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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Wilson Barrett and Colonel Ingersoll.

WE did not know that Wilson Barrett took himself so seriously. It appears that he is something more than an artist—or perhaps something less. He has a mission in the world, and it is a moral mission. He preaches from the stage instead of from the pulpit. His object is to make people feel and think as they ought to, and to render the theatre the greatest power in the world for good. It was all a mistake to suppose that he took up those Roman plays in order to trade on sentimental superstitions with regard to the early Christians, or to wear the toga and display his anatomy. He has been explaining the matter to a representative of the Newcastle *Evening Leader*. "I would make the stage," he says, "a vehicle of good for others, and for myself too; and not of good alone, but of good united to interest and to thought—deep, earnest thought." The interviewer asked him whether that was the mission of the drama. "Not the mission of the drama, perhaps," he replied, "but at any rate it is my mission." This is clear enough, and some will regard it as very satisfactory. But others will shake their heads—with something in them. They will scarcely be able to believe that this gentleman is commissioned and equipped by nature (or providence) for deep, earnest thought. They have an opinion that he shines chiefly in robust melodrama, where the situations, rather than the acting, make people "feel." They fancy, too, that his own writing, as in "The Sign of the Cross," is full of stilted platitudes and shoddy rhetoric, which he probably mistakes for poetry. By no means can they take him at his own estimate. They recognise, however, that he can afford to smile at their "depreciation," for he has the great, ignorant, emotional public with him, and their late-found patronage has lifted him out of semi-bankruptcy into affluence.

Mr. Barrett is proud of the fact that Ruskin was greatly interested in "Claudian." "The letter he wrote me," the author-actor says, "on its production is amongst my most valued possessions. The altruism of the play appealed to him, especially the dying for an ideal." Now the great John Ruskin was undoubtedly a man of genius, but he was not without his eccentricities, and this was one of them. The "altruism" of "Claudian" is extremely difficult to discover. The hero of that play is strongly reminiscent of Manfred. He poses and spouts, and overflows with self-sympathy. Everything is directed towards his "spiritual" interests. Earthquakes and massacres, involving the death of thousands, are perpetrated with consummate recklessness in order to prepare his immortal soul for the kingdom of heaven. He advances to glory along a road of ruin. Provided he gets home all right at the finish, the fate of others, who are equally immortal, and perhaps equally valuable, is a matter of superlative indifference. It was an aberration on Ruskin's part to see altruism, and idealism, and all the rest of it, in such an egotistical performance.

It appears that Mr. Barrett wrote "The Sign of the Cross" for a definite religious purpose. It happened in this way—in his own words:—

"It was my own play, the result of much previous thought and consideration, and of a desire to get something to oppose the materialistic tendency of the day. Perhaps the first idea came to me during a visit to America, where, at the Southern Hotel, St. Louis, I met Colonel Robert Ingersoll, a charming, clever man, whose atheistical lectures crammed every theatre or hall where they were given; and so witty was Colonel Ingersoll that these places resounded again and again with laughter at the clever attacks he made on the supernatural side of Christianity. It was at this time that I began to think if it were not possible to write a play to counteract the mischief he was doing; for unless we can get anything better than Christianity why try to pull down the hope and comfort of this world of ours?"

Why on earth did not Mr. Barrett tell us all this before? We should have understood him then. His aspiration is to figure at the front in the noble army of infidel-slayers. He has for many years been fighting Colonel Ingersoll. Against the great Freethought orator's wit he opposes the solemn nonsense of "The Sign of the Cross." Ingersoll made people laugh. "Very well," says Mr. Barrett, "come to me, and I will make you cry." Tears are trumps. Infidelity shall be snivelled out of the theatre, and wet pocket-handkerchiefs shall lie on bosoms filled with the love of Christ.

Really, it is *too* funny. Look at Ingersoll's portrait, and then at Mr. Barrett's; read Ingersoll's lectures, and then Mr. Barrett's play; and ask yourself whether there is any equality between these antagonists. Is it not a battle between a giant and a dwarf? Ingersoll could make people laugh; yes, but not *at* him. He could also make them cry. But he did not elicit the facile tears of cheap sentimentality. His hearers were surprised into the melting mood by the sudden, swift touch of nature that makes the whole world kin. The hatred of cruelty, the scorn of injustice, the loathing of hypocrisy, the indignation at bigotry, the acclaim of courage, the love of tenderness, the sympathy with unmerited distress, the grief over the sufferings of women and children, the yearning towards strong men fighting forlorn hopes in the deepest adversity—all followed the irresistible magic of his appeal.

What "hope and comfort" did Ingersoll try to "pull down"—as Mr. Barrett elegantly puts it? The one thing above all others with which he warred was the Christian doctrine of everlasting hell. Is this the "hope and comfort" that Mr. Barrett seeks to re-establish? Ingersoll never denied a future life. He said he did not know. And we venture to think that Mr. Barrett is in the same position. We also think he will cling to this life as long as he can, and postpone his voyage to the next world until he is forcibly put on board the boat for Port Salvation.

We gather that Mr. Barrett is supporting "the supernatural side of Christianity." Well, it certainly needs all the support it can get; and when the actors join the parsons in its defence, it must be in a very parlous condition.

G. W. FOOTE.

Josephus and Christ.

IN October last two articles of mine appeared in these columns showing the nature of myths and the unhistorical character of the New Testament story of Christ. In a letter to the *Freethinker* of October 21, Mr. C. Vaughan took exception to certain of my conclusions; but he did not deny my general affirmation—namely, that the principal passage in Josephus's writings, in which a reference is made to Jesus Christ, was a forgery. My reason for not replying at the time to Mr. Vaughan's letter was that it did not meet my objection to the Christian claim; that the existence of the Christ of the Gospels was amply proved by the testimony of historians who wrote about the period when Christ is supposed to have lived. I should not notice the gentleman's criticism even now had I not been asked to do so by several friends. My silence would not have been out of any disrespect to the writer of the letter, but simply because his remarks do not affect the position I take upon the subject. My contention was, and is, that there is no evidence that any secular writer of the first century refers to the Jesus called Christ. In support of my allegation I dealt, among other things, with the supposed testimony of Josephus, showing that, according to even Christian writers, the celebrated passage in his history where Christ is mentioned is an interpolation. "If," says Mr. Vaughan, "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."

Now, it is evident that Mr. Vaughan has not directed his attention sufficiently to literature bearing upon the subject. Had he done so, he would have known that the references to James and John in the writings of Josephus are also doubtful and destitute of historical accuracy. Before, however, furnishing proof of this, let me remind my critic that he confounds the name of Jesus with that of Christ. In my previous article I stated that it was not my intention to dispute that a man by the name of Jesus lived two thousand years ago. Josephus refers to more than one person of the same name who lived about that time. My contention was that there is no historical evidence that the Christ (which really means the anointed) who is professed to be believed in by Christians ever existed. But supposing the James in question existed, and had a brother by the name of Jesus, it does not follow that he was the virgin-born miracle-worker, Christ of the Gospels, who was looked upon as something more than a mere "man and a brother." Then as to John the Baptist. Such a preacher might have existed among others; but the point is: Did Josephus mention a John the Prophet, who is said to have foretold the coming of Jesus the Messiah, the restorer of the Jewish nation, and the deliverer of its people from the Roman yoke? Besides, as the principal passage in Josephus's writings referring to Christ is an *admitted* forgery, it is not improbable that the passages wherein James and John are named are also interpolations, inserted by some Christian at a subsequent period to support the first forgery. Further, what does Mr. Vaughan mean in saying: "Thus we have *three* allusions to the early history of Christianity"? There is no allusion whatever made to Christianity in the passages referred to. Before the existence of Christ and Christianity can be historically proved it must be shown that early secular writers refer to a person such as the New Testament describes, who was born without a human father, who performed the acts related of him in the Gospels, who died on the cross, who rose from the dead, and who is now sitting at the right hand of the God of Israel in the Christian's heaven. This is the proof required; let him produce it who can.

Mr. Vaughan says: "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." Here it should be noted that, if the passages found in Josephus in reference to James and John were genuine, they would not be personal evidence in favor of the events recorded, but only hearsay. The passage as to John states that some of the Jews thought the destruction of Herod's

army was owing to his having slain John, called the Baptist. The reason assigned for John's death is that Herod feared that his (John's) influence would lead to rebellion; hence it was thought advisable to put him to death to prevent his causing mischief. This is a very different story to that given of the same event in the Gospels. Evan Powell Meredith, who says, in his *Prophet of Nazareth*, that he "sees adequate reasons to conclude that the passage in Josephus referring to John is a clumsy forgery," writes thus:—

"Josephus, according to Christian chronology, was only about thirty years older than John; and, at the time he wrote, some of John's converts and disciples must be alive; for out of the many thousands he baptised a sect must have been formed; or, at least, a great number must, through life, have adhered to his doctrines, and been imitated by their children. Still, Josephus makes no mention of any of his adherents. Nor does he allude to the deputation of Jewish priests and Levites sent to John by the great council of the nation to demand his authority for baptising (John 1). But what is still more singular, as evincing the spurious character of this passage, is that Josephus does not mention either John or his followers when systematically treating of the religious sects that existed in Judea, which he does both in his *Jewish Wars* and *Antiquities* before the passage in question occurs. If he knew anything of John or of his adherents, and if John was such an important personage as he is described in the Gospels, and even in the supposed spurious passage under notice, influencing the whole nation so as to be able at any time to persuade it to rise in rebellion, and making the governor of this nation regard him with awe, and to kill him, at last, from fear of his influence—if, we say, the Jewish historian knew of these remarkable things—and it is impossible for them to have existed without his knowledge—he would undoubtedly have given a detailed account of John when treating of the other religious teachers of the Jews. Instead of this, we find only a casual notice taken of him. The most direct and positive proof of the forgery of this passage is that it makes Herod send John to the citadel of Machærus, which was not only not within his own tetrarchy, but not within the Roman domains. It was in the possession of Aretas, the king of Arabia; so that, if Herod sent John to this castle, he would have no power over him, either to kill him or preserve his life. To make it still more unlikely that he should have sent John to the fort of another monarch, Aretas had long ago been inimical to Herod, having had a quarrel with him about the boundaries of Gemalitus. Aretas and Herod's father, also, had always been inveterate foes. We may, therefore, be certain that Herod never imprisoned John in a castle which was in the possession of another king, and that a foe; and, further, that Josephus would never be so contradictory as to say that he did so. Consequently, the passage about John must be an interpolation, foisted into the text with the view of making Josephus bear testimony that John the Baptist flourished in the time and country of Herod the Tetrarch. But so clumsy is the forgery that it utterly falsifies the Gospel testimony regarding John."

Now, the advocate for a historical Christ is placed in this dilemma: he must either abandon the story as given in Josephus, or he must disbelieve the New Testament account. Personally, I credit neither, believing, with Judge Strange, that this passage in Josephus about John the Baptist is "as clearly traceable to Christian hands interpolating the record of Josephus as is the case in any of the other instances."

The reference to James, "the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ," is open to the same objection that has been urged against the genuineness of the other passages found in the writings of Josephus. The Rev. Dr. Giles considers the passage "incomplete and suspicious." He says:—

"The insertion of the words, *who is called Christ*..... may be due to the ignorance, or even the piety, of some Christian annotator" (*Apostolic Records*, pp. 285-6).

