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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Principle or Policy : Which ?

I HAVE recently been somewhat in a state of perturbation in consequence of Mr. George Jacob Holyoake's "change of front" in regard to the use of the word "Atheism." The new attitude he has taken in reference to the employment of this term is calculated not only to perplex some of his friends, but also to gratify a few of his (in a theological sense) enemies. The former have always supposed him to be an Atheist, while some among the latter profess to see in his recently-published statements upon Agnosticism a desire to modify his once pronounced views as to the correctness of the Atheistic position. Now, anything from the pen of my highly-esteemed friend, Mr. Holyoake, is of special interest to me, for the reason that he was the first Secular propagandist who, by his calm reasoning, his argumentative advocacy, and his gentlemanly manners upon the platform, induced me to forsake the religion of my youth, and to accept Secularism as the "one thing needful" in the regulation of my duties in daily life. I am, therefore, particularly anxious that his present attitude towards Atheism should be clearly understood, in order that both his friends and foes may know exactly what his opinion now is upon the question.

This is the more necessary because many besides myself have always looked upon the Father of Secularism as "a guide, philosopher, and friend." I hope, therefore, Mr. Holyoake will be good enough to notice what I am here writing, which, he may be assured, is penned in no spirit of antagonism, but purely from a desire to know *why* he prefers to substitute another word for Atheism, for the use of which he once avowed his preference. In his *Trial of Theism* he wisely wrote that Atheism "is a defiant, militant word. There is a ring of decision about it. There is no cringing in it. It keeps no terms with superstition. It makes war, and means it. It carries you away from the noisome word-jugglery of the conventional pulpits, and brings you face to face with nature." Now, this is a high tribute in favor of adhering to the term "Atheist." It may not, however, be an adequate reason to Mr. Holyoake for retaining its use, hence my solicitation that he should explain himself clearly and fully upon the subject. He once wrote, when refuting the fallacy that "a good God has designed the suffering which makes the breast to sigh and the earth to seem sad":—

"There is far more reason in Atheism which confesses, 'all this is not to be understood'; and far more reverence in Atheism which refuses to ascribe suffering to God; and far more modesty in Atheism which prefers to maintain silence where speech is a contradiction of itself, or an imputation upon Deity."

Here Mr. Holyoake claims reason, reverence, and modesty for Atheism. He also says: "Affirmative Atheism of the intellect is a proud, honest, intrepid, self-respecting attitude of the mind.....It has a definite foundation, or it could claim no position, and would deserve none." What more can be said on behalf of Agnosticism? It is true Mr. Holyoake refers, in his *Trial of Theism*, to what he terms "negative Atheism of mere ignorance, of insensibility, of lust, of gluttony and drunkenness, of egotism or vanity, whose talk is outrage and whose spirit is blasphemy." It was painful to me to read such words from the pen of one who himself nobly endured imprisonment for alleged blasphemy. The words are more like the

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"sound and fury, signifying nothing," of an indiscriminate member of the Christian Evidence Society than those of the philosophic founder of Secularism.

But is such a description of Atheism accurate? With the profoundest respect for my venerable friend, I venture to say that it is not. No Atheism is mere negation; but, if it were, is it not better to accept a negative truth rather than a positive error? Neither is there an Atheism of "mere ignorance, lust, gluttony, and drunkenness." I say, with the Right Hon. William Pitt, that "Atheism furnishes no man with arguments to be vicious." This evidently was Professor Tyndall's opinion when he wrote:—

"If I wished to find men who are scrupulous in their adherence to engagements, whose words are their bond, and to whom moral shiftiness of any kind is subjectively unknown; if I wanted a loving father, a faithful husband, an honorable neighbor, and a just citizen, I should seek him and find him among the band of Atheists."

It is possible that there are bad men who have no belief in God, but this may be true also of some Agnostics, as well as of many believers in God. It would be unfair, however, to blame either of the three isms for the wrong-doings of its adherents.

The reasons given by Mr. Holyoake, in his recent "Defence of Agnosticism," for preferring the term to that of Atheism are not, to my mind, conclusive. Is there any real difference in the meaning of the two words? I submit there is not. Both represent a condition of the mind where no belief in God obtains. Mr. Holyoake says that between Agnosticism and Atheism there "is the wide distinction between knowing and not knowing." It is not quite clear what is here meant by the phrase, "knowing and not knowing." What does either the Atheist or the Agnostic know that the other either does not or cannot know? The knowledge of both is confined to natural phenomena, beyond which they cannot go. Neither *denies* the existence of God, but both admit that they know nothing about him. Where, then, is there any difference between the two? Mr. Bradlaugh, who frankly avowed his Atheism, said:—

"The Atheist does not say 'there is no God,' but he says: 'I know not what you mean by God; I am without idea of God; the word "God" is, to me, a sound conveying no clear or distinct affirmation. I do not deny God, because I cannot deny that of which I have no conception, and the conception of which, by its affirmer, is so imperfect that he is unable to define it to me.'"

Now here, according to the ablest and most pronounced Atheist of modern times, Atheism, no more than Agnosticism, denies the existence of God, but only certain absurd representations of him. And for doing this Mr. Bradlaugh is described by Mr. Holyoake as "the most absolute Agnostic of his time." If this be so, I again ask, Wherein does Agnosticism differ from Atheism? But Mr. Holyoake himself denies certain representations of God. Here are his words:—

"God cannot be a First Cause—all cause is bifold. God cannot be a Power—that is an attribute of matter, and never impersonal. It cannot be a Spirit—that is the negation of matter, the negation of all we know. It cannot be Light—light is subject to law. It cannot be Intelligence—that grows, and has conditions of development. It cannot be Consciousness—that is human. It cannot be Love—that is a personal attribute called forth by external and relative objects. It cannot be a Principle—that is neither a material force nor a logical rule. God is the eternal, unanswered *Why?* to which no man has replied."

"The definer seems to overlook that a man may deny the possibility of any idea of God—or deny the possibility

of God, as involving contradictions so far as they have as yet been explained—and yet not assume the infinite pretension of declaring that nature conceals no fact of God. Does the most absolute Atheism do more than declare the secret of nature to be unrevealed?" (*Trial of Theism*, pp. 56 and 181).

Here Mr. Holyoake, correctly I think, combines the "knowing and not knowing," and thereby shows the similarity of Atheism and Agnosticism. Evidently he knows enough to deny some things, but he has not sufficient knowledge to deny everything. This I take to be the Atheistic position. Will my friend, Mr. Holyoake, kindly say if in this he recognises any opposition to the principle of Agnosticism? And, at the same time, will he state what is the *essential* difference, so far as being "without God" is concerned, between disbelief and non-belief?

Of course, the question of policy may be considered as deserving consideration. That a wise policy is better than a foolish one goes without saying. But my impression is that the true policy to follow on all occasions in our advocacy is to say what we mean with frankness, and with a due regard to the opinions of others. Atheists and Agnostics alike are "looked down" upon by some, but, when the nature of their belief and disbelief is better understood, their views will be less of an impediment than they are now to the recognition of their services to humanity. Firm adherence to principle should be the basis of our policy. In Mr. Holyoake's own words:—

"Truth is the child of courage as well as of honor. The high-spirited alone are habitually frank. It is weakness to affect singularity, but it is worse than weakness not to be singular if the singularity lie in acting out a conviction of the right. Better even be eccentric than false. It is sometimes dangerous to dissent from the public and painful to dissent from your friends. It is often very *expensive* to have an opinion of your own, and avow it; but the partisan of truth must be content to brave many penalties; and he is badly educated in his art if he is not apprised of this. He must leave to valetudinarian moralists to utter timid, base, and comfort-seeking acquiescence in the hypocrisies of sects and society" (*Trial of Theism*, p. 232).

I have thus submitted a few points for Mr. Holyoake's consideration, and I sincerely hope that he will notice them, in order that his many admirers may know to what extent he has changed his mind, and what are his precise reasons for changing not his principles, but his policy.

CHARLES WATTS.

Christianity and Civilisation.—III.

THE POSITION OF WOMAN.

PROFESSOR ORR's next example of the benefits conferred on the world by Christianity is concerned with the position of woman and the family under Pagan and Christian rule respectively. One might be surprised at the Professor's remarks on this head had not long acquaintance with the methods of Christian apologists rendered one surprise-proof. The power of reiteration is all-conquering, and this particular dogma concerning the elevating influence of Christianity on woman has been, and is, made so frequently that doubtless a good number really believe it from the sheer effect of so often hearing themselves state it.

It is, of course, easy to dwell on the wrongs of women—as it is on the wrongs of men, for that matter, as no class can claim to have been treated with absolute fairness. The question, however, is one of comparison and tendencies; of comparison in the shape of contrasting woman's position in pre-Christian times with her position in Christian ages, and of tendencies in the shape of studying the general estimation in which woman was held at different periods, and the general trend of the society in which she was living. And it may be as well here to say a word upon the method of comparison usually adopted by Christian apologists. To compare the end of the nineteenth century with the beginning of the first is not only unfair, but stupid. If matters are better now than they were then, the obvious retort is that the mere lapse of time ought to have brought that result about, independent of the introduction of any new force. A civilisation never stands still

—it either advances or recedes; and one can usually account for either movement by the operation of internal forces. If we wish to test whether or not Christianity has been a power for good, the only sound method is to examine the tendencies manifested by pre-Christian society, and then discover whether these tendencies were realised or perverted when once society was definitely under Christian rule.

And, without taking up any such absurd position as would be involved in the statement that woman's position in pre-Christian society was idyllic, it is well within the bounds of historic truth to assert that her position, both as a member of the family and as a unit of the State, was superior to what it afterwards became under Christian rule. There is no need to enter into a detailed examination of woman's position in all the states of antiquity; so far as we are directly concerned, the wide-spreading dominion of Rome limits our comparison to an examination of her position under the Roman Empire, Pagan and Christian.

The habit of labelling all domestic life under the Roman Empire as impure, and all women as corrupt, is so confirmed with Christian apologists that it is necessary to deal somewhat with this charge at the outset. To any sober student of history such charges are self-destructive. The unit of social life is as much the family as the individual, and civilisation would have been simply impossible had family life been nearly as corrupt as many Christian writers would have us believe. The truth is that nearly all such statements are exaggerations based upon incidental references in the writings of satirists or moralists. Juvenal mentions an anonymous case of a woman having had eight husbands, therefore *all* Roman women married a similar number of times. Seneca says that "certain of the noble ladies count their years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of their husbands," and it is at once declared that *all* noble Roman ladies did the same. An impartial reader would at once put the statement down as a wild exaggeration, if only on the evidence of Seneca's further declaration, that women are not satisfied unless they have a paramour for every hour in the day.* In neither case are names given; both are clearly extreme statements made by incensed moralists; yet it is upon evidence such as this that Christian charges are made. Even allowing the pictures by Juvenal of Roman society to stand, equally dark ones might be drawn, and have been drawn, of Christian society as late as the days of Charles II. and George III. The records of Charles the Second's court, as pictured in the *Memoirs of the Count Grammont*, allowing for difference of time and place, are little better than the society drawn for us by Juvenal or Martial.

