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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Puffing the Bible.

JOHN HOWARD went through Christian Europe on what was called by Burke "a circumnavigation of charity." He visited the prisons in which the most desolate and unhappy of mankind were lingering out a wretched death in life, and let a little air of humanity into their fetid dungeons. A great deal has been done since then, at least in the more civilised countries, to remedy the evils which enlisted his philanthropy. Nevertheless, there still remains something to be done in this direction, and it is fitting that a Howard Association should agitate for the completion of the reforms which he inaugurated. But why on earth should this Association issue religious pamphlets, and go proselytising for one special form of belief? During the present year it has issued such a document, with the title of "National Security and Biblical Education." We have read this manifesto with considerable astonishment. Had it emanated from the Religious Tract Society, or the Sunday School Union, we could have understood it, and smiled accordingly; but, coming from a body like the Howard Association, it involves a more serious criticism.

The first paragraph of this document runs as follows:—

"In view of the important fact that, in general, the crimes, mob-violence, disloyalty, and rebellions, which, from time to time, disturb nations, are confined to classes of persons destitute of Biblical education, it is remarkable that Governments and the respectable portions of all communities have not taken a far more active part than hitherto in the Scriptural (as distinct from the sectarian) training of the young."

Reference is then made to the atrocities of the various French Revolutions, to the regicides perpetrated by Anarchists, and to the assassinations and conspiracies of Nihilists. On the other hand, it is observed that the "best citizens" are those who have "had the advantage of more or less of Scriptural knowledge."

Now, is not this the greatest nonsense? What, to begin with, are the assassinations and conspiracies of Nihilists in Russia when compared with the tyranny and cruelty of the Russian government? The murder of a Czar, or a lower official, bulks largely in the sight of the Howard Association; but it takes no note of the hangman's ropes, the lashes, and the crowded prisons, by which Czardom keeps down the independent spirit of the Russian people. In the next place, it is a curious fact, which the Howard Association should mark and learn and inwardly digest, that nearly all, if not quite all, of the assassins of heads of States have had a religious training. They may not have been very familiar with the Bible in every case, for many of them had been trained as Catholics, but they had at least the "advantage" of a religious education.

Suppose we turn to England itself. This is a Protestant country, and the Bible is everywhere. According to the Howard Association, therefore, our prisons ought to be full of "infidels." But they are not. They are full of quite another description of persons. It has been admitted by a responsible paper like the *Christian*

World that ninety-five per cent. of the inmates of our gaols have been Sunday-school scholars.

When the Howard Association clamors for more "Biblical education" it is really making itself ridiculous. More than half the elementary public schools in England are denominational. The Bible is read in every one of them, and Christian dogmas are openly taught to the children. Bible reading obtains also in the overwhelming majority of the Board schools. The exceptions, indeed, are so few as to be hardly worth mentioning. And it must be recollected that this Bible reading, and expounding, and other religious education, occupies the greatest part of the first and brightest hour of the day. One would think that this was sufficient. But it does not appear to satisfy the Howard Association. Plainly, then, we ask this body what it wants. Does it want the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, in the public schools of this country?

Professor Huxley is quoted in support of the statement that "the Bible is the grandest of all Classics"—which, of course, is not *his* language. But this opens up a literary question with which the Howard Association cannot possibly be concerned. Then an American clergyman is quoted in favor of the Bible as "a basis for morals"—just as though a clergyman would say anything else! What on earth has the Howard Association to do with the "basis of morals" at all? But if it will trouble about what is far beyond its province, we beg to tell it that the Bible is not, never was, and never can be, a basis of practical ethics. Catholic divines make it so because they claim a power of infallible interpretation, and thus compel it to sanction all the laws and discipline of the Church. Protestants, however, are always wrangling over the meaning of their "blessed book," always splitting up into fresh sects, and always discovering that the Bible cannot be appealed to successfully on any practical question that is occupying the public mind.

The greatest puzzle of all is why the Howard Association should be so anxious for the Bible to be read by *women*. Already, we believe, they read it more than men do; and, in our opinion, it would be a great improvement if they read something more suited to the requirements of modern life. The unexpurgated Bible is a brutal book for females of every age and condition. It generally treats their sex with insult and outrage. From the story of the Fall, in which woman is represented as the blight and curse of the world; through the Ten Commandments, where she is lumped in with the house, the ox, and the ass as the man's property; right on to the teaching of Paul, who commands her to observe silence and submission; the Bible is woman's worst enemy, and the fact that she has not found it out only proves the completeness of enslavement.

Bible instruction, according to the Howard Association, is a subject "deeply affecting the Laboring Classes." Why is this? How is the reading of the Bible more important to working men than to peers of the realm? Is it because the Bible is such a good book for *keeping them under*?

G. W. FOOTE.

The Teachings of Christ.

IN the *Freethinker* dated May 5 there appeared an article from me, entitled "Christ an Imperfect Character," in which I endeavored to show that the Jesus of the New Testament manifested most of the imperfections akin to human nature. It was not denied that, according to the Gospels, he exhibited some excellent qualities. This, however, in the present writer's opinion, will not justify the extravagant claims urged by orthodox believers on behalf of their hero. They regard him as having been the very embodiment of truth, virtue, and perfection; and those persons who are compelled to doubt the correctness of these assumptions are regarded by orthodox believers as most unreasonable and perverse members of society. Probably the principal cause why such erroneous and extravagant notions are entertained of one who, according to the New Testament, was very little, if at all, superior to other religious heroes can be accounted for by the fact that the worshippers of Christ were taught in their childhood to reverence him as an absolutely perfect character, and as being beyond criticism. Thus youthful impressions resulted in fancied creations, which, in matured life, were accepted as realities. Christ appears to me (assuming, of course, that such a person actually existed) to have possessed but limited education. He was surrounded by unfavorable influences for intellectual acquirements, he belonged to a race not very remarkable for literary culture, he retained many of the failings of his progenitors, and he had but little regard for the world or the things of the world. Viewed under these circumstances, while excusing many of his errors, one can recognise and admire something that is praiseworthy in the life of "Jesus of Nazareth." But when he is raised upon a pinnacle of greatness, as an exemplar of virtue and wisdom, surpassing the production of any age or country, he is then exalted to a position which he does not merit, and which, to my mind, deprives him of that credit which otherwise he would, perhaps, be entitled to.

To this estimate of the character of the alleged founder of Christianity the Rev. Henry J. Alcock, in the issue of this paper of May 12, takes an exception, and terms it an "onslaught on the character of Christ." In order that the contention between the rev. gentleman and myself may be clearly seen, the reader would do well to once more read my article, and also my critic's reply thereto. No doubt he is honest and well-meaning; but, despite his promise to the contrary, he is sadly deficient in "strength of argument." Like most theological disputants, he substitutes assertion for proof, and conjectures for facts. What he thinks *should* be he concludes *must* be, regardless altogether of the relation which should exist between the cause and the effect of the subject of his allegation. In his reply assumption does duty for demonstration, and boldness of statement for calm reasoning. His "sins of omission" are almost as numerous as his "sins of commission"; hence he avoids the main points of my contention, and notices only portions of what is said, while utterly ignoring the context thereof. This may be theological discretion, but it is not candid reasoning. Let us fairly consider what he says in reply to what he is pleased to term my "strength of language."

He objects to my allegation that there are associated with the Christian profession imbecility and hypocrisy. Imbecility, in the sense used by me, means argumentative weakness, and hypocrisy implies the profession of that which is not acted upon. Now, my allegation is that it is thoroughly imbecile to believe in such doctrines associated with the Christian profession as the Bible description of God, the Fall, Atonement, natural depravity, hell torments, and the perfection of Christ. That the Church is honeycombed with hypocrisy is evident from the fact that those who preach the Gospel never attempt to act up to what they teach. Will Mr. Alcock name one Church where Christ's supposed teachings in reference to poverty, neglect of the world, forgiveness, non-resistance, reliance upon the prayer of supplication, and disregard of domestic duties are obeyed? Christian newspapers teem with admissions of the hypocrisy of the clergy. Whether or not my charge of imbecility, etc., is "an unusual method of reasoning"

is not the question. The point is, Is it true? If it is not, let Mr. Alcock refute what I say.