Charles B. Waite, A.M., in his *History of the Christian Religion*, says that "commentators have not been able to decide" whether the James mentioned was "the brother of the Lord." "Some evangelical writers have been inclined to let this passage go with the other as a forgery" (pp. 34-5). Judge Strange, in his work, *The Sources and Development of Christianity*, writes thus:—

"That the passage is a fabricated one is also evidenced by the circumstance that at one time it stood in the account of the *Wars* verbatim as we find it in the *Antiquities*..... The passage being withdrawn amounts to an admission

of its spuriousness, and the whole action of the insertion and the withdrawal exhibits the unscrupulous manner in which the records left us by Josephus have been tampered with" (pp. 22-3).

Thus it appears to me that Mr. Vaughan's statement that there are "three allusions to the history of Christianity" is not supported by historical fact.

Mr. Vaughan says the passages referring to James and John "are mentioned by Origen." Supposing this were true, it proves nothing in favor of my critic's contention. Origen is said to have written in the third century, and how his testimony can be of any evidential value as to who wrote in the first century I fail to see. But it is well known to readers of primitive Christian history that many of Origen's statements were "open to suspicion." It is a significant fact that Origen, in his discussion with Celsus, never once refers to the alleged testimony of Josephus to Christ. On the contrary, he admits the lack of such testimony, and tries to account for the silence of the Jewish historian.

Sufficient has now been said, I hope, in reply to Mr. Vaughan's letter. Whether or not he will be satisfied remains to be seen.

CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Civilisation.—II.

THE QUESTION OF MORALITY.

(Continued from page 757.)

IN my last article I pointed out how utterly misleading were the statements so often made that Roman society was destitute of any satisfactory moral teaching prior to the introduction of Christianity, as also the kindred charges of Roman demoralisation. The truth is that the only authorities that can be cited in proof of the latter statement are the writings of satirists or moralists, who naturally dwelt upon the evils they sought to abolish, and not upon those aspects of Roman life that were secure from their condemnation. No serious student of Roman civilisation would accept the scandal-mongering of Suetonius, the epigrams of Martial, or the satires of Juvenal—from whom most of the statements are borrowed—as being fair pictures of the life of their times. "Satire," as a clerical historian remarks, "can never be accepted as a fair portraiture of social manners. It dwells only on the bad side of life, and ignores the brighter and the nobler scenes";* and, with the remains of Roman writings and of Roman greatness before us, we can scarcely doubt that the bright side was there for those who sought it. Certainly the letters of Pliny the Younger introduce us to an entirely different world than that pilloried by Juvenal; and Pliny was no satirist, but a plain, cultured, observant man of the world. His letters show that, with all the vice of Roman civilisation, there was yet a much higher spirit abroad—a spirit which manifested itself in the softening of harsh laws, the growth of a loftier ethic, the amelioration of the lot of the slave, and an improvement in the condition of woman.

But the myth that Roman life was utterly corrupt is only one side of the myth that Christianity gave this corrupt society new moral ideals and a new moral birth. It is, as Mr. Farrer remarks in his excellent *Paganism and Christianity*, "one of the commonest traditions that has acquired some semblance of truth by persistent reiteration." On what evidence does this belief rest? Simply and entirely on the statements of Christian writers themselves. To the Pagan writers no such austere morality was evident. Marcus Aurelius, a moralist of the sternest type—classed by Renan among the world's noblest characters—was not struck by their moral culture, although he was by their obstinacy and fanaticism. Pliny, Tacitus, Suetonius, Celsus, and Lucian saw in Christianity only a stupid and evil superstition. And it is, to say the least of it, remarkable that not one of the best Pagan writers or rulers observed the moral excellence of Christians. Not only are the witnesses to early Christian purity confined to Christians, but even they discover the greatest purity in the most distant periods, which are precisely those of which our information is scantiest. Where we know

little or nothing of Christians, they are said to have been leading pure lives; directly we begin to have precise information concerning them, then, as Christian writers testify, "to represent the Christian Church as ideally pure or stainlessly perfect would be altogether a mistake..... Hatred and party spirit, rancor and misrepresentation, treachery and superstition, innovating audacity and unspiritual retrogression, were among them as among us."*

Putting on one side the grave misconduct in the Christian Churches evidenced by St. Paul's admonitions, the broad and damning fact remains that our first genuine historic acquaintance with Christians introduces us not to a body of lofty moral teachers, exercising a restraining and purifying influence on the world around them, but to a crowd of religious fanatics, whose conduct was no better than that of their fellows, and often worse. Tertullian, writing in the latter part of the second century, meets the charges of misconduct against Christians by the somewhat curious defence that, while it is true of some, it is not true of all—a defence that practically admits the justice of the charges made. And in his own writings, that are addressed specially to Christian communities, he depicts exactly the same vices and portrays precisely the same types that are pictured by Juvenal or Seneca.† A few years later Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, rebukes exactly the same faults—and with the same result. He describes the Christian world, laity and clergy, as thinking chiefly of money and pleasure. There is neither devotion nor faith among the clergy; many of them leave their duties to engage in mercantile traffic, while false swearing, evil speaking, and dissolute habits were common to all classes.‡

The growing conviction of the sanctity of the celibate life led also to much open and secret immorality. Not satisfied with the ordinary practice of celibacy, the monks "formed connections with those women who had made vows of perpetual chastity; and it was an ordinary thing for an ecclesiastic to admit one of these fair saints to the participation of his bed, but still under the most solemn declarations that nothing passed in this commerce that was contrary to the rules of chastity and virtue."§ Tertullian declares that the desire of enjoying the reputation of virginity led to much secret immorality and infanticide—a declaration that carries conviction on its face.

The significant part of such statements, which might be multiplied indefinitely, is that they refer to the Christian population at the earliest times of which we have any authentic knowledge concerning it, and not to a much later period, when it might be urged in extenuation that it had grown corrupt. The truth is that morality, as ordinarily understood, was not the prime object of the first centuries, and the early Church was anything but a society of ethical propaganda. Antinomianism, the doctrine that the elect were freed from all law, legal and moral, and that none of their actions could be deemed sinful, no matter what their character, was ever present in the early Church, as it has been at later important religious revivals. Prodicians, Adamites, Eutrychites, to name only a few sects, were all antinomistic, some of them heating their churches in order to attend service in a state of nudity (see Renan's *Marcus Aurelius*, p. 71, and Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, ch. 2). Mosheim may well remark, in answer to the question, What is a bad director in point of morals?: "If by such a person be meant one who has no determinate notion of the nature and limits of the duties incumbent on Christians, no clear and distinct ideas of virtue and vice..... then it must be confessed that the title belongs indisputably to many of the fathers."

When we take the Christian period at a later date, and inquire as to the effect of Christian teaching then, matters become immeasurably worse. Far from effecting any improvement, every advance in the power of Christianity seems to have been accompanied by the presence of a lower level of moral degradation. Of the state of affairs in the fourth century Gibbon says that "the Christians had forgotten the spirit of the Gospel, and the Pagans had imbibed the spirit of the Church.

* Dean Farrer, *Early Days of Christianity*, p. 59.

† See Cruttwell's *Literary History of Early Christianity*, p. 584.

‡ See his treatise, *On the Lapsed*.

§ Mosheim, *Ecclesiastical History*, Century III., pt. ii., c. 2.

* Rev. W. W. Capes, *Early Roman Empire*, p. 214.

In private families the sentiments of nature were extinguished by the blind fury of zeal and revenge; the majesty of the laws was violated or abused; the cities of the East were stained with blood."* But Gibbon was not a Christian, and his testimony may be biased. Let us, then, take the evidence of two Christian writers, St. Jerome and Salvianus, Bishop of Marseilles, both belonging to the fifth century. The language of both is rather too blunt for literal repetition, so I will give their indictment as summarised by Mr. H. C. Lea in the following passage:—

"Nothing can be conceived more utterly licentious and depraved than the whole framework of society as described by him [Salvianus], with such details as preclude us from believing that holy indignation or pious sensibility led him to exaggerate the outlines or darken the shades of the picture.....Unbridled lust and unblushing indecency admitted no sanctity in the marriage-tie. The rich and powerful established harems, in the recesses of which their wives lingered, forgotten, neglected, and despised..... The poor aped the vices of the rich, and hideous depravity reigned supreme and invited the vengeance of heaven..... Nor does Salvianus confine his denunciations to Gaul and Spain. Africa and Italy are represented as even worse, the prevalence of unnatural crimes lending a deeper disgust to the rivalry in iniquity.....What hope, he asks, can there be for the people when even in the Church itself the most diligent search can scarce discover one chaste amid so many thousands?"†

The indictment of Jerome, as summarised by Dill in his important work, *Roman Society in the Last Days of the Western Empire*, is equally sweeping:—

"Among all classes of the clergy corruption prevailed. The evils of seduction and captation became so grave that, in an edict addressed to Pope Damasus, the Emperor Valentinian I. sternly prohibited monks and ecclesiastics from entering the houses of widows and orphan wards.....The passion for wealth invaded all ranks of the clergy. Many were engaged in amassing fortunes in trade. They will perform the most disgusting and menial offices for some heirless lady on her death-bed.....The picture which St. Jerome draws of female society is so repulsive that one would gladly believe it to be exaggerated. Men and women, vowed to perpetual chastity, lived under the same roof, brazening out the miserable imposture of superhuman purity under impossible conditions" (pp. 112, 113).

In fact, it matters little whether we take Pagan or Christian testimony, the result is the same. So far as the latter is concerned, purity in life is generally claimed for *preceding* generations; when dealing with their own times, there is an endless lamentation as to its impurity. Let the reader bear in mind, too, that the testimony I have quoted covers the period during which our knowledge of early Christian life is most exact, and it will be seen what slight grounds there are for assuming that Christianity effected any moral improvement in the lives of the people. There is small wonder that Dean Milman concludes that "in a great degree, while the Roman world became Christian in outward worship and in faith, it remained heathen, or worse than heathen, in its better times, as to beneficence, gentleness, purity, social virtues, humanity, and peace."

Not only do the purely Christian ages show a marked increase in special vices such as those cited above, but in nearly all the constituent elements of a sane civilisation there was a weakening also. Let us take, for example, the case of public education. The arrangements made by the Roman Government under the Empire to secure educational facilities were extensive and admirable. Universities for the higher education were scattered all over the Empire. There was a great law school in Berytus, a University at Edessa, at Constantinople, at Trèves, Lyons, Toulouse, and numerous other places. Rome alone possessed twenty schools of a public character as early as the days of the first Cæsar. Vespasian, Hadrian, and the Antonines gave large sums of money for the encouragement of education, and Alexander Severus founded numerous bursaries for poor scholars. Space prevents my dealing with this matter at length; but is there any need to point out that it was under Christian rule that this universal system of education died out, or that in the eighth century Karl the Great had to force the clergy to open schools of the most elementary character?

In the decay of civic virtue there is the same lesson to be read. Duty to the State, even to the point of dying in its behalf, was the ideal constantly before the Roman mind. From the first Christianity opposed this ideal. The early Christian leaders were emphatic in their teaching that no true believer could share directly or indirectly in the civil or military administration of the Empire. Well may Renan say that "during the third century Christianity sucked ancient society like a vampire, drawing out all its forces and creating that general enervation against which the patriotic emperors vainly struggled"; and that "the triumph of Christianity was the extinction of civil life for a thousand years."* Lecky, too, desirous as he is to find good in Christianity, is driven to the admission that the Christian ages "rank immeasurably below the best Pagan civilisations in civic and patriotic virtues, in the love of liberty, in the number and splendor of the great character they produced, in the dignity and beauty of the type of character they formed."† The truth of the statement is clearly seen in the types of character that have come down to us. Throughout the centuries the social reformer, seeking for examples to nerve his arm and encourage his followers, has gone back to these ancient models. We have gone to them because in no other period of European history was municipal life so well developed. "Local senates met in council, magistrates were chosen by popular election, and patriotism, though confined within narrow limits, was still intense. The inscriptions which are found in every part of the old Roman world, as well as the ruins of the great works which here and there are left, show us how real and widespread was the public spirit."‡ Rome gave the world, if not perfect specimens of civic life, at least an indication of what might be. What have the Christian centuries bequeathed in this matter? Naught but the figures of half-mad monks, shunning all human intercourse, and living the life of beasts, or of a priesthood, sensual and grasping to a degree, reddening the streets of city after city with blood shed in settlement of theological discussions, and permitting the world to sink back into barbarism and decay. Yet we are coolly informed by Professor Orr that it was Christianity which entered "as a regenerating principle into ancient society." Why, then, did Roman civilisation perish?