The dishonest—I use this phrase deliberately—feature of the Christian attack is the careful avoidance of the other side of Roman female and domestic life that must be known to every reader of Roman history. We are not concerned with the very early years of the Roman nation, when, in common with all primitive peoples, the husband was truly the head of the family and possessed almost absolute power over all its members, but with Roman society as it was when Christianity entered it. And here we find them, instead of being "subject to the absolute authority" of the male, occupying a position of personal and proprietary independence such as it has hardly been their lot to enjoy since. To begin with, marriage was dependent upon the consent of both parties. Both parties must have reached manhood and womanhood, and polygamy was absolutely prohibited. In some cases the consent of the parent was necessary, but a father might be compelled to give his consent if he had no reasonable ground for withholding it. The estates of a wife "could neither be alienated nor mortgaged by a prodigal husband" (Gibbon). These remained her absolute property; and, in case of a divorce, the dowry that she may have received was given to one or the other, returned to the father, or shared by the divorced parties, as circumstances might direct. There was thus no need for a "Married Woman's Property Act," as the idea that a wife became part of her husband's property was of later Christian origin. In the matter of inheritance, too, male and female children were upon a legal

* *On Benefits*, iii., 16.

equality sharing the estate between them—another striking contrast to later Christian legislation. The law of divorce was the same on both sides; and the wife was thus spared many of the iniquities of our later civilisation.* Nor does it appear, as the Rev. Principal Donaldson remarks, that "the Roman idea of marriage had.....a bad effect on either the happiness or morals of the women," or that "divorces were very frequent in ordinary society."

In striking contrast to the condition of things during the Dark and Middle Ages, we find that women helped their husbands in the government of provinces, figured as writers, played no insignificant part in public affairs, pleaded their own cases in courts of law, and held public meetings in order to induce the Senate to agree to such modifications in the law as were thought desirable. The wife, in short, was rapidly taking her place as the equal of the husband; and the statement put into the mouth of Brutus's wife by Shakespeare, demanding to know her husband's inmost mind "By the right and virtue of my place," otherwise "Portia is Brutus's harlot, not his wife," is but a transcript of her speech as reported by Plutarch. Indeed, one has only to call to mind such characters as Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi; Julia, the wife of Pompey; Octavia, the wife of Antony; Calpurnia, the wife of Pliny—out of many numerous others that might be named, to realise how villainously false is the ordinary Christian presentment of Roman women.

I will conclude this portion of my case by a few brief testimonies from prominent writers. The Rev. James Donaldson says:—"The [Roman] marriage was a community in all affairs, and within the home the utmost diligence, reverence, and harmony prevailed."† Gibbon points out (chap. xlv.) that, instead of the later marriage laws inflicting hardships on wives, "the prevailing institutions were least favorable to the males." Sir Henry Maine, in his treatise on *Ancient Law*, says that the Roman lawyers had "assumed the equality of the sexes as a principle of the law of equity.The situation of the Roman woman, whether married or single, became one of great personal and proprietary independence; but Christianity tended somewhat from the commencement to narrow this remarkable liberty.....The prevailing state of religious sentiment may explain why modern jurisprudence has adopted these rules concerning the position of women which belong to an imperfect civilisation.....No society which preserves any tincture of Christian institutions is likely to restore to married women the personal liberty conferred on them by middle Roman law." Professor Dill is equally emphatic:—

"The Roman matron, from the earliest times, had secured to her by family religion a dignified and respected position.....In the early years of the Empire.....her status, both in law and in fact, really rose. There can be no doubt that the Roman lady of the better sort, without becoming less virtuous and respected, became far more accomplished and attractive.....She became more and more the equal and companion of her husband, and her influence on public affairs became more decided."‡

Finally, Lecky says:—

"In the legends of early Rome we have ample evidence both of the high moral excellence of women and of their prominence in Roman life..... For five hundred years, it was said, there was no such thing as a divorce in Rome.....[Women] arrived, during the Empire, at a point of freedom and dignity which they subsequently lost, and have never altogether regained.....The legal position of the wife had become one of complete independence, while her social position was one of great dignity."§

It cannot, then, in face of these facts, be denied that Christianity had at least one good foundation to work on, had one of its objects been the establishment of the equality of the sexes. Such an advocacy could not have struck the educated Roman as anything startlingly strange, seeing that it would only have been another expression of forces already at work. But Christianity

was largely an Eastern religion, and it brought with it all the worst Eastern ideas concerning women, which, when allied with its teachings on the origin of evil and kindred matters, could only set up a retrogressive tendency. To take its "sacred" books first. In the old Bible woman is everywhere in complete subordination to man. Created as an afterthought, lumped in in the Ten Commandments as one of the articles of property belonging to her husband, she played no part in any of the religious services, at which her presence was neither necessary nor, presumably, desirable; while the most lavish praise bestowed on any woman in the Bible is given to one who had just murdered a man who was sleeping in her tent under promise of hospitality. In no case do the types of womanhood contained in the Bible approach for dignity and purity those of Roman history or Greek poetry.

As regards marriage customs, we read that parents could, and did, sell their daughters either into slavery or marriage (Exodus xxi. 7-8, Genesis xxiv. 53); and in certain cases the father not only claimed the daughter as property, but also the daughter's children (Genesis xxxi. 43). Abraham sent his servants to procure Rebekah for Isaac, and there is no mention made of the woman's consent being necessary. Evidence of buying wives may be also found, among other places, in the story of Jacob and Leah, and in the book of Ruth (iv. 9, 10). The act of divorce was charmingly easy. "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes because he hath found some uncleanness in her, then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of the house." The assumed inferiority and subordination of woman is seen still more clearly in that the period of purification set apart for the mother after the birth of a child was seven days in the case of a boy, fourteen days in the case of a girl—the uncleanness being so much greater.

Polygamy was general. Nearly all the Old Testament characters indulged in this practice, and are thus in striking contrast to Greek and Roman national figures, not one of whom possessed more than one wife. God himself says to David: "I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom" (2 Samuel xii. 7-8); so that the practice has, for a Christian, the highest sanction. The truth is that monogamy comes to us from Greek and Roman sources, not from the teachings of either Old or New Testament. There is not a line in either book to prohibit it. Paul's advice that a *bishop* should have only one wife carries on the face of it evidence that more than one wife was permitted elsewhere.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

Death of Mr. Samuel Hartmann.

By the death of Mr. Samuel Hartmann the Freethought cause has lost one of its most loyal and devoted servants. He was a vice-president as well as honorary treasurer of the National Secular Society; a member of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society, Limited; and a member of the Board of Directors of the Freethought Publishing Company. His death occurred on Monday, December 3, but the news was not communicated to us for nearly three days, so it could not appear in last week's *Freethinker*. His remains were cremated at Woking on the following Friday. Unfortunately, those in charge of the funeral arrangements made it only too obvious that the presence of his old Freethought colleagues would not be welcome; and, in the circumstances, the N. S. S. could not be represented.

The first time I remember seeing Mr. Hartmann was on the morning of my release from Holloway Gaol. He attended the public breakfast at the Hall of Science, and was introduced to me as one who had taken and distributed several copies of the *Freethinker* every week during my imprisonment. The last time I saw him was on Friday evening, November 30, at the annual general meeting of the Secular Society, Limited, when he thanked me for devising and establishing that Incorporation, which he regarded as of the very highest importance to the future of our movement.

* For authorities see Gibbon, chapter 44; Ramsay's *Manual of Roman Antiquities*; articles on Roman law in Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*.

† *Contemporary Review*, May, 1888.

‡ *Roman Society in Last Century of Western Empire*, p. 137.

§ *Hist. Europ. Morals*, ii., pp. 298, 300, 304, 306.

Each of the three bodies already mentioned has passed a resolution of profound regret at Mr. Hartmann's death, and of warm appreciation of his intelligence and character. Personally, I feel his loss most keenly. I shall miss his smiling, appreciative face at my lectures. I shall miss him still more in connection with the N. S. S. and the Incorporated Society. His suggestions were nearly always valuable, but he did not frown and complain if they were not accepted. He understood that he had a right to be heard, but no right to force another's judgment. Firm and steadfast as he was on grounds of principle, he was mild, placable, and tolerant. His good temper was almost invincible, and his good nature was not for show occasions, but for common intercourse. Months ago I told how gallantly he stood by the Freethought Publishing Company, when we were tossed from pillar to post in searching for suitable and available premises. I shall miss him most of all on that Company's Board.

Perhaps the reader will pardon me for indulging in a personal note. I am human like others—"feel want, taste grief, need friends"—and in the pauses of my work I sometimes have an oppressive sense of isolation. There are moments when the strongest spirit of duty needs fortifying. In such moments I have found support in my friend who is dead. He believed in me, he appreciated what I was doing and trying to do, he had ever the kind word of encouragement for me, even if he had to dissent in some particulars. A meaner man might have been soured by the failure of his Financial Scheme. He quietly recognised that the conditions were against it, in spite of his own generous contribution of £50 for the first year. He owed me no grudge when I had to intervene again as President; on the contrary, he urged and cheered me on. He had no paltry egotism; his one desire was for the good of the movement. Only a few weeks before his death he wrote me a touching letter that brought tears to my eyes. He wanted to make a sacrifice for me, though I could not accept it. And now I shall treasure his letter as one of the rare, inestimable things that help to sweeten memory and correct the inevitable bitterness of public life.

Mr. Hartmann knew that he was marked to die. He was aware that his complaint might kill him at any hour. He told me so plainly. Two years ago he fully recognised the precariousness of his life. No man ever faced death more serenely.

G. W. FOOTE.

Freethought in Germany.—II.

(Concluded from page 763.)

OWING to the number and variety of the Freethinking Societies existing in Germany, exact and exhaustive statistics of membership cannot be given. Several Societies are, in fact, connected both with the German Freethought Federation and with the Federation of the "Freireligiöse" Congregations. The Berlin Society attached to the "Freireligiöse" numbers about 4,500 members, without counting the children belonging to the body and receiving the advantage of its purely secular training. Outside the active militant supporters of the movement there are some 20,000 passive unorganised supporters of the party, who, though abjuring every species of church conformity, take no collective concern in the propaganda of Freethought. Besides the groups marshalled under the banners of the above-mentioned Federations, there are in Germany many Societies unconnected with either Federation. It is, therefore, difficult to give precise figures concerning the numerical strength of the movement in the Kaiser's Empire; but, judging from the fact that forty-eight Freethought Societies have been counted by my friend, Ida Altmann, as having a membership of about 25,000, some faint idea may be gleaned of the extent and influence of Freethought in the country. Take Berlin, for example. Besides the one Society already referred to, three or four other Freethought Societies exist in Berlin whose collective membership is estimated at quite another thousand. At Wiesbaden, again, the Society has about 400 active members, whilst throughout

Germany the number of militant members of the Freethought Federation alone amounts at the least to 6,000. We in England, who know what a mere handful of determined men and women have been able to accomplish against the hooligan hosts of bigotry, aided by the long purse of plutocratic piety, and by all the unscrupulous arts of lying apologetics, will not be disposed to under-value the enormous potential force, intellectual and moral, which a body of six thousand determined, high-minded men and women have it in their power to let loose for the overthrow of a superstition which has been discredited and refuted a hundred times over in the present century, and which simply lingers either as an idle, simple-minded conformity to established superstitions, or as the vile parasite of power and pelf.

At Wiesbaden the members are chiefly of the middle class, whilst at Berlin they belong for the most part to the working classes. The meetings of the Society are open to the public as well as to actual members, and I am glad to know from Ida Altmann (to whom I am greatly indebted for valuable information utilised in the present article) that many visitors, some of distinguished character—professors, artists, merchants, and others—frequently attend these meetings.