The rev. gentleman's reference to Pilate is no answer to my statement that Christ taught nothing that was original and of "any intellectual, physical, or ethical value," so far as secular duties are concerned. If he did, let such teachings be produced. Where did he teach intellectual freedom, physical science, or any system of education? As to politics, he recognised the "divine government," for he said: "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above" (John xix. 11). "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." Christ's notions of government were similar to those of St. Paul, who said: "The powers that be are ordained of God.....and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Romans xiii. 1, 2). Graetz, in his *History of the Jews*, says that Christ thoroughly shared the narrow views held by the Judæans of his time, and that he despised the heathen world. Thus he said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matthew vii. 6). He further said: "I am not of this world." "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." The fact is, Christ was a spiritualiser, and not a social reformer. If he had been to his age what Bacon and Newton were to theirs, and what Darwin, Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall have been to the present generation; if he had written a book teaching men how to avoid the miseries of life; if he had revealed the mysteries of nature, and exhibited the beauties of the arts and sciences, what an advantage he would have conferred upon mankind, and what an important contribution he would have given to the world towards solving the problems of our present social wrongs and inequalities. But the usefulness of Jesus was impaired by the idea which he entertained, that this world was but a state of probation, wherein the human family was to be prepared for another and a better home, where "the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

Mr. Alcock's reply to my remarks upon perfection is a fair sample of orthodox evasion. He is absolutely silent in reference to the principal passages I cited to prove Christ's imperfection. It was shown from the New Testament that he lacked wisdom and power; that he suffered from human weakness and human passions; and that he taught what was really impracticable and opposed to the progress and well-being of society. To this no answer was attempted. The fact still remains that, if the doctrine of Christ were perfect, there would be no need to leave its principles and "go on to perfection." But this was but a minor reference made by me. The important instances I gave were all avoided. This perhaps was an indication of discretion, but it was not a mark of the boasted "strength of argument." Mr. Alcock admits that a perfect character is incapable of improvement. If this is so, then Christ was not a perfect man, for he possessed no trait of character that could not be improved upon. What experimental example could he give to the world as a husband, a father, a statesman, or a business man? He never occupied one of these positions. And in the conditions of life he is said to have filled he failed to exhibit any high degree of excellence, discrimination, or manly courage. As a son, he lacked affection and consideration for the feelings of his parents; as a teacher, he was mystical and rude; and as a reasoner, he was defective and illogical. Lacking a true method of reasoning, possessing no uniformity of character, Christ exhibited a strange example—an example injudicious to exalt and dangerous to emulate. At times he was severe when he should have been gentle. When he might have reasoned he frequently rebuked. When he ought to have been firm and resolute he was vacillating. When he should have been happy he was sorrowful and desponding. After preaching faith as the one thing needful, he himself lacked it when he required it the most. Thus, on the cross, when a knowledge of a life of integrity, a sensibility of the fulfilment of a good mission, a conviction that he was dying for a good and righteous cause and fulfilling the one great object of his life, should have given him

moral strength, we find him giving vent to utter despair. So overwhelmed was he with grief and anxiety of mind that he "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." "My soul," he exclaimed, "is sorrowful even unto death." At last, overcome with grief, he implores his father to rescue him from the death which was then awaiting him.

Will Mr. Alcock give me his authority for saying that Christ's friends who thought he was "beside himself" subsequently "changed their minds"? Perhaps with the rev. gentleman the wish was father to the thought. Such special pleading may pass in preaching, but it will not do in debating. He was quite right in supposing that I based my comments in reference to the ass and colt episode on Matthew xxi., but I include verse 2, where it is stated that Christ told his disciples to bring *an ass and a colt* unto him. They did so, and put on *them their* clothes, and set him thereon. It does not say *one* animal was selected, but quite the contrary; the clothes were put on *both*. Mr. Alcock makes this addition in order to give the absurdity an air of "common sense." That Mark and Luke contradict Matthew only shows how contradictory the stories are. The point, however, of my reference is entirely ignored, which was to show that Christ's conduct was so imperfect that it could not be emulated to-day. To prove this I gave five instances from the New Testament, and my critic notices only one, and in that case he fails to grapple with the real objection urged.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Decline of the Clergy.

THE May Meetings have produced more than one lament concerning the difficulty of enlisting recruits for the priesthood, and the inferior quality of such as volunteer for service. Among others, the Methodists find the number of candidates for the ministry inferior to those of previous years; while their Lordships of the House of Convocation consider the matter serious enough to be made the subject of a special prayer. The complaint, as usual, does not come from the laity. They are content to rub along without any increase in the number of their spiritual overseers; and it may be safely assumed that, if the suggestion of a special form of supplication is adopted, there will be many prayers that will be said with greater gusto than that of "Oh Lord, send us down more parsons."

It is the clergy themselves who complain of the need of further reinforcements for the Black Army, and their complaint is based upon easily-discoverable reasons. Religious feelings are so far artificial as to threaten to disappear altogether unless properly stimulated. Those who are brought up without religion seldom adopt it when they reach maturity, and, on the part of society at large, it is pretty certain that those who already hold to the orthodox faith would find their adherence weakening in the absence of an organised priesthood. The policy of the clergy is, therefore, plain. Their existence depends upon the existence of certain religious feelings; but these feelings are themselves largely dependent, in civilised society, upon the clergy. Therefore the clergy first of all labor to keep alive the feelings that demand the existence of a priesthood, and then point to the existence of these feelings as a sufficient reason for strengthening their own ranks.

But, apart from this aspect of the matter, the declining influence and present intellectual status of the clergy are a significant feature to the student of modern religions. Three or four centuries ago the priesthood represented a powerful influence in national affairs. This was due partly to certain special conditions that then prevailed, but partly also to the character of the leading Christian preachers. The Church was then one of the principal avenues of wealth and distinction. Literature was more or less a field for men of wealth and position. The drama was degrading, political and social life cramped and dangerous; while science was but just beginning to emerge from its thralldom to theology. Under such conditions the Church could, and did, dominate to a considerable extent the life of the nation; and men of intellectual strength, unaffected by the doubts and questionings of a later period, could, with both sincerity

and affection, turn to the Church as a profession. The Church, or Churches, could then feel a legitimate pride in many of its advocates—men whose writings, differ from them though we may, yet show a breadth, a genius, and a sincerity that one fails to find in their present-day representatives.

But changed conditions brought new men. As fresh avenues of employment were opened the Church was steadily drained of its best blood. Science, art, and literature, the developing political and social life of the nation, all arose as competitors to the Church; and added to these was the still deadlier danger that newer views of nature and of man rendered it a matter of increasing difficulty for men of well-informed intellect to give themselves to the service of the orthodox creed. The net result is that each generation sees the intellectual status of the English clergy of all denominations sinking lower and lower. There is positively no one in any of the Churches, Established or Nonconformist, who can be placed alongside of the leading divines of the seventeenth, or even of the eighteenth, century. Our modern clergy are remarkable neither for purity of style, dignity of manner, nor sanity of judgment. When, among one class of believers, men like Dr. Parker, sentimental fictionists like "Ian Maclaren," or fictionists of another order like Mr. R. F. Horton, are hailed as philosophic thinkers, or when the English Church puts as successor to Dr. Creighton, who had much learning and some ability, a man like Bishop Ingram, who has neither, the intellectual vacuity of the ministry is palpable enough.

I have no wish to raise a cheap sneer at the expense of the clergy; many of them may be perfectly admirable men in most of the relations of life; but, all the same, I do not think it can be questioned that, on the whole, the average of intelligence is anything but high. Anyone who has listened to a number of clergymen addressing audiences, or has read any number of modern sermons, must have observed the poor display of reasoning offered. Considered as an educated body of men, the clergy rank below doctors, lawyers, or any class that can be said to have received a fair education. And the simple and complete explanation of this is that theology no longer enlists the higher minds on its side. These drift off into other professions, while the sarcasm of the Church being a refuge for the fool of the family receives daily justification. As a mere matter of historical fact, each fresh development of the secular side of life has taken something from the Churches, until the clergy are left "a baffled and desponding minority, whose most cherished political principles have been almost universally abandoned, who are struggling faintly and ineffectually against the ever-increasing spirit of the age, and whose ideal is not in the future, but in the past."*

Although Lecky applies this stricture specifically to the clergy of the great established Churches, yet this, with the further statement that "all over Europe the priesthood are associated with a policy of.....reaction or of obstruction," is true of the essential character of the clergy of all denominations. Political circumstances have thrown the dissenting clergy for support upon the mass of the people rather than upon the privileged classes; but, when allowance for this circumstance has been made, there is little to choose between the two orders. The cry of the dissenting clergy, that the State should not interfere in religion, has its hypocrisy disclosed by the manner in which they avail themselves of every possible measure of State assistance—relief from rates, religious instruction in public schools, and the perpetuation of laws and customs that serve to hamper critics of the Christian religion. So long as their own sects are allowed freedom of worship, they show themselves callous to all manner of oppression of such as exist outside all the Churches; while in opposition to scientific discoveries, the advance of Biblical criticism, and in the display of a spirit of narrow intolerance, Dissenters are probably greater sinners than the members of the Church established by law.