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

The School Board Contest in Leicester.

TO-MORROW (Monday, December 3) the burgesses of Leicester will have the opportunity of voting on an issue which I have had the honor of laying clearly and definitely before the town: Are they in favor of secularising the whole instruction given in Board-schools, and of directing all education towards the supreme end of good citizenship? Thirty years have passed since the establishment of School Boards, and not until this election has Leicester been asked to declare its mind upon so vital a problem.

I am interested in every detail of school-work, but I deliberately confined my program to this one point of Secular Moral Education. The people will speak for that, or against it. At each of my five meetings I have expressed my general approval of the Liberal methods of staffing and furnishing the schools; but I have made the exclusion of Bible-reading and the substitution of a rational ethics the main and unmistakable burden of my plea. On the whole, I am satisfied that the bulk of the electorate has fairly well seen the issue. Our posters have been multitudinous. My speeches have been adequately reported. The editors of four local papers have inserted all the letters which I wrote to them on the subject of my program. My friends have diligently distributed nearly 40,000 copies of my address from door to door, and I desire most sincerely to acknowledge the patience which they displayed in addressing thousands of envelopes, and delivering circulars along the streets, often under depressing conditions of rain,

* *Decline and Fall*, ch. 25.

† *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, pp. 85-6.

* *Marcus Aurelius*, pp. 337-336.

† *History of European Morals*, ii., 16.

‡ W. W. Capes, *Early Empire*, p. 188.

slush, and darkness. It has all been volunteer labor. When I thanked one of these loyal missionaries after he had tramped the town for many weary hours, he answered rightly: "I am not doing it for you; I am doing it for a principle."

What was the principle? In my address I asked that the schools should be entirely secular, and that character should be made the chief aim of school life, the children being taught on the following lines:—

"*Self-respect*; temperance in eating, drinking, expenditure, clothing, speech, and amusements; courage and perseverance in the pursuit of useful objects; prudence, and modesty.

"*Truthfulness* in speech, action, home-life, and business dealings; value of scientific truth; careful judgment of facts and persons; respect for the opinions of other people, and especially of minorities.

"*Kindness* towards members of one's family, playmates, the infirm, and animals; good manners and clean speech at home and in public; sympathy for suffering as illustrated by lessons on hospitals, lifeboats, fire-brigades, lighthouses, institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb, etc.

"*Work and Duty*; the duty of all healthy men and women to join the production of wealth by their personal labor of muscle or brain.

"*Society and the State*; intelligent study, not of the details of British battles and trifling incidents in the lives of kings, but of the history of mankind, and of all the wonderful works of the human race in the past, inventions, literature, and the arts; the nature of justice, personal and civic; the principles of intellectual and political liberty; the functions of the State and the duties of citizenship; the blessings of co-operation and international peace; the beauties of art and nature. And this civic instruction should include the principle of the social and political equality of the sexes."

The local press received this proposal with a marked respect. Not a single criticism has appeared; not a single candidate has fastened upon a word or phrase to which objection might be taken. One editor referred to the program as embodying the ideals of "some of the greatest thinkers of the time." He probably said this because Mr. Frederic Harrison was good enough to let me publish a letter of commendation. Mr. Allanson Picton also did me great service by sending me an open letter, in which he rebuked the Nonconformists for disloyalty to their oft-professed principle of disassociating religion from State-aid. But the Liberal journals entirely ignored this communication from their old and esteemed M.P. Another editor described my scheme as "excellent." A third observed that with many things in my plan he cordially agreed. A fourth believed I had many "admirable ideas." All this sounded like soft music and the cooing of doves. But not one journal suggested that people ought to vote for me.

It was not long, of course, before the Bible came up for discussion. But I had given the orthodox very little opportunity for attack. I made no assault on the Bible. I said that it offered a sectarian basis of morality, inasmuch as it did not meet the views of Jews, Unitarians, Catholics, Agnostics, and others who contributed to the support of the municipal schools; and I also said that on large areas of ethical practice the Bible had nothing whatever to teach. In other words, I affirmed, not that the present moral training was bad, but that it was inadequate. This again put the editors in a difficulty. They perfectly well knew that the instruction given under the system of Bible-reading must be piecemeal and disconnected. They could see I had a logical and liberal plan to offer in place of the theological lessons. They attempted only a feeble reply. The leading paper kept repeating that the Bible-reading had satisfied the parents of Leicester for more than twenty years; but it carefully refrained from asserting that the editorial mind was satisfied. I answered that, on purely educational grounds, it was absurd to think children could understand passages from any literature without suitable comment, and that this comment could be crammed into the bare allowance of fifteen minutes. That is the measure of the devotion of the Leicester School Board to its religion. It allots a quarter of an hour for a hymn, prayers, Bible-reading, and explanation of the passage read. I maintained that to treat the Bible, or Shakespeare, or Ruskin, or any other author, in such a manner amounted to contempt. On the other

hand, I advocated that the teacher should be encouraged to draw illustrations from the full range of literature and history of all ages and nations, including the Bible. The leading journal snapped at that "including the Bible," and wanted to make out that I and the Progressives occupied the same ground. Of course, I had to rejoin that I stood for something vastly different; that the great moral ideas were those of temperance, veracity, gentleness, and justice, and that these possessed a grandeur quite independent of the existence of the Bible.

Only one man has been rude. He penned a letter—anonymous, as usual in such cases—to one of the papers, suggesting that I had dishonestly concealed my Atheism under cover of an ethical program. It so happens that I have frequently written letters to that very journal, dealing with my Freethought convictions, and always undersigned with my name and address. This I pointed out to him, and also invited him to attend a public meeting, and question me as he thought fit. He never came. I have only had one opponent at a meeting. He spoke for nearly twenty minutes, begging me not to rob him of his Bible, and entertaining us with a minute account of the affairs of his soul and his household, and full particulars of the devoted way in which he took a cup of tea up to his wife at half-past four every morning. I have heard of several Churchmen who mean to vote for me. One of these came into the Committee-room the other night, swore he would give me fifteen votes, and wound up with inviting me to accept a libation of whiskey. I accepted his kind offer of votes, and declined the glass.

Only one man outside our Secular circle has prominently supported me on the platform. That was the Rev. W. Whitaker, minister of the Free Christian (Unitarian) Church. He is a Theist, and I am not; but that is no matter; he is a straightforward, courageous man.

Whether I am elected or not, this much is certain. The town has been stirred, and the Liberal advocates of the sectarian Compromise have been made to feel uneasy at their weakness of political principle.

F. J. GOULD.

P.S.—The result was declared on Tuesday. The number to be elected was fifteen, and there were twenty candidates. I was successful, being second on the poll. I heartily thank all friends, including the *Freethinker*, for their support.—F. J. G.

There's Nothing Like Leather!

"The London and Foreign Bible Society was, not long ago, jubilant over the great demand for Bibles in an inland district of China. But later on came the gruesome discovery that the Word was being freely used as sole (not soul) 'leather.'"—*London Paper*.

A SNOB gets his living by saving our "souls"
And the rest of our feet from the weather;
The cash in his pockets he jingles and rolls,
And he murmurs, "There's nothing like leather!"

Men of God get their living by frightening "jays"
With those mythical regions the "nether";
"There is nothing," they say, "like our creed"—for it pays—
It's a case of "There's nothing like leather!"

The "work" of the parsons is heavily priced,
Though that "work" is as light as a feather;
They say to their dupes, "There is nothing like Christ"—
To themselves, "There is nothing like leather!"

They trade in their Bibles at home and abroad,
And they gather the "shekels" together;
"There is nothing," they say, "like the Word of the Lawd."
(O there's nothing, there's nothing like leather!)

In China they've lately been doing some "biz."
Where the "heathen" are dwelling together;
They've been selling God's Word—for there's nothing like His—
(O there's nothing, there's nothing like leather!)

They were jumping for joy, for they sold such a lot,
All their hearts were as light as a feather,
Till they found that those Bibles were purchased—Great Scott!
By some "snobs" for the sake of the leather!

Those Bibles were sold for the sake of their "souls"
(And the nests of the parsons to feather),
But the "soles" of the Chinamen's boots were in holes,
And for patching there's nothing like leather!

They used up the covers in which they were bound
For protecting their "soles" from the weather;
And those Chinamen showed common sense that was sound,
For, of course, "there is nothing like leather!"

ESS JAY BEE.

Acid Drops.

OSCAR WILDE—who was once famous, and then became infamous—is dead; and it is reported that he was received, shortly before his decease, into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. According to the New Testament, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance. We suppose this is true, considering who said it; and if it be so, there must be a perfect beanfeast in heaven on the present occasion.

Oscar Wilde was not without brains, but he never had any character, in the proper sense of the word. He was a most insincere posturer, and the newspapers degrade themselves by printing a selection of his "epigrams and paradoxes." For the most part, they are nonsensical things said seriously, or brutal things said politely. "There are only two kinds of women, the plain and the colored." Well, that is mere insolence, and very vulgar insolence too. Fancy a man saying this, and with a certain acceptance, in the land of Shakespeare!

Judge Bacon should not play the fool—or the bigot—in his own court. A witness came forward there recently with a smiling face, and claimed to affirm on the ground that he had no religion. "Don't smile," Judge Bacon said, "as if you were proud of the fact; it only further shows your empty mind." The witness might have retorted that Judge Bacon's mind was perhaps not empty, but certainly ill-furnished.

Men of God sometimes let out the truth, and the truth is often unpleasant and damaging. The Rev. W. J. Robins, of Cockfield, gave the Bury St. Edmunds Free Church Council some of his experiences as a Nonconformist minister. Religion and drink, he found, went wonderfully well together in certain villages. "Young and old men," he said, "would go and sit under the sound of the Gospel—and he had even seen tears trickling down their cheeks as the Word had touched them, and they would leave the sanctuary and go and sit in a public-house until closing hours on the Sunday evening. This was not a thing that happened once, but Sunday by Sunday." And why not? "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more." So says the Bible, and those villagers were doing it.

We have said that a Christian who wants to keep the Sabbath strictly holy should go to bed on Saturday night, and get up on Monday morning, and pay a Jew to turn him over. Something like this idea was presented to the mind of a member of the Legislative Council of Victoria. Being accused of eating hot potatoes on Sunday, he claimed that he did not violate the Fourth Commandment, as they were cooked by an Atheist who lived next door.

A Wigan tradesman has found out from the Bible that the proper Lord's Day is the Sabbath—not the first day of the week, but the seventh. Accordingly, he has announced that his business premises will be closed at sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday, and will "continue open on Sunday." We suspect, however, that the Wigan Protestants generally will fail to recognise his right of private judgment. They will probably set the dogs of law at him, and make him read the Bible as they do.

"Why People Stay Away from Church" is being discussed in the *Hull Daily Mail*. All sorts of answers are given; but the only real answer is that people don't want to go.