Our readers will be glad to learn that there are no less than seven Freethinking papers—*Septem contra Christum*—published in Germany. I subjoin the names of these journals by way of record, placing in parentheses the towns where they are issued:—1, *Die freie Jugend* (Berlin); 2, *Der Freidenker* (Wiesbaden); 3, *Freireligiöses Familienblatt* (Breslau); 4, *Freie Glocken* (Gotha); 5, *Menschentum* (Gotha); 6, "*Es werde Licht*" (Münchea); 7, *Die Morgenröte* (Offenbach). The first on the above list is edited by Dr. Bruno Wille, and is now in its nineteenth volume; and, as the name implies, is issued specially for the young people. It is an admirably produced eight-paged paper, well written and excellently printed, and contains poems, sketches, and instructive articles and addresses adapted to the growing minds of children. The *Freidenker*, which appears fortnightly, is the organ of the German Freethought Federation. Besides these papers there is a valuable body of popular literature, which, I am glad to hear, is well supported by the public. Several of these pamphlets, together with a short catalogue of other similar publications, are now before me as I write, and are alike popular in style and learned in tone.

The "Freireligiöse Gemeinde" celebrated its jubilee in 1895. The title of "Free Religious Congregation," assumed by the body, was necessitated by the odious intolerance of the law against the participation of women and children in the triumph of the principles of Freethought. But, under the thin disguise of a seeming religiosity, the very thoughtful and learned section of German Freethinkers who ticket themselves with the above title are now enabled to give scope within the party for the free play of woman's intellect, and to afford the children of Freethinkers the benefits of a Freethought education. How hollow is the pretence that Christianity elevates woman and imparts to her a degree of freedom elsewhere unknown may be seen from the experience of the German Freethought party, face to face with the narrow bigotry of the Christian spirit. In the empire ruled by the Kaiser and dragooned by God, women are debarred from attending meetings which are avowedly and nakedly Freethought in character; they are only permitted to take part in the free movement of thought in Germany to-day under the condition that they shall sail under the flag of a society christened with an evasive title—a title, it is true, intended to throw dust in the eyes of the persecuting Sauls who are never so happy as when they are breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the enemies of superstition.

The "Freireligiöse," like their freethinking *confères* in France and Belgium, have found it useful to counteract the attractions of certain religious festivals, around which many social usages and traditional memories have grown, that have become, as it were, woven into the texture of the popular thought and imagination. Acting on the principle that a superstition is only refuted when it is replaced, the typical Christian feasts have been secularised and shorn of all supernatural signification. For example, at Easter, instead of celebrating the resurrection of a dead Jew, the

"Freireligiose" commemorate the re-awakening of life, both in its moral and physical aspects, after the slumber of the night of winter, into the glories of spring-tide and the flowering of new hopes in the soil of man's mind; at Whitsun, the victory of the human intellect over the brute forces of nature, and the quickening burst of inspiring ideas poured out, not through the spirit of a ghostly God, but evolved by the quite un-pentecostal process of widening the love and deepening the thought of our common humanity. There are no ceremonies and no mysticism introduced into these Freethought feasts. Lectures and songs appropriate to the event form the staple of the various feasts. On these occasions the attendance is always much more numerous than at ordinary times, and the feasts seem to be appreciated by the public as something far better than what is offered in the churches. They are also found of especial value in weaning the young from the enticements of theological flummery and mummery.

In Germany, as elsewhere, the bigots surround the Freethinkers with every legal and social difficulty, in order to prevent the rising generation from escaping from the theological net. Whilst in some towns the lecturers are permitted by the authorities to give lessons of "free religion" to the children of their members, elsewhere—as in Berlin, Stettin, and other towns in which the Freethinkers are known to be Socialists—the Government, at one time, prohibited the giving of any such lessons. To-day "Suffer little children to come unto me" means nothing else than the frightened cry of trade jealousy and narrow-minded intolerance. Both Dr. Wille and Ida Altmann have actually been imprisoned for no other crime than that of attempting to impart moral lessons to the children of freethinking parents. Special addresses are now given to the children every Sunday morning; but, in order to evade the law and rob the bigots of the savage satisfaction of refuting their opponents by the argument of imprisonment, the lecturer is changed every week. A single lecture can more easily pass with impunity than a whole course of lectures delivered by the same individual. The authorities, I learn, seem appeased for awhile, and for some time past the lectures in question have not been interfered with.

At Berlin there are four special propagandists (they are called "*Sprecher*"—i.e., Speaker): Wilhelm Boelsche, Bruno Wille, Albert Gehrke, and Ida Altmann. One of these persons gives an address every Sunday and holiday, so that about sixty lectures a year are delivered. Lecturers are exchanged between the various towns. For instance, Breslau or Magdeburg will send a lecturer, like Prediger Dr. Kramer, from Magdeburg; a lecturer, like Prediger Dr. Kramer, from Magdeburg; Prediger Tschirn, from Breslau; or Prediger Georg Welker, from Wiesbaden; and the vacancies created by these visits will be filled up by one or other of the lecturers from Berlin. It will be observed that in the three towns named outside Berlin, instead of the term "*Sprecher*," the strange-sounding title (for a Secular advocate) of "*Prediger*" (Preacher) is adopted. Another soft sop to the clerical Cerberus!

Religion in Germany is simply a matter of statecraft and vested interests. It is a pious pretence to believe what everybody knows to be false. Nobody there goes to church except the parsons, who earn their stipends, or the officials, who occasionally fulfil an empty function by dancing attendance at the throne of grace. The Emperor is pious, but the Empire is quite the reverse. In vain the Government plays court to God Almighty by appointing for the nation a day of penitence (*Busstag*) every 21st of September. The people remain obdurately impenitent. The Berlin correspondent of *Le Petit Belge* (for a copy of which paper I am indebted to my friend, J.-B. Demoulin, of Brussels, to whom I am also under deep obligation for having furnished me with the valuable information which enabled me to write my last article) points out what an empty show is all this national pretence of penitential contrition. Protestantism in Germany, he says, has for a long time become a system of Rationalism pure and simple. The true, believing Protestant, and the parson who still regards the Scriptures as the source of truth and the supreme testimony to the divinity of Christ, are the exception in Germany. The orthodox believers form only a small section of the community—comprising, it is true, some very distinguished personalities, but exerting no influence either upon the masses of the

people or upon the governing classes. As regards the *Busstag*, it is a flagrant farce. Out of the thirty millions of Protestants in Germany, not even one poor, miserable million observe this solemn Day of Penance and Prayer instituted by the Kaiser for the gratification of Christ. At Berlin this year (and one year telleth another) the conventicles remained as empty as on any "common or garden" Sunday on which the preachers drone their prayers and preachments before a congregation consisting usually of a dozen yawning officials, whose duty it is to expiate their positions by being piously bored at divine worship. As for the people at large, their penitential observances take the form of crowding into the innumerable dancing halls and concert rooms on the outskirts of the town. At night everybody comes home gluttled with dance and song, and the farcical fast is kept going by copiously consuming bocks of lager beer. As a matter of fact, except in a few belated and bigoted parts, Protestantism in Germany is a spent quib. The only sincere Christians, taking the average type of "believer" as the standard, are found amongst the Catholics. The ragged remnant of the true believers are between the deep sea of scepticism and the devil of Catholicism. Whilst they abuse the Papists, the Freethinking element grows stronger and stronger within the fold of Protestantism itself. The Rationalising section, who yield up everything except their salaries, are no more successful in catching the public ear than the out-and-out orthodox of the Stöcker type. Both these sets of sky-pilots preach fifty-two Sundays a-year before empty benches, whilst the great world outside gaily treads the primrose path of eternal torment without caring a *denier* about its ultimate damnation. At Berlin very few parsons cling to orthodox doctrine. Their view of the Bible is that it is merely a book with a symbolical meaning, and not intended to establish dogma. *Sic transit gloria Christi.*

Christianity in Germany is doomed. There, as elsewhere, it gives its sanction to every species of reaction and rascality. In Germany the odor of sanctity is especially rank. Christian rapine and villainy, perpetrated in China quite recently by order of the Imperial instigator of wholesale slaughter and no quarter, cannot fail to provoke a healthy revulsion of feeling in the minds of the thoughtful German people against a creed in whose name such inhumanities are committed, and by whose teachers such crimes are condoned. The Imperial War-Lord and the Prince of Peace—viewed historically—are a congenial pair—*arcades ambo*. To the German Socialists, whose cry is "International Solidarity"; to the German Freethinkers, whose aim is "Intellectual Freedom," the hearts of all English Freethinkers will go out with warmest sympathy for the realisation of these high ideals, and with fervent hope that the day is not far distant when, instead of being the paradise of the drill-sergeant, Germany may be free to expand her mighty energies of labor, of learning, and of love, not for the stultification of her patient people and the enslavement of her neighbors, but for the enrichment of the life of humanity and the peace and well-ordering of the commonwealth of civilisation.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

Forethought.

IN early stages of theological belief, men regarding every incident that happens to them as the result of a special divine decree sometimes esteem it a test of faith and a form of duty to take no precautions for the future, but to leave questions of food and clothing to Providential interposition. On the other hand, in an industrial civilisation prudent forethought is regarded not simply as lawful, but as a duty, and a duty of the very highest order. A good man of the industrial type deems it a duty not to marry till he has ensured the maintenance of a possible family; if he possesses children, he regulates his expenses not simply by the relation of his income to his immediate wants, but with a constant view to the education of his sons, to the portioning of his daughters, to the future necessities and careers of each member of his family. Constant forethought is the guiding principle of his whole life. No single circumstance is regarded as a better test of the civilisation of a people than the extent to which it is diffused among them. The old doctrine virtually disappears, and is interpreted to mean nothing more than that we should accept with resignation what no efforts and no forethought could avert.—*W. H. Lecky.*

Acid Drops.

WHAT on earth does Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader in the House of Commons, mean by reading the Government lessons in piety? When the Queen's Speech was read, this gentleman rose and asked a Sunday-school question. "Has there ever," he enquired, "been a Speech before which did not end with an invocation for the blessing of Almighty God on our proceedings?" He put the query very solemnly, but he was, nevertheless, only playing to the religious gallery. It stands to reason that he does not believe in the Almighty's blessing on the present House of Commons, for he believes it ought to contain a Liberal majority, whereas it contains a woful Liberal minority—which is presumably the work of Old Nick.

Mr. Keir Hardie's "Jesus-Christism" has been badly hit at Leicester. The Independent Labor Party there put forward two candidates, neither of whom was satisfactory with regard to "Secular Education." Mr. F. J. Gould went straight on that ticket as a really "independent" candidate, and he polled 15,669 votes, while Messrs. Hubbard and Peacock, who expected to win on "Labor" without ideas, polled 9,896 and 9,306 respectively. Perhaps this will be a lesson to the Independent Labor Party. They cannot remain merely "political" in the matter of education.

Sir Robert Hart knows as much about China as any living European, and he does not take a very hopeful view of the future relations of China to the Western world. However mistaken and hasty the Boxers may be, he says they are patriots, being a kind of volunteer army spontaneously raised to resist the aggression of foreigners. In the course of time there will be twenty millions of them, all drilled and armed, and when that day comes let the foreigners beware. The China of the year 2000 will be very different from the China of 1900. The "yellow peril" is already threatening. By-and-bye old scores will be wiped off with interest, everything foreigners have taken from China will be taken back, and the Chinese flag and Chinese arms will be "carried into many a place that even fancy will not suggest to-day." The Christian Powers are stirring the slothful colossus into action. "You are all too anxious to awake us and start us on a new road," said a great Prime Minister of China fifty years ago, "and you will do it; but you will all regret it, for, once awaking and started, we shall go fast and far—farther than you think—much farther than you want!" And "his words are very true," says Sir Robert Hart.