There is, as a matter of fact, but one function that is legitimately connected with the character of a priest, and when that decays the justification for the existence of a priesthood has disappeared. The original and essential function of a priest, whether he belongs to a

* Lecky, *Rise of Rationalism*, ii., p. 127.

savage tribe or a modern Church, is that of a mediator between man and some supposed supernatural powers. But this is a function that is obviously dependent upon the prevailing intellectual environment. Where a knowledge of natural processes is either absent or present in only a small degree, the functions of a priesthood will be active; but with the growth of knowledge its legitimate function sink into disuse. In all civilised countries the belief that a priest has any control over natural processes is rapidly dying out. In the region of the physical sciences—with the doubtful exception of the weather—it is quite extinct, and even in other matters it exists in only a perfunctory manner. It still exists, perhaps, in the theological fiction that a man who enters the ministry has a special "call" from his imaginary deity; but this is a belief that reflects little credit on the intelligence of those who credit it, or on the deity who is supposed to make the selection. Yet it is certain that a priesthood would never have existed but for this belief, which sprang into being as the result of the ignorance of our remote ancestors; and it is equally certain that its disappearance removes the only solid reason for the existence of the clergy.

I am not concerned now with what particular clergymen may do in their character as citizens, although even here it is notorious that their function as agents of the supernatural has seriously interfered with the discharge of their duties in this character. It is almost unnecessary, perhaps, to point out how their sacerdotal function has led to their playing the part of a drag upon civilisation and the oppressor of all reformers. Even as teachers of morals—a character assumed only when the development of the secular side of life led to the decline of their supernatural functions—even here they have lagged far behind laymen in contributing to the growth of a scientific ethic. There is scarcely a fruitful suggestion in ethics that has emanated from their ranks, while the establishment of a science of ethics has been brought about, not only by those outside the clerical sphere, but principally by those who rejected Christianity altogether.

What I am concerned with is the character of the priesthood as such; and here their influence has been wholly evil, and their existence wholly parasitic. They have absorbed the comforts of civilisation without contributing to its growth. One of America's most suggestive thinkers has said of the priesthood and of religion generally:—

"If all the religious training the world has ever received should be concentrated upon one community and thoroughly indoctrinated into the mind of every member of it, it would be utterly useless as a means of carrying it through an ordeal which threatened it with famine or destruction from climatic influences.....Not one of all the wonderful contrivances invented by man for extorting subsistence from nature, for destroying the enemies to man's triumphant progress.....has ever been attributable to the labors of the priesthood as such, and none of these blessings can ever come directly or indirectly from that source. Yet from the infancy of the race this class of persons has enjoyed a far greater share of the fruits of industry than the producers of wealth themselves. Sacerdotal duties are, and always have been, a special and exceedingly lucrative means of obtaining a livelihood. It required only a little more than ordinary sagacity to perceive that appeals to the sentiment of fear respecting the unknown.....would exert a powerful influence, and a little calculation was sufficient to determine the best means of making this influence operate in the direction of conveying pecuniary value. The result has been that long before history began the earth was decked with costly temples, and within them a well-fed and comfortably-clothed priesthood sat enjoying, all unearned, the luxuries vouchsafed by toil and credulity. The reign of this parasitic hierarchy still continues all over the world; and still, to-day, the hard labor of the masses is paying its tithes in support of this non-industrial class, and for the erection of costly edifices which the State exempts from taxation, and which serve no other purpose than to be opened once in each week that honors may be paid and anthems sung to imaginary deities. When we consider the universality of this hierarchic system, it presents one of the most extensive drains which are made upon the productive industry of the world."*

From two distinct points of view, then, this unmistakable decline of the clergy is a natural result of man's mental development. The Churches can no longer monopolise the intellectual life of the nation,

and thus compel all who seek advancement to enlist in its service; and it can no longer appeal to the belief in the supernatural with the same success as of old. From these two points of view it is inevitable that their intellectual status should sink lower and lower, perhaps one day to rank upon the same level as the peripatetic fortune-teller or palmist, who would, under other conditions, have taken *their* place as priests. Yet the priesthood is with us as an organisation, and a powerful one to boot. On the continent we can all see its evil influence in an unmistakeable manner; and those who look closely can detect the same influence at home, even though exercised in a more surreptitious fashion.

C. COHEN.

George Meredith.

'In our fat England the gardener Time is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them?'—*Sandra Belloni*.

"The Art of the pen is to rouse the inward vision, instead of laboring with a drop-scene brush."—*Diana of the Crossways*.

How pleasant it is for cultured persons to admire an author who is "caviare to the general"! Granted that the majority is always wrong, a minority of one is not necessarily always right, unanimous though it be. But whether the majority be allowed to elect a great writer, or whether the choice be left in the hands of a single critic, concerns us not here. Somebody must first discover the new star, and then infect others with his belief in its right to a high place in the literary firmament. Fame, as awarded by contemporaries, is certainly a curiously illogical thing. If the plaudits of the respectable mob are held to confer it, a certain Miss Marie Corelli is far beyond the creator of *Richard Feverel*, while Thomas Hardy is nowhere in comparison with the Reverend Mr. Hocking.

In dealing with George Meredith it is difficult to avoid extremes. Even professional critics and literary men, accustomed to balance their judgment, express extreme devotion or absolute impatience or dislike. Robert Louis Stevenson, an artist to his finger-tips, boasted of having read *The Egoist* a number of times. Andrew Lang, our most delightful critic and a hardened novel-reader, admits that he was unable to read the same book once. Amid such warring voices in such eminent company, the humble person who attempts to be impartial is placed in an awkward position. It will, however, readily be granted that, in a writer who so excites enthusiasm on the one hand and repudiation on the other, there must needs be something rare and vigorous.

Among the "acute and honorable minority" who, in the days which are afar off, used to love to prophesy George Meredith's future greatness may be mentioned James Thomson, that bright and particular genius who gave us *The City of Dreadful Night*. "Meredith's style," wrote Thomson, "must be ranked among the supreme achievements of our literature." The voices of criticism are anything but unanimous concerning this, but many more come singing to-day "the Meredithyramb," as it has been profanely called, than even James Thomson dreamt of in the days of his vanity. There can hardly be any doubt that *The Egoist* is the most absolute product of George Meredith's art. In it he deals with that most fundamental of all passions, the lust of self. The author names *The Egoist* a "comedy in narrative." It is true that laughter is not the only emotion excited. Sir Willoughby Paternoe is rather a tragic figure discovered for us through the eye of comedy. If he is Meredith's greatest comic study, he is, at the same time, his most pathetic figure. The characterisation of this ignoble nobleman is superb. It reveals an amazing insight into human nature and a wide knowledge of the springs of human action. It is a rare tribute to Meredith's masterly handling that, despite the endless dissection of Sir Willoughby, he still keeps his outline and remains whole and living to our eyes, when, in lesser hands, he might so easily have resulted in becoming a mere anatomical diagram. It is certainly comic, in the customary sense, to see that satire on masculinity reduced to paradox by the

* Lester F. Ward, *Dynamic Sociology*, i., 588-9.

exposure of its springs. To see the engineer "hoist with his own petard" is always amusing, but the results are none the less tragic, though one must always reckon with the man who will not

"Show his teeth in way of smile
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable."

Yet, if *The Egoist* is so pre-eminently Meredith's typical work, and Sir Willoughby Patterne his most typical characterisation, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* is that which wins our affection. The subject of *The Egoist* is psychological; the subject of *Richard Feverel* is first love—that eternal subject dear to writers of all ages and all countries, and which time cannot wither nor custom stale. Meredith gives the book a sub-title, "A History of a Father and a Son," and it is evidently in the light of a story of an experiment of the training of youth upon a philosophical system that he would have us regard it. But the plot of *Richard Feverel* is its one weakness. Its real importance is that it is a prose poem of young love, in its powerful characterisation and its magnificent style. It is fuller of fine things than any other of his books, except, maybe, *Diana of the Crossways*. And, of course, the greatest thing in it is the matchless lyric of the early love of Lucy and Richard, so fine that we think of them as we think of Romeo and Juliet, or Paola and Francesca. Mrs. Berry, the nurse, would have been a credit to Dickens, the creator of the inimitable Sarah Gamp, and we do but scant justice in dismissing "the great Berry" in a sentence.

To reflect upon the splendid things in Meredith's writings is an unmixed delight. Take, for instance, that magnificent scene in *Rhoda Fleming* between Dahlia and Edward in the London lodging, and that other in the Kentish farm-house, when she rouses from her long apathy and calls upon her sister to bring her lover back.