A party of Christian whites lynched a negro at Limon, Col., for ravishing and killing an eleven-year-old white girl. They burned him at the stake. Still, they remembered that he was a Christian, though a black one. So they provided him with a Bible, which he read as he walked to the scene of his execution.

"God is love" were the last words of Richard Gardner, a devout negro who died in Columbus, O., November 9. Gardner had read the Bible all night, and had it with him at the time of his demise, being interrupted in the perusal of the same by Warden Derby, of the Ohio State Prison, who turned on the electric current. On the day before his death the deceased conducted a religious meeting in the jail, at which he related that heaven had been revealed to him. It was by the ravishing and murdering of a little girl that Gardner made his calling and electrocution sure.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The New York Presbytery has narrowly missed throwing its creed into the melting-pot. The vote for Revision was seventy-one to seventy-one; but the Rev. Dr. Wylie, who had voted as a member, gave a casting vote as Moderator, and defeated the motion—for the time. The world *does* move when Presbyterianism puts a leg forward.

Elisha the prophet should have lived to-day. He would

then have been able to use the much-advertised "Tatcho." This might have stopped his baldness, and saved the lives of the school-children who laughed at his lack of hair.

We regret that Mr. Edward Leggatt, of West Ham, a member (we believe) of the local N. S. S. Branch, has been fined 40s. for selling literature and making a collection in Finsbury Park. He was very ill-advised, however, to do anything of the kind. The London County Council has made a reasonable arrangement, with which the N. S. S. and other bodies cheerfully concur. It would be intolerable if anybody and everybody were allowed to hawk papers and pamphlets in the parks, which are primarily intended for pleasure and recreation; and no less intolerable if anybody and everybody were allowed to beg money from the public in such places. A regulation has, therefore, been made that collections and the sale of literature shall be confined to the meetings held in a certain part of the parks, and that neither shall be for the private gain of individuals, but for the general objects of a recognised Society or for some special object of general benevolence. Of course there is *something* to be said against this regulation. There is something to be said against almost any regulation. But as this world goes we have only the choice of alternatives, and the present regulation is ever so much better than sheer chaos. All of us have a fondness for doing as we like, but it is clearly impossible for us to do so in public places. The parks are meant for all, and one man's liberty must not be a nuisance to his fellows. We hope Mr. Leggatt will see that he is contravening a necessary bye-law, which must be upheld.

Another letter on "Atheistic Lectures" appears in the *British Weekly*. Arnold Foster writes from Wuchang, China, stating that a copy of the *B. W.* has just reached him, in which a writer speaks of "the injury being done in England by 'infidel demagogues' delivering Atheistic lectures in the London parks." Arnold Foster thinks that, if "intelligent Christians with a ready wit" were to mix in some of these "assemblies of ill-informed people who gather round infidel lecturers," they might often be able to discomfit the orators with a few words. Arnold Foster must be very "ill-informed" himself, or he would know that Christians who think themselves intelligent, and possessed of a ready wit, *do* mix in the assemblies, and make the kind of effort he suggests. But it isn't the orator who is discomfited. It's the other party that goes away with the tail between his legs; and that's just where the Christian trouble comes in.

This sapient gentleman, whose absence in China may account for his want of knowledge, cites an instance of an "infidel lecturer" being silenced by ready wit. We give the account in his own words: "Some years ago a man of this type was declaiming after the manner of these orators to a number of passers-by, of whom few, perhaps, had the wit to answer his sophisms, though some may have suspected that they were sophisms. 'My friends,' said the lecturer, 'can you suppose that an Almighty God will ever hereafter punish for sin, as the Bible says he will, a poor puny creature like man—a being not six feet long? Can you imagine that such insignificant beings as we are deserve such punishment for anything we could do?' A friend of mine who happened to be passing by, and heard this remark, addressing the lecturer, inquired if he might ask a question. 'Certainly,' was the reply. 'I should like, then, to know,' said my friend, 'whether you suppose that an Almighty God is unable to make within the limits of six feet a moral being who deserves, as the penalty for his sin, the punishment which the Bible says the sinner will receive?' The lecturer had evidently not considered that aspect of his subject, and was not prepared with an answer."

We don't believe for a moment, supposing anything of the kind to have occurred, that the lecturer was unprepared with an answer. For the answer is so obvious. The lecturer had not raised the question whether Almighty God *could*, but whether he should or would. Mr. Foster's friend was, therefore, beside the mark with his question—as Mr. Foster himself is with his letter.

What lies—transparent lies—Christian missionaries do tell! The home missionaries are as bad as the foreign in the way of inventing palpable fiction. Take the following extract from the report of a public-house missionary engaged in connection with the London City Mission: "In one house," he says, "among the many men drinking at the bar was a soldier—a finely-built fellow, with decorations upon his breast. After a while I said to him: 'I perceive you are a soldier of the Queen, and one of England's defenders. As such you have received those emblems for distinguished service. How I wish you were also a soldier of Christ!' 'Who is He?' asked the soldier. 'I do not know Him, nor do I believe there is such a being.' After a long and earnest talk, the soldier answered with glistening eyes: 'Ah, you are right! You have pictured my case just as though you had known my history. My mother and father are very aged; they are Christians. He is a minister, and I am their bad boy. They do not know where I am, nor what I am

doing. All my brothers and sisters are on the Lord's side, but I am wrong.' He promised to at once write to his parents, and, turning to the other men in the bar, said: 'What we have been told is right, men, and it is we who are on the wrong side. I can only say God bless you for coming to tell us wandering ones of God's love, and His willingness to forgive us. I know it is in answer to the prayers of my dear old father and mother.'

Note the "glistening eyes." Everybody, according to these pious romancers, weeps when he is being converted. The process of conversion usually takes from about five minutes to half-an-hour. This is a proof at once of the power of the Gospel and the persuasiveness of the missionary—and some people may add, of the idiocy of the converted. But the fact is that nine out of ten of these stories are pure inventions. The missionary feels bound to show that he is doing something for his money, and, when the man of God is put to it, Ananias is a fool by the side of him.

Just as he began his sermon in church, the Rev. G. D. Pagden, rector of Cusop St. Mary, near Hay, Breconshire, was observed to stagger and fall, and, though medical aid was immediately sought, the doctor could only pronounce life to be extinct. The Lord might have allowed him to deliver his sermon.

George Lawton, who confessed at Liverpool to having married three women while his wife was alive, was sentenced to three years' penal servitude. He was once a church official, he said, and well aware of the sacredness of marriage. That was probably why he tried it so often.

In sentencing a groom at the Liverpool Assizes to three days' imprisonment for bigamy, Justice Darling remarked that the prisoner had on each occasion been married in a registry office, and "had not profaned any religious ceremony in what he had done." Annesley Kenealy writes to the *Morning Post* observing that it is quite a new notion that bigamists are punished for profaning a part of the Church service. Of course it is, and no other judge would have made use of words open to that interpretation. The appointment of Mr. Darling to the judicial bench was a great surprise. He seems to be doing his level best to show that it was also a sad mistake. What he lacks in dignity and legal acumen he endeavors to make up by bigotry of the worst description. We observe that the Court of Appeal has recently reversed one of the sapient decisions of this legal luminary.

Marquis Ito has been interviewed by Mr. Raymond Blathwayt. The "maker of modern Japan," in the course of the interview, asks: "What is Buddhism or Christianity but a superstition, and, therefore, a source of weakness rather than of strength to a nation?" The Marquis says he "does not regard Japan's almost universal Atheism as a source of danger." These statements have very much disturbed the *Christian*, which, however, does not seem able to do more than express its horror at their utterance.

Apropos of the death of Mr. W. P. Sinclair, of Liverpool, whose advocacy resulted in the adoption of section 5 of the Oaths Act, 1888 (51 and 52 Vic., cap. 46), the *Lancet* says: "The danger of kissing the book in coroners, police, sessions, or assize courts is greatly accentuated by the fact that medical witnesses are asked to do this after the book has already been kissed by numberless witnesses of the lowest classes, including, from time to time, some infected with loathsome disease. We have frequently pointed out before the dangers of the English mode of administering the oath, and have urged the adoption of the Scottish form. We could add much in favor of the latter form on the grounds of greater impressiveness and more solemnity, but we leave this to others."

The Scottish form of oath consists in holding the right hand aloft, and repeating a formula commencing with "I swear by Almighty God," etc. It doesn't strike the beholder as being particularly impressive and solemn, though it is less dangerous and disagreeable than kissing a greasy, much-besmirched volume. The best thing, of course, is to abolish the oath altogether. It has no efficacy in multitudes of cases. And the conscientious people with whom it has weight are just the people who might be relied upon to tell the truth on simple affirmation.

Someone writes to the *Examiner* marvelling at the "audacity" displayed by Canon Driver in his recent address at New College. The writer says it is absurd for Canon Driver to expect that others will remain where he has drifted to, without being swept on by the current to "bald theism" or farther still. Canon Driver, he says, "asks us to accept as our guide of faith, and as containing the revelation of God, a book which (according to him) is full of falsehoods and old wives' fables." And he adds: "Our Lord was perfectly right when he said that, if we believe not Moses's writings, neither shall we believe his words. Indeed, Christ, according to the critics, is a false witness. That is, he either

told lies intentionally or in ignorance, and in either case he is unworthy of credit." That, no doubt, is the exact position. The wonder is that the believers have not found it out before.

In a late issue of the *Universe*, the Catholic newspaper, an advertisement pitifully appeals for financial help for a church at Olney, which, for a year past, has been held in "a wretched laundry." We have not sent our offering. The Christian superstition was born in a stable. It might as well die in "a wretched laundry."

In a leading article in the *Universe* the Pope is playfully called "The Fisherman of the Universe." Quite so! We presume he angles for flat-fish.

Booksellers are sometimes asked for curious books, and a friend of ours was staggered, a few days since, by a German gentleman asking for "Mrs. Crowe's 'Backside' of Nature." Of course, the inquirer meant "nightside"; but his limited knowledge of English had this humorous result.

Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* has been used as a textbook in the Universities for about a century. And yet parsons have the audacity to call theology a science!

A Roman Catholic cathedral was recently opened in Sydney, Australia. The Governor (Earl Beauchamp), the Lord Justice, etc., were present. The Romish Archbishop had not the courage to declare in the presence of the audience what the papers next day reported him to have said. The reporters, says the *Rock*, were supplied with printed copies of the sermon before it was delivered; they were requested to print it verbatim. But the wily Archbishop (acting on the Jesuit principle of the means being subordinate to the end) suppressed, in the preached sermon, a number of passages which he thought would be unacceptable to some of his distinguished hearers, as, for instance, "The leaders and founders of Protestantism—Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli—were notorious for their vices..... Protestantism has desecrated the home, polluted the nuptial bed, lowered the dignity of womankind, devastated the school, and stopped the progress of science." The last accusation, we *must* say, comes with especial grace from a representative of the persecuting Church of Rome.

Mr. John Lobb, formerly the proprietor of the *Christian Age*, is one of the rejected candidates for the London School Board. An address that was issued to the electors on his behalf is a gem of unconscious humor. It stated: "John Lobb's pamphlets are notorious. He was for three years a member of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, and has devoted his pamphleteering genius to dementia, imbecility, and idiocy in all its forms."

The Australian parson mentioned last week who objected to dancing as ungodly, but encouraged kiss-in-the-ring and hunt-the-slipper, has been eclipsed. An Adelaide suburban clergyman has lately excised a corset advertisement from a fancy fair program on the ground that it would affect injuriously the morals of the young men of his congregation. Those morals must be rather shaky to be so easily upset.—*Topical Times*.

The Evangelical *News* mentions, as if it were an astounding fact which should raise the hair of its Christian readers, that the "yearly outlay of the public on single London papers, not including advertisement payments, far exceeds the entire income of the Church Missionary Society for evangelising the world!" Very likely. English people want their newspapers; and the heathen do not want the Gospel; and the public outlay is regulated accordingly.

Christians seem to love one another at Whiting Bay, Arran. Their love is so consuming that they are almost prepared to kill each other, as in the "good old times." There is an Anti-Unionist Church party in the Bay, and last week they attempted to take possession of the local Free Church. The doors of the building, however, had been locked by the church officer, who, with his assistant, remained inside. The demonstrators climbed on to the roof of the church hall, and attempted to gain admission by the fanlight. Their entry was opposed by the two officials, whereupon, it is stated, a revolver was produced by one of the besiegers and levelled at the church official, who, considering discretion the better part of valor, hastily retired. The Anti-Unionists then entered through the window, and took possession of the building. Many of them, it is stated, sustained severe cuts through broken glass.

Unseemly disturbances between the United Presbyterian and the Free Church of Scotland have also taken place in other parts of the Highland district, particularly Ross and Sutherlandshire. At Evanton two reverend gentlemen, who had arrived to explain the doctrines of the Union, were pelted with eggs, stones, and other missiles, and with difficulty escaped into a room, the windows of which were smashed.

What on earth is the use of Archbishop Walsh, of Dublin, raving at stage-plays? The performances in the cathedrals of his own Roman Catholic Church are all stage-managed, and designed to create impressions by pretty much the same adventitious aids adopted by the theatres he denounces. Besides, he has not made himself acquainted with the full bearings of the subject. He declares that plays are represented at the Dublin theatres which would not be tolerated in London. That is nonsense. The plays presented in the principal Dublin theatres are those which have achieved success in London, and are submitted in the course of the ordinary touring system.

The Manchester *Umpire* chaffs the Archbishop in a very amusing fashion. It says that *the* profession have insisted on returning the compliment of advertisement accorded by Dr. Walsh, and it publishes the following imaginative report: "Mr. Arthur Roberts yesterday laid the foundation-stone of the new Band of Hope Hall in Teetotal-lane. The gifted comedian was misunderstood to say that he did not recommend intolerant clerical addresses as a cure for narrow-mindedness, wooden legs, or sore heads. In fact, he thought that the more the public denied itself indulgence in such vicious pleasures—of which he spoke from hearsay only—the better it would be able to face a hard and censorious world. Mr. Roberts, however, proceeded to say that, even as there were no belles of the ballet without diamond rings, so there were no clerical bad-lots without some better. He had, therefore, much pleasure in recommending his audience to regularly attend the weekly addresses given by the Rev. Jeremiah Backbight, curate of Little Cursington. Mr. Backbight could say things that would raise the hair on the head of Kruger's statue, and his denunciations of the stage and actors were enough to make Ananias and Sapphira rise and protest. Those who listened could always pass away a pleasant hour wondering what Mr. Backbight meant, and whether he had any more idea than the Man-in-the-Moon of what he was talking about. 'There is a plate collection,' concluded Mr. Roberts, 'so nobody with ordinary skill at legerdemain need come empty away.'"

The Rev. Price Hughes makes another appeal on behalf of the Million Guineas Wesleyan Fund. He will not be satisfied until the whole of that amount is "laid at the blessed feet which, for us men and our salvation, toiled to Gethsemane and bled on Golgotha." This sanctimonious cant about the "blessed feet" is all very well to rope the money in with. The money may be laid, metaphorically, at the "blessed feet," but it will pretty soon afterwards find its way into the "blessed" pockets of Wesleyan ministers and other "professionals" of the sect, and why doesn't the Rev. Price Hughes have the manliness to say so?

The Folkestone Police-court missionary has sustained a severe shock. He went peering into some mutoscopes, and found that the pictures were "so indecent that he would rather have lost five guineas than have seen them." He recovered sufficiently to give evidence at the Police-court, and the magistrates ordered certain of the photos to be destroyed. Notice of appeal was given. Quite proudly this "Peeping Tom" announced that he had never been to a theatre in his life. We should have more faith in his sensitive, delicate purity if it weren't for the fact that, in common with other men of God, he carries all day long under his arm a book containing an abundance of undisguised obscenity and filth.

An American Methodist minister, named Brotherton, with a co-swindler named Kemp Van Ec, has paid a visit to the Old Country with very profitable results. They started some fraudulent syndicates and companies in Bishopsgate-street, E.C., and, having "lifted" the very respectable sum of £55,000, have bolted.

A young man has been committed for trial at Southwark for the theft of a bicycle. He had squandered £2,000 in gambling, and had been fined £50 for keeping a gaming house at Reigate. His father had intended him for the Church. With a little circumspection, he might have had his fling and been admitted to holy orders, after all.

The failure of Continental Catholicism was the subject of more than one lamentation at the recent Catholic Congress at Bourges. One of the speakers said: "I traverse France from Calais to Marseilles, as I do Italy, which in all respects it resembles, as also I do other European countries, and what do I see? Churches almost empty, churches where there is only a handful of people kneeling before the Holy Sacrament. I read the newspapers, and they teach me that, if things continue in this train, we are, humanly speaking, vanquished." The Abbe Pastorell, in a sermon to the Congress, said: "Men are drawing away from Christianity. Amongst the masses it is indifference. With great numbers of them the whole life contains room for not more than three or four

religious observances. In the middle and upper classes the men also, with some miserable exceptions, are escaping us."

We have some delightful remnants of superstition, worthy of mediæval ages, still lingering in our midst. Here is Mr. Coupland Bowie relating, in the *Christian Life*, a conversation he had at the London School Board with Mr. Athelstan Riley. Says Mr. Bowie: "I remember on one occasion, when Mr. Riley was particularly severe on Unitarianism as a pernicious and soul-destroying system of belief, I inquired whether he really in his heart believed that I would be consigned to hell and the Devil for rejecting the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity. He answered that he was not prepared to say what would happen to me; he only knew that, if *he* rejected those great doctrines, *he* would perish everlastingly."

Professor Adeney continues, in the *Christian World*, his review of the century's progress in religious life and thought. He says it is plain that the rabbinical notion of the verbal inerrancy of Scriptures "has no longer any ground to stand upon." It is growingly felt "that the inspiration of the writers was limited to their mission as teachers of religion, and, further, that *even there* it did not secure them fulness of knowledge, or we could have had no progress in revelation." After this, what certainty is there about any portion of Holy Writ?

He says: "Some people still find a serious difficulty in regard to our Lord's references to the Old Testament. Still, in this matter, wiser views than once were held are gradually coming to the front. Nothing could be more disastrous than to tie down the authority of Jesus Christ to certain literary judgments. Earlier in the century the appeal was made with the utmost confidence, apparently without the faintest perception of the mischievous effects that would follow the inevitable reversal of the argument." Of course, the appeal was made; and naturally so, too. Apparently it is the "consequences" that now suggest its discouragement. To talk of "literary judgments" is to talk nonsense. The references of Christ to certain Old Testament incidents were obviously made as references to matters of fact, and were so received. If he knew they were fable and fiction, he must have deliberately lent himself to the perpetuation of gross delusion, which has existed down to the present time.

The *Church Gazette* still lives, and continues to administer nasty knocks at dull and indolent clerics. In its latest issue it has a leader which concludes as follows: "The laity want the clergy to be more sensible and practical, and to live as men aware of the needs of their own time. We do not say that the laity expect it—they have ceased to do so, from long and disappointing experience; but that is what they demand if the Church is to be to them anything more than a name."

The Rev. Dr. Horton, in a recent address, said he took it for granted that the pulpit is losing hold of the men of the country (he was speaking of England, and of London especially; but it might apply to Scotland too), and he held that the decay of pulpit influence is due to its own vices. The *British Weekly*, commenting on this address, says it is afraid that the power of the press is increasing, and that the power of the pulpit is not keeping pace with it.

We know now what has brought so much disaster on the Boers. The Bishop of Rochester has found it out. He says it is because they are a non-missionary nation. The Boers have steadily disowned the duty of mission work; consequently they have been smashed to pieces, and that is the fate awaiting all nations who neglect missionary labor.

Another volume of Dr. Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible* has been issued. Dr. Bernard contributes an article on "Miracles." The *Church Times* considers it a valuable contribution, except in regard to Dr. Bernard's treatment of the miracles of the Old Testament. As an example of what it objects to, the *Church Times* quotes the following passage (p. 393): "While we distinctly recognise the miraculous nature of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, and are not slow to accept the allegation that *miracles* may have accompanied their progress, we cannot think that the evidence for several recorded miracles, such as Elisha making the axe-head to swim (2 Kings vi. 5), the speaking of Balaam's ass (Numbers xxii. 28), and the staying of the sun and moon at Gibeon (Joshua x. 12), is at all sufficient to compel implicit credence in their literal truth."

The *North British Mail* relates the following story of two Free Church office-bearers who, a few days ago, foregathered and fell into a very heated discussion. "I am surprised at you, man!" exclaimed one of them; "your views are diametrically opposed to those of Bunyan and Spurgeon." "Bunyan and Spurgeon!" repeated the other with withering sarcasm, and then continued: "I don't care a pin-point for the views and opinions o' aal the Bunyans and Spurgeons in Scotland!"

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 9, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "Christian Charity in China."

December 16, 23, 30, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 9, Battersea Baths.—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.

OWING to the pressure of other matter upon our space, the second part of Mr. W. Heaford's article on "Freethought in Germany" stands over till next week.

G. D. B.—Thanks for the paper. We are always very glad to see such correspondence in local journals.

E. W. S.—Pleased to hear that your wife has accepted Secularism and actually means to contribute to the new year's Shilling Week. Some Freethinkers talk about converting the world, and never make a beginning in their own homes. Your answer to your orthodox querist shows that you have got hold of the subject by the right handle.

R. PARKER.—Order executed. Please send in future direct to the Freethought Publishing Company, not to Mr. Foote.

W. P. BALL.—Always glad to receive your cuttings.

H. R. WRIGHT.—Thanks. See paragraph.

DOCODA.—You fail as yet in the *technique* of versification. This does not come by intuition, but by study and practice.

J. CHAPMAN.—We know absolutely nothing of the infidel-slayer named Linton who is advertised to settle Freethought at Tunbridge Wells. He is probably a nobody "on the make," who will find his own level if you let him alone. We cannot undertake to send down someone to oppose him. Thanks, all the same, for your letter.

J. PARTRIDGE.—See paragraph. We wish the Birmingham Branch all success now and henceforth.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for the cuttings, though they arrive too late for use in this week's *Freethinker*. We were already over-set for the present issue.

H. S. SHACKELTON.—We have no knowledge whatever of Mr. Holyoake's views on Swedenborgianism.

J. BARRY.—Thanks. See "Acid Drops."

M. ROGERS.—It shall be dealt with in our next, and returned to you as desired.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Alfred Marsh, £1; T. H. Seymour, £1.

H. PERCY WARD.—Go on, and fight on, and you will gain a better reward than any thanks of ours—highly as you value them.

R. R.—Too full of copy this week. In our next.

PORPHYRIUS.—Back numbers sent you as requested. You are on the right track.

A. CLARK.—The matter shall have attention, with a view to action if possible.

D. FRANKEL.—Looking over your letter again, we must say it is rather off the lines of Mr. Wright's communication.

S. HOLMAN.—Instead of inserting an inadequate report of Mr. Treharne-Jones's lecture, we should prefer to insert something from his own pen. A summary of a lecture is to the lecture itself, too often, what the skeleton is to a human being. See Mr. Watts's article this week for the other matter.