There are only two ways of peace with China for the Christian Powers in the future. One is the partition of the Celestial Empire. But that is considered by Sir Robert Hart as impracticable. The other is the conversion of China to Christianity. But this also would be "miraculous," and is clearly improbable. The Chinese have had too many object lessons in the moral value of Christianity. Sir Robert Hart himself ends his *Fortnightly Review* article with these significant words: "Meanwhile the once-crowded Peking is a desert, and the first few days of foreign occupation have seen much that need not have occurred and will certainly be regretted." This "much" includes unlimited looting, wanton destruction, reckless massacre, and horrible violation of Chinese women. Scenes were enacted that newspaper correspondents dared not describe; and when a French general was remonstrated with, he had the impudence to say that "It was impossible to restrain the gallantry of French soldiers." Gallantry! forsooth. What a word for the vilest outrage that one human being can inflict on another!

Sir Robert Hart does not appear to be in love with missions or missionaries. He notes that the Chinese converts got "their religious teachers, more especially the Roman Catholics, to interfere on their behalf in litigation, etc." He also refers to the "arrangement by which missionaries were to ride in green chairs and be recognised as the equals of Governors and Viceroyes." Dear, amiable apostles of the meek and lowly Jesus! Butter would hardly melt in their mouths at missionary meetings in England, but what airs they give themselves amongst the heathen! They come out in their true characters then. And is it any wonder that the Chinese mean to get rid of them bag and baggage?

A mad sailor, with a lighted cigar in his mouth, entered a Congregational church at South Shields, forced his way into the pulpit, and offered to preach the sermon. The result was a "painful sensation" and the abrupt closing of the service. The mad sailor's sermon was not heard, and the congregation will never know what they lost.

There is nothing that can be fancied which has not happened; for, as Bacon remarked, the variety of nature infinitely exceeds the imagination of man. Mr. Foote once

wrote "A Mad Sermon," which is included in *Comic Sermons and Other Fantasies*. This sermon was supposed to be delivered by a lunatic who took the place of the chaplain on one occasion.

Arthur Coningham, one of the Australian cricketers who visited England in 1893, is suing for a divorce from his wife at Sydney. The co-respondent is Father O'Haran, Cardinal Moran's secretary. Mrs. Coningham made a confession, which she repeated in the witness-box, and her evidence could not be shaken. Cardinal Moran was called as a witness, but he did not attend until the judge threatened to issue a warrant. The Catholics are up in arms against the husband for daring to expose a priest.

James Bergon is under sentence of death for murdering Margaret Morrison at Liverpool. He was a Catholic and she was a Presbyterian, and that was the beginning of their quarrel. Good old religion!

The Czar's recovery is claimed by the Russian clergy as an answer to their prayers. Had he died, they would have said it was due to something else. The truth is, the Czar is a young man, and he has had the best medical treatment and nursing that could be obtained for love or money. There is very little left to be accounted for by prayer.

Rev. C. M. Sheldon ran the *Topeka Capital* for a week to show how Jesus Christ would edit a newspaper. It was not a brilliantly successful experiment, though we understand that the "What would Jesus do?" editor got £1,000 for the six days' job. Our own Dr. Parker, the reverend oracle of the City Temple, did not approve of Brother Sheldon's lines, and he is going to show how the thing *ought* to be done. From December 17 to December 22 he will edit the *London Sun*—a stupidly named evening paper. He is not going to exclude wicked news. Oh dear no! He says there is wicked news in the Bible. What he will aim at is to touch life at all points, above all "as the man of God striving towards high purpose, and conscious of high endeavor, would touch it." Will he get £1,000 for *that* job? Or say £600—to allow for the difference between American and English rates?

Dr. Parker is going to edit the *Sun* during the week before Christmas. That is usually the duller week in the year for newspapers. And the proprietors have shown some little shrewdness in allotting that period to the great man. He can't do the paper much harm. But we are getting a trifle sick of all this talk about parsons in newspaper editorial chairs. The novelty of the idea has worn off, and Dr. Parker is not likely to be less of a failure than the gifted Sheldon. In his own modest way he thinks himself equal to any task that suggests itself under the sun. Why doesn't he try his hand at navigating a Transatlantic liner, and take a good load of his admirers on board?

Anent the *Lancel's* warnings as to "Danger in the Chalice"—i.e., the handing of the cup from one communicant to the other to drink from—Mr. W. Batten Doherty writes to the *Record* recommending "simple faith in what our Blessed Lord, the only wise God, has appointed as certain never to bring any injury to any one of His dear people." The *Church Gazette* describes this recommendation as "too silly for words," and adds: "If faith is determined to set itself against obvious facts, we can only say we are sorry."

Some time after the new chaplain in a lunatic asylum had entered upon the discharge of his duties one of the inmates came up to him and said: "I like you better than the other one." "Why?" "Because you are more like us," answered the lunatic.

The Lord Chamberlain has declined to license a play written by the Rev. George Walters, of Sydney (N.S.W.), with the subject and title of *Joseph of Canaan*. By all accounts we haven't lost much. The play has already been performed in Melbourne. We learn that "the incident of Potiphar's wife is treated with simplicity, directness, and dignity." That erring woman is brought to repentance, confesses her sin to her husband, and is pardoned; thus presenting "a picture to fill the soul with pity."

The reason assigned by the Lord Chamberlain for his refusal is that "plays avowedly adapted from the Scriptures are not eligible for license in Great Britain." A great deal seems to depend on the "avowedly." Perhaps, with slightly altered names, the play might have passed the Censor. Certainly it has just as much right to a license as *The Sign of the Cross*. Mr. Martin Harvey wants to know "why, if we may paint pictures, write cantatas, compose poems on the subject of sacred history, are we to be debarred from performing plays?" "What are these Scriptures," he asks,

"which must stand inviolate from the hands of the dramatist? To a very large extent they are but the history of the Jewish nation."

Thus spake Mr. Martin Harvey at a recent meeting of the Playgoers' Club. In the debate which followed, Mr. Norreys Connell suggested that most of the so-called religious plays were given a pious touch simply because the Bible is thought to be an excellent advertising medium. Another speaker thought that burlesque might follow the serious Scriptural play, and that we might see Mr. Dan Leno, with a ladder, as Jacob, or (assisted by Mr. Willie Clarkson) as Delilah, with Sandow as Samson. This gentleman, we learn from a lively report in the *Topical Times*, had no faith in "the conscience of the community" in questions affected by the sense of humor.

We thought it was reserved for the *Church Gazette* to lecture dull and indolent country parsons. But the *Church Times* also has now undertaken the rôle of "candid friend." In a leading article in its latest issue, it describes a fossilised incumbent who has, "perhaps, held the living for thirty or forty years. There are two services on Sundays; at all other times the church is kept locked. The Holy Eucharist is offered on 'Sacrament Sunday'—i.e., once a month, at mid-day, as an appendix to Matins and sermon—too often with dreadful, though unintentional, irreverence. From Sunday to Sunday the incumbent is occupied in rearing poultry or growing roses. His sermons never go beyond inculcating morality; they contain practically no instruction. When he visits his people, he recommends them to come to church, otherwise he purposely avoids religion as a topic. Occasionally his family promote a parish tea or a concert, which is always fixed for a Friday, because 'the schools are cleaned on Saturday.' And everyone is quite content."

The restraining and strengthening influence of religion has found another exemplification. The Rev. D. H. H. Johnstone, curate of Bolain, near Morpeth, committed suicide last week by shooting himself in the heart with a revolver. He had been in delicate health, and had become despondent. The Bible didn't help him much.

A clergyman was found in the Old Market-place, Grimsby, in a helpless state of intoxication. He had fallen upon his face, which was badly cut, and his trousers were almost torn to shreds. He pleaded guilty to a charge of being drunk and incapable, adding that he was ashamed of the whole thing. He was ordered to pay 13s. fine and costs. A nice sort of a party to solemnise your marriage, baptise your children, and read the Burial Service over your remains.

The Rev. Henry Pelham Stokes, forty-nine, clerk in holy orders, and residing in Conybere-street, Birmingham, has been remanded at Clerkenwell Police-court for obtaining a gold watch and chain and a diamond star brooch of the value of £35 15s. by means of a forged cheque. This, we suppose, was his method of "spoiling the Egyptians."

The creditors of the Rev. T. B. Paynter, clerk in holy orders, Vauxhall Bridge-road, are wondering how they're going to be paid £50,825—liabilities the man of God has incurred—out of assets amounting to £2,875. In future they had better trust in the Lord rather than in the ministers of his Gospel.

The Rev. Alexander Morrison, parish minister of Cross and Burness, Sanday Island, Orkney, has been ordered to pay £100 damages for adultery with the wife of a local doctor. The Rev. Morrison, in one of his letters, wrote: "There is only one alternative, and it is most sweet and pleasant. Morphia excites pleasant dreams, and so does brandy." He had evidently tried both, with adultery intermixed.

A Brannston surgeon has got himself into trouble at Daventry by a mild imitation of Christ's treatment of the money-changers in the Temple. When the offertory-plate was put in front of him, he struck it with his stick, scattering the money on the floor. A month ago he was fined for throwing the offertory-plate and its contents at the church-warden. He was now sent to prison for fourteen days. They were more lenient in the old Jerusalem.

According to the Rev. E. J. Hutchings—a High Churchman temporarily officiating at the Mission Church of St. Luke, Gellifaslog, Dowlais—one of the greatest sins any member of the Church of England can commit is to enter a Nonconformist place of worship. He said this in the course of a sermon, and the statement caused a member of the congregation to spring to his feet and address to the preacher in a loud voice the question: "What about entering a Roman Catholic church?" A rumpus followed, and the interrogator

was called upon by a sidesman to "shut up and sit down." The preacher took no notice of the interruption, but proceeded with his sermon.

At a children's service at a London church the other Sunday a missionary, after telling his youthful flock about the bravery of a soldier at the front, drew a picture of a missionary in China surrounded by a howling mob, and with "no weapon but his Bible." "Both these men were brave, both were fighting," he said; "but one was fighting to kill; the other (the missionary), what was he trying to do with his Bible?" "It 'em!" piped a very tiny voice.

The Lord did not appear to be much concerned as to "divine service" the other Sunday at Staplegrove Church, near Taunton. He let the electric light go out during the reading of the first lesson, and, as he showed no disposition to turn it on again, the curate pronounced the benediction and dismissed the worshippers. When two or three were gathered together in his name there was darkness in the midst of them.

The Rev. James Simpson fell dead during the quarterly meeting in Lansdowne Church, Montreal.

Dr. Ryle, the new Bishop of Exeter, is said to favor the Higher Criticism. "But," says the *Church Times*, "we believe he holds with the saner school, which sees whither the stalwarts would like to drag them." In other words, he hasn't the courage to follow the criticism to its legitimate conclusions, because it would carry him a little farther than it is convenient to go, especially now that he is a Bishop.

The Ripon Diocesan Conference has been discussing the secular press. Amongst the speakers was the Rev. J. A. Hayden, vicar of Dent, who talked in the oracular style usual with clerics when they know absolutely nothing about their subject. He said that crimes and indecencies should never be reported in a family newspaper. That is exactly what the criminals and offenders would say, and they would make the prohibition apply to newspapers of all kinds—for general as well as for family reading. In many cases publicity has greater terrors for them than any term of imprisonment. But, says the Rev. Hayden, these reports have a tendency to corrupt the minds of the readers. That may be so; but the men of God who circulate the Scriptures indiscriminately amongst the young are not exactly the persons to advance that plea.

The farce of "swearing" the members of the new Parliament has elicited some outspoken remarks from the *Christian World*, which rightly says that the spectacle presented by this ceremony is "not solemn or even edifying. At several tables arranged on the floor with a number of Testaments upon them successive groups of Members, almost jostling each other in their haste to get the thing over, seize a book, follow the gabbled formula, kiss the Testament, sign the roll of Parliament, shake hands with the Speaker, and hurry away to gossip, smoke, or eat and drink. If it is considered necessary at this time of day specially to remind Members of an obligation binding on nearly every one of them from their birth, and on the few exceptions from the time of their naturalisation, we can imagine much more imposing forms of doing this than the one at present in use. For instance, if, as in some historic scenes, the Speaker, with uplifted right hand, made the declaration in the name of the whole House, standing to signify assent, the spectacle would be much more imposing and could hardly be less binding upon the individual conscience than the present scrambling and squalid procedure."

The *C. W.* is, of course, entitled to its opinion as to the more "imposing" character of the procedure it suggests. Certainly the plan would be more expeditious. But is there really any need for such a formality at all?

Lawyers are credited with ingenuity in twisting statutes to their own purposes, but the parsons beat them hollow at that game. The Rev. Canon Knox-Little has just published a work on "Holy Matrimony." In attempting to prove the alleged perpetual virginity of Mary he says: "There are the strongest reasons for believing that our Lady was not the mother of any child except her Divine Son, and that those who are sometimes called the 'brethren of the Lord' were His kinsmen, 'not improbably His cousins according to the flesh.'" This, says the *Christian World*, is "backing up a weak case with a purely imaginative hypothesis which contradicts the plain words of Scripture and violates all probability. The Canon complains that in the Church of England, in order to make a Catholic Prayer-Book conform to Protestant or lax opinion, 'Principles have been strained to snapping and words used in unreal meanings.' He should be an expert in this process."

Binding the multiplication table with the Church Catechism is an odd arrangement. But this is what the author of *A Tour in the Harz* found to be the case with some children's school-books that he came across in Klansthal. He naively remarks that it is not easy to reconcile the multiplication table with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and "children are thus, from the earliest years, liable to be led into mortal doubt. In Prussia we are much wiser, and, with all our zeal to convert our mathematical Freethinkers, we are careful not to print the multiplication table on the back of the Catechism."

At a High School in the North of London a pupil handed in an essay containing the following remarkable announcement: "And Joash, the king, fell on Eliz^a's neck and wept."

Some highly amusing answers from American examination papers have been published by a Transatlantic monthly. Here are some good samples of the unconscious humor of the schoolboy:—"What was the religion of the Ancient Britons?"—"A strange and terrible one—that of the Dudes." "For what is John Milton famous?"—"Keeping bad angels out of heaven." "Name some of the early Christian Fathers."—"Jerome, Oxigen, and Ambrosia."

Printers' errors are confined to no part of the world. A Colonial paper had in its announcements that one of the most popular ministers would preach on "The Mania in the Desert," and that another would take for his subject, "An Altar to an Unknown Girl."

A Rochdale correspondent sends me, says a writer in the *Sunday Chronicle*, two lottery tickets issued in connection with the Littleborough Parish Church Schools Bazaar. One is a penny ticket, giving a chance to obtain a brass curb fender and "suite complete"; another is a threepenny ticket for a "handsome full-sized bedspread." He wants to know what is the difference between this form of gaming and that in coupon competitions now declared illegal. There is no difference at all, save that one is associated with the Church, and is therefore so respectable that the police do not interfere, and even the Anti-Gambling League is rendered blind; and the other is associated with sport, which, as you all know, is in the eyes of the elect the depth of wickedness. That which is a sin on this side the street is a perfectly pious act in the church across the way.

Dorsetshire has not the only parish church in which a congregation of one person only has attended the service. At a church in Deal, where choral evensong is sung on Wednesdays, on one evening the parson, verger, organ-blower, and organist were the only officials in their places, and the reverend gentleman went through the whole of the service and preached a sermon to a congregation consisting of one lady.

We referred the other day to a Church of England benefice that was going a-begging, on account of its poverty and general undesirability. It is a very different case, however, with the rectory of St. Peter's, Cornhill, London, which is worth a good round sum annually, running up into three figures. This living is in the gift of the Corporation, and we hear the Guildhall has been besieged with applicants.

St. Andrew's Church, Bordesley, Birmingham, had to come down, as it was a tottering structure and a menace to the public in the street. But it seems to be a matter of great difficulty to raise the money for the new edifice. About £6,000 is still wanted, and does not appear to be forthcoming. "Revive thy work, O Lord," was the hymn chosen for the induction service. It was a most pathetic and pointed appeal to the Almighty, and we are wondering if he will give the "work" a lift.

The *Beverly Guardian* continues to print correspondence on "Religion and Infidelity." The orthodox representatives do not err on the side of modesty. Canon Nolloth insinuates that Darwin was a Christian, in spite of Darwin's own express disclaimer; and an anonymous writer, signing himself "Student," claims that the Ten Commandments are "written on the heart and mind of every human being born into this world." Of course the ethical part of the Ten Commandments is as old as human society, and myriads of years older than the Christian or the Jewish religion. But the ecclesiastical part is strictly limited to Jews, as far as the first commandment is concerned, and to Protestants, as regards the fourth.

Solomon's decision in the matter of the baby with two mothers was repeated by an American judge the other day in Georgia. He called for a big butcher's knife, and declared that he was going to divide the six-months-old bantling in halves. Whereupon both ladies exclaimed, "Don't do that: keep it yourself." They hurried out of court, and left the judge with the baby on his hands!

The clerical party in the Hungarian Chamber of Deputies have censured the Government for allowing "immoral" books to be used in the public schools. Amongst these objectionable volumes is Shakespeare's *King John*. We suppose the "immorality" consists in the King's speeches against priestcraft.

A number of lads were charged at the Highgate Police-court with breaking into the Manor Park Mission Hall. The superintendent of the soul-saving establishment, who is also a commercial traveller, recognised all of them as more or less regular attendants, but did not seem to see that this was any reflection on his doctrines or his preaching.

"May God rest his soul." That is what Policeman Thompson's alleged murderer is reported to have said to Inspector Divall. There is not much "infidelity" in the observation, anyhow.

A *Daily News* reviewer calls attention to the fact that "the severance between morality and religion" is not confined to the Mohammedan world. Mecca and Medina are foully immoral cities, but "the Rome of the Popes never has been a model of the Christian virtues." There is no need, however, to go as far as Rome for an illustration. It is notorious in England that cathedral cities show the most drunkenness and prostitution to the square yard. They come out an easy first in any fair and open competition.

General Gordon once asked the present Archbishop of Canterbury whether it would be possible to allow polygamy amongst the native Christians in Africa. "If," said Gordon, "we could only let them have four wives each, I verily believe that in half a century you could make the whole of Africa Christian." Dr. Temple replied with a peremptory "No," and he now says that Christian converts in the Dark Continent must "acknowledge the laws which Our Lord has imposed upon us in this teaching." This is all very fine; but where does Dr. Temple find any "law" against polygamy in the teaching of Jesus Christ? We have been unable to discover a single word against it in the Gospels—or, for that matter, in the whole of the New Testament. The Archbishop of Canterbury ought to know, and probably *does* know, that Europe has inherited monogamy from the civilisation of Greece and Rome.

After the School Board fight at Birmingham came the licensing struggle, in which the Temperance party secured the refusal of a drink license to two theatres. This will not lead to less drinking, but rather to more. People will simply leave the theatre between the acts, and get what they want in the liquid line at the nearest public-houses; and, instead of taking one glass, will often take two—one for thirst and one to go on with. They will also bring in drink in bottles. And the last state of those theatre-goers will be worse than the first.

The *Christian World* publishes two articles by the Rev. F. C. Spun, dealing with Revivals and Conversions. He observes that the great Simultaneous Mission contemplated by the Dissenting Churches early in the new year will be either a "magnificent success" or a "great disaster." For the coming campaign, he says, they "want science." Perhaps so, but does science want them? Mr. Spun admits that "the secular spirit has penetrated the life of England so thoroughly that average people simply refuse to give themselves a chance of thinking about 'higher' things," and that "vast numbers of people will not come to church unless there is in the service an element of sensationalism." Again, he admits that "the notion of God, of the soul, of immortality and of spirituality, have *no real grip* upon the majority of the people." Even the Church is "largely secularised." Mr. Spun is also sceptical regarding "conversions." "We read again and again," he says, "that so many people entered the enquiry room," but he adds, "I should like a report to be given *six months afterwards*." We have said the same sort of thing ourselves many a time and oft, and we are glad to see it is being forced upon the recognition of the more knowing men of God. On the whole, it is pretty evident that Christianity is a losing cause. Nothing short of a miracle can save it. And the age of miracles is past.

The new vicar of Brixham, the Rev. Perry Circuit, went into the Baker's-hill Girls' and Infants' School, demanded the log book, and made entries therein. This was against the Code, and a mere piece of clerical impertinence. The School Board passed a resolution strongly disapproving of his conduct.

George Macdonald, the humorous contributor of "Observations" in the *New York Truthseeker*, does not like the way some people have of setting themselves up as the "Ingersoll" of this or that part of the United States. "I myself," he concludes, "have done that which must endure and be conned by generations to come as long as Ingersoll's writings occupy the libraries of the world. It is the index to his works."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 16, Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road; 7.30, "The Blood of Christ: A Study in Savage Salvation."

December 23 and 30, Athenæum Hall.
January 6, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—December 16, Camberwell; 17, Temperance Hall, Blackfriars-road; 23, Camberwell. January 20, Sheffield; 27, Leicester.—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.

F. W. LLOYD.—See "Sugar Plums."

H. SILVERSTEIN.—We recollect the meeting quite well.

F. J. VOISEY.—Much pleased to hear from you.

S. HOLMAN.—See paragraph. We should like to see a good, strong Freethought organisation in South Wales.

FREETHOUGHT TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND.—Per Miss Vance: J. Greeves Fisher, 7s. 6d.; G. Calcutt, 1s.

A. J. H.—We should prefer to see the volume first. "Book Chat" will be resumed shortly as a regular feature of the *Freethinker*. Thanks for the trouble you have taken.

M. M. R.—Must still hold over. Fortunately, it will keep. We want to deal with it adequately. Meanwhile, pray accept our best thanks.

H. D. B.—Thanks for the cutting. See paragraph. *Darwin on God* has been sent you. That little volume should be kept at hand by every Freethinker for reference. It contains all that relates to religion in Darwin's works and in his Life and Letters. Mr. Foote took a great deal of pains to bring the material together.

F. E. WILLIS.—Thanks for cuttings. We are not in the least surprised at the exclusion of your letter by the Birmingham press. The editors can't afford to upset their Church and Chapel readers.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always very welcome.

ALERT.—We are obliged. See "Acid Drops."

OWING to the Christmas holidays, the *Freethinker* for Sunday, December 30, will have to be published on Monday, December 24. It will be necessary, therefore, for all Lecture Notices for that number to reach us not later than the first post on Saturday, December 22. Branch secretaries and other persons concerned are requested to note this and prepare to be in good time.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges: Mrs. B. E. Marks, 5s.

R. CHAPMAN.—See "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums." Thanks for cutting.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Bristol Times—Secular Thought—Glasgow Herald—Freidenker—Boston Investigator—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Birmingham Gazette—M. A. P.—Anglo-Russian—Home Magazine—Leicester Guardian—Doncaster Gazette—Crescent—Ethical World—Liberator—Sheerness Guardian—Truthseeker (New York).

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.

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

The Freethought Twentieth Century Fund.

I.—SHILLING WEEK.

IT will be remembered that the first seven days in October were fixed upon as "Shilling Week." During that period the readers of the *Freethinker*—or those of them who were not placing their names in the official list of special subscribers to the Twentieth Century Fund—were invited to send me one or more shillings, which I promised to acknowledge from week to week as I received them. This "Shilling Week," as on previous occasions, ran into "Shilling Month." So many people fail to hurry up with voluntary subscriptions; and so many, too, wait to see what others are doing before giving anything themselves. Moreover, there are always some desperate laggards in every considerable collection of human beings; ladies and gentlemen who, as the proverbial saying goes, will be too late for the resurrection. Still, everything ends, even "Shilling Week." With a final dribble, as late as December, this subscription closed; and I intended to say something about it immediately, but I was prevented from doing so just then by the other imperative calls upon my time and energy. Subsequently, for a week or two, there was no room in the *Freethinker* for my observations on the subject. But this week I have made room, as I want the matter done with before Christmas.

This October "Shilling Week" was designed in order to let the "rank and file" of the Freethought party have an opportunity of contributing, if only the smallest sums, to the Twentieth Century Fund. They were invited to do so in the strongest language at my command. Those who responded to the appeal are now asked to receive my thanks—on behalf of the movement. Those who did not respond—and their name is legion—are earnestly asked to think the matter over again, with a view to showing that they have some real, substantial interest in the progress of Freethought, when the next opportunity is offered them, as it will be early in the new year, which is also early in the new century.

It must be confessed that the first "Shilling Week" was rather a disappointment. The list ought to have been three or four times as long. Here is a catalogue of the weekly acknowledgments in the *Freethinker* from beginning to end:—

SHILLING WEEK.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS IN THE "FREETHINKER."

Oct. 7	...	...	...	...	...	7	0	6
" 14	...	...	...	...	...	24	17	0
" 21	...	...	...	...	...	6	13	6
" 28	...	...	...	...	...	6	18	0
Nov. 4	...	...	...	...	...	5	16	11
" 11	...	...	...	...	...	1	2	6
" 18	...	...	...	...	...	0	7	0
" 25	...	...	...	...	...	0	12	0
Dec. 2	...	...	...	...	...	0	2	0

£53 9 5

This total of £53 odd is so small that I can only conclude that a good many readers are holding back for the second "Shilling Week," which was announced to take place the first week in January. Their opportunity will be then or never, and I hope they will not let it slip by them into "the irrecoverable past."

Many, if not most, of those who gave something in October will give something more in January. It is generally those who give once that give again. That is because they are sincere and earnest friends of the movement. Perhaps I may add in this connection that

those who "shell out" from time to time are also the most generous and considerate in other respects. It is seldom the subscribers who raise objections and cause bothers. The man who *gives* is generally satisfied that the best has been done with his money. It is the man who does *not* give who is so anxious to know what has been done with the other man's subscription.

Next week I shall print the remainder of my observations on this important subject. I shall also print a full list, right up to date, of all the special subscribers to the Twentieth Century Fund, with a mark against those who have redeemed their promises. This will occupy a fair amount of space, which I cannot spare at present. In the meantime, I invite all who have not already *paid* their subscriptions to do so if possible by Tuesday morning, December 18.

Freethinkers who may be a little downhearted over the small success of the first "Shilling Week" may console themselves at once by reflecting, as they will see next week, that far greater success has been realised in respect to the special side of the Twentieth Century Fund. Readers will perhaps have noticed that, concurrently with the "Shilling Week" acknowledgments, there have been other acknowledgments of a more gratifying character.

When I first proposed the idea of this Twentieth Century Fund I suggested that there ought to be no difficulty in raising £1,000. In spite of a partial discouragement, I still intend to make a strong effort to approach, if not to reach, that figure. One never knows what is in reserve.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

SOME readers of the *Freethinker* may not have been able to obtain a copy of our last week's issue. We ran short on Saturday, and had to refuse some orders. There are always returns, however, and back numbers can generally be obtained.

Mr. Foote had a capital audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and his lecture on "Christian Charity in China" was followed with close attention and appreciation. Mr. Foote occupies the same platform again this evening (Dec. 16), taking for his subject "The Blood of Christ: A Study in Savage Salvation." Some people will think the title a strong one, but the language is Scriptural as far as the "Blood" is concerned, and the doctrine is the vital essence of orthodox Christianity.

The Mother of God is the title of a new little work by Mr. G. W. Foote. It consists of the articles (revised) which appeared in the *Freethinker* a year ago, and which he was urged to reprint—together with a large amount of fresh matter. The *brochure* will be on sale next week.

Mr. Charles Watts lectured last Sunday evening at the Public Baths, Battersea. There was a much larger audience than on the previous Sunday. The lecture was well received and heartily applauded. Mr. Schaller presided, and made an earnest appeal for opposition, but none was forthcoming. Mr. C. Cohen lectures at the same place this evening, Sunday, December 16.

Mr. Charles Watts has reprinted in pamphlet form his articles that have recently appeared in our columns on Spiritualism, with a lengthy addendum on "Some Criticisms Answered." The title of the pamphlet is *Spiritualism a Delusion*; the price is threepence, and it is on sale at our publishing office. It is carefully written, and should have a good circulation.

Under the Concentration Scheme the Camberwell Secular Hall will be utilised, by arrangement with the local N. S. S. Branch, for three Sunday evening lectures, beginning with this evening (Dec. 16), when Mr. Charles Watts will lecture. He will also lecture on the following Sunday, and will be succeeded by Mr. C. Cohen. The admission to these meetings is by the customary charge at the door.

Mr. Cohen opened the course of four lectures in the Tem-

perance Hall, Blackfriars-road, on Monday evening. There was a moderate attendance, which will doubtless be improved upon as the experiment gets better known in the neighborhood. Mr. Watts delivers the second lecture of this course on Monday evening next (Dec. 17).

Mr. A. B. Moss finished the course of free lectures at Wellington Hall, Islington, on Monday evening. His lecture was well appreciated, and was followed by a lengthy discussion.

Mr. A. B. Moss lectured on "Shakespeare," with dramatic recitals, at the Secular Hall, New Brompton, on Sunday evening, and was received with great favor by a large and appreciative audience.

Mr. W. Heaford wound up the course of lectures at the Aldgate Public Baths on Sunday evening. He had a fair audience and a lengthy discussion. We understand that the East London friends are looking for a hall in the Poplar district.

Secular Thought (Toronto), which we are always glad to receive, continues to reach us fitfully. Four numbers have just arrived together. One of them reproduces our article on "The C.I.V.'s at St. Paul's," another a poem by Ess Jay Bee—who, by the way, is no "Jay"—and a third an article by "Mimmermus." The *Freethinker* staff will be pleased to know they have readers in Canada.

Mr. F. J. Gould won a brilliant victory as the Secular Moral Education candidate at the Leicester School Board election. It was an indisputable triumph to come out second on the poll. Fortunately, Mr. Gould is thoroughly conversant with School Board work, and he is certain to make an extremely useful member.

The *Leicester Guardian* prints a portrait and a sympathetic notice of Mr. F. J. Gould. "We have seen enough of Mr. Gould," the editor says, "to make us believe that he will make an able and useful member of the School Board. Those who know him best express the highest admiration for his ability, tact, and moderation. These are all qualities needed on public bodies, and they promise well for Mr. Gould's future as a public man in Leicester."

The Church and Chapel parties are equally divided on the Leicester School Board. Both can say "We are seven." Mr. Gould is the fifteenth member—*second* on the poll, though—and holds the balance between them.

The *Birmingham Gazette* is an orthodox organ in religious matters. All the more valuable, therefore, is its admission in a book-review that "Few men of perception will deny that the foundations of faith have been shaken, and that a latent Agnosticism exists in the minds of many who, nevertheless, attend church regularly, and repress every outward and visible sign of the change that has come over them."

Mr. H. Percy Ward's election committee at Birmingham are making an earnest appeal for subscriptions to clear off the balance of the expenses of his "Secular Education" candidature. They rightly point out that, although Mr. Ward did not win a seat, he scored in many ways a very distinct success; and they feel that they have a good ground for inviting outside support. The total expenditure was only £21 19s. 1d. Of this £9 13s. 3d. has been subscribed, and the deficit is £12 5s. 10d. Contributions should be forwarded to Mr. J. Partridge, 65 Cato-street, Birmingham.

The Birmingham Branch has sent us a statement of the local income and expenditure in connection with the Free-thought Demonstration held in the Town Hall on Sunday, October 21. The collection at Mr. Foote's lecture in the afternoon realised £5 0s. 9d., and the collection at the Demonstration in the evening £7 4s. 9d. The total of expenses, including incidental hall charges, organist, printing, posting, and other advertising, was £12 10s. 8d. The deficit is therefore only 5s. 2d. It was the afternoon lecture that saved the Branch from a more serious loss. The expense of the speakers was borne by the Central Fund.

Mr. James Neate, a vice-president of the N. S. S., and a hard and constant worker for the Free-thought cause in East London, writes to us as follows: "On Friday last I was summoned on a coroner's inquest before Mr. Wynn Westcott, and when the coroner told the constable to swear in the jury I made my protest according to the instructions drawn up by our late leader, Charles Bradlaugh. In a very pleasant manner the coroner allowed me to make affirmation; but some of the jury seemed surprised, and the constable looked amazed. I noticed that all the doctors and the police kissed the open Bible, while the jury and other witnesses had to kiss the dirty covers, which were probably defiled by tobacco juice and sore lips. I hope all Freethinkers make a point of affirming. They should do so if only in honor of the man

who carried the Oaths Act. This is the third time I have affirmed before this coroner, and only once have I found a fellow claimant, who was president of the local Co-operative Society."

The *Sheerness Times* gave a good report of the funeral of the late Mr. A. W. Marks, whose death was recorded in last week's *Freethinker*. A Secular Burial Service—from which our contemporary printed a long extract—was read by Mr. H. Barber, a friend of the deceased, who has succeeded him as Secretary to the Gas Company. A large number of townspeople went to the cemetery to pay a last tribute of respect to the dead. Wreaths were sent by the Gas Company Directors, by the Liberal Association, and by the Women's Liberal Association.

Mr. Treharne-Jones's lecture at Pontypridd was highly appreciated by the audience. The local Freethinkers show a desire for a better organisation, to which end a meeting has been called for Sunday evening (Dec. 16) at 6 o'clock at the City Restaurant, Pontypridd. Freethinkers in the district are earnestly invited to attend.

Mr. Henry Spence, a member of the West Ham N. S. S. Branch, writing from 11 Reginald-road, Forest-gate, E., says that he is superintendent, secretary, and treasurer of the Sunday-school at Libra Hall, which was started nine years ago by Mr. F. J. Gould. It is still flourishing, and has over seventy scholars. Their usual Christmas treat is approaching. "May I appeal to your readers," Mr. Spence asks, "for a few shillings to carry on the good work?"

Mr. James Hales is a candidate in the Portsmouth School Board elections. He is in favor of relegating religious instruction to the Sunday-schools, which he calls "its proper place." We hope he will be strongly supported by the Freethinkers. He polled nearly 6,000 votes before, and 7,000 will carry him in. Freethinkers ought to be able to make up that extra thousand.

The London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the National Secular Society, will take place on Monday evening, January 14, at the Holborn Restaurant. Mr. G. W. Foote will preside, and will be supported by several leading Secularists. The tickets are, as usual, four shillings each, and can be obtained from Miss Vance, 1 Stationers' Hall Court, as well as from London Branch secretaries. Some innovations are to be made at this first dinner in the New Century, which, it is believed, will add to the enjoyment of the company.

Liverpool friends should note that Mr. H. Percy Ward, of Birmingham, is lecturing in their city to-day (Dec. 16). He speaks three times in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

THE doctrine of the Trinity is usually ascribed to Egyptian influence, chiefly because it seems to have been specially championed by the theologians of Alexandria. The parallels brought forward from Egyptian mythology, however, are extremely vague and unconvincing, and it is very doubtful if they have much bearing on the question. Within the past few years another large body of literature has become accessible to the learned world—namely, the Babylonian literature; and it will be interesting to consider whether the Babylonians can offer anything in elucidation of the problem.

First of all, however, we must consider the origin of the idea of the Trinity; or, rather, the association of the Three Persons of the Godhead. In the earliest Christian writings Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are cited with all the solemnity of a known religious formula, as in 2 Corinthians xiii. 14 and Matthew xxviii. 19. The Third Person of the Trinity is unknown to the Old Testament, but appears, fully developed, in the New. He is introduced as a known conception, and not a word of explanation is vouchsafed about him. In the Gospel of St. John this Person has a special name—the "Paraclete" (John xiv. 26) or "Advocate," which the Authorised Version curiously renders "Comforter," in imitation of Martin Luther; although, as the margin of the Revised Version indicates, that is not the meaning of the word; and if *Parakletos* is translated "Advocate" in 1 John ii. 1, it should certainly have the same rendering in John xiv. 26. However, apart from all philological considerations, we have to bear in mind that the Holy Ghost is assumed, throughout the New

Testament, to be familiar to the reader; so that we must take it that it was a known conception, and not an innovation of doctrine. In consequence of these facts it has often been argued that the doctrine of the Trinity must be pre-Christian, and have been taken over bodily by the New Testament writers. The problem is, therefore, Who was it taken from?—for it is difficult to conceive that the doctrine was the product of Jewish speculation.

Until comparatively recently we had no certain knowledge of the religious ideas of the Babylonians; but the discovery of thousands of Babylonian tablets within the last fifty years has enabled us to gain an insight into these ideas as welcome as it was unexpected. The Babylonians had the same crowd of gods in their Pantheon that we find in the theology of other ancient peoples. But the deity who most concerns us is Ea, the God of the Sea. In calling him the God of the Sea the reader must not run away with the idea that he was a mere Babylonian Neptune. For the "Sea" meant much more to his worshippers. In the Babylonian Cosmogony the world is conceived as a flat disk, floating upon the bosom of the primeval ocean, and separated by the firmament from the upper ocean which occasionally pours down its waters in rains and storms. Over all these waters Ea reigned supreme, and all wisdom was supposed to be derived from him. But Ea himself was far too august to be approached by mere mortals; hence his son Merodach was conceived as the mediator. Merodach was the patron god of the City of Babylon. It was Merodach that had overthrown chaos and created the world, and it was Merodach who watched over his creatures and preserved them from every ill. He was hailed as the benefactor and savior of mankind, and the lord of heaven and earth. So great was the enthusiasm for Merodach that some of his worshippers practically denied the existence of any other deity, and Mr. Theo. G. Pinches has described at the Victoria Institute a theological tablet now in the British Museum in which all the gods of the Babylonian Pantheon are asserted to be mere manifestations of Merodach.

Therefore, the two most prominent personages in the Babylonian Pantheon are Ea, the Father, and Merodach, the Son; and we find these two acting together in a most noteworthy fashion.

Merodach was mostly invoked for the cure of diseases. The doctrine of demoniac agency was fully developed among the Babylonians; all misfortunes, all accidents, all diseases, were ascribed to the direct action of evil spirits. All these ills were caused by the agency of a demon who had taken up his abode in the sufferer. In fact, the Babylonians held precisely the same idea upon the subject as the New Testament writers. Thus Matthew considers that dumbness is the work of a devil; and when the devil is cast out the dumb speaks. Casting out demons cures epileptic fits, insanity, fevers, and all the ills that flesh is heir to.

When, therefore, a Babylonian found himself under the influence of misfortune or disease he sought divine help. He repaired to the temple, and confided his troubles to a priest, who looked up the proper formula in the temple library, and proceeded to work a cure. Within the last few years these formulas of exorcism have received considerable attention from European savants. Professor Lenormant led the way, but his studies are now antiquated, being superseded by the work of younger scholars. In these tablets the course of events is usually as follows:—The possessed man and his priest present themselves before Merodach, and draw his attention to the case. Merodach then retires to his father Ea, describing the sufferings of the patient, the recital ending in this fashion:—

"I know not, O Father, how this man can be restored."
Then Ea answered to his son Merodach:
"My Son, what is it that thou dost not know?
What can I tell thee more?
What I know, thou knowest also—
Get thee gone, my son Merodach [and thus and thus shalt thou do to enable this man to be restored]."

Merodach then receives specific instructions from his father as to the healing of the sick man by casting out the particular evil spirit that possesses him. In tablet after tablet we find Merodach acting as intercessor in this manner, and appealing to the wisdom of his father Ea for the benefit of mankind. The worshipper invoked

Merodach with the greater confidence because the Son was co-equal with the Father. The line just quoted, "What I know, thou knowest also," has quite a Johannine ring about it (compare John x. 15), for it is very remarkable how all religions move along parallel lines, and often reproduce one another's formulæ.

But, in addition to this association of father and son, we frequently find a third deity—namely, Gibil, the Fire-God, whose co-operation is quite as important. Thus, in an incantation quoted by Dr. Zimmern for the relief of a person possessed by the "Seven Devils" (a community much feared in the Babylonian superstition), the conclusion is as follows:—

Get thee gone, my son Merodach;
Take thou the dish of Ea which drives away
the demons;
Beneath it kindle holy fire, the sacred exorcism
of Eridu.
Put fire above and below, that the Seven may
not come nigh the patient.
Let it glow at his head by night and by day.
O Gibil, stand beside him at the midnight hour:
Scare away the Seven, and scatter them afar.

In this incantation it will be observed that the sacred fire is supposed to ensure the attendance of Gibil, the God of Fire, who stands beside the patient and scares away the devils. Gibil was especially invoked for protection against sorcery, witchcraft, and evil spells. K. Tallqvist's *Maqlu* series contains the following exorcisms against sorcerers:—

Your sorceries, with which ye have bewitched me,
May Ea, the exorcist, dissolve.
Your witchcrafts shall be torn asunder
By Merodach, the divine exorcist, son of Ea, the judge.
I bind ye, fetter ye, deliver ye over
To the Fire-God, the burner, the singer, the binder,
Who overthrows the sorcerers.

For the loosening of the witchcraft, and the spell which is upon me,
I fly to the hands of Ea, Merodach, and the Fire-God.

In the Babylonian religion, therefore, we have a triad of divinities, of whom the two first—Ea and Merodach—stand to one another in the relation of Father and Son; while the third, the Fire-God, carries out the commands of both, and acts as the intermediary between heaven and earth, and the purifier of mankind from devilry and witchcraft. In the New Testament, likewise, the Third Person of the Trinity stands in close relation to fire. "I, indeed, baptise you with water," says John the Baptist; "but he that cometh after me, he shall baptise you *with the Holy Ghost and with fire*" (Matthew iii. 11). "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, *like as of fire*, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the *Holy Ghost*" (Acts ii. 3, 4). Thus the parallel between the Babylonian triad and the Christian Trinity is close and startling. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there must be some relation between them. The above extracts are derived from tablets of the Assyrian period, dating some six hundred years before the Christian era; but the Babylonian religion endured very much later, only dying out about the time of Constantine the Great. It is true that we know little or nothing of its later developments, as only a few scattered records have come down to us; so that its influence upon early Christian theology can only be surmised, and not categorically proved. Parseism, Gnosticism, Judaism, Mendaism, and sundry other isms rose upon the ruins of the Babylonian faith; and it is only now that scholars are beginning to realise how much of these is to be traced back to the old theological speculations of Babylon and the curious superstitions of the Babylonians. CHILPERIC.

Echoes from Olympus.

IV.—CONCERNING BATHSHEBA'S BALL.

THE great event of the Elysian season was Bathsheba's ball. Let there be no surprise at Bathsheba's presence in Paradise. That was all settled many centuries ago. David repented of his sin and was forgiven. Bathsheba made a most interesting penitent. When Jehovah saw her in all her surpassing beauty, suffused in tears for her offence, he forgave her at once. He knew then the strength of the temptation to which the "man after his own heart" had been subjected. David took all the blame on himself, which was the least he could do in the circumstances. The Lord approved of this magnanimity on the part of his favorite. He felt that he could

hardly make fish of one and fall foul of the other. So he freely pardoned both, and decided that they should be taken into Abraham's bosom. Bathsheba demurely objected to this, remarking that she would prefer to remain in David's bosom. At which there was a hearty laugh in heaven—where fun is not too frequent.

"The only thing that disturbs me," said the Lord, "is what are we to do with Uriah the Hittite, her former husband."

"Oh," said David, "the poor chap might have sued me for damages and landed me in for costs, but he was prevented by the fact that he was dead. He was a gallant officer—a brave man. Make him Commander of the Heavenly Household Cavalry, with 2,000 shekels a year for pay."

"Yes," said the Lord, "that is the least we can do for him. But do you think he'll remain satisfied? He might cut up rough, you know."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed David, in his masterful way, "he is not the only husband who has lost his wife, and survived sufficiently long to feel glad that he had got rid of her."

"Well, well," remarked Jehovah, "if you are so certain about it, so it shall be. Uriah shall be Major-General of our Household Cavalry, with good pay, and a handsome pension when he retires. But, David, don't let's have any scandal in heaven in regard to you and Bathsheba. I've stretched a point."

"Go on, you don't mean it," remarked David with bluff *camaraderie*, "the gods have played too much havoc with the daughters of men to justify any pretence at prudery. As there is no giving or receiving in marriage in heaven, Bathsheba and I are going to live 'tally.'"

"Tally?" said the Omniscient; "what's 'tally'?"

"As if you didn't know? Well, let's go and have a 'magnum' together."

And they went, for David and the Lord were on very intimate terms.

Bathsheba's advent in heaven was the occasion of much jealousy. Jael wanted to drive a nail into her head at the first start off, but was prevented. It was represented to Jael that one performance of that kind was enough not only for a lifetime, but for eternity. Eve said she wasn't going to wash linen for a troll like that. And various other remarks of a similar kind were made by the envious female sex.

But Bathsheba lived it all down. She seemed to grow younger and more beautiful every day. It was said that she "painted." But that didn't prevent the male saints running after her. Young Joshua (he was only one hundred and ten when he died), arrayed in khaki, once attempted to lay hold of her in a dark corner of heaven. Being clawed for his pains, he apologised, and was pardoned on his representation that he was an "absent-minded" warrior. Many little notes were received by Bathsheba from aged, but still amorous, saints. Bathsheba pursued one settled course. She re-addressed them all to the senders' wives, and drove out each morning with the sweetest of smiles in her landau drawn by six cream-colored ponies.

Young Joshua, caring nothing for his rebuff, usually rode at her side as cavalier in attendance. His only, but sufficient, reward was a lift of her arched, jet-black eyebrows, and a covert glance from her flashing eyes.

Bathsheba—smiled on by the Court, and figuring in the most select of heavenly circles—had no difficulty in achieving the height of her ambition. She became the unchallengeable leader of Elysian fashions. The ordinary female saints contemned her—and copied her. Leading photographers fought for the privilege of photographing her in all sorts of poses and in all kinds of costume.

The prophet Daniel, who had cultivated a pretty taste for painting, wished to depict her as David first saw her. Bathsheba was agreeable, but David came in unexpectedly and kicked over the bath and the easel, and Daniel went sorrowing away with a black eye. All the consolation he got was a remark from Moses that he must have been "off his bloom'n' chump," and a threat from young Joshua that "he'd a good mind to bash his blighted head in."

But all this has nothing to do with Bathsheba's ball. How this great event came about we must hasten to relate. One bright morning in early spring Bathsheba and David were sitting at breakfast. Outside the open casement the brilliant-plumaged birds of Paradise sang and fluttered and twittered in the bright rays of the rising morning sun. Bathsheba crumbled little pieces of bread in her dainty fingers on the cloth, and looked from time to time at David on the other side of the table. David was a trifle glumpy this particular morning, having stayed rather late at the Old Angelic the previous night playing crib with Isaiah. David was bringing out a new edition of his Psalms, and had a piece of toast in one hand and sheets of MS. in the other.

"Davy, my dear," said Bathsheba in mellifluous accents.

David had another chew at his toast, and took no notice.

"Davy, my dear," repeated Bathsheba, a little louder.

"Well, what is it?" he growled, without looking round.

"I'm thinking, Davy dear, of giving a ball."

"My God! what other extravagance are you contemplating? However, do as you like. There's nothing but bankruptcy in front of us." Then, in his desperation, David held up his toast for another read, and made a chew at his MSS. Immediately afterwards he jumped up, and strode out of the room.

Bathsheba, of course, was in no way disconcerted. What do you think? Who ever knew a woman disturbed by a trifle like that? A little latter Miriam, Jephthah's daughter, looked in, and together they fixed on a date, and began to issue the invitations.

"The old man," said Bathsheba, "is rather cross about the idea just now. But he'll cotton to it later on. I know him."

"You ought by this time," observed Miriam.

And, in perfect confidence as to David's pliability and ultimate approval, they perfected their arrangements.

"It's to be confined strictly to our own set," explained Bathsheba. "As I have my reputation at Court to consider, we cannot, on any account, ask any shady people to come. Eve is no class, neither is Jael, nor Tamar, nor Lot's wife. But we must invite Moses and Aaron, Abraham and Sarah, and Jacob with Rachel and Leah. And oh! we *must* have Queen Esther and that funny old uncle of hers, whom you can never think of except as sitting at a gate. And we must have little Ruth, though we have to put up with that pig, Boaz. Then there's Solomon and his seven hundred wives. That's a nice little tea-party in itself, isn't it? Quite a circus. We can't, of course, invite his three hundred concubines. I suppose we shall have to ask some of the prophets, though I don't like the idea. They are such a dirty, unshaven, unrepresentable crew. I daresay some of them will come with their naked arms and legs sticking out of sacks, and with a heap of cinders on their heads. And if that wretched old Jeremiah comes, he'll put a damper on the whole affair with his 'Woe, woe, woe,' as if he were in charge of a team of horses. We shall have to strictly limit the invitations, that's sure."

"Is there any possibility," inquired Miriam, "of a certain August Personage looking in?"

"Ah, that's the very thing which is uppermost in my mind. If, Miriam, we could ensure that, I should be made. Then I could snap my fingers at all the spiteful, mean creatures who are so jealous of me. They could never get Him to attend any of *their* balls. I believe I can. Did you notice how he smiled at me when last we bowed before the Throne?"

"Yes," said Miriam, "when you were there with David."

"No, but I am sure it was intended for me. I'll get David to bring him along when the affair is in full swing."

David came home rather early at night, and not a little pleased at the fact that an eminent firm of celestial publishers had accepted his new edition of the Psalms. Bathsheba laid before him her plans for the ball. He was now inclined—and this shows the instability of men when the fair sex are concerned—to regard the project a little more graciously than in the morning.

Bathsheba, whose head was screwed on all right, speedily fixed him up.

"Davy," she said, "can't you write us a nice little dramatic piece to be performed in the course of the evening? You can do it, when you like."

"Yes, I could," he responded. "A mere unpretentious trifle, lasting, say, half an hour."

"The very thing. It would give such *éclat* to the whole affair."

"But we shall have to find the people to take the parts, and is there time enough for rehearsals?"

"Plenty of time," said Bathsheba, "and I have secured a splendid *chef* for supper—Abel. You know how his savory cooking was pleasant to the nostrils of the Lord. And Noah has offered to officiate as butler. But I *do* hope that he won't get drunk."

"Well, my dear," observed David, "you seem to have fixed it all right, and I must now set to work on the little dramatic piece. I have one on the stocks, as it were, which will come in very handy with a little alteration. I have called it *The Lily of Judah*."

"Oh, how beautiful!" exclaimed Bathsheba, with rapture that seemed too natural to be feigned.

Thus the arrangements went on, and at last the eventful evening arrived. The *élite* of the Jewish section of heaven were present in the beautiful Palace which had been allotted by the Lord to the man after his own heart. The halls and corridors and conservatories and retiring-rooms were ablaze with dazzling light, reflected four-fold by the glittering gems which at every point adorned the marble pilasters, the frescoed walls, and the brightly-polished agate pavement and stairs. In the orchestral balcony, perched high in the central hall, a band under the direction of Herr Jacobinoff discoursed sweet music.

Bathsheba, attired in a silk costume resplendent with precious stones—flashing diamonds, sapphires, amethysts, rubies, and pearls—received her guests. David, in shining martial armor, moved about and greeted those of the male sex with whom he was more or less personally acquainted.

Bathsheba's ball was a pronounced success. Whatever might happen subsequently could never discount its splendid opening. David's dramatic production went off wonderfully well. It was written somewhat on conventional lines. Most of the leading visitors had parts assigned to them. The Lily of Judah (Ruth) was beloved by a young lieutenant (Absalom). She was coveted by the Lord of the Manor (Naboth), and a plot was in project to put Absalom to death. Then there came on

the scene the good angel (Samuel) who defeated all the vile machinations. And in the happy ending the patriarchal blessing was bestowed on the loving couple by a pilgrim father (Moses). Curtain.

Much applause was bestowed on this dramatic trifle, and, in reply to cries for the author, David appeared and bowed his acknowledgments.

Then there was presented a little operetta by Aaron, entitled *The Enchanted Garden*, with a chorus and dance by hours. The chorus was very much in these words:—

We're now at home
In the realms of bliss,
We needn't pose like that or this;
Perhaps we sometimes do amiss,
But they can't kick us out,
Though we turn about,
For we're now in the New Jer-o-salem.

By this time there was an exhilarating air throughout the marble halls of David's palace. Dancing started in the Central Hall, led off by David and Bathsheba. Many complimentary things were said about both, but the real dancing took place when young Joshua took out Bathsheba for a waltz.

David went into the hall where the theatrical stage was rigged up. All the ladies had left there for the fascination of the dance. "Now, boys," said David, "I'll show you how I danced before the Ark of the Lord." He immediately began to disrobe, but was providentially stopped by the entrance of Abraham and Moses. Then David said he would give his celebrated Nigger Entertainment. He went out, and came back as the White-Eyed Kaffir, with young Samuel made up as Dan Leno. Hardly had they begun their entertainment when, as if with a gust of wind and an electrical disturbance of the air, there walked in no other than the August Personage. A dead silence reigned.

David hurriedly tried to wipe the black from his face with his coat-tails, but failed. Then he darted to the side wings, and endeavored to find the door leading to the dark regions below the stage in which to hide himself. But he failed to escape, and eventually had to listen to a very stern remonstrance from the August Personage on his unseemly behavior. Afterwards he was not in too much of a good humor. He went into the hall where the dancing was proceeding, all the time inwardly raging at his own folly. The first view that presented itself to his vision was Joshua waltzing with Bathsheba. Then he whipped out his sword, and went for Joshua. The latter, who had espied him, was ready, and in less than two minutes each had sustained a wound. Bathsheba fell on the combatants in turn, and bathed them with her tears. The wounded were taken off, and at this point the guests discreetly thought it time to depart. Thus ended Bathsheba's ball. Is it not all written in the chronicles of heaven?
FRANCIS NEALE.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at the Society's offices on Thursday, December 6. Present: Mr. G. W. Foote (President), Messrs. E. Bater, W. Beech, C. Cohen, A. B. Moss, J. Cooper, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, H. J. Stace, B. Munton, J. Neate, E. Quay, C. Quinton, V. Roger, F. Schaller, T. Shore, T. Thurlow, G. J. Warren, and C. Watts. Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

The Secretary reported the sudden decease of Mr. S. Hartmann, and all present expressed their deep concern at the sad intelligence.

The Secretary was instructed to ascertain if arrangements could be made for the N. S. S. to be represented at his (Mr. Hartmann's) funeral, and the meeting unanimously resolved: "That a letter be sent to Miss Hartmann, expressing the N. S. S. Executive's sorrow at the death of its honorary treasurer, Mr. S. Hartmann, in whom the Freethought movement loses one of its most loyal and devoted workers, whose goodness of nature endeared him to all his colleagues."

A letter received from Mr. J. F. Haines, of the East London Branch, was read by the Secretary, who was instructed to write Mr. Haines to the effect that the matter of his letter was one to be dealt with by the Freethought Publishing Company.

The President mentioned the terrible difficulty in obtaining halls in London for Freethought lectures, particularly for Sunday meetings, and thought it desirable to arrange for a partial shifting of the scheme, and to take in such parts of the provinces as are doing active work. The following resolution was then moved by Mr. Moss, seconded by Mr. Warren, and carried unanimously: "That, considering the difficulty of obtaining halls in London, and the immense cost of them, this Executive authorises the shifting of the basis of the Concentration Scheme in part to the provinces."

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary*.

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, "The Blood of Christ: a Study in Savage Salvation."

CAMBERWELL (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Is Modern Spiritualism a Delusion?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford): 7, Harry Snell, "A Century's Progress in Science."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Herbert Burrows, "Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (The Victory, Newnham-street, Queen-street, Edgware-road): December 20, at 9, Half-yearly meeting.

BATTERSEA BATHS (Latchmere-road, Battersea): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Use of Religion."

SOUTH METROPOLITAN TEMPERANCE HALL (Blackfriars'-road): December 17, at 8, "The Science of Life."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, A lecture.

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "Hindooism."

COUNTRY.

ABERDEEN (Northern Friendly Society's Hall): 6.30, Mrs. A. M. Craig, "Man: From a Woman's Standpoint."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): 7, Concert by Bohemian Choir—J. Matthews and others.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school,

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Mr. Gilbert: 6.30, A lecture.

HULL (2 Room, Friendly Societies' Hall, Albion-street): 7, Mr. Trumper, "A Peep into Sociology."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Marie Corelli's *Master Christian*."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward—11, "Thomas Paine and his *Age of Reason*"; 3, "Who Made the Devil?" 7, "Jesus Christ: God, Man, or Myth?"

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Stanley Jones, "The Roots of Christianity."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Extra Pleasant Musical Evening.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 6.30, Adjourned discussion on "Agnosticism and Atheism."

Lecturer's Engagements.

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