They have been compared to the great scenes of Webster, one of the noblest Elizabethan dramatists; and who shall call the praise excessive? What, for truth and simplicity, could be finer than the passage describing the opening of the money-boxes which Mrs. Sumfit and Master Gammon presented to their mistress, Rhoda Fleming, at a critical season, and the discovery of the meagre and painful savings of a lifetime? Meredith here proves himself a Shakespearean writer—one capable of dealing with elemental passions.

Vittoria is, doubtless, Meredith's one great achievement in the objective dramatic. What professed historian could have given us such a picture of that great struggle between Austria and Italy? The author engages our sympathy for a Colonel Weispress no less than for an Angelo Guidascari. There is one passage of passionate rapture—Sandra Belloni's meeting of Wilfrid Pole at Wilming Weir in the moonlight—which is almost as fine as the perfect pean of pristine passion in *Richard Feverel*.

The crowning example of Meredith's use of the comic spirit is *The Shaving of Shagpat*, which some clever people persist in interpreting as a satirical allegory, but which one can be well content to take according to its title, "An Arabian Entertainment." Nothing in that delicious Oriental parody is more delicious than the clever imitation of Eastern phraseology, and the cleverness in which Meredith has caught the manner of the Arabian story-teller.

Fortunately, although a master of the art of authorship, Meredith is so much more than that. We have not space at present to do more than allude to the human interest in *Evan Harrington*, the fascinating pages of *Rhoda Fleming*, the historical interest of *The Tragic Comedians*, or that other book, so full of "arrowy phrases," which make us all cry, "Great is Diana!" If these books prove Meredith to be a novelist of rare and delicate genius, the volumes, *Poems*, *Modern Love*, and *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth*, prove him to be an unmistakable poet in heart and an artist in expression. For many years he has been the foremost novelist of his time. The name of Shakespeare has already been mentioned in speaking of Meredith. This need not create surprise if we limit the terms of comparison to the creation of immortal characters. Like the Master, George Meredith has sufficient of Shakespeare's power to move a world to laughter or to tears.

MIMNERMUS.

He's Not a Respector of Parsons.

God's not a respector of parsons. A parson He chastens as much as a layman;
A brick falls as heavy and hard on a "good" as it does on a "giddy and gay" man.

His "people" respect him, and show their respect by erecting a church and a steeple;
But plain as the face of a fiddle's the fact that He's got no respect for His "people."

He's not a respector of parsons, the Lord, for they frequently die in their pulpit,

While showing the people the way to keep out of the roomy, but very near "full," pit.

An "infidel" lecturer's highly respected by God, and his life He takes care of;

There's never been one that has died on the "boards"—not as far as the writer's aware of.

He's mindful, we're told, of His own, is the Lord—was there ever such ludicrous twaddle?

Two men were out waiking; a tile tumbled down; there was one of them knocked on the noddle.

That one was a parson, a friend of the Lord and His Bethlehem Babe of the Manger;

The other was one of Old Harry's Brigade, and entirely escaped from the danger.

On board of a ship, in the dining saloon, sat a parson so pious and prayerful;

A "sinful" man opposite hungrily gazed at the "flesh-pots of Egypt" so snareful.

The parson said grace—then he hurriedly fled, left the "sinner" to sample the dishes;

The latter was busily feeding himself, while the former was *feeding the fishes*.

Just a last illustration. A "man of the world" in a boat went fishing on Sunday.

A parson, who thought Sunday fishing was wrong, in a boat went a fishing on Monday.

The "man of the world" with his rod and his line caught a trout, and he carefully bagged him.

The "man of cloth" "caught a crab," and was drowned; to the shore with a boat-hook they dragged him.

He's not a respector of parsons, the Lord, cares no more for His "own" than for poodles.

Perhaps He's a figment that's formed in the brains in the noddles of credulous noodles!

ESS JAY BEE.

The Mind of Captain Dreyfus.

A WRITER in the New York *Sun*, who has seen and conversed with Captain Dreyfus in the little Swiss village of Cognoy, where he lives in quiet with his wife and two children, says that he is working all the time to clear his name of the stain which rests upon it. New facts are coming forth one by one, and it is these that he trusts to. He appeals to no sentiment and asks for no sympathy. "What I want," he says, "is the full list of facts in the case, which alone can, and inevitably will, prove beyond a shadow of doubt to the most prejudiced man my absolute innocence." Meanwhile his great joy is in his family, and especially in association with his children. Of his friends he speaks with great enthusiasm, particularly of Colonel Picquart, Zola, and Clémenceau—who, by the way, are all Freethinkers. The reaction after the fifth act of Captain Dreyfus's martyrdom, the second trial at Rennes and the Government pardon, had a curious effect upon his mind. The following account of it is given by the *Sun* writer:—"Mentally I cannot see that there is any evil effect of the strain of those long years of loneliness and torment. His mind is neither weakened nor dulled; but it does show a certain quality of absorption and concentration, evinced in his repeating any statement which he considers important several times over. His weakness and illness after his pardon brushed from his memory the acquirements of years, so that he has forgotten nearly all the English which he learned from poring over his Shakespeare in his little hut on Devil's Island, and even his German has left him; and he told me that when the great Scandinavian poet, Björnson, came to see him the other day, and spoke German, he had to ask him to change to French, as he found great difficulty in following him, though formerly a proficient German scholar."

"In saying last week," remarks a Western Kansas paper, "that 'if everybody will take an interest and supply the needed material our new cemetery will prove a success,' we were the victim of a typographical error. We wrote 'creamery,' not 'cemetery,' and the hellish typo did the rest."

Snooks, Hymnologist.

His head was quite empty ; the knowledge he had
In boyhood with sorrow acquired
Had filtered away, and his parents were sad,
For to make him a clerk they'd aspired.
They oft wept o' nights when they thought of the plan
They had formed for their angel and pride :
"Just wait till our wonderful babe is a man,
And you'll see what he'll do!" they had cried.
"You'll see what he'll do,
You'll see what he'll do ;
We'll warrant his talents will stupefy you!"

One day for a shilling five quires he bought
Of nice, shiney paper, cream-laid ;
"To write verses," he said, "one need never be taught—
'Tis simpler than learning a trade !
My writing may never make stodgy my purse,
But what matters that *if I'm read?*"
Said mother: "You're right, lad, just stick to your verse ;
You still may be famous," she said
"Though you ne'er earn a sou
You may make a 'to-do,'
And *someone* may put up a statue to you."

The vacuum Nature thought fit to supply
In the place of a brain answered well ;
Our hero to hymn-writing straightway did fly,
God's plans for the future to tell.
He rhymed "love" with "dove," and he chortled of grace,
He warbled the goodness of God ;
He longed (in his stanzas) to "gaze on His face,"
The mumps he defined as "His rod."
Perchance you pooh-pooh
(Ungodly folk do),
But remember, he wrote for such sinners as you!

Then he reeled off a hymn with no meaning at all,
Impossible, likewise, to scan ;
So vile were its rhymes that each critic must call
It the work of a wonderful man.
It was printed in gold (an edition *de luxe*),
Each chapel and church with it rang ;
Its author, the talented Archibald Snooks,
Self-satisfied, whistled and sang :
"I vowed I would do
(And I've kept my word, too)
Some deed which should prove most surprising
to you ;
'Tis probable, now,
They'll place on my brow
The laurel, and give me a place in *Who's Who?*"

(NOTE : *And they did.*)

JOHN YOUNG.

Jehovah and Creation.

BUT that a God like Jehovah should have created this world of misery and woe, out of pure caprice, and because he enjoyed doing it, and should then have clapped his hands in praise of his own work, and declared everything to be very good—this will not do at all! In its explanation of the origin of the world, Judaism is inferior to any other form of religious doctrine professed by a civilised nation; and it is quite in keeping with this that it is the only one which presents no trace whatever of any belief in the immortality of the soul. Even though Leibniz's contention, that this is the best of all possible worlds, were correct, that would not justify God in having created it. For he is the Creator, not of the world only, but of possibility itself; and, therefore, he ought to have so ordered possibility as that it would admit of something better. There are two things which make it impossible to believe that this world is the successful work of an all-wise, all-good, and, at the same time, all-powerful Being: firstly, the misery which abounds in it everywhere; and, secondly, the obvious imperfection of its highest product, man, who is a burlesque of what he should be.—*Schopenhauer.*

Noah's Good Heart.

"What did that seedy-looking fellow on the pier want of you, father?" inquired Noah's youngest hopeful of the ancient mariner.
"He wanted to come aboard with us."
"And what did you tell him?"
"I told him it was impossible."
"But I thought I saw you hand him something?"
"Well, yes; I felt so sorry for him that I loaned him my best umbrella."—*Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

Acid Drops.