ALFRED MARSH sends us £1 towards Mr. H. Percy Ward's expenses in the School Board contest at Birmingham.

JOHN SCOTT.—We will think the matter over and let you know. Thanks.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Torch of Reason—Hull Daily Mail—Blue Grass Blade—Literary Guide—Wigan Observer—Nottingham Guardian—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Truthseeker (New York)—Frankfurter Zeitung—Two Worlds—Journal of International Psychological Institute—The Gray Goose—Truth (Christchurch)—Newcastle Evening Leader—Kensington News.

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.

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

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 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 returns to the Athenæum Hall this evening (Dec. 9), when he will deliver a special lecture on "Christian Charity in China." Freethinkers are earnestly invited to bring their orthodox friends to this lecture, and to make it as widely known as possible amongst the general public. Mr. Foote has collected a lot of startling information as to the methods of the co-operative Christian army in the Celestial Empire, and he will deal with the subject candidly and fearlessly.

Peace continues to reign at the Aldgate Public Baths on Sunday, thanks to the gentlemen in blue who scare away the local Hooligans. Mr. Foote was the lecturer last Sunday evening, and was accorded an enthusiastic reception by a really fine audience, nearly all the seating accommodation for six hundred people being occupied. Mr. Thurlow, who acted as chairman, had a very easy task, for there was not the slightest semblance of disorder. The whole meeting was attentive and appreciative to the highest degree. All the lecturer's points were readily caught up, and from beginning to end there was a running fire of laughter and applause, which terminated in a remarkably fervent outburst as he resumed his seat. Some good-tempered opposition was offered by a gentlemanly Christian Evidence speaker, and the meeting closed with more cheers for the lecturer's equally good-tempered reply.

Mr. W. Heaford lectures at the Aldgate Public Baths this evening (December 9). This is the last meeting of the present series, and we hope the East End "saints" will do their utmost to secure Mr. Heaford an audience worthy of his talents and his long service to the Freethought cause.

The third of the special course of propagandist lectures at Wellington Hall, Almeida-street, Islington, was delivered on Monday evening by Mr. Foote. In spite of the wet weather there was a much improved attendance, which was felt in the religious part of the proceedings—the collection. On the whole the meeting was very clearly in sympathy with the lecturer. Mr. Cattell, who presided, threw out a strong invitation for questions and discussions, but only a few questions were asked, and no opposition was offered, although one auditor had been industriously taking notes. The last lecture of this course will be delivered by Mr. Moss next Monday evening (Dec. 10), his subject being "Christianity and Evolution." We trust he will have a good audience.

Mr. Foote lectured at the Paddington Public Baths on Tuesday evening; Mr. Edwards, of the West London Branch, occupying the chair. The lecture was followed with close attention and sympathy, and half-an-hour's discussion took place afterwards. The collection was an exceptionally good one. It is to be hoped that this large well-situated hall will be available for further meetings.

Mr. Cohen had the pioneer task of opening the Battersea course of Sunday evening lectures at the Public Baths. There was not a large meeting last Sunday, nor was it to be expected. No doubt there will be an improvement as the course proceeds. The hall is a larger one than we thought. Mr. Cohen advises us that it will hold 800, and has seats for 550. We hear that they complain of insufficient advertising, but they do not offer any definite suggestions. There are plenty of handbills for distribution, and we suggest that they should distribute them. The lecturer this evening (Dec. 9) is Mr. Charles Watts.

Another hall has been engaged in South London for a course of week-night lectures. It is the Metropolitan Temperance Hall in the Blackfriars-road. The evenings are Mondays, December 10 and 17, and January 7 and 14. Mr. Foote will take one evening, and Messrs. Watts and Cohen the others. We hope the South London friends will see to the circulation of the handbills, which can be obtained at 1 Stationers' Hall Court from Miss Vance.

It is terribly difficult to obtain halls for Freethought lectures on Sunday evenings in London. We all knew it would not be easy, but no one thought it would be so hard. With a view to occupying the lecturers engaged under the Concentration Scheme in London, at least up to the end of the present year, the Camberwell Secular Hall has been engaged for three Sunday evenings, December 16, 23, and 30. Messrs. Watts and Cohen will be the lecturers, and special handbills are being issued for distribution in South London.

The Annual General Meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, was held at the Manchester Hotel on Friday evening, November 30. Mr. G. W. Foote, as chairman, read the Board of Directors' report and presented the balance-sheet, both of which were adopted. The three retiring Directors—Messrs. Foote, Hartmann, and Warren—were re-elected, and Messrs. Bater and Woods were elected in

addition, to bring the Board up to the maximum of twelve members. Mr. Hartmann, who is the N.S.S. treasurer, in speaking on the report said the meeting ought not to pass without an expression of the great debt of gratitude that was owing to the Chairman for devising, establishing, and watching over the interests of the Society, which he (Mr. Hartmann) regarded as the most important piece of constructive work ever done for the Secular movement. Copies of the report and balance-sheet can be obtained by Free-thinkers who are non-members of the Society by applying to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C.

The Secular Society, Limited, subscribed two guineas towards the expenses of each of four "Secular Education" candidates in the recent London School Board elections. Unfortunately not one of them succeeded in gaining a seat, although the fight they made is bound to produce good results in future contests. Mr. F. G. Jones polled 10,718 votes in Chelsea, where the highest successful candidate polled 14,269 votes, and the lowest 12,008. A little more effort should, therefore, carry in the "Secular Education" candidate at the next election. Mr. W. J. Barwick did rather badly in Finsbury, his poll amounting to 4,617, which is less than Mr. Watts polled six years ago, although a Social Democratic candidate was also in the field with "Secular Education" in his program. Mr. Barwick's poll represented nothing like half the strength of the parties he stood for. We believe this is owing to the fact that, while he is sound enough on the point of "Secular Education," he is by no means as ardent about it as he is about other points on which he appealed to the electors. Perhaps he will see by the next election what is most likely to be the winning point of his program. Mr. H. Quelch polled only 4,159 votes in East Lambeth, but Mr. G. Hewitt did very much better in the Tower Hamlets, polling 10,350 votes. Mr. Hewitt, we may observe, made a stronger point of "Secular Education," and was well supported by prominent friends of that policy.

Mrs. Bridges Adams secured second place at Greenwich with 13,497 votes. The newspapers represented her as a Progressive and Labor candidate. But she was not a Progressive in the official sense of the word. She bravely refused to accept the Progressive "Bible-Reading" ticket, and insisted on retaining "Secular Education" in her program. Her brilliant success at the poll should be a lesson and an inspiration to other candidates at the next elections.

Official organs of the so-called Progressive party—for instance, the *Daily News*—carefully concealed the part played by "Secular Education" in the London School Board elections. But what is the use of this ostrich policy, when it is pretty clear that, with reasonable resources and good organisation, the "Secular Education" party would probably be able to win at least half-a-dozen seats? The matter would have to be mentioned then.

The Birmingham Branch of the N. S. S. has promptly applied for the use of the Board schools on the same terms as they are granted to other bodies of ratepayers, and the application has been referred to the Sites and Building Committee. An amendment, declaring that the Board saw no reason to depart from its previous decision, was lost; and the Branch is not without hope of receiving a favorable reply.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured last Sunday morning to an excellent audience at the North Camberwell Radical Club on "Byron and Shelley." This evening (Dec. 9) he lectures at New Brompton on "Shakespeare." No doubt he will have a good meeting.

Mr. E. Treharne-Jones, late curate of Treherbert, is lecturing this morning and evening (Dec. 9) in the Empire Theatre, Pontypridd, on "Christian Morality" and "Christianity a Myth." This gentleman, who has just seceded from the Church of England and from Christianity too, has favored us with a personal letter, which we are too busy to answer until we have got this week's *Freethinker* off our hands. Meanwhile we wish him all success in his new propaganda.

Pressure upon our space continues this week, and we are, therefore, again obliged to postpone the insertion of Mr. Foote's lengthy statement, etc., *re* the Freethought Twentieth Century Fund. As the statement is accompanied by some observations and an appeal, it is perhaps as well that the matter should be fresh in the readers' hands (and minds) during the Christmas holidays, when Freethinkers may all have a little leisure to reflect on their duties towards their own movement.

The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited.

NOTICE is hereby given that the Register Books of the above company are closed (under section 33 of the Companies' Act) from December 10 to December 21 for the purpose of annual audit, etc
E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

Robert Burns.

"He is the supreme representative man of his nation in literature. Scott was a good archer, but he never bent so mighty a bow nor sped a shaft so true to the centre."—JAMES THOMSON.

DE QUINCEY, in a caustic mood, observed that many a writer is, by the sycophancy of literature, reputed to be read whom no one cares about. This is, assuredly, not the case with Robert Burns. He has been dead over a hundred years, and his fame is far wider and more secure than it was when he passed away. His life is now celebrated as an important historical event, and his poetry is regarded as a glorious contribution to the literature of the world. Admittedly Scotland's greatest poet, he has been subjected to an extreme amount of conscious adulation at the hands of his admiring, but indiscreet, countrymen. Had he been a lesser genius than he really is, this fulsome praise would have exposed him to the derision of all sober men.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, with biting sarcasm, remarked that it was a matter for surprise that puritanical Caledonia could take Burns to her straightlaced bosom without breaking her stays. For there was nothing of the puritan in Burns. On the contrary, he was a Free-thinker, although Christian apologists, urged by theological jealousy, have striven desperately to disguise the unwelcome fact. They conceal his heresies, or they lament them, with customary pious hypocrisy, as part of his "wasted life."

Burns, like Paine and Voltaire, was a Deist. Of other religion, save what flowed from a mild Theism, he scarce showed a trace. In truth, one can scarcely call it a creed. It is mainly a name for a particular mood of sentimentalism, the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration. The Holy Willies of Orthodoxy have made the basest uses of this emotionalism, but Christians can hardly read Burns without unloosening some of the shackles of their gloomy faith. Hume's young freethinking contemporary did not merely express his dissent from Calvinism. He struck at the very core of the Christian superstition. He saw plainly that priests trade on fears of mankind. He sounded a true note when he scornfully said:—

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
To haud the wretch in order.

How he satirised the *unco guid* and rigidly-righteous—

Sae pious and sae holy,
Y've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebor's fauts and folly.

And again:—

Learn three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,
Wi' weel spread looves, an 'lang wry faces,
Grunt up a solemn lengthened groan,
And damn a' parties but your own;
I'll warrant then ye'er nae deceiver,
A s'eady, sturdy, staunch believer.

Burns knew the different value of conduct and creed:—

Ye'll get the best o' moral works
'Mang black Gentoos and Pagan Turks,
Or hunters wild on Ponotaxi
Wha never heard of orthodoxy.

He never hesitated to attack the most sacred Christian beliefs:—

D'yrymple mild, D'yrymple mild, tho' your
heart's like a child,
And your life like the new driven snaw,
Yet that winna save ye, auld Satan must have ye
For preaching that three's ane an' twa.

He even poked fun at the "Merciful Great God" of the Christians:—

O Thou wha in the Heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thyself,
Sends ane to Heaven and ten to Hell,
A' for Thy Glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore thee!

Burns characteristically said his favorite hero was Milton's "Satan." He carried about with him a well-thumbed pocket edition of *Paradise Lost*, "in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity, unyielding independence, and noble defiance of hardship in that great personage, Satan."

In the vital part of his genius Burns is original. He is a pioneer, fresh and audacious. How his love of freedom bursts out in the chorus of his "Jolly Beggars":—

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!

Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

In speaking of Burns's poems one must allude to the "Cotter's Saturday Night." Orthodox bigots, wishing to gloss over Burns's Freethought, have tortured this poem into a confession that Burns pined to death for lack of the Christian Soothing Syrup. The "Saturday Night" is obviously less a religious poem than the testimony of a dutiful son dwelling on the remembrance of an affectionate parent of an emotional nature, recalling the old home of childhood. It finally merges into Burns's favorite themes, patriotism, independence, and valor, not Christian virtues by any means. Burns was the kind of poet who is, like Mrs. Browning's Euripides, pre-eminently "the human." He could say, with Heinrich Heine, "the Voltaire of Germany":—

"Red life boils in my veins. Every woman is to me the gift of a world. I hear a thousand nightingales. I could eat all the elephants of Hindostan and pick my teeth with the spire of Strasburg Cathedral. Life is the greatest of blessings."

And, indeed, while it is quite true that those who have ceased to know love have ceased to know life, there comes an inevitable stage in which it is no longer ours

To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair.

And with it comes the time when the keener raptures have to be known vicariously in the pages of Burns, Heine, or De Musset.

This "royal peasant" sang of love and liberty with a fiery sincerity which a reader must be without heart or brain to resist. His songs are instinct with individuality. They are, as it were, clothed with his voice; they flash with the lightnings of his glance; they glow with his inspiration. Without that charge of personal energy, they were so much empty verbiage, and no more. And then, while the artist may not be elegant, refined, nor consummate, the man is nothing if not delightful in influence and a veritable enchanter in effect. Every Freethinker will say of him what Burns himself said in his epitaph on his friend:—

With such as he, where'er he be,
May I be saved or damned.

MIMNERMUS.

The Land of Confucius.—II.

(Continued from page 765.)

IN 1834 the charter of the East India Company, which had a sort of smuggling trade with China, expired, and, although it was renewed for a period of twenty years, it was practically nullified by the British Parliament, which gave to any of its subjects the equal right to trade in the privileged posts of China. This resulted in the immediate and vast increase of the importation of opium from the British-Indian possessions. This became so great, the people took to it so kindly, that the use of opium soon became almost universal among the Chinese people. Some of the officials, noting its influence, noting, too, that the importation of the drug was increasing, made a stubborn protest against it. Winning to their side some of the English philanthropists, the opium importation was for a time forbidden. These events occurred in the year 1839, and, by the united action of the English and Chinese commissioners, all the opium then in store in Canton, or lying in the holds of vessels in the harbor, was gathered upon the shore, placed in huge trenches, mixed with unslacked lime, and the waters of the sea conducted into the ditches. As the result of this controversy, and the destruction of opium, there were bitter and violent protests on the part of the English merchants; and then followed the war of 1839, known as the opium war. That controversy developed the fact that there were directly opposite opinions, both among the Chinese and among the English, as to whether the use of opium was deleterious or not, and it was finally decided that it was not especially hurtful, and that its harm lay in the abuse of it, and not in the use of it. Subsequently the importation of opium was officially sanctioned by the Emperor's Government, and continues until this day. But, as a result of this war, England compelled a sort of recognition in the Flowery Kingdom. So far was the concession made that she was permitted to have a

commissioner of commerce, or superintendent of trade, resident in that country, and, instead of the closing of the ports, eight others, in addition to Canton, were opened to English commerce.

The matter that now lay in dispute was how, or whether at all, the English representative could have an audience with the Emperor of China. Hitherto the negotiations had been carried on between the English representative and the Emperor's representative. No foreigner had ever seen the face of the "son of heaven." The Chinese etiquette and tradition resented an audience of any foreign representative with their Emperor, because that would imply a sense of equality—an admission that the Chinese Emperor was not superior to all other potentates on earth. This question was to the front for more than thirty years, and was never finally settled until the time of the disturbance between France and China in the year 1870. In that year certain religious fanatics murdered three of the French Catholic missionaries and twenty-two of the native converts. In seeking reparation for that outrage, France insisted, as one of the conditions, that an audience should be granted to her representative. This was finally, with great reluctance, conceded, and in 1870 the representative of the French Government had an audience with the "son of heaven"; but it was afterwards discovered that this audience was held in the hall of "tributary nations." Thus had the Chinese saved, at least, a little of the claim of superiority by compelling this representative to meet in the hall dedicated solely to communications with vassal or tributary States. As it was simply a matter of etiquette, and as the essential demands of the development of commerce could be secured without it, it was not resisted by any foreign power until twenty years subsequent to that time. The right of audience has only been granted to foreign representatives within the last decade, and even yet there is a matter of conduct in dispute, the representatives refusing to perform the ceremony of prostration of the body to the earth in token of the superiority of the Celestial Emperor.

The religion of this people has been, whenever uninvaded, whenever unimpeded, whenever unassailed, sufficient and adequate for the wants of their people. According to tradition, St. Thomas the Apostle once visited China, and so, if the tradition be accepted as true, Christianity, or its representative, was there at the very beginning of the Christian era. It is said that a Nestorian preacher visited China and proclaimed his gospel as early as the year 636; it is certain that Roman Catholic missionaries invaded that country in the beginning of the thirteenth century; the modern missionary movement to China dates from the beginning of the present century. The greatest and most destructive internal strifes the Chinese people have ever suffered have been those which arose from religious differences. At a very early date the Mohammedans sent missionaries, and made a large number of converts, especially in the southern part of the empire. About 1870 began an eighteen-years' war, which was simply a strife for supremacy between the invading Mohammedans, with their new religious ideas, and the Chinese, with their ancient system.

Left alone and undisturbed, I have said that the religion of the Chinese is sufficient for Chinese needs. This recalls the history of that great sage whose name is still the pride and whose renown is the imperishable glory of the Celestial kingdom—Confucius. Born in the year 551 B. C., and living to the age of seventy-two, he left his imprint so indelibly upon that strange multitude of beings that it remains ineffaced and ineffaceable. Devoted to study, taken into the public service, and winning in that capacity distinction and prominence, his mother having died, he at the age of twenty-four resigned his office, and went into a period of seclusion and mourning for three years. During this time he gave himself up to meditation and reflection, and ever after, except for the brief period when he was prime minister of the empire, he devoted his time to the teaching of philosophical and moral truths, and to the promulgation of these ideas throughout the empire. In the system which he formulated he rejected all divine revelation; he said that the sufficient and secure basis for all real advancement in morals was man's knowledge of himself. He endeavored to adapt his maxims to the needs and aptitudes of men; he appeared to see within

the strange mystery of human life sufficient potency for its final triumph and completeness. Being asked one day to give, in a single sentence, a rule sufficient for the conduct of human life, he replied in these words: "Do not unto others what you would not have them do to you." Thus the Golden Rule, at least in its negative form, antedates the birth of the Christian era by five centuries and a-half, and flowered first on the lips of a pagan philosopher.

The vitality of this ancient people may be seen in the fact that they have endured. Modern students have set apart a period for the life of nations, and have said that, judging by history, five centuries is about the allotted time of any nation upon the earth; but this people has endured for many times five centuries. The causes and inherent sources of the vitality of that people are simply a matter of conjecture. Let me suggest two. One is that the people are free from modern enthusiasm and consuming passion for the accumulation of material wealth. A nation or a man may grow enormously wealthy, but it cannot be said that the forces of continuity or long life are in any great sense furnished or nourished by this accumulation of wealth. The rivalries and strifes, the revolutions and broils, the internal convulsions that have shaken that ancient people more than once, have been rivalries that existed between the pretentious princes and petty governors. They have not originated with the people. They find the sufficient satisfaction of the life in the simpler pursuits, and are free from the fever and stress and strain, the wild, mad rush that characterises almost every other nation upon the globe. Another reason for that great vitality may be found in the fact that the people, as a rule, are not meat eaters. I am not here to argue for or against the doctrine of vegetarianism, but we cannot refuse a just consideration of facts. Here are a people, the most numerous on the globe and the most ancient, who in a large measure exist without the use of meats. They do eat poultry, and they are fond of pork; in the northern provinces mutton is a common article of food, but rice, herbs, vegetables, and fruit have constituted for centuries the chief diet of the Chinese. Moreover, the people are temperate. Brandy and beer are unknown, and wine rarely seen. They make an intoxicating liquor from rice, but the person who discovered the way to make it was banished from the empire. I do not know how much weight is to be placed upon these things; but here is the astounding fact—a people with sufficient vitality to defy the ravages of time, and to rise with preposterous strength from the devastations of flood, famine, pestilence, and war. It is said that during one famine at least thirty millions of people died. A famine in one district is greatly aggravated because of the almost impossibility of other provinces sending succor or aid. The transportation of goods throughout much of the internal region of China is carried on upon men's backs, in wheelbarrows, and upon mules, ponies, and donkeys. With its immense resources of agriculture and mining, with its invitations to commerce that are already exciting the avarice and cupidity of the globe, it has yet no adequate means of communication between its own provinces in time of need. To these things as much as to any other must be ascribed the reason for that enormous vitality. Let me add one more—the fact that the people have no divine revelation and no thought of dependence upon any power not themselves. It cannot be denied that the wars of devastation, the revolutions that have changed the history and the destinies of nations, have been frequently brought on by the zeal of religionists. This simple people, without a thought of divine aid or of a divine revealer, worshipping Confucius not as a god, but as a man, extolling the human, loving nature, living so far as possible in harmony with its laws, undisturbed by the superstitions and sanctities that are guised and garbed as religion, has developed the power to mock at time and defy the changes and mutations of history.

(DR) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be continued.)

Truth can never be confirmed enough, Though doubt did ever sleep. —*Shakespeare*.

Echoes from Olympus.

III.—CONCERNING JUVENILE CELESTIALS.

"So," said Master Tommy, in his night-shirt and with a pair of wings, "we are in the 'home for little children above the bright blue sky.' That was one of our Sunday-school hymns, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said little Alice, similarly arrayed; "this is the place they told us about, but I don't like it. Do you?"

"Well," replied Tommy, striding his legs apart and feeling in vain for his trousers pockets, "I don't think I do. Anyhow, I wish I had come up here a *man*. Men can do so much more than boys. They have all the fun, and we have to sit still and listen and watch, and sometimes they are very nasty with us."

"But we shall grow, Tommy, shan't we?"

"I hope so, else I'd sooner have stopped down at home and had ever so many complaints. I haven't been here long enough to find out whether we *do* really grow in heaven, but it will be an awful shame if we don't."

"What did you die of, Tommy?"

"I don't know 'xactly, but it was some long thing the doctor spoke of. I couldn't tell what it was. I saw angels just at the last, but they weren't like any of these up here."

"Were the ones you saw nice?"

"Oh, heaps."

"Perhaps what you saw were those in the picture-books at the Sunday-school."

"That was it. These up here are nothing like 'em. Not a bit. But I say, Alice, what did you die of?"

"Oh, quite a s'perior kind of complaint mine was. The doctor said it was a most 'strordinary case. He had never seen anything like it before. I'm glad I didn't die of anything low and vulgar. Mamma would have been so annoyed. I had three doctors altogether. How many did you have?"

"Well—I think it was only one, but then pa paid him ten guineas a visit."

"I wonder whether we had nice funerals."

"Ah, that we don't know—do we? I know pa would see that I was buried proper."

"Did you feel cold in the ground, Tommy?"

"Not a bit. Didn't know nothing about it."

"I used always to think that people, when they're buried, *must* feel cold, 'specially when there was snow."

"Oh, no. That's what girls think; but I didn't mind if it was, because I felt so hot in bed. But I say, it isn't anything like the picture-books up here, is it? It's nothing but Sunday-school and Sunday-school for ever and ever. Amen. I wish I'd never been christened, and then I shouldn't have come."

"Oh, Tommy, how wicked—and you an angel, too. If you hadn't been christened, you would have gone down to the Naughty Man, and that would have been worse."

"I don't care; I had 'nuff of Sunday-school before. But I say, Alice, I'm off. I'm going to see if I can't find somebody to have a game with. I don't see any boys that I know. Johnny, that died of scarlet fever next door, ought to be here, but I can't see him anywhere. There are so many. 'Wever, I'm off."

"And I," said Alice disconsolately, "shall have to play with Lilly and Dolly, and I don't like them a bit. They think so much of themselves because they have been here before me, and know all about it. I daresay I could have died sooner if I had liked. But oh, it is so lonely!"

Tommy gone, Alice sat down in her loneliness in these great wide heavens, and cried. Then there came along an elderly angel, who was none other than the Apostle Paul. You could see he was venerable, because his wings had begun to moult.

"Why, my little maiden," he exclaimed, "in tears—though in heaven. Astonishing! This is the abode of eternal bliss. Earthly grief has no counterpart or entrance here. All trouble and pain are banished from these heavenly realms, where felicity alone eternally reigns."

"I know, sir," Alice replied, "but I want my dear mamma and my brothers and sisters."

"Oh, they will come in due time—all in due time."

"Are you *sure* they will?" Alice eagerly inquired, and fixed her soft blue eyes intently upon him.

The Apostle looked askance. Then he said hesitatingly: "Well—no doubt they will. They are probably a godly family, who attend church regularly, take the blessed Sacrament, keep the Sabbath day holy, and subscribe to the Church funds. Meanwhile, how thankful you should be that you were duly baptised; that you were taught to say your prayers regularly morning and evening; that you went to a Sunday-school and had to learn so many verses of Holy Writ. How thankful you ought to be that you were not allowed to romp and play like the children of irreligious parents; that you were frequently chastised, and kept under strict religious discipline till you had ceased to exhibit any of the joy and gaiety and buoyancy and brightness of ordinary childhood; that your dear maiden aunt (who reads my Epistles daily) gave you all those beautiful and improving tracts, and examined you afterwards as to whether you had read and understood them, and severely reprimanded you if you failed."

How thankful you must be to the dear, kind minister of your church who set you the Catechism to learn—pages of it, and instructed you in the fundamental principles of the Christian religion."

"I know, sir," said Alice; "but mamma was very kind to me, and made excuses for me when I couldn't learn my Catechism and other things with the long words that I couldn't tell the meaning of even when it was explained. And, oh, I want to see my mamma. It isn't, and can't be, bliss when we are so far apart. I won't believe it—no, not if it was said over and over again a thousand times."

"Now think," continued the Apostle, ignoring this little outburst; "what would have happened to you if you had died unbaptized? You would never have been here. *Where* would you have been? Why, in eternal misery, with the myriads of unhappy infants who might well curse the day they were born. How much you have to be grateful for."

"I know, sir; but I *do* want my mamma."

"Who's your family doctor?"

"Dr. Bismuth, sir."

"Then likely enough you'll see her when next she falls ill. Now dry your eyes, and come along with me, and I will show you the cherubims and seraphims. They are such funny-looking creatures. Also some little cherubs—infant angels, such as you have seen in your Sunday-school picture books. They are such gay, chubby little chicks—just like Cupids. They fly about without any clothes, and never catch cold. All the lady angels who were married on earth simply doat upon them. They remind them of their own earthly little ones. Some angels, who were elderly maiden ladies on earth, have wanted to make them little shirts and knickers; but the Lord wouldn't have it. The Lord is very fond of little children. He said: 'Let the children come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

"Then," asked Alice, "why has he let all those children who were not baptized go down to the other place?"

"Ahem! That is a mystery, my dear, which it does not concern us to penetrate."

"What has become of all the children killed by Pharaoh at the time when Moses was born, and of those killed by Herod when Jesus was born? Are they up here or down below?"

"That I have no special information about. I really cannot tell. I am not omniscient. There is only One who is. Let us talk about something else. Do you like nice music? because we have a beautiful oratorio—*Holy, Holy, Holy*. It goes on day and night, everlastingly. The angels go in in batches, because there isn't accommodation for them all at once. St. John of Patmos is the conductor; it's his idea. St. Matthew is in the box office; he used to sit at the receipt of custom when on earth. I can pass you in without a ticket. They all know me."

"Oh, wouldn't Tommy like to go!" exclaimed Alice.

"Who is Tommy?"

"He is a little boy who lived near us in the Clapham-road, London."

"Anywhere near Spurgeon's Tabernacle?"

"Not far off."

"Then go and fetch him and bring him to me. Stay, let me give you my address—Gold and Ruby Throne, 6th Kingdom, N.E. Tell Tommy we have some funny beasts to show him. We must, at least, try to make you happy now you are here."

Alice flew away along the golden streets, past the palaces of saints, and the marble halls of the godly, and the pleasure grounds in which were lakes of molten gold. Quite unexpectedly, considering the vastness of that heavenly region, she had the good fortune to speedily encounter her young friend, who seemed to be flying about rather distractedly.

"What is the matter, Tommy?" she asked, perceiving a troubled look on his face.

"A lot the matter," he replied ruefully. "Who do you think I flew into when I left you?"

"I don't know, Tommy; who was it?"

"Why, old Biffkins, the superintendent of St. Mary's Sunday-school—you know him, the one we used to be under. I tried to fly away from him as hard as I could, but it was no use. The old beggar laid hold of me. 'Why, my young friend,' he says, 'are you here? Well, what a happy meeting, to be sure. And now you see what you have got to thank me for. You never would have been here if it hadn't been for me. And now we have met in these blessed realms of the glorified ones—you and me, Tommy, we will never part again—no, never. We'll continue our devotions together now to all eternity. Death can no longer separate us. Yes, Tommy, we will resume here in heaven all those happy times we had in St. Mary's Sunday-school on earth. I can be always with you now, Tommy, and we will raise up our voices together in praise of the Holy One for ever and ever.'"

"And what did you say, Tommy?"

"Oh, I put him off. I said 'Yes, sir, all right; but just now I am obliged to fly away to find somebody that I was looking for very special,' and then I got away. Oh lor, to think of having him at your elbow for ever and ever, world without end!"

Alice looked sympathetic, but said nothing.

"Let's do a guy!" said Tommy at length with great determination. "Let's hook it as far away from here as ever we can—thousands and thousands and thousands of miles away, so as he can never find us."

"Very well," said Alice. In another moment they had mounted high on their wings, and then they flew like lightning in a southerly direction—over palaces and temples and gardens and lakes and mountains, until at last they vanished from view in a purple cloud.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Correspondence.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The article on the School Board Election in last week's issue, by Mr. Cohen, has carried me back to the religious troubles which were experienced by me as a delicate, sensitive child. My parents are old-fashioned Baptists, and my first childish recollection is of Sunday-school, where I sat turning over the leaves of a Bible and wondering why God had made man, and then afterwards repented that he had done so; why, after being cruel enough to make hell, he could not have saved man from it without sacrificing his own Son; why, even if Christ had died nearly two thousand years ago, it could affect us now; and, in fact, many similar thoughts troubled my baby mind, until a teacher from behind, noticing my inattention, brought me to myself by raising a bump behind my ear with the edge of his Bible, and I heard the superintendent give out the hymn:—

There is a dreadful 'ell,
And heverlasting pains,
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains.

This sort of thing continued for some time; but at last, like all other good things, it came to an end, and from the Sunday-school I went to hear the parson preach a sermon which was not intended for little children; and so ended the Sabbath morning.

In the afternoon, by way of a nice change, the parson preached first, and the school came afterwards, concluding with that hymn so dear to the heart of every little child:—

Almighty God, thy piercing eye strikes through the shades of night,

And our most secret actions lie all open to thy sight.

The evening was spent at home, but play or recreation in any form was not allowed, and only books that were extra good must be read; and, to wind up the day, ill-tempered and miserable as we were by this time, Bibles were again fetched out, and then, after reading a chapter, came bed. But somehow, after the light was taken away, I lay thinking. Every time the clock ticked I was nearer, and millions of others were nearer, death—and then, what? Would father and mother, brothers and sisters, and all those I loved, escape that hell, or would one, even one of them, be condemned to that torment to which there was no end? And then I saw something, at the sight of which I struggled to scream in terror; but my tongue was unable to make a sound, for there, just above my head, was an eye, without a body—a large, cruel, terrible eye looking straight at me, the eye about which we, or rather they, had sung in Sunday-school; and I pulled the clothes over my head and sobbed, and trembled and prayed in that greatest of all agonies, the agony of innocent, helpless childhood, until, worn out in body and spirit, I fell asleep. I might give many similar instances of the misery I suffered as a child, if it were not for occupying too much of your time; but the effect of it all was that, as I grew up, the evils and cruelty of giving young children any religious training whatever became more and more apparent to me.

No Freethinker need send his children to Sunday-school, of course; but often, as I pass by the week-day schools in the town in which I live—schools upheld by public money—the poor little things are repeating that concoction of rot known as the Church Catechism—a condition of things which is an insult to a dissenter, but is absolutely intolerable to a Freethinker. And, therefore, I am pleased with the bold stand you are making in this respect (because, as you say, Nonconformity is equally as bad as the Church, if opportunity occurs), and I have long ago vowed that, if children are entrusted to my care, they shall never set foot in a place where religious instruction is given, and through which their childhood might be blighted and embittered and rendered utterly destitute of happiness, as was mine.

W. J. GILBERT.

WE regret to record the death of Mr. A. W. Marks, of Sheerness, which took place on Friday, November 30. The funeral was a Secular one; Mr. Barber, a friend of the deceased, reading a Secular Service at the graveside. Mr. Marks was a very sterling Freethinker, a steady supporter of the late Charles Bradlaugh, and since then a no less steady supporter of the N. S. S. and the Secular Society, Limited. His name appeared in almost every list of subscriptions. We beg to tender our profound sympathy to Mrs. Marks in her bereavement.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Christian Charity in China."
ALDGATE PUBLIC BATHS (Goulston-street): 7.30, W. Heaford, "Some Fallacies of Theism."
BATTERSEA BATHS (Latchmere road, Battersea): 7.30, C. Watts, "The Science of Life."
CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, "Vengeance."
WELLINGTON HALL (Almeida-street, Upper-street, Islington): December 10, at 8, A. B. Moss, "Christianity and Evolution."
SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, John M. Robertson, "The Future of South Africa."
EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, A lecture.

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, A lecture.
BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, Angus Mackay, "All Men are Liars."
BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, H. Thompson, "The Great Earth Sculptor." With lantern slides.
CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A. B. Moss, "Shakespeare."
GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): H. Percy Ward—11.30, "Robert Burns"; 2.30, "The Foolishness of Prayer"; 6.30, "Thomas Paine and his *Age of Reason*." (Committee meeting at 1 p.m.)
HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, J. Birks, "A Pressing Need."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, G. H. Perris, "Does Trade Follow the Flag?"
LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mr. Haydon, "The Riddle of the Universe."
MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. A. Rogerson, "Our Relationship with the Simplest Types of Life." Lantern views by A. Flatters.
PONTYPRIDD (Empire Theatre): 11, Rev. E. Treharne-Jones, "Christian Morality"; 2.30, S. Holman; 6.30, Rev. E. Treharne-Jones, "Christianity a Myth."
SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Joseph McCabe—3, "The Origin of Life"; 7, "Death, and Afterwards." Tea at 5.
SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, "Atheism and Agnosticism."

Lecturer's Engagements.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—December 9, Glasgow; 16, Liverpool.

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