence of this being. Stories of the interference of guardian angels are favorite subjects of Catholic literature, and are largely circulated. These anecdotes are just as foolish as other religious narratives, and many of them seem to be inter-religious, if one may coin the word, for the same story which is told in Protestant books as an instance of providential deliverance often reappears in Catholic works as an instance of the care of the guardian angel.

I have before me a collection of these tales—made in Germany. I gather from it that, in ancient times, the guardian angels only busied themselves with important personages, for the earlier stories only deal with emperors, princes, popes, and the cardinal saints of the Church. As the ages rolled on, however, the guardians became more democratic, and the modern instances of angelic interference are confined to poor people.

One narrative, quoted from the History of the Society of Jesus, deserves notice. St. Ignatius, being ordered by the doctor to return to Spain, wrote to his nine first companions, who were in Paris, to proceed to Venice. "They set out at once, although the time of the year was severe, and took their way through Germany. One evening they alighted in a small village, whose parish priest was infected with the errors of Luther. He was so exasperated at seeing them openly carry their rosaries that he resolved to destroy them. This wicked purpose was to be carried out next morning; but the good angel, to whom St. Francis Xavier and his companions daily recommended their journey, woke them at break of day, warned them of the danger hanging over them, and ordered them to follow him, and led them into safety." As Herodotus says: "I leave everyone to his own opinion upon this matter."

When you have the Guardian Angel very strong, he is very useful. St. Frances of Rome was continually attended by one in the form of a little golden-haired boy, who was dressed in a tunic, the color of which varied on different days, in order to match the altar cloth. His countenance was as brilliant as the sun, and "at night St. Frances could read and work as easily as in daylight by the brightness of this, her celestial companion." Furthermore, this supernatural light was so strong that the saint was able to anticipate the Röntgen rays, for she could see inside everybody, and perceive

their most secret thoughts. It is a great pity that there are so few Catholics of such transcendent piety. If we had a few more of them, there would be no need to illuminate the streets at night with gas or the electric light; the presence of the angels would do the work, and lessen the rates and taxes. Our surgeons would have no need to burden themselves with X ray apparatus, but could avail themselves of the brilliancy of a guardian angel to carry out their operations.

The care of the guardian is not confined to this life, for the angel has been seen to conduct the soul of its protégé into Purgatory, and then wait outside until it was sufficiently purified, when he took charge of it again, to convey it to Paradise; reminding one of the working man taking his Sunday dinner to the baker's, and waiting outside the shop until it was cooked.

It does not do, however, to forget one's guardian, or the forgetfulness may be mutual. A short time ago, in the village of Obdorf, a peasant family was at its morning prayers. The mother, being, like Martha, very busy with household affairs, wished to omit some of the invocations. But her little son called out: "Oh, mother! I must pray to my angel guardian. Who will take care of me if I don't?" And so he concluded his customary devotions. In the course of the morning his father was ordered to cut down an oak tree, which, he noticed, had grown into the shape of a gigantic Y. The axe was laid to the foot of the tree, and it was just about to fall, when the horrified father noticed his little son playing upon the very spot where the tree would come down. It was too late to speak or move. Down came the oak with a crash. The next thing the father saw was his son, perfectly uninjured, standing apparently in the midst of the foliage. The angel had so guided the tree that the two forks of the Y came on either side of the child, and left him untouched; and thus the evening papers were unable to chronicle "another horrible accident." Quibbling scoffers may say that there was no sign of the visible intervention of the angelic guardian in this case; and therefore we will transcribe the following story.

Unfortunately, the narrative is not related by the principal actor, and no names are given. These little defects, however, are to be found in all religious anecdotes. "A corporal of dragoons in a Venetian regiment" [name unknown] tells us that he was present at the battle of Königgrätz, or, as we generally call it in this country, Sadowa. The Austrian cavalry were covering the retreat of their beaten army. As the dragoons rode through the streets of a village, to beat back the Prussian hussars, "Count M." suddenly saw a child of some three or four years of age, and with a face of most unearthly beauty, standing in the roadway in imminent danger of being run over by a passing gun-carriage. To snatch the boy from the ground and place him on his saddlebow was the work of an instant. The Prussians were swept away by the charge; but when the dragoons returned they found that the little stranger was quite dead. Two bullets had passed through his body, one of them lodging in the Count's clothes. Out of the thousands on that battlefield, one guardian angel had done his duty, and had materialised himself sufficiently to become a bullet-stopping shield for the noble Count.

A worthy priest, while visiting his parishioners, ascended to the first floor of a tenement house, and was startled to see a little boy sitting on the landing, playing with an open razor. "Mrs. M'Cafferty," he cried, "why don't you take the razor away from him. He'll do himself a mortal injury." "Sure now," replied Mrs. M'Cafferty, "the dear child is very happy with it; and don't I know that his blissid guardrian angel is at hand to protect him, the darrling." "Yes, yes, that's true for ye, Mrs. M'Cafferty," rejoined the good father softly, "but who's to protect the guardian angel? Suppose the dear child were to fall down the stairs! He might easily cut the angel in half as he flew down to catch him." "Begorr!" cried the alarmed Mrs. M'Cafferty, "I never thought of that." And she dexterously removed the child from the razor, and placed the latter in safety in the family chest of drawers.

We are somewhat too apt to imagine that the work of opposing superstition is over; that the progress of exact knowledge has swept away the last lingering vestige of excuse for believing in the supernatural. But we have

only to open our eyes and look around to see numbers of people still living contentedly in mediæval darkness. Some of the worst features of superstition may have disappeared; but when we find the doctrine of angelic presence still inculcated by a considerable body of men, who are learned according to their own standard, it is obvious that there is much to be done yet. Catholicism is waning in proportion to the population, like all other religious denominations; but it is still capable of making a great deal of noise, and some show. At Westminster it is rearing up a new Tower of Babel, which promises to be the hugest and ugliest barn in London; and we are likely to hear more of it yet. Consequently, its doctrines and beliefs should be kept in view as present dangers, not merely as historical anachronisms.

CHILPERIC.

A Biblical Bald-headed Buffer.

In the Biblical days, when we're led to suppose
That the people were ignorant duffers,
When the lubberly noodles were led by the nose
And bamboozled by bald-headed buffers,

When they swallowed the "kid" of the prophets of God,
Like the bait on the hooks that the fish bite,
Lived Elisha, who put on the mantle and trod
In the shoes of Elijah the Tishbite.

Now, Elije was the friend of the "Ancient of Days,"
And our "Jack" was as good as his master,
For he walked all the days of his life in the ways
Of our heavenly blesser and blaster.

Now, the head of our tale (keep the smiles from your face)
Shows the state of the "poll" of our hero;
'Twas a bright and a shining and beautiful place,
Like the realms of our heavenly Nero.

To the banks of the Jordan he travelled one day,
With his mantle divided a river,
Then he crossed it on foot: if you doubt what I say,
Something's wrong with your heart—or your liver.

On arriving at Jericho people found fault
With the water, for no one could drink it;
So he sweetened the stuff by inserting some salt;
'Tis the truth, though you hardly would think it.

When he'd finished his wonderful trick, he was chaffed
By some children who hardly could toddle;
And they shouted in Hebrew "There's hair," and they
laughed,
For he hadn't a hair on his noddle.

As I've already stated, those children were small,
Only lately let loose from their nurses;
Men of sense would have taken no notice at all,
But the prophet gave vent to some curses.

And he had his revenge on those poor little dears,
For, according to holy report, he
Was supplied by the Lord with a couple of bears,
And they worried and slew two and forty.

Now, we're bound to admit, when a person does wrong,
It is right that that person should suffer;
But the "sentence of death" was a little too strong
Just for boeing a bald-headed buffer.

Nowadays, if we say to a parson "There's hair!"
When his hirsute appendage he's minus,
We are never condemned to be killed by a bear—
Why, there's hardly a "beak" that'll fine us.

But the ways of the Lord and his "pilots" are not
Quite the same as the ways of his laymen;
If the latter resembled the former—Great Scott!
Let us hope that they never will. Amen!

ESS JAY BEE.

Sincere believers in Christianity will soon cease to interfere with the management of a world where they profess themselves to be pilgrims and strangers. The new supreme being [humanity] is no less jealous than the old, and will not accept the servants of two masters. But the truth is that the more zealous theological partisans, whether royalists, aristocrats, or democrats, have now for a long time been insincere. God is to them but the nominal chief of a hypocritical conspiracy, a conspiracy which is even more contemptible than it is odious. Their object is to keep the people from all great social improvements by assuring them that they will find compensations for their miseries in an imaginary future life.

—Auguste Comte.

Acid Drops.

THE parsons are becoming infected with the sensationalism of the press. Some time ago the clerical authorities at St. Paul's Cathedral were with difficulty restrained from holding a memorial service over the men and women said to have been massacred in the British Legation at Peking. No such massacre had taken place, but the newspapers had reported it in great detail, and the parsons wanted to get an advertisement out of the business. At the last moment, however, they saw the ridiculousness of the position in which they would be placed if the news—as was whispered—turned out to be false, and they quietly backed out of the engagement.

Last Sunday there was another of these "previous" blunders committed at St. Paul's Cathedral. The preacher, an eminent Church divine, denounced the selfishness of rich men. He said that it had been difficult to raise a million for the South African War Fund, yet a millionaire could give his daughter half that sum on her husband's safe return from the front, and she had spent it straight away on furnishing a new house for herself. This part of the reverend gentleman's sermon was founded on a newspaper report, which turns out to have been a mere invention. "We are asked to state," said the *Daily News* on Tuesday, "that the frequent reports to the effect that the Duchess of Marlborough has received any sum of money from Mr. Vanderbilt are entirely without foundation, and are totally untrue." It is evident, therefore, that even the most distinguished preachers are far from infallible, and that some of them are distinctly lacking in the charity which thinketh no evil.

The Church Lads' Brigade paraded at St. Paul's Cathedral on Monday evening. A special service was held for them, and a special sermon was preached by the Bishop of Stepney. We do not know what was his text, but it must have been easy to find a suitable one in such a miscellaneous book as the Bible. "I came not to send peace, but a sword" lies side by side with "Whoso taketh the sword shall perish by the sword."

According to the Bishop of Stepney, by far the most generous contributions to East London Church work are given by brewers. Very likely. The brewers know what they are about—which is more than can be said of the bishops, except so far as taking the money is concerned.

Rev. Dr. Horton preached a sermon on "Religion and Science" at Bradford during the meeting of the British Association. In the course of it he referred to Haeckel as teaching that an "All-conscious Spirit underlies and directs, or wills, all phenomena." Two letters have appeared in the *Bradford Observer*, by "Monist" and "Scientist," pointing out that Dr. Horton had no right to make such a statement concerning the great German evolutionist. "Monist" accuses Dr. Horton of superficial knowledge or wilful deception. The reverend gentleman has not replied, but he will probably not repeat the statement in Bradford, whatever he may do elsewhere.

"Darkness there, and nothing more!" as the hero of Poe's *Raven* said. Such was the state of the case at St. James's Church, Bermondsey, on Monday evening, when the Bishop of Rochester was preaching a reopening sermon. About £2,000 had been spent on improvements, and the electric light had been installed, but it went out before the Bishop had finished, and the church was left in total darkness except for a few gas jets at either end. The Bishop continued his sermon, and more gas jets were lit, but many people left the church at once. Heaven was their home, but they didn't want to go home in a stampede.

"The Total Depravity of Human Nature" was the subject of a paper read by the Rev. P. E. Thomas, vicar of St. Barnabas's, Blackburn, at a meeting of the Evangelical Protestant Union in Manchester. The reverend gentleman did not draw proofs from his own nature. Nobody ever does that. He looked around upon his neighbors and found them a devilish bad lot. What with drunkards, gamblers, thieves, and irreligionists, it seemed to him that men were as bad as ever. The more civilisation advanced, the more did vice stalk about with shameless effrontery; and the filthy conversation of Sodom never equalled the loathsome bestiality of the workshops and factories of Britain. Education was no good—nothing was any good, except religion. That was the man of God's sovereign recipe, and he dispenses it professionally. No wonder he teaches it will do the trick. Still, he forgets that other people know something of history, and are aware that religion has been operating and boasting for thousands of years, with the results we all see. Even the Christian religion has been on the job for nearly two thousand years. When the reverend gentleman recommends more

religion, he invites the retort that religion has been the cause of more than half the mischief.

"Ye must be born again!" cries the Rev. P. E. Thomas. Well, we should say that *he* ought to be born again, anyhow. He was evidently meant for a better world than this, and if he cannot get born again in some degree of harmony with it we strongly advise him to emigrate.

Henry Hill Aby, a well-known local preacher, of Wakefield, whose case we referred to last week, has since been sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labor for embezzlement. His defalcations amounted to more than £1,000, but only three trivial charges were pressed against him. He may consider himself lucky. Perhaps he is thanking the Lord.

Another man of God gone wrong. Samuel Walton Kay, formerly vicar of Butlers Marston, Warwickshire, has been sentenced at Lancaster Quarter Sessions to five years' penal servitude for obtaining money by false pretences. He had previously been convicted for forgery. His impassioned appeal for mercy had more effect upon himself than upon the judge. He fainted in the dock on hearing his sentence.

"May God forgive me for what I am going to do," said William John Page, a waiter, aged twenty-nine, before shooting himself dead outside Snow Hill police-station. In the same letter he said: "You must blame Ella for all I have done." All she did was to decline to marry him while he was not in a position to support her. His hope in God, therefore, went hand in hand with injustice to the woman he professed to love. Such is the sublime influence of religion!

Christ promised that when two or three were gathered together in his name there would he be in the midst of them. It was not a political promise, such as might be made by a Parliamentary candidate, but a *bona fide* guarantee. One, therefore, finds it rather perplexing to reconcile with his utterance the recent disaster at a Russian monastery. Not two or three, but 5,000 pilgrims, assembled at a religious festival. During the night the floor of the upper room of a building gave way, under the weight of pilgrims sleeping upon it. Thirty-six women and four men were crushed to death, and a score of others were injured. If Christ was in their midst, he was not of much avail.

"When Christian Churches cease to kick each other whilst they pray." This little flash of wit, not unworthy of Voltaire, sparkles in a letter to the *Church Gazette* in criticism of foreign missions. By the way, it is regrettable to learn from an editorial notice that the *Church Gazette* will cease to appear after two or three more issues unless pecuniary aid is forthcoming. 'Twas ever thus with journals in advance of the age. A wretched religious abortion like the *Christian World* sells to the extent of hundreds of thousands, and is in a most flourishing condition.

Either reporters must be, without apparent motive, terribly untrustworthy recorders of what they hear, or parsons must be abominable liars. The Rev. W. D. P. Bliss was reported to have said, at a meeting of the London branch of the Christian Social Union, that in the United States "the Church was doing more in the fight against Mammon than all the religious bodies put together." The Rev. Bliss sends a correction to the press. He states that what he really said was: "More of our clergymen took pronounced stand, and did active work for Socialism, than those of all other religious bodies." The Rev. Bliss does not like to appear as denouncing Mammon. He probably feels that, looking at the source of his income, it would be ungrateful. So that, like other preachers who have been caught tripping, he says he has been *misreported*.

The *Church Times*, discussing the forthcoming School Board elections, hopes that, in this connection, we shall be "rid for ever of these unseemly wranglings about religion." So we shall, when religion it kept out of governmental elementary education altogether.

The Welsh Congregationalists of Glamorganshire are proposing to enter upon a vigorous crusade against Sunday desecration. They say that Sunday travelling, cycling, golfing, etc., are on the increase in the Principality. A Conference is to be held at Pontypridd to deal with this serious evil. If these good Christian Welshmen would study the attitude of Christ and Paul in regard to holy days, they might possibly sink their religious scruples. On other grounds Wales—especially North Wales—is not at all likely to profit by absurd Puritanical restrictions.

Here is some gossip from the "Woman's World" column in the *British Weekly*: "Mrs. B., proprietress of a small

circulating library, to her best customer: 'There's a great deal of talk going on about this book, *The Master Christian*. Everyone comes into the shop and wants to read it. Do you know, ma'am, I think that book will do a great deal of harm.' 'In what way, Mrs. B.? I am sure it was not intended to do harm.' 'It will do harm by making young people infidels; for once they come to think little of the churches, the next step will be to give up their religion. I know a young girl who was very regular and devout in attending the Church service, and she said that after reading *The Master Christian* she felt she could never care to enter a church as long as she lived.'

Until 1869 Exeter was one of the poorest of bishoprics, the stipend being only £2,700 a year. On that miserable pittance the poor right reverend father-in-God had to subsist as he could. How he managed to rub along on £52 a week will always remain a profound mystery. But he did it somehow. From 1869 till 1877 the stipend was £5,000 a year, which was a decided improvement. £800 a year, however, was knocked off when the new See of Truro was established, and the Bishop of Exeter has normally an annual income of £4,200. The new Bishop will only receive £2,800 a year during the lifetime of Bishop Bickersteth, who takes a retiring pension of £1,400 a year. No doubt the latter gentleman will draw that amount as long as possible, and annuitants are proverbially long-lived. Just as probably the former gentleman will secretly grudge every minute that his pensioned predecessor lingers superfluously upon this mortal scene.

Bishop Philpotts, who used to draw £2,700 a year from the See of Exeter, enjoyed other emoluments, and it was understood that his income generally went up to five figures. Eventually he had to die, like less fortunate mortals; and it must have been a bitter thing to leave all that steady revenue behind. How the Bishop fared on the other side of Jordan we are not in a position to say; but we read in the Gospels that a rich man has a tremendous difficulty in forcing a passage into heaven; in fact, that it is just as easy for a camel—hump and all—to work its way through the eye of a needle. We never heard of a camel achieving that feat, and we fear, therefore, that Bishop Philpotts has emigrated to the wrong establishment.

The *Sunday Sun* man who compiled last week's list of "Books Received" seems to have been upset by the General Election. The recent floods of oratory have been too much for him. With the painful experience fresh upon him, he includes in the list: "*The Origin of Speeches, by Means of Natural Selection*, by Charles Darwin, M.A., LL.D., F.R.S. (John Murray.) 2s. 6d. net." Certainly there has been plenty of scope for "natural selection" among recent speeches, whatever their origin may have been.

John Caney, an Edmonton tailor, said: "I trust in God as my healer." He is now dead, though evidence was given that if he had taken the medicine offered him he would undoubtedly have recovered. The Coroner said a person might just as reasonably refuse to go to a baker's for bread because he trusted to God to feed him. But this is beside the mark. The deceased relied upon Scriptural teaching, which excludes the use of medicine. The prayer of faith did not make him whole; but, at any rate, he tried it, and in that way displayed more courage and consistency than the bulk of professing Christians can honestly lay claim to.

"Is the Bible going out of fashion?" asks the *Liverpool Post*. Yes, certainly, the old Bible, as our forefathers knew it, is going out of fashion. Nowadays we have a new book, with vastly diminished claims. The Bible is no longer the Word of God, but a collection of writings containing the Word of God. The prize puzzle of the age is to pick out the Word. The pious punter "backs his fancy," while the clergy provide the stable tips and the "dead certs."

As a sample of the way in which Christians abandon the Bible in one breath and exalt it in another, a recent address by Professor Marcus Dods, in Renfield Free Church, stands quite pre-eminent. Historical errors are of no consequence, he says. The object of the Bible, or the New Testament at least, is simply to exhibit Christ. As if, indeed, that did not involve questions of history, and very serious ones too. This method of playing fast and loose with the book may suit the exigencies of Christian apologetics, but it is scarcely honest. Whether it imposes on any but superficial minds is more than doubtful.

Much amusement seems to have been created in Marlborough-street Police-court by the Chinese method of taking the oath. Lee Foo, the complainant, went into the witness-box and knelt down. The usher handed him a thick, common saucer, which he was told to break. Lee Foo threw it on the ground; but it bounced up again, whole. He was told to throw it harder, and did so, the saucer smashing into several

pieces. The Usher (solemnly): "The saucer is cracked, and if you do not tell the truth your soul will be cracked like the saucer." Those who took part in the formality seem to have been already "cracked." We are told that the ceremony created laughter in court. But, after all, this form of oath-taking is only a trifle more absurd, perhaps because less familiar, than the practice of kissing a book. The laugh is not against the Chinaman alone.

Sunday observance was one of the subjects discussed at the Lincoln Diocesan Conference. Mr. S. Cheney Garfit declared that the English Sunday was fast going, and apparently expected the public to receive the announcement with tears. Clergy and ministers of all denominations, he said, were realising that their congregations were not what they once were. No doubt; and still our eyes are not bedimmed, nor our voice raised in wailing. The chief idea of Sunday now, he continued, was to have the maximum of pleasure with the minimum of worship. Quite right. Through the baleful influence and example of the upper classes, the non-observance of Sunday had permeated to the lower classes. Society insisted upon having its week-end house-parties, lawn-tennis, concerts, and dinners.

Here the speaker, whether conscious of it or not, was treading on rather dangerous ground. It is quite safe for clerics to rail at the lower classes, but it will be well for them to be careful in their denunciations of "society." The "hupper suckles" may turn round and rend them. Anyway, they are not at all likely to diminish their Sunday pleasures in consequence of anything that parsons may say.

The Rev. Canon Bullock said that if anyone went to Paddington or Waterloo on any Sunday afternoon in summer and autumn, and saw the young men and young women, the old men and old women, crowding the platforms as they would for Henley Regatta, they would see that they were not the sort of people who could not possibly find time for recreation on any day except the Lord's Day. Well, suppose they can find time on weekdays, it is evident that Sunday is preferred as more convenient, otherwise it would not be utilised in the way described. What really is the use of the clergy endeavoring to stop the rational recreation on any day of people whose lives at the best are none too full of pleasure?

The *unco guid* at Leeds have hit upon a terrible punishment for the boy-smokers of cigarettes. They are not to be permitted to attend the Sunday-schools! A *Topical Times* contributor shudders at the cruel severity of this penalty. He remembers how, when he was a little boy, he looked forward all the week to the hours of didactic literature and wise exposition and soporific exhortation that the Sunday-school affords. And he has no doubt that Leeds is full of budding virtue as great as his own. He feels sure that no Leeds boy who values his Sunday's happiness will ever puff another cigarette.

The latest performance of Saint Antony of Padua, the patron saint of animals, is recorded in *La Croix du Littoral* by a French baron resident at Pas-de-Calais. Summoned to his stables, the baron found one of his best cows choking. A piece of turnip had stuck in her throat. Her body was greatly swollen, and in a few moments she would have fallen dead. "My man could not extract the offending turnip. I secretly promised five francs to Saint Antony. Hardly was the promise made when my man cried, 'She's swallowed it!' and after a sneeze or two the beast was herself again. Let wisecracks laugh as they may," adds the baron; "their sneers will not decrease my confidence in the good saint, nor my gratitude to him."

Some time ago a citizen of Connecticut bequeathed a large sum of money to an Adventist society in Boston to be expended in combating what his will characterises as "that greatest of all Pagan superstitions upon which are founded the great systems of error and superstition in the world—namely, the unscriptural, unreasonable, and pernicious doctrine of the immortality of the soul." The heirs are now contesting the will on the ground that it is contrary to public policy to countenance bequests in the interest of doctrines which are "inimical to the public welfare." What the heirs are probably most concerned about is not the public welfare, but their own personal interests. The testator would have done well to expend the bulk of the money according to his own liking during his life. Then there would have been no danger of its being diverted.

The Bishop of St. Albans has issued to his clergy a form of special thanksgiving for soldiers home from the war and for the restoration of peace. The thanksgiving service includes a prayer which says: "We yield Thee hearty thanks for that Thou hast vouchsafed to bring again these Thy servants to their home in peace." This is all very well, from a Churchman's point of view, but what about "those Thy servants" who have not come back to their homes in peace, but are

lying dead in the veldts, rotting abroad while their relatives are weeping at home?

The *Methodist Times* reviews a book called *Infidelity Disarmed*, which professes to be a reply to lectures by Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, and is issued from the Toronto Methodist Book Room. The *M. T.* says: "This book, written by a Methodist layman, published by a Methodist Book Room, and commended by Methodists of note in the Dominion, is not a creditable performance. We admire the writer's eager advocacy of the Christian faith. We do not blame his honest adherence to certain traditional views now discarded by many saintly scholars; but the vulgarity of his abuse has caused us to blush. The certainty of the Colonel's damnation is repeatedly asserted with revolting callousness, and it is even the subject of the author's wit. Mr. Stephens frequently quotes from the works of the Agnostic. We wish we could say that his replies were always convincing; in graces of style and in courtesy of polemic the apologist is inferior to the iconoclast. We regret that we must record our conviction that the antidote will be not less harmful than the poison."

There is still more testimony in current literature as to the futility of Christian missions to foreign lands, particularly China. It is quite surprising to notice how, since Lord Salisbury set the ball rolling, Christian prints have hastened to assert, as if they had only just found it out, what Free-thought journals have persistently urged for scores of years past. There seems a general agreement as to the paucity of genuine converts. The Christian missionary now finds it necessary to justify his occupation, particularly in regard to results. Therein he reminds us of that holy laborer for the Lord in foreign fields of whom it was written:—

Despite his zeal, the Church's foes
Declare his efforts all perverted,
And that he counts upon his nose
The heathen Indians he's converted.

There exists in France, as many people know, a congregation of nuns, called "Les Petites Sœurs des Pauvres." Their mission is to nurse the sick, and it is one of their rules not to ask their patient's religion. When, however, a sick person, not a Catholic, asks one of the sisters to bring a minister or a Rabbi to his bedside, they have (our Paris correspondent writes) some scruples about it, their own conscience apparently not enabling them to decide whether they would be right in acceding to the request. Accordingly, the point has been submitted to Rome, and the reply has come that no Roman Catholic, whether nun or layman, can take a message to a non-Catholic minister to attend a dying person. But a Roman Catholic may ask somebody who is not a Catholic to do so. In a Catholic country like France it is extremely probable that nuns in a convent will not be able, in an emergency, to find a Jew or a heretic to carry the message for them. In this case the Pope's decree would mean that the dying patient nursed by the nuns must be allowed to die without the rites of his own religion.—*Daily News*.

Miss Braddon, the famous sensational novelist, is not to be left behind by writers like Mr. Hall Caine and Miss Marie Corelli. She has burst upon the world with a new novel called *The Infidel*. The said infidel is a very beautiful girl, and a good one too, for she is ultimately to become a Christian. Her father, however, from whom she imbibed her infidelity, is a bad lot, having actually suffered a long term of imprisonment for fraud. The heroine is at last persuaded to become a Christian by the great John Wesley. It will thus be seen that the story is a "long ago" affair; in which respect Miss Braddon is a great deal sharper than the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes. That gentleman went in for very recent chronology, and consequently courted a sad exposure.

One reviewer of Miss Braddon's new novel, while praising it generally, works in the nasty reflection that "there is a lack of subtlety in the character drawing." Of course there is. That almost goes without saying. Even a Tolstoi loses his art when he is bent on preaching. An artist in a pulpit is like a fish on dry land.

Another sudden death in a church. It happened at St. Paul's, Gloucester, on Sunday. The holy edifice was crowded, the occasion being the dedication festival; and just as the procession had finished the round of the building, Frederick Pattison, who was acting as cross-bearer, fainted, and expired in the vestry before the arrival of a doctor. Carrying the cross was too much for him. It was even too much for his Savior. But some people will say that such remarks are frivolous, and even blasphemous. Well, we are at least entitled to observe that a sudden death of this kind in a Secular Hall would give rise to plenty of pious criticism on the part of believers.

When people say "God help you" they mean it is all over with you. That is how Mr. Frederick Andrews, a professional burglar, used the expression when he was arrested and brought to the Kingston-on-Thames police-station. "I go in for night

work," he said, "and God help the policeman that ever tries to stop me." This remark was backed up with a formidable knife, which the police, not trusting to divine protection, promptly secured and put away in a safe corner.

"Providence" has been pretty active of late in America. We note that the death-roll amongst the fishermen of New Brunswick, which has recently been visited by a record storm, now numbers forty-six, and may yet be increased.

"Your duty to your neighbor is to keep your eye upon him." So said a lady at Wimbledon who was appealing against her assessment. She put in a neat way the practical ethic of the majority of Christians.

William Cowper, the poet, cancelled a passage in his "Expostulation." It was a severe attack on Roman Catholicism, and he seems to have been afraid that it would offend his Roman Catholic friends, the Throckmortons. The passage is given in Mr. Thomas Wright's new volume, entitled *The Unpublished and Uncollected Poems of William Cowper*. It was written apparently in February, 1781. Here it is:—

Hast thou admitted, with a blind, fond trust,
The lie that burned my father's bones to dust,
That, first adjudged them heretics, then sent
Their souls to heaven and cursed them as they went?
The lie that Scripture strips of its disguise,
And execrates above all other lies,
The lie that claps a lock on mercy's plan,
And gives the key to yon infirm old man,
Who once ensconced in apostolic chair
Is deified, and sits omniscient there;
The lie that knows no kindred, owns no friend,
But him that makes its progress his chief end,
That, having spilt much blood, makes that a boast,
And canonises him that sheds the most?
Away with charity that soothes a lie,
And thrusts the truth with scorn and anger by;
Shame on the candor and the gracious smile
Bestowed on them that light the martyr's pile,
While insolent disdain in frowns expressed
Attends the tenets that endured the test!
Grant them the rights of men, and while they cease
To vex the peace of others grant them peace:
But trusting bigots whose false zeal has made
Treachery their duty, thou art self-betrayed.

The *Star* has been denouncing as "filthy" the language of old Dowie, who runs the Zionist movement in America, and holds in his own name all its property. The canny old fellow has been holding forth in London, no doubt with a view to recruiting his party—and his exchequer; and some of his expressions have raised the gorge of our contemporary. But were they, after all, any worse than the language used by Jesus Christ to his religious rivals in Jerusalem? "Fools," "vipers," "whited sepulchres," and "children of hell" take a lot of beating.

What on earth is the blessed Sabbath coming to? Last Sunday morning the Third London Rifle Volunteers assembled at Victoria Station, and, instead of going to church, they went by special train to Epsom Downs, where they drilled by companies and went through manœuvres involving the use of blank ammunition. Shocking, sirs, shocking! Let the clergy rouse themselves and stop this terrible scandal.

We like to see Roman Catholics asserting their political independence in spite of the priests. In the Houghton-le-Spring Division of Durham the Catholic voters, who are two thousand strong, were counselled by their spiritual guides to support the Conservative candidate, who favored an Irish Catholic University. However, they polled almost solid for Mr. Robert Cameron, the Liberal candidate, and thus more than doubled his majority. Perhaps this will be a lesson to the clerical meddlers in future. These gentlemen should go on saving souls, if they can, and let politics alone.

The Catholic Association of London, addressing the Pope at Rome, rejoiced that "in all parts of the British Empire Catholics enjoy the fullest religious liberty, and are treated with the greatest tolerance." Catholics are good at claiming liberty for themselves; bad at conceding it to others. Where the Catholic Church holds sway, as in Spain, there is no more liberty than Protestants and Freethinkers can enforce.

Crowds of people gathered nightly outside St. Mark's Church, Leeds, in order to see a ghost in the churchyard. It was a lady "with golden hair and sparkling eyes." The spectre was first seen by a lad who stated that it was a female sitting on a gravestone, knitting. It appears that the lad did see something, for a woman with a white shawl strayed into the burial ground in a state of intoxication, for which she was arrested, and, as she could not pay the fine, imprisoned. This explanation has been furnished by the police, and now the credit of the ghost is gone, and the neighborhood is at rest. Good old ghost!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 21, Birmingham Town Hall; 3, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 7, Freethought Demonstration.

October 28, Leicester.

To Correspondents.

- MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—October 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.
- J. PARTRIDGE (Birmingham).—Pleased to hear that the grant from the Secular Society, Limited, will be "of great service" to your Branch, and that you are all doing your best to secure a big success for the special meetings in the Town Hall.
- MR. and MRS. CHARLES LEVI (Cincinnati).—Sorry we could not attend the wedding at your house on October 17. This is a case in which distance does *not* lend enchantment. Being present would be ever so much better. Kindly convey to your daughter, whom we had the pleasure of meeting in 1896, our very best wishes for her happiness in the new life she is entering upon.
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued batches of cuttings.
- E. EVELIN.—They don't seem to do much good by praying for you. We have referred the other matter to Miss Vance. We daresay it is all right.
- D. FRANKEL.—Glad to see the East London Branch is taking up that work energetically. See paragraph.
- S. HOLMAN.—Thanks for your Welsh good wishes on behalf of the Birmingham Demonstration. No doubt it will be a great success. See "Sugar Plums."
- J. H. B.—Received. Shall appear.
- W. H. NASH.—The question of the Tacitus passage is dealt with fully in Mr. Foote's pamphlet entitled *The Sign of the Cross* (6d.). We advise you to read it.
- G. LANGRIDGE is dissatisfied with the response to our Shilling Week appeal. Will the "saints" (he asks) never make a strong and worthy effort for the cause?
- G. H. WILLIAMSON.—Acknowledged under the special (original) heading. Thanks. Your suggestion shall be borne in mind.
- J. BEAZER.—Much cannot be expected from a working man with a family, but all should do something, however little. Thanks for your good wishes on our own behalf.
- W. TIPPER.—Your experience with the Christian anxious after your soul's salvation was amusing. What you say, from your experience, of the general honesty and good temper of the Chinese is corroborated by many independent authorities.
- J. RALSTON.—We regret the omission. It is included in this week's list.
- INQUIRER.—It should be sufficient. If you find your instructions are not attended to, write us again.
- FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—G. H. Williamson, £1; F. Deane, 10s.; G. Thwaites, 10s.; H. Trotman, 10s. 6d.; R. Stevenson, 10s.
- E. E. SIMS.—See "Sugar Plums." Glad to hear that the West Ham friends will "add their mite" to the Twentieth Century Fund.
- LILIE A. GOYNE.—We hope to see you at Birmingham Town Hall.
- HORACE DAWSON.—We will bear in mind your suggestion *re* the *Freethinker*. It was very nice of the chairman and his colleagues to whisper "Atheist" and "contemptible" when you claimed your legal right to affirm. No doubt they are very good Christians. Don't you know the species?
- P. CASSIDY.—So it was Darwin who knocked out your Roman Catholicism. He was one of the greatest of human emancipators.
- F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings.
- J. F. HAMPSON.—Glad to know the Bolton debate was a success.
- R. STEVENSON, subscribing to the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund, says: "We are quite satisfied that the administration of the Fund is right in your hands. Go straight ahead." This correspondent wants to know when he may expect our article on *Richard Feverel*. We can only answer, One of these fine days.
- GATESHEAD FRIEND.—Yes, we remember the evening quite well, and pleurably. We hope to see you again before very long when we visit the Tyneside.
- J. BULLOCK and A. F. BULLOCK send their promised subscriptions to the Twentieth Century Fund.
- G. WATSON.—See "Acid Drops." There is no end to the audacity of orthodox apologists Lying for the glory of God—and the profit of clericalism—has always been a leading ecclesiastical virtue.

A. ROWLEY.—Pleased to hear that you so "admire" the *Freethinker*. It is always pleasant to be appreciated.

EX-ACOLYTE.—Pleased to hear from you. Our readers will be interested in the following extract from your letter: "When I think that had I not, by some accident, got hold of the *Freethinker*, I might be still going to confession—the dupe of the priests—I almost wish that there was a hell they could fry in. I can't imagine how I was such a fool as to believe their lying rot." But it isn't always a question of folly. It is often a mere question of the mind being turned in the right direction.

RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Lucifer—Leeds Mercury—Torch of Reason—Freidenker—Boston Investigator—Social Review—Conduct—Agnostic Annual (Watts & Co.)—Ethical World—Northern Daily Telegraph—Two Worlds—Blue Grass Blade—Free Society—Huddersfield Chronicle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE'S lecture on "South Africa and China: A Secularist's Outlook" drew a fine audience to the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening. For nearly an hour and a half his address was followed with the closest attention. A few questions were asked at the finish, and were answered apparently to the satisfaction of the meeting.

MR. A. B. MOSS lectures at the Athenæum Hall this evening (October 21), taking for his subject "Life's Great Problems." He has lived long enough to know something about them, and we hope there will be a good audience to hear what he has to say.

Arrangements are completed for the special meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall to-day (Oct. 21), in pursuance of a resolution passed at the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday. By special request, Mr. Foote will lecture in the afternoon at 3 on "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ," and the chair will be taken by Mr. Charles Watts. From 6 to 7 o'clock there will be an Organ Recital by Mr. C. W. Perkins, the City Organist. At 7 o'clock Mr. Foote will take the chair and initiate the Freethought Demonstration. His own address on this occasion will be supplemented by speeches from Mr. Charles Watts, Mr. C. Cohen, and Mr. H. Percy Ward. The admission will be free all the day, and collections will be taken towards the expenses. No doubt the Birmingham "saints" will do their best to make the collections reasonably liberal.

Advantage is being taken of the presence of so many Freethought speakers in Birmingham to hold some special meetings in favor of Mr. H. Percy Ward's candidature on the "Secular Education" ticket for the local School Board. On Friday evening a meeting is announced to take place at the Somerville-road Board School, Small Heath; on Saturday evening at the Bristol-street Board School; and on Monday evening at the Farm-street Board School, Hockley. Mr. Ward will speak, presumably, at all these meetings. Mr. Watts and Mr. Cohen will speak at one or more, but we are not informed which. Mr. Foote will speak at the Saturday night meeting. His editorial and other duties do not allow of his doing more, much as he hopes for the success of Mr. Ward's candidature.

Last Sunday evening Mr. Watts lectured in Bolton. The audience was not so large as usual, in consequence of the heavy rain that fell during the whole of Sunday. In spite of the weather, however, friends came from Darwen and surrounding places. Next week Mr. Watts will be engaged on missionary work in Scotland.

Mr. Charles Watts held two nights' debate in Bolton last week, upon Spiritualism, with Mr. G. H. Bibbings, editor of *Psyche*. Mr. Watts speaks very highly of his opponent, who

is an eloquent speaker and gentlemanly in controversy. The large audience listened with commendable impartiality to both disputants. The local papers gave a brief report of the discussion.

The Manchester Branch held its annual meeting on Sunday afternoon. The Committee's report, a copy of which we have received, is slightly pessimistic; but we hope this spirit will soon be banished. Financial support is certainly requisite, and no doubt the members and friends will respond to the Committee's appeal. Mr. Foote has also promised to use his influence in London on behalf of the Branch. He spent some time in consultation with the Committee after his evening lecture in the Secular Hall on October 7. The day's proceedings had been eminently successful, and it was felt that the reaction, from which all advanced movements had suffered during the previous year or so, was apparently coming to an end. A good, prosperous winter season will doubtless set the Manchester Branch well on its legs again. There is certainly no reason to despair, for even now the Branch is very far from being financially bankrupt, and the outlook is distinctly improving. Arrangements will be made as soon as possible for a Freethought Demonstration in Manchester, similar to the one in Birmingham; and this will probably give a fillip to the movement in the whole district.

Mr. C. Cohen had excellent audiences at Pontypridd, friends attending from miles around. A strong desire was expressed to have more Freethought lectures in South Wales. Those who wish to co-operate in bringing this about should communicate with Mr. S. Holman, 5 Jenkin-street, Porth.

The East London N.S.S. Branch is carrying on meetings in conjunction with the Social Democratic Federation on the Mile-end Waste every Sunday morning, in view of the approaching School Board elections. Local Secularists are invited to attend these gatherings, if only to show the general public that there is some real strength behind this agitation. On Monday evening, October 22, a concert and dance will be held at the King's Hall, 85 Commercial-road, in aid of the local "Secular Education" candidate's election fund. The proceedings commence at 8 o'clock, and the tickets are 1s. single and 1s. 6d. double. They can be obtained from D. Frankel, 25 Osborne-street, E. There should be a good gathering.

The Bethnal Green Branch had a good meeting in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon, and made a fair collection on behalf of the Freethinkers' Benevolent Fund.

We have received the *Agnostic Annual* for 1901. It is a Twentieth Century Double Number, price one shilling. We have not had time to look through it carefully, as it only reaches us as we are busy preparing for the press. But we see it contains what must be able articles on many interesting topics by Leslie Stephen, J. Allanson Picton, Joseph McCabe, Charles Watts, F. J. Gould, G. J. Holyoake, and other writers. Mr. Holyoake's article is noticed in our editor's leading article this week.

The West Ham Branch applied for the use of one of the Board school-rooms for Sunday afternoon meetings, but the application was refused. It appears that the school-rooms are only available for Sunday-school purposes. "But why," asked Mr. Majer, "is there any objection to the National Secular Society? I don't see any difference between their meetings and the Sunday-schools in the afternoon. It's a letting all the same." The Chairman, however, said that there was a resolution against it, and the Board passed to the next business. Still, the matter may not end there, for the N.S.S. Branch is approaching the friendly members of the Board with a view to getting the obstructing resolution removed. Meanwhile, Freethought meetings are being held every Thursday evening in the Rock Room of the Workmen's Hall, West Ham-lane, at 8 o'clock.

We are happy to state that the circulation of the *Freethinker* has been slowly, but regularly, expanding since the middle of September. This movement will, no doubt, be continued and accelerated if our friends all over the country will render us a little assistance (1) by inducing their newsagents to put a copy of the *Freethinker* in the window, (2) by getting them to exhibit our weekly contents-sheet, and (3) by persuading them to take a few extra copies for possible sale, and guaranteeing them against loss on copies that remain unsold. There ought to be no need for this guarantee, as the *Freethinker* has always been supplied to the trade on "sale or return." But it seems that some wholesale agents put obstacles in the way of changes by retail newsagents, and we have no means of compelling them to deal with us impartially. A journal like ours has naturally its enemies and ill-wishers. That, however, is a reason why its friends should try to counteract the injury arising from such a cause.

We have received the first number of *Conduct*, a little monthly issued by the South London Ethical Society, and containing articles by F. J. Gould and Professor Earl Barnes. We note also an editorial paragraph on Secular Education, which some of the Ethicists are beginning to see is perhaps "the shortest route to moral instruction." Very much the shortest route; they may depend upon it.

Debate at Bolton.

TUESDAY and Wednesday evenings, October 9 and 10, were red-letter days for the Bolton Secularists, and will be long remembered by those who listened to the debate upon the question, "Is Spiritualism True?" between Mr. Charles Watts and Mr. G. H. Bibbings. Despite the heavy rain on the Tuesday night, we had about 500 persons present, and on the Wednesday quite 600 attended. The chairmen were all that could be desired. Mr. Shufflebottom, who took the chair on the first night, acted, as we knew he would, fairly to both sides; and Mr. Chiswell, of Liverpool (Spiritualist), who took the chair at the second night's debate, could not be surpassed. His straightforward manner and fairness manifested themselves from start to finish. Hours before the time of starting on the first night the weather was trying to put a stop to the meeting; but, like all blind forces, it did not know with whom it had to deal, for Spiritualists and Secularists rushed to the hall. A saloon carriage conveyed Mr. Bibbings and a number of his friends from Liverpool. Far away Dundee was represented by our good friend Mr. McLean. The audience behaved splendidly each evening, and both disputants were highly gratified to find that both sides had listened to them from first to last without the slightest interruption.

Mr. Bibbings is a fine and pleasant speaker, with a strong, though rather harsh, voice. He exhibits more of the emotional nature than of the calm reasoner and investigator. He occupied a large portion of his time in giving detailed accounts of what he had seen and what he had been told others had seen at various *séances*. He claimed that that was sufficient evidence to prove the existence of visits from the spirit world.

Mr. Watts, in reply, asked Mr. Bibbings for scientific proof which would satisfy the audience of the alleged manifestations, and invited him to appoint six Spiritualists to represent his side, and he would appoint six to represent the Secularists' side, and they could there and then go into the matter and investigate the alleged spiritual manifestations.

Mr. Bibbings never alluded to this in his reply, and, although Mr. Watts repeated the invitation at the second night's debate, Mr. Bibbings would not accept it, which seems to prove to the Secularists that Mr. Bibbings's repeated remark, "We seek the severest scrutiny and fullest investigation," was hardly correct.

Mr. Watts was in grand form, and several of the audience complimented us on having such a clever debater on our side, saying they had never had such an intellectual treat, and that they would like to hear him again soon.

The discussion was quite a unique experience for Bolton, as there had not been a debate here for over twenty years, and we all felt proud and glad to see that Mr. Watts had lost none of his accustomed ability to deal with a clever opponent. The Spiritualist chairman complimented him after the debate, and said he would on no account miss hearing him when he came to lecture in Liverpool.

All our Freethought friends are delighted with the result of the debate. It has done the Freethought movement in Bolton much good, for it has been the means of showing the Spiritualists what our attitude towards their views really is. Mr. Watts's method of advocacy just pleased them. He was firm without being dogmatic, and gentlemanly while not yielding a single point to his antagonists. He won the applause alike of Secularists and Spiritualists, and the general wish here now is for some Christian representative to meet Mr. Watts in debate. That, we believe, would do us more good than even this encounter. It is only just to say that, in arranging for the debate, and throughout the entire proceedings, the conduct of the Spiritualists was all that could be desired.

JAMES F. HAMPSON, Sec.

In very truth the Bible is a complex collection of most valuable documents. They contain much that is admirable and valuable, but also legends, myths, contradictory assertions, accounts expressly falsified to suit later times, mere human fictions, and words spoken in the name of the Lord without there having been any authority for attributing to them such a sacred character. There are writings which merit most reverent treatment, and there are stories no more worthy of respect than the history of Jack and the Beanstalk.—*St. George Mivart*.

Purify thy thought, thinking no evil.—*Pythagoras*.

A Kingly Philosopher.

"To bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm;
That is the top of sovereignty."—KEATS.

THE antithesis is familiar between the literature of power and the literature of charm—the literature which is a school of life and the literature which is a dream. It has always been the former which has principally claimed the attention of philosophic minds. Without being insensible to the sensuous and imaginative side of literature, they deliberately set this aside as, on the whole, scarcely worthy of a man's best and most serious thoughts. They value the dynamic, not the merely delightful, qualities in literature. Such minds would assign the first place to those who have embalmed great thoughts in literature, and who have pierced to the roots of nature and of life.

Among the chief of those who have given to after ages an immortal ethical work must be mentioned the kingly philosopher, Marcus Aurelius. The waters of thought slip silently away, and it is not a little amazing to realize, upon reflection, that the ideas of this Roman Emperor should still have sufficient vitality to fire the hearts and brains of men and women of our own generation. It is a splendid achievement—power over millions of all ages, races, and sympathies. Small wonder that Renan, a writer of nice distinctions, has spoken of the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius in terms of more unmixed eulogy than he has ever bestowed elsewhere.

The old-world philosophers expected much from their rulers. Aristotle and Plato, to name no others, looked forward to an ideal monarch—one who should in his person unite the philosopher with the king. To us, after the lapse of the centuries, their words seem instinct with perfect, if unconscious, irony. Once only in the history of the world these conditions were fulfilled. In Marcus Aurelius we find the philosopher-king, the ruler who preferred the solitude of the student to the splendor of the palace, the general who loved the arts of peace better than the sad glories of war. His was a troubled reign. On the north the Roman Empire was threatened by the hardy German tribes. On the east the "insolent Parthian" was a source of trouble and danger. Marcus was obliged to cope with both these enemies. He himself conducted the campaigns on the Danube. The scant notes in the *Meditations* show how these precious records were composed amid the storm and stress of battle and the elation of victory. It is remarkable how little this turmoil affected the kingly philosopher. What others learn in calm, Marcus Aurelius learnt in tempest. The finest flower of Stoic philosophy was produced to the dread accompaniment of a martial monotone. Far away on the wide Roman marches might be heard the endless, ceaseless sound of beating horses' hoofs and marching feet of men. The barbarians were gathering in multitudes. Who could say what the morrow would bring forth?

Over these wars and rumors of wars hung a shadow, darker and more terrible than battle. Plague had become endemic in the Roman empire. The Mistress of the World was paying a fearful price for victory. The disease brought from Asia by Verus, in 166, had not abated. It had destroyed tens of thousands of the population. It was one of the most terrible calamities which ever fell upon men. From the pestilential East, whence it sprang, this awful plague swept through the empire. From the camps it reached the huts where poor men lay. From the hovels it swept to the lordly residences of the nobility. It did not rest till it reached the imperial purple of the greatest of the Roman sovereigns. Marcus died in the camp alone. "Why weep for me?" were his last words of self-suppression. They were characteristic of this noblest Roman of them all. He was mourned with a note of such true sorrow as never before or since was raised at the death of a king.

The *Meditations*, be it remembered, were never intended for publication. They are simply the Emperor's commonplace book, where he entered his reflections, often quite unconnected, on life and death. The little precious volume was considered for many

centuries a literary curiosity. It fitly headed the very brief list of the writings of kings, a class not in any way remarkable for literary genius. The *Meditations* constitute the finest gem of the Stoic philosophy, and proves its author to have been one of the best and greatest of men. Marcus Aurelius was a Rationalist. This life, he tell us, is all that concerns us.

"Though you were destined to live three thousand, or, if you please, thirty thousand years, yet remember that no man can lose any other life than that which he lives now, neither is he possessed of any other than that which he loses."

Epicurus bade his followers depart from life as a guest from a banquet satisfied with the entertainment. Marcus Aurelius, in sterner language, bids us leave the stage as an actor who has performed his part.

The fundamental religious belief in "god" and "providence" is not beyond question in Marcus's eyes. The passages where he repeats the alternative "either gods or atoms" are too strongly expressed to allow us to think that the antithesis is only a trick of style. His philosophy, be it noted, was Secularistic in that last resort to which men are pushed so often,

With close-lipped Patience for their only friend.

Critics talk of the Greeks as being the teachers of Marcus Aurelius. It is true; but the golden book of the *Meditations*, methinks, could only have been written by a Roman. The strength, the tenderness, the noble humanity, and the monumental resignation—these are the gifts of the lords of human things, the masters of the world. The almost stainless virtue of Marcus Aurelius has been ascribed by Christian theologians to their own bastard faith. It is absolutely certain that Marcus did not derive any of his ethical principles from a wretched religion of which he knew, practically, nothing.

So free from unworthy acts is the life of this greatest Roman Emperor that mentally we place him by the side of Socrates, draining the cup of hemlock among his sorrowing disciples. The life of such a man as Marcus Aurelius remains as a normal high-water mark of the unassisted virtue of man. No one has shown more simply or more completely what men must do and be. Farewell, most noble Emperor! Farewell, thou wise and kindly philosopher! *Ave Atque Vale!*

Not Cæsar dying amid Roman sighs,
By Pompey's statue seems more great than thee.

MIMNERMUS.

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

SHILLING WEEK.

SHILLING WEEK, as usual, is running into Shilling Month. I am keeping this sub-fund open, therefore, until the end of October, in order to give every Freethinker a fair and full opportunity of subscribing. Hundreds of Freethinkers, who could afford to send something, have as yet sent nothing. Perhaps they find it too much trouble to get a Postal Order and address an envelope. But this is a very poor excuse, especially in view of all the trouble I am taking in this matter. I invite the "rank and file" of our party to wake up and give a trifle for the good of the cause.

G. W. FOOTE.

Subscriptions received by Tuesday, October 16.

F. J. P., 2s.; S. Hudson, 10s.; J. T. Jones, 5s.; R. Lewis, 2s.; A. Rushton, 5s.; F. Shaller, 5s.; G. Langridge, 8s.; Leathers, 2s.; W. Milroy, 2s. 6d.; J. Beazer, 2s.; W. Tipper, 5s.; J. Ralston, 5s.; Bishop and Friend, 2s.; Gustav Roleffs, 5s.; E. Evelin, 4s.; J. Payne, 1s.; L. Wood, 1s.; G. Thwaites, 2s.; J. Walters, 1s.; R. Walters, 1s.; Gateshead Friend, 5s.; 10s.; J. Bullock, 1s.; Ex-Acolyte, 2s. 6d.; Walham Green, 1s.; L. A. Goynne, 2s.; Horace Dawson, 2s.; Collected at Mr. Watts's lecture at Bolton, 12s. 6d.; Mr. Tonge, 1s.; P. Cassidy, 2s.; J. Pruett, 5s.; W. J. Bayly, 2s.; L. James, 2s.; A. Rowley, 1s.; J. Hood, 1s.; G. W. Holloway, 1s.; G. S., 1s.; R. H., 1s.; R. Gibbon, 5s.; Dot, 5s.; Jim D., 5s.

The Passing of the Creeds.

(Concluded from page 652.)

COMTE'S THREE STAGES.

THE passing of the creeds confirms the French philosopher who pointed out the three periods of the mental development of man. They were the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive periods. The creeds belong to the second. They do not belong to the theological period, for that is more distinctly religious than speculative. All the great prophets have belonged to the first period. Simple, refusing to guess, large-hearted and trustful, they have laid their heads upon the bosom of the infinite mother-earth and lived or died without a fear. Such were Buddha and Jesus and Emerson and Whitman.

There is nothing more to be feared than irresponsible power. To have power, and not have intelligence or honesty to use it right—our peril lies that way. The positive mental attitude is a general inheritance. Thousands of people are swayed by its influence, and do not recognise it. For all such the creed of the Church is a moral injury. There can be no great and just morality without intellectual honesty. If a man temporises with his mind, with his reason, it superinduces a moral condition whereby he can temporise or trifle with the moral sense. We have the conviction that the Church already referred to, that holds one set of doctrines in the pulpit and another set in its pews, without suspecting it or intending it, is a source of dishonesty and immorality. To trifle for selfish purposes, to be compelled to believe something in order to be saved, whether that something is true or not, produces moral confusion.

UNCHRISTIANITY OF CHRISTENDOM.

Many people have speculated about the reason for the unchristianity of modern Christendom. Why is it that the gospel of peace is yet an unknown gospel to the great nations of the earth? Why is it that legislatures and congresses and parliaments are still, at this dawn of the new century, holding secret meetings and examining "soft-nosed shells" that can penetrate any steel armor? What is the reason for irresistible guns, smokeless powder, and huge armies whose genius and spirit is that of destroying human life? Why is it that the great standing armies of the world hold aloft the banner of war with the banner of the cross? Why is it that, as civilisation advances and becomes the possessor of the results of invention, and machinery becomes more wonderful, the burden of life grows daily heavier and heavier upon the back of the toiling millions? It is because the attitude of the Church to the intellect is, and always has been, one of dishonesty. A man cannot lie without vitiating his moral sense, and a lie, if told to save his soul, will vitiate that moral sense just as much as if it were told to injure somebody or selfishly aggrandise himself. A man cannot lie to himself, he cannot lie to the Church, he cannot lie to God for any purpose whatever, without becoming less capable of recognising eternal justice and the eternal right. And from generation to generation the dogmatic creeds have held as necessary to salvation the belief of absolutely unbelievable things, unthinkable propositions, incomprehensible dogmas; and millions upon millions of people, while intending to be honest and sincere, have read the standards and looked at the doctrines, and thought of an angry God, and longed to escape from his wrath, and said: "Yes, we believe." As the inevitable result we have an unchristian Christianity, an un-Christlike humanity. The great accumulators of wealth imagine that it is all right to take advantage of humanity the world over, to extort, to deceive, to rob, and to enrich themselves beyond all measure and all sense if perchance they build a university for a Church or pay off the debt of struggling congregations. I have a fancy that God Almighty cannot be fooled or bribed.

ADVENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL THINKER.

The passing of the creeds issues in the freedom of the mind. Thenceforth it bows to none. It may be mistaken. The individual thinker may err. Then he is responsible for it himself, and the honest man, if he

reaches God's throne in any future and finds he has been mistaken, like an honest man, will own he has been mistaken and will not seek to put over on to the Church or the priesthood or the Westminster catechism or upon Christ himself the responsibility of his failure. It is something in this world to be accorded the right to do one's best, and then, if need be, to make an honest failure. The man that thinks and reasons and does not fear is not giving himself any great concern about whether he knows anything about God or not.

The passing of the creeds makes morality imperative; it leaves no longer the hope of heaven at the price of somebody else; it leaves no longer the poor dependence upon a dying God; it inspires a man with a sense of responsibility for his own thought, his own word, his own deeds. It is singularly like the gospel that man Jesus of Nazareth taught. He never said anything about atonement. There never would have been any doctrine of the atonement had it not been that somebody, 200 or 300 years after he left, wrote the Gospel of John. If we were confined to the three first gospels, we never would have any theory of atonement, nor of the fall of man; we would simply have had the doctrine of humanity, "that the pure of heart shall see God," that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and that every man shall be judged according to his deeds.

The passing of the creeds makes life grow earnest and meaningful, makes our responsibility extend to the other man, and requires us to accord to him every right we claim for ourselves. As the creeds pass away, as the theologic Christ becomes impossible, and the theologic God odious and absurd; as the human mind becomes clear and the ideal of morality lifts up its form, commanding and august, the only religion man needs now—justice, fraternity, honesty, and truth—becomes more and more the commanding influence in human life.

J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Echoes from Olympus.

II.—CONCERNING CELESTIAL CLUBS.

EVEN Elysium palls, for, as one may have too much of a good thing, æons of bliss may end in biliousness. That very atrabilious personage, St. Peter—whom we left in the Junior Angelic gnawing the end of a full-flavored cigar, and flung the print aside in a new access of ill-temper.

"Infernally dull!" he exclaimed, alluding to the journal. Then he corrected himself. "No, that's a slander on Inferno, where it would be an odd thing, indeed, if they couldn't turn out something brighter and better than this, considering all the talent they have at their disposal—under lock and key, and frizzling in the furnaces."

Yet it was a perfumed sheet of white satin with golden fringe, and letters of shining bronze and artistic headlines in brilliant colors, and, for illustrations, superbly-tinted vignettes.

"Looks well enough," he said somewhat grudgingly. "But where's the news? Angels are not always on the *qui vive*, and cannot be expected to know everything first-hand. But here there's nothing beyond a lot of blatherskitish rubbish about people who are either living on the Lord or dying in the Lord. There isn't a man among 'em."

"I think it a fairly good paper," ventured Luke with some diffidence. "There are some interesting narratives in it. You must admit that, Peter."

"Interesting narratives be — well, never mind," exclaimed the choleric Peter. "You're not exactly the sort of party to talk about interesting narratives. I wish you and Matthew and Mark and John had been drowned in the sea of Galilee before you thought of writing your Gospels. Don't you know you have lost us some of the best of fellows who, but for you, might have come up here, and infused some light and life and joy into our humdrum existence?"

"Make allowances, Peter," remonstrated Matthew. "We did the best we could with our materials."

"And a fine hash you made of it. I endeavored to put things straight in my Epistles by writing on general matters. Fear God; honor the King; wives be in subjection to your husbands, and so on."

"And didn't you say 'angels bring not railing accusations'?" asked Luke.

"True," said Peter; "but I said railing accusations 'before the Lord,' which is different to talking to a lot of gutter-snipes in a club. Besides, I've changed since then. What I've had to endure has been enough to spoil the temper of any saint. However, to change the subject: what do you

think of the new feature I've introduced in the *Intelligencer*—the Arrivals?"

"Very good, indeed," said several members, rather pleased to find a point of agreement.

"Yes, I should think so," continued the Apostle. "Here you see the names of all the distinguished people who have crossed the herring-pond to the City of Immortal Life. Look for instance, at this list of Americans who, having done Europe, have found their way to kingdom-come. Funny thing, the first person Americans ask for on arrival is Shakespeare. Really, I think the principal thing they come for is to see him. One of them, who could not find the Bard the first day he got here, said he guessed he'd go down and have a hunt in the other place. 'Mind you,' I said, 'you can't come back.' He said he didn't want to. He'd seen enough of this one-horse show."

"Dreadful!" exclaimed Matthew.

"Shocking!" said Luke.

"I'm often asked," continued Peter, "for introductions to Chaucer, Milton, Bunyan, and Wesley. All I can say is: 'You'll find 'em roaming about somewhere in the grounds.' Then, soft-like, they say: 'But how shall we know 'em?' 'Get inside with you,' I reply; 'you've got all eternity to do it in, and I've got to mind this gate.' Then they sling their hook."

"Peter," said young Timothy, advancing from a corner of the room. "Do any arrivals ask you if Byron or Shelley or Bobbie Burns is here?"

For answer, Peter reflectively scratched his head with one hand. The other went silyly groping down to his sandal. In a moment the sandal was off and flying at Timothy's head.

"The impudence of these kids," remarked Peter to the company generally, "is simply staggering. Paul prescribed for that youth a little wine for his stomach's sake. I'd prescribe something very different to improve his manners. Chaffing his elders, indeed! What is Heaven coming to?"

"Yes," resumed Peter after a pause, "I'm rather proud of that list of distinguished arrivals. But, talking about newspapers, you wait a bit, and we'll have something like a newspaper—an ideal newspaper—when Stead comes up to claim his throne. As for that Topeka crank, I can't stand him at any price. How does he know what Jesus would do? It's more than I know. And I've been up here a fairish length of time, and knew Him when we were both down in that mud-hole, Judea. It's just what you don't expect our blessed Lord to do that he straightway goes and does. That's my experience. And sometimes in consequence there's been hell-up."

"Talking about hell," continued Peter after another pause, during which he had taken many reflective whiffs. "Talking about hell —"

"S'ssh," mildly expostulated the Angel Gabriel. "We ought not to mention that place up here."

"And why not, pray?" Peter's fiery temper was rising once more.

"Well, you see, Peter, it's rather a delicate matter. You must remember that there are many folks here in heaven who have relatives and connections about whose fate they are not at all certain, and who might, you know—who might, in fact, be down in the place you mention."

"Well, then," said Peter sturdily, "why don't they go down and join 'em?"

"How could they?"

"Easy enough. If they went and kicked one of those belly-eyed tykes about the Throne, they'd soon be chucked."

"Dear, dear me. I'm shocked at you, Peter."

"And I'm disgusted with you, Gabriel. And, now we're talking, I may as well tell you. The other day, when I was at the gate —"

"Would any gent. like to join in a little game at faro?" The inquiry emanated from the patriarch Jacob, who had come shuffling in from the card-room.

"Where's my sword?" cried Peter. "I'll whip his ear off in two jiffs."

Jacob immediately retired.

"I know—I feel sure of it," said Peter; "this club will be raided one of these fine days. That trickster Jacob is croupier, and already some of the young angels have gone and pawned their golden harps and crowns with Uncle Isaac."

"That reminds me," remarked Gabriel; "I must be off very shortly to lead the Hallelujah chorus."

"Oh, ah; the 'Holy, Holy, Holy' shriek. I know it. Thank God, I'm excused in respect of my bad toe—though, to be sure, I don't howl with that, but rather on account of it."

"I'm sending a medical certificate myself."

"Indeed. But I thought that just now you were going to tell me something."

"Yes, so I was. It's only a little incident illustrating the cheek of some mortals. The other day, a company promoter—director, I think, of the Westralian Wild Cat All-gold Mining Company, and I don't know how many other companies of a similar kind—came to the gate as bold as brass. He said he knew there were two or three items down against him. He understood, however, that the Recording Angel, taking pity on him, had blotted them out with tears. 'Tears be blowed,' I said, and then I looked up your ledger

and found his record. 'You infernal villain,' I said; 'there are no tears here. If any tears have been shed, they have been drawn from your victims. Scoot!' But he had me in the end. He said he'd built a church, had been churchwarden for fifteen years, and a Sunday-school teacher still longer. Moreover, he had paid the expenses of the parson's holiday in Switzerland, and had always been an ardent supporter of missions to China."

"Well, and what then?"

"I had to admit him, of course, after that. I ordered him straight off to the bath, and told 'em to give him a good scrubbing, and drown him if they could. Gabriel, my boy, those reputed weeps of yours are doing a devil of a lot of harm."

Gabriel said he would discuss the matter another time, and hastily disappeared.

Peter chuckled to himself. "I thought that would shift him. He's a good sort, but a fearful old molly-coddle."

Still laughing to himself, Peter stretched his legs on another chair, and blew some rings of smoke towards the ceiling. Happening to cast his eyes in the direction of the door, he gave a sudden start. The cigar fell out of his mouth. His jaw instinctively dropped. His eyes opened to their fullest extent. "My God," he exclaimed, "who's this coming?"

As the words escaped him, a grim and ghastly figure stole noiselessly towards him from the door.

With the speed of lightning Peter sprang to his feet, turned round, and darted out of the room by an opposite exit. Two minutes afterwards he burst into the billiard-room, where Michael and Stephen were playing a game of 1,000 up. As he threw himself on a settee, the Apostle emitted a heavy and heart-rending groan.

"What's the matter with you, Peter?" asked Michael.

"I'm ill, Mike; I'm ill!" groaned the Apostle. "I don't know what's coming to this club. We have in heaven nearly all the murderers and villains of the earth who have chosen to repent at the eleventh hour. The place is over-run with scoundrels who weren't considered good enough to be allowed to continue their existence on earth. Most of the best people—philosophers, scientists, poets, wits, reformers—are down in the other place. We have most of the scum. But I did think we kept the Junior Angelic a trifle select—that it was a club established by gentlemen for gentlemen. And yet there is he—he walking about in the reading-room as if the place belonged to him."

"Who, Peter, who?" inquired the two players simultaneously.

"Why, the Repentant Thief. Go and look at him."

"Phew!" said Michael. "That's so, is it? Well, I suppose we must put up with it. We mustn't be too hard on others, especially if they are, indeed, repentant, nor must we be too self-righteous ourselves."

"I won't stand it, Mike," said Peter vehemently. "I'd sooner resign. I'll go back to the old Angelic."

This he eventually did, and in the parent institution he is as fairly comfortable as he is ever likely to be. He finds his chief source of entertainment in chaffing Moses about Darwin, and in retailing to other patriarchs the latest results of the Higher Criticism.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Correspondence.

JOSEPHUS AND JESUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Watts, with his usual incisivness, gives the arguments against the principal passage of Josephus's writings when he mentions J. C.; and if this was the *only* mention, it might be considered a final refutation. But this passage does not stand alone. Josephus also mentions James as the brother of J. C., and also devotes a chapter to John the Baptist. Both these passages are mentioned by *Origen*; so they are not open to the same objection as the principal passage which mentions Christ. Thus we have three allusions to the early history of Christianity in a contemporary history, and Mr. Watts has only disposed of *one*. It would, therefore, appear that the majority is still two to one against Mr. Watts, and it would be interesting to know how he proposes to dispose of the two references I have given: while they stand it does not appear much use disproving the third.

C. VAUGHAN.

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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, Arthur B. Moss, "Life's Great Problems."
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, J. McCabe, "Death and Afterwards."
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, H. Snell, "The Religious Education of Children."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY, Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road: 7, Herbert Burrows, "The Silences of Life."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, A lecture.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.
VICTORIA PARK (near the Fountain): 3.15, R. P. Edwards.
HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.
KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, S. E. Easton.

COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): J. H. Gilliland, A lecture.
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Town Hall): 3, G. W. Foote, "Marie Corelli and Jesus Christ"; 6 to 7, Organ Recital; 7, Freethought Demonstration.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, J. W. Cox, "Our Father in Heaven."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—J. Allan; 6.30, A. G. Nostic, "Fermentation"—with lantern illustrations.
HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Birks, "The Value of Spiritualism."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Famines in India."
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, A lecture.
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. Simpson, "War Promoters and their Victims."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Ernest Evans—3, "Biological Problems"; 7, "Science and Morals." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A Scottish Reading.

Lecturers' Engagements.

C. COHEN, 17 Osborne-road, High-road, Leyton.—October 21, Birmingham. 28, Athenæum Hall. November 4, Glasgow. 11, Aberdeen.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall-Heath, Birmingham.—October 21, Birmingham; 28, Birmingham. November 4, Manchester. 18, Birmingham. 25, Sheffield. 26 and 27, Debate at Sheffield. December 9, Glasgow.

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