MR. GEORGE LYNCH, the well-known newspaper correspondent, contributed an article to the *Westminster Gazette* of May 17 on "The Dance of Death in China." It was an appalling account of some of the horrors he witnessed in China on the track of the Christian Allies. "Many of the details," he says, "of the conduct of the Russian, French, and German soldiers do not bear publication." These must have been too frightful for words if they were worse than those which are recorded. The outrages perpetrated on girls and women were simply infernal. Mr. Lynch himself found two Chinese girls at the foot of a cliff, where they lay moaning piteously, and one of them at the point of death. "As I went towards them," Mr. Lynch writes, "the one who appeared least injured shrank from me with an expression of loathing and horror until I offered her a drink out of my water-bottle. Her delicate, childish little hand trembled violently on mine as she drank eagerly from it. The other was almost too far gone to swallow." From the houses above came the hoarse cries of soldiers, and the sobbing screams of women, telling eloquently what it was that these two poor creatures had tried so desperately to escape from. "This scene," Mr. Lynch adds, "was typical rather than singular." On the way to Peking, and in Peking itself, it was no unusual sight to see entire families lying side by side on the river, where they had suffocated themselves, or to see them suspended from the rafters of their houses. Suicide was their only refuge from the memory of Christian infamies.

"As the Chinese," Mr. Lynch sarcastically says, "have agreed to erect a monument to Baron von Ketteler in Peking in commemorative apology for his murder, it appears to me that there is an opportunity for the Allies to erect one also. It might be of pure white jade, which the Chinese women love, which in its translucent depths seems to hold the bright Eastern sunlight with the detaining lingerage of a caress, and might bear an inscription saying that it was erected in honor of the memory of the women and girls of the province of Pechilli who had sacrificed their lives to save their honor."

According to Mr. Lynch, the Russians and the French were the worst offenders in this respect—or rather, as we should say, the vilest beasts. And really this seems quite natural. Russia is still a savage nation, with a very thin veneer of civilisation; and France is now the "firm ally" of the land of the Cossacks. Moreover, she has fallen too greatly under the control of the clericals in general and the Jesuits in particular. The Germans ranked after the Russians and the French. We gather, however, from Mr. Lynch, as well as from other writers, that the British and Americans have been comparatively free from the more cruel crimes against the Chinese.

Captain Dreyfus, in his Devil's Island diary, quotes the exclamation of Schopenhauer, "If God created the world, I would not be God." Schopenhauer, of course, was thinking chiefly of the misery of the world; but he did not forget its wickedness. There is even a certain malignancy in human nature, which is found to some extent also amongst the lower animals. This evil passion is gratified by the sight, and even by the thought, of the sufferings of others. According to the theologians, it is a proof of the existence of the Devil; and this idea is satisfactory enough until we inquire why the Devil is allowed to poison God's universe. The only possible answer to this question is either that the Devil is an imaginary being, or that God is helpless and imbecile.

We see by the newspapers that the white bear at the Jardin des Plantes, Paris, has just died of poison. According to the *Express* correspondent, it is only too common for visitors to ill-treat the animals in those famous gardens. One method of torture is to put cayenne inside pieces of bread or meat. Sometimes pins or needles take the place of the cayenne. Even the beautiful timid gazelles are not safe against this cruelty. One shudders to think of these criminal beings who can present such things to helpless, trusting animals, and then go away gloating in imagination over the sufferings their victims are experiencing. Yes, there is no Devil, but there is the devilish in human nature, and it is the worst part of our inheritance from the brutal past. To some extent, however slight, it exists in all of us. Our duty is to give it no chance, to tread it down, to starve it out of our systems.

Flunkeyism is rampant in the ordinary press. A fulsome paragraph went the round of the newspapers lately about the Prince of Wales and one of his female servants. The poor young woman was being carried from the royal residence to undergo a serious operation, and King Edward, who happened to drive up just then, actually spoke to her a few words of kindness and encouragement. That was all right, of course; but would not any English gentleman do the same thing in the same circumstances? Is it necessary to fall into hysterics

of loyalty every time the sovereign performs the most common act of humanity? We should think that the King himself must look with disgust upon these lickspittles.

What are we coming to? At a recent inquest in London, held on the body of a coachman who had committed suicide while under the influence of religious mania, it was stated that the deceased was often heard singing hymns, and the coroner remarked that this was "a dangerous sign." Such a performance, we suppose, is only harmless in church or chapel on Sundays; in other places and on other occasions it is a sure sign of approaching lunacy. Some day or other, perhaps, Sundays will be included.

The author of *Terra Firma*, a book recently published, and written by an honest old Christian—Mr. D. Wardlaw Scott—believes "the real source of modern astronomy to have been Satan." This gentleman (Mr. Scott, not Satan) proves from the Bible that the earth is flat and stationary. He cannot believe that any man in his senses can think the sun is stationary—which, by the way, it isn't—when he sees it, with his own eyes, revolving round the heavens. He is also puzzled to understand how any man can believe that the earth is whirling around the sun when he feels not the slightest motion. Altogether, it appears that this gentleman is an orthodox Christian of an ancient type; and he seems to have been born out of due season in order to assist in maintaining the gaiety of nations.

The *Daily News*, in noticing this belated work, wonders how anyone at this time of day should be found to pay for the cost of its production. But there are hundreds of books published which are essentially just as silly. The Bibliolatry of more up-to-date writers is only less glaringly absurd, and the same may be said of nine-tenths of what is called Christian Apologetics. Considering the vast amount of money spent on nonsense, it is not surprising that some of it went to the printing of *Terra Firma*.

The Sons of the Clergy Corporation held their annual meeting the other day. One of the speakers was the new Bishop of London, who said he thoroughly endorsed the remarks of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the chairman of the meeting, in regard to the needs of the clergy. Then Dr. Winnington Ingram referred to the recent work on *The Fatal Opulence of Bishops*. He made, it is said, the "confession" that he was "now in front of the most appalling financial crisis that he had ever faced in his life through his elevation to the See of London."

Appalled at £10,000 a year! Perhaps he was thinking of the preliminary expenses attending his installation. But they did not amount to more than £500, according to a paragraph in a Church paper. Dr. Ingram has now two palatial abodes in which he can live rent free, and he has a stipend of £10,000 a year. What has he to complain about? One would think that the complaints should be made by Churchmen who support him, with the help of the State, and who must already be rather sick of his silly protestations.

According to the *City Press*, Canon McColl is so busy manufacturing Church history for the benefit of his fellow sacerdotalists that he has no time to do more in regard to his City church of St. George, Botolph Lane, which has been closed for ten years because the roof is a little defective, than draw his stipend of £600 a year.

Canon Gore says "the preaching of the Old Testament on a critical basis where the preacher's own faith in the Divine inspiration of the prophets is real, banishes, and does not create, scepticism. Scepticism, as touching the Old Testament, is, and has long been, widespread—more widespread than most of the clergy recognise. But it has been bred and fostered by the preaching of the Old Testament on the basis of the uncritical tradition, and criticism, in countless cases, relieves and remedies it."

It does not take a very keen intellect to perceive the Christian "climbing down" in the above extract.

The Lord, as a Shepherd, might at least provide for the safety of those who are preaching his doctrines. Yet we read: A painful sensation was caused in the Free Presbyterian Church, in Thurso, on Sunday, by Rev. William Campbell, of Pulteneytown, swooning while he was delivering his sermon. He recovered from the swoon, and insisted on resuming the service, only to swoon the second time.

The oracular Rev. Campbell, of Brighton, thus discourses in the *British Weekly* in reply to a correspondent: "'Vacille' (Bradford) asks whether it is necessary for a Christian to believe in the inerrancy of the Old Testament, or to approve

such conceptions of God as are given in Exodus xi. 2, 3, 12, 36; also 'How must one instruct one's scholars in Bible history? How can one segregate authoritative from unauthoritative Scripture?' This is a statement of a difficulty that is being felt and faced all over the country. It is quite reasonable for 'Vacille' to believe in the inspiration of the Old Testament without necessarily believing in its inerrancy. The best thing to do before trying to introduce little minds to Scripture problems is to obtain an intelligent grasp of the meaning of the Scriptures, separating the essential from the non-essential, and the relative from the absolute."

The manners of some Christians or Hebrews, when on business bent, are not always of the Lord Chesterfield order. For instance, it is reported that the Eastbrook (Bradford) Wesleyan Chapel was sold the other day by auction, with a view to its removal to make room for a large new mission hall. At the opening of the proceedings some of the trade bidders, who were smoking their pipes with as little compunction as in an ordinary sale-room, were reproved by the Rev. John Wilson, minister of the circuit, who pointed out that it was still a place of worship.

Naturally we take an interest in our neighbor—St. Paul's Cathedral. We are, therefore, somewhat concerned at the following observations which appear in the *Rock*: "The Decorating Committee of St. Paul's have very properly removed the painted coats of arms of certain City Companies (though not the coats of arms from the candles). When are they going to scrape off that scandalous would-be representation of the entombment, in which an angel is depicted as treating our Savior's body as if it was a puppet; which no angel would have been permitted to do, or have been so impious as to think of doing? The sacred arms are being held out as though still on the cross, the object, of course, being to suggest the idea that the sacrifice was not finished at Calvary, but is still to be carried on. The mosaic of the resurrection is bad enough. Scripture says that the opening of the sepulchre had no door, and was so low that St. John had to stoop to look in, but is represented in the mosaic as having an opening some six feet high, with its floor three steps above the ground without and having two large folding doors!"

The *Daily Mail* has secured the services of a live lord—Lord Dunmore—to write on "Christian Science." This gentleman professes to be a follower of Christ, but he does not seem ready to follow his Master in the way of swearing off property and joining the poor. He is quite ready, however, to follow him on an easier path. "It is but a short five-and-thirty years ago," his lordship says, very ungrammatically, "since the revelation of Christian Science came to Mary Baker Eddy." This "Science" turns out to be "metaphysical." It teaches how to heal "from sin and sickness." And there must be something in it, because more than 200,000 copies of Mrs. Eddy's book have been put into circulation. By its agency drunkards have been reclaimed, the sick have been healed of every conceivable disease, and even "lunatics have regained their sanity." We do not care to contradict this, but we fancy that Christian Science is likely to make more lunatics than it recovers. That it has "swept like a wave over the northern continent of America" is no proof of its wisdom, but rather the reverse. Who ever knew truth to sweep like a wave over any continent? It is only folly that makes a rush like that.

John Thomas Cattersall, of Homeleigh, went to Carshalton Church and saw the worshippers bending their knees at the name of Jesus. Thereupon he shouted "Idolatry" five times—one, we suppose, for the Father, one for the Son, one for the Holy Ghost, one for the Church of England, and one for the Church of Rome. This led to his being summoned for "improper conduct in church," but he submitted that genuflection in the Church of England was illegal and idolatrous, and the magistrates dismissed the case. It seems pretty clear, therefore, that persons who want some fun in any of the Established churches have only got to select a "High" one, watch the congregation till they crook the pregnant hinges of the knee at the name of Jesus, and then shout "Idolatry." That word will do just as well as swearing. There will be a rumpus, and the visitor in search of fun will have as much as he wants, free, gratis, for nothing.

"To sell 1,000,000 copies in England, or even 500,000 of a book," the *Sphere* says, "you would have to provide all kinds of vulgar sensation, or a great amount of more or less foolish religiosity, which a mass of readers would need to mistake for profound thought." This seems to throw light on the circulation of the Bible. The Old Testament contains the "vulgar sensation," and the New Testament the "foolish religiosity." We always thought the problem could be explained, and the *Sphere* has done it.

Every now and then Italy is disturbed by a religious revival, which turns the heads of many peasants, renders

them unfit for work, and gives the authorities infinite trouble. At present in the South a most picturesque figure is going about the country preaching, and gaining innumerable disciples, by means of whom he still further disseminates his doctrines. He is a poor shoemaker, of imposing aspect, who travels from village to village, dressed in snow-white robes, which he keeps spotless. He has flowing curls, and rides a white donkey. His doctrines are simple in the extreme, and are rendered irresistible to the vulgar mind by his claims to Divine inspiration. He declares himself sent by the Almighty to preach partition of property, universal equality, justice for each (but, of course, according to the conception of the peasant), and dreadful but unexplained punishment for those "Masters" who refuse to take warning. Armed with these arguments, he has managed to get together a considerable number of converts, who, so far, do not conspicuously follow him. When they do the police will have their hands full.—*Daily Telegraph*.

What a colossal joke it was to see the Mother of Parliaments, at Westminster, adjourning on "Ascension Day." Fancy the representatives of a great civilised nation—for that is our boast—resolving to commemorate for the eighteen hundred and sixty-eighth time the levitation of a dead Jew into a God-knows-where heaven! No wonder our affairs are in such a muddle. The wonder is that we get along as well as we do in the circumstances.

The Archbishop of Canterbury says that the nation must be prepared to pay more for a married than for an unmarried ministry. Quite true, as a matter of arithmetic. But is it necessary to go up to £15,000 a year? That is the Archbishop of Canterbury's salary. And, curiously enough, the "unmarried" old priest at Rome, called the Pope, gets ever so much more. The real truth is that a priest, or a priesthood, always costs as much as the people can be got to pay.

We remarked recently, in a leading article, that it takes a terrible lot of money to fix up a Bishop. The instance we gave is now strikingly supplemented. The Archbishop of Canterbury has laid before Parliament a scheme for the creation of a new Bishopric of Southwark. St. Savior's Church, which has lately been restored at a cost of £40,000, is to be the cathedral of the new diocese, and Bishop's House, Kennington Park, the residence of the new prelate. It is estimated that £130,000 will be needed as an endowment, and we read that "a substantial portion of the amount has already been subscribed." When the new Bishop is installed we shall have a fresh *farceur* preaching the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor."

Another large amount spent on a religious object. The Archbishop of York has just opened a Church House at Liverpool, erected for the diocese at a cost of £66,000. This is intended, we presume, to serve as a centre of organisation for the emigration agency to heaven in that district. It is doubtful, however, if St. Peter will be any busier at the golden gate in consequence.

American clergymen are trying to live up to the commercial ideal of their country. They have left the mild and sentimental "Pleasant Sunday Afternoons" far behind. Among their more recent devices to draw and keep congregations are lightning sketches, thrilling recitations, a free swimming bath, a roof garden, and wireless telegraphic experiments. These are the things that the clergy are reduced to in the absence of the Holy Ghost, with whose aid (see the Acts of the Apostles) Peter and his brother preachers were able to convert three thousand sinners in one day—ay, and in the same city too.

A burning question is being decided in America. May ministers of religion smoke? One would think they ought to. It would be quite in character for walking advertisements of hell-fire. But the Churches appear to think otherwise. There is a Mr. Baer, minister of Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, who pleads guilty to smoking an occasional pipe. The General Court of discipline of the Methodist Church of Canada has decided that their men of God mustn't smoke. Mr. Baer's case has been referred for decision to the British Columbian Methodist Court of Discipline. They will probably put out the poor man's pipe; unless he plucks up courage and resolves in spite of them, like the late C. H. Spurgeon, to smoke to the glory of God.

Morality must run very high among these Methodist men of God when their Church has to tackle them on the subject of smoking. It would never do to waste time in suppressing such an indifferent habit, from a moral point of view, if the ministers were still liable to any tincture of such sins as envy, hatred, malice, or uncharitableness. We assume, therefore, that the Methodist exhorters over there have nearly developed into angels—all but the wings.

More "Providence" in Italy. An enormous landslide at

Acerenza, near Potenza, has caused great loss of life. Many dead bodies have been dug out, and many are still entombed. "He doeth all things well."

Christianity has always been a proselytising religion. Its theory is that all non-Christians are going to hell, and it is therefore an act of mercy to convert them to the only saving faith. Hence it is, we suppose, that Christians obtrude their literature upon the public in season and out of season, and in all sorts of inappropriate places, including railway stations. One of our correspondents has sent us a few samples which he found while waiting for a train in far-off Aberdeenshire. One is a "Letter to Mr. Bradlaugh" by a certain Mr. George Sillwood, of Keswick, who says that he cannot answer the Atheist's pamphlet entitled *What was Jesus?* but that he can tell "what Jesus is to me"—and great nonsense it is. Another is headed, "Are You a Sceptic?" and begins with a cock-and-bull story of "a celebrated infidel lecturer" who was discoursing in "a village" and was put to ignominious flight by a poor old widow. What a low idea the writers of such tracts must have of the intelligence of the average believer.

There is at any rate one Irish Catholic who practically respects the language of the Coronation Oath, in which King Edward VII. had to express very strong opinions about the Roman Catholic religion. Mr. J. A. O'Sullivan, of the London Irish Rifle Volunteers, has been ordered to pay £2 15s. and three guineas costs for leaving his Corps arbitrarily and against the rules of the service. This gentleman cried off his own oath when he found that the King's oath was "a gratuitous insult to the Catholic soldiers in his army." We feel a certain respect for Mr. O'Sullivan, but why does he call the insult "gratuitous"? The King did not utter it for nothing, but for the sake of the Crown; and, according to all accounts, he mumbled it so as to make it as harmless as possible.

A recent meeting of Father Ignatius's at Portland Hall, Southsea, was a scene of great disorder. The lecturer having referred to the Church of England as "Catholic," a young man cried out that it was "Protestant." For a few moments there was a wordy duel between Father Ignatius and the interrupter. Then a number of hands were laid upon the young man, who was "chucked out," one female advising the stewards to "shake him well." Altogether it was a curious commentary on the text, "Let brotherly love continue."

The *Sunderland Echo* reports a free fight in Villiers-street Synagogue. Worshippers ran out into the street shouting "Help!" "Murder!" and "Police!" Candlesticks were used in the scrimmage, and much damage was done to several Semitic faces. The row was over the minister's salary.

A handsome manuscript Bible, in old English black letter, dating about 1410, was sold the other day at Sotherby's for £1,200. It was almost entirely Wycliffe's translation. When it was written the mere reproduction of the Bible in the vulgar tongue was a severely punishable offence. Probably the writer and the owner both kept the matter dark. But times have altered since then, and Bibles go round as steadily as milk-carts.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake delivered a speech of characteristic interest at the grave of William Woodward, the old Chartist who died recently at Brighton. At the close of his address he said that "No one truer or worthier had ever passed through the Golden Gates of the Land o' the Leal." We suppose Mr. Holyoake was speaking poetically, metaphorically, or something in that fashion. The Land o' the Leal means Heaven; at least, that is what it means in the well-known poem of that name, though Mr. Gladstone made the curious mistake of thinking that it meant Scotland—which is not exactly Heaven, at any rate in the winter. Mr. Holyoake is not reputed to be a believer in Heaven, or in any form of a future life. It is a pity, therefore, that he did not make use of some expression more in harmony with his own philosophy. There are poetical expressions available without borrowing from orthodoxy. Colonel Ingersoll's funeral addresses are sufficient evidence of the fact.

Professor Haddon presided over a meeting of the Anthropological Society the other evening, when Mr. W. MacDougal read a paper by himself and Dr. Hose on the curious superstitions of the islanders of Sarawak. Details were given of the manner in which omens were drawn from the flight of birds, particularly of the white hawk, which is regarded by most of the tribes as the chief god. No doubt this is very odd, but there are parallels to it in the religions of more civilised people. For instance, two of the chief gods of Christianity were once on earth together in a bodily form; one of them as a man, and the other as a dove perching upon his head or shoulder—the sacred scriptures of that religion not stating precisely which. It is difficult for an outsider to perceive much difference between the holy dove of the Christians and the white hawk of the Sarawak islanders.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, May 26, N. S. S. Conference, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

MR. CHARLES WATTS'S ENGAGEMENTS.—May 26, N. S. S. Conference.—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.

REASON.—Mr. Watts replies to Mr. Alcock this week; otherwise we should have been pleased to insert your letter.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your cuttings.

JOHN ALLAN.—See "Sugar Plums." We hope there will be fine weather and a good gathering at the Glasgow Conference. It is a long journey for some of the English delegates and visitors, but we hope they will all make an effort on this occasion, if only out of compliment to the Glasgow Branch, which has achieved such splendid success during the last few years.

JAMES NEATE.—Pleased to hear that Mr. Heaford delivered such a good lecture on Sunday in Victoria Park, and to such a capital audience; also that the new *Age of Reason* is still selling well there.

S. COLEMAN.—We have not "ignored" your notices. The East London Branch has had several paragraphs during the past few months. At present it devolves upon the N. S. S. secretary to make up the list of Sunday outdoor lectures for the *Freethinker*, and in starting week-night meetings you should have drawn special attention to the fact.

IRONSIDE.—Verses not bad, but susceptible of improvement. "Prayerless" and "pennyless" are not rhymes.

W. McDONALD.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

E. B.—Read the Bible with the aid of our *Bible Handbook* (1s. 6d.), and then read Paine's *Age of Reason* (6d.). Afterwards you might read Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*, *Bible Heroes*, and *Book of God*. You will know quite enough about the "blessed book" when you have digested those volumes.

MIDLANDER.—We have often referred to the work of the Leicester Secular Society, and shall be happy to do so again. We regard it as one of the best and most useful organisations in England.

A. S. TREVOR.—A cheaper edition of Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* is now issued at 7s. 6d. The title of the English edition of Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* is not exactly original. A book bearing that title, by E. D. Fawcett, was published seven or eight years ago. Not that it matters very much, only precision is precision.

L. DENNIS.—Mr. Carnegie, the multi-millionaire, who is giving such vast sums to public objects, was a friend of the late Colonel Ingersoll, and is reputed to be an Agnostic.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Freethought Magazine—Cape Argus—La Raison—Public Opinion—Two Worlds—Huddersfield Examiner—Portsmouth Evening News—Reynolds' Newspaper—Truth-seeker (New York)—People's Newspaper—Blue Grass Blade—Sunderland Echo—Monastic Orders Up to Date—Secular Thought—Lucifer—Freidenker—Progressive Thinker—Torch of Reason—Boston Investigator—Liberator—Labor Voice—Sporting Chronicle—Newcastle Leader—El Libre Pensamiento—Shields Gazette—Consent Guardian.

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.

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How to Help Us.

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.

Sugar Plums.

IN view of the fact that this is holiday week, and that the very fine weather is likely to draw a good many readers of the *Freethinker* from their homes, it has been deemed advisable to postpone the insertion of a separate Prospectus and Form of Application for Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited—which was referred to in our last issue. Mr. Foote's special appeal on behalf of the Company also stands over, at least until next week.

Those who are in the habit of attending the lectures at the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham Court-road, will please note that it is closed for this evening (May 26), generally in consequence of the holiday, and particularly in consequence of the N. S. S. Conference.

Delegates and visitors to the N. S. S. Conference at Glasgow to-day (Whit-Sunday) will please note that Mr. John Allan, of 7 Kenmore-street, Pollokshields, the secretary of the Reception Committee, will have detachments at all Glasgow stations meeting the excursion and English trains, from 8 o'clock in the morning till late in the evening. Members thus appointed will wear a badge with the old Northampton colors. Visitors who arrive before 8 o'clock in the morning, or who arrive later in the day but happen to miss the Glasgow friends at the station, should go on to the Secular Hall, 110 Brunswick-street, near the municipal law courts. The hall will be open all Saturday.

Those who intend joining the party to visit the Exhibition on Monday are requested to meet at Scott's Monument, George Square, at 10 a.m. They will have an opportunity of seeing many rare and interesting exhibits. Over a million people have already visited the great show, and this should testify to its merits. In the art galleries may be seen the originals of many of Burns's poems, not the least fascinating of which is the manuscript of "Holy Willie's Prayer." Visitors staying over Monday will be able to take trips amidst the splendid Clyde scenery; and, if they have a taste for aquatic sports, they will have an opportunity of seeing the American Cup Challenger, Shamrock II., competing in the yacht races.

The evening public meeting in connection with the Conference will be held in the Waterloo Rooms, further west than the Secular Hall, and not far from the Central Station. The large hall there is capable of seating about fifteen hundred people, and as the city has been well billed there will doubtless be a good audience in spite of all drawbacks.

Glasgow is not an easy place to get food and drink in on the blessed Sabbath. A lunch has therefore been arranged for at the North British Station Hotel on Sunday at 1 o'clock, between the morning and afternoon sessions of the Conference. Delegates and visitors who wish to sit down at this repast should communicate by Saturday morning at the latest with Mr. T. Robertson, 1 Battlefield-crescent, Langside, Glasgow.

Mr. Charles Watts's lecture at Chesterfield on the Delusions of Spiritualism seems to have been a great success. The hall was crowded, and many Spiritualists were present, some of whom took part in the discussion that followed the lecture. The chair was occupied by Mr. B. Douglas, J.P., who professed himself a friend of free investigation and discussion. Mr. G. H. Bebbings, the well-known Spiritualist, challenged Mr. Watts to a two-nights' debate, and the challenge was accepted amidst applause. A good report of the meeting appeared in the *Derbyshire Courier*. Order appears to have been maintained until the vote of thanks was passed to the Chairman. But, according to the *Courier*, a number of persons remained in the room for a considerable time, and "the feeling became so warm that in one case blows were exchanged." Pugilistic debaters ought not to attend such meetings.

The Macclesfield School Board has decided to brave the law as laid down in the Cockerton appeal. Its French and German evening classes are to be carried on through the summer, in spite of the Local Government auditor and the Board of Education. If other School Boards revolted in the same way, the Tory bigotry against free education would soon be defeated.

Hitherto the Training Colleges for Teachers have all been in the hands of church or chapel people. In every one of them a profession of the Christian religion has had to be made, and every student has had to declare himself a member of some denomination. This is one of the greatest evils of our education system, and we are happy to see that an improvement is sought to be made by the London County Council, which intends establishing, under its own control, a Day Training College for Teachers in connection with the University of London. A start will be made in October, 1902, with 100 selected students, at an estimated cost of £2,800 a

year, which will be defrayed from the funds which the Council may annually devote to technical education.

The Huddersfield Branch sends us its Annual Report and Balance-Sheet. We are glad to see that the balance due to the Treasurer has been reduced by one half, and that now the war fever is abating the Committee are "arranging a more extensive program for the coming winter."

Mr. A. B. Moss addressed two large open-air meetings on Sunday at Battersea Park and Mile End. Mr. Moss's official duties will unfortunately prevent him from attending the N. S. S. Conference.

The Twentieth Century Edition of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* is still selling well. It is a wonderful sixpennyworth, and Freethinkers should do their best to put it into general circulation. Copies for distribution can be obtained at the Free-thought Publishing Company's shop at the price of 4s. 6d. per dozen, but not less than half a dozen can be supplied at that rate. A thousand Freethinkers might very easily give away several thousands of copies amongst their friends and acquaintances, and incalculable good might be done in this way. Few men write like Paine, but it is not difficult to find him readers, and the cost of doing so is now reduced to a minimum.

Mr. Cohen's little volume on *Foreign Missions* might also be lent about by Freethinkers after they have read it themselves. It is replete with important information, and should be a veritable eye-opener to those who believe in the efficacy of missions to the heathen.

Death of Thomas Thompson, of North Shields.

A WELL-KNOWN and earnest worker for Freethought and all progressive movements in the North and South Shields district during the past fifty years was Mr. Thomas Thompson, who died on Thursday, May 16, at the residence of his son-in-law, Mr. J. W. Duncan, 47 Borough-road, North Shields. Mr. Thompson was born at Newcastle in 1828, and early in life was left an orphan to fight the battle of life practically single-handed. He became a canvas-weaver to trade, but was victimised on account of disputes; started business as a boot-and-shoe dealer, from which he retired about eight years ago. A willing advocate of the people's cause, much of his time was always devoted to public work, to the detriment of his business and private interests.

While quite a lad he joined the Chartist movement, and was sent as a delegate from the North of England to the London Convention. In later years he took a prominent part in Liberal and Radical progress in the Borough of Tynemouth. A staunch Republican and Freethinker, he was associated for over fifty years with the temperance movement in the locality. An advocate of compulsory education, he was returned to the local School Board at the second election in 1875, in the place of a reverend gentleman. For many years Mr. Thompson was always ready to lend his assistance to the local Branch of the National Secular Society, delivering lectures, attending debating classes, or giving popular addresses at general gatherings, picnics, etc. A hero worshipper as well as a hero, he was eloquent in praise of the leaders of the people. Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and Foote, with other advocates of free speech and free thought, were strongly recommended to all who came within reach of his powerful voice. His activity and enthusiasm were a stimulant and an encouragement to all who heard him. To meet him was to admire and respect him; and to know him, to love and revere him. Even those who differed from him most could not find an ill word to speak of him. That he worked too hard was the strongest complaint ever heard against him. All in all, he was a credit to the cause of Freethought.

For the last twelve months he had been much troubled in health, but through all bore his sufferings patiently and manfully, calmly expressing his desire for a Secular Burial Service in accordance with his life-long principles. The ceremony took place on Sunday last at Preston Cemetery, in the presence of a large gathering of Liberals, Good Templars, Secularists, and friends, including a number of men taking prominent parts in the public life of the Tyneside district. Mr. W. R. Bow read Austin Holyoake's beautiful Service, after which addresses were delivered by Mr. R. Chapman, secretary of the South Shields Branch, on behalf of the Secularists; County Councillor J. R. Hogg, on behalf of the temperance societies; and Councillor J. Robinson, on behalf of the Liberals. Highly appreciative notices of Mr. Thompson appeared in all the local papers, and an account of his burial as a Secularist, with lengthy details, in the *Shields Gazette* and *Shields Daily News*.

R. C.

Gladly will every truth-seeker change his conduct when convinced of sin, for he injures himself who abides in his error.—*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*.

A Gentle Ironist.

"Quand l'absurde est outré, l'on lui fait trop d'honneur,
De vouloir, par raison, combattre son erreur;
Enchérir est plus court, sans s'échauffer la bile."

—LAFONTAINE.

I CANNOT enjoy a good thing unreservedly unless I share it with someone, and the more one shares a good book the bigger one's own share in it grows. Last week I read *In His Own Image*, and was vastly pleased. It is not that the stories made one laugh, they hardly did that; but that their effect was better than laughter, for their light, lambent irony kept one's mental faculties softly bathed in an atmosphere of smiles; and a pleasant alertness of outlook for the unexpected, for the sly allusion, for the fine point of a good-tempered wit became easy to maintain, being so liberally rewarded. The writer of these stories ought to know James Thomson's *Satires and Profanities*, and probably does; and yet outwardly the *Satires* and *In His Own Image* have little to suggest this; yet essentially—and here and there incidentally—they seem *en rapport*. James Thomson, and Heine, and Sterne, each is suggested in the atmosphere of these stories, and Frederick Baron Corvo's prose has, at its best and purest moments, a quality not unworthy of comparison with the prose of the three writers I have named above. Moreover, Toto's tales are tinged with such a *naïve*, half-conscious, mild, and mellow blasphemy, that when one considers how good a little Christian-Pagan he is, one cannot resist the desire to hear Toto *viva voce* whilst resting 'neath some shady greenery by the sunny Italian shore. Toto, indeed, asserts that Frat' Innocente-of-the-Nine-Quires is his abounding source from which these stories flow, and he, Toto, but repeats them. Let me sketch one of Toto's shortest *contes mythologique*. It is the story of Lazzaro, and is called *The Four Things Necessary*. Lazzaro is smitten with sores, and avoided or contumeliously treated by everyone, broken in spirit, and longing but for any miserable refuge where he may hide himself and his miseries in quiet. "One morning the grey angel chanced to be looking through his calendar, and found that the life of Lazzaro was to be ended at one hour after the Ave Maria. So his highness gave the usual advice to Lazzaretto, who was the angel-guardian of this Mendicant, and at the first hour of the night Lazzaretto took the soul of Lazzaro in his arms and carried him right up to the gates of Paradise, for he needed none of the fire to cleanse him, having been purified by a more painful Purgatory down in the world."

Now, the soul of Lazzaro, having lost the habit of self-assertion, feels it a piece of presumption to knock at the door of Paradise for admission, and remains there "shivering with unnecessary modesty"; so that, many hours after, his angel-guardian returns, to learn if any accident has happened to Lazzaro's soul, that he has not been admitted to everlasting bliss. He finds Lazzaro shaking with fear, and heartens him, telling him not to be afraid of Sampietro, even if that worthy be in a bad temper; that much trouble must be taken to enter the Regno di Dio; and that Lazzaro should pluck up his courage and demand admission. Lazzaro, however, knocks so feebly that Sampietro, not quite sure of his hearing, opened the gates of pearl but a little way, and asked who was there. Poor Lazzaro was so terrified that his voice failed him, and Sampietro shut the gate again. After a day or two Lazzaro again knocked—this time a little less timidly; but Sampietro, not being sure whether it were the wind or a knock, thought he wouldn't trouble to go down, but looked out of his tower, and, seeing Lazzaro prostrate and shy, called to him that, if he wished to enter, he must knock boldly, or else wait till the gate was opened to some more manly soul. Further, Sampietro said he couldn't be running up and down stairs all day to open the gates to a person unable to make up his mind whether he wanted to come in or not. So Lazzaro lay at the gates for a couple of months, no other souls coming to be admitted. At last the very illustrious Lord Baron Duria perished, and his soul was brought up to the portals of Paradise in great pomp and dignity, for masses had been sung for it, "gum and olibanum at fifty lire a pound" had been burnt to it—no expense, indeed, had been spared, as Sampietro knew; so he arranged for a grand reception.

The gates of heaven were "draped with magenta damask, very gorgeous, and with festoons of lace and muslin curtains, blue and white and yellow"; the floor was strewn with bay and box, and a grand cut-glass chandelier, holding many hundred tapers, was suspended from the centre of the archway. On the Lord Baron's arrival Sampietro chanted: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, to let the very high and very illustrious Lord Baron Duria in. Enter, O very magnificent Lord Baron. Your lordship's servant am I, and I beseech your lordship to look on me with favor. What an honor! what condescension! Does your lordship admire the decorations? Ah, so good of your lordship to praise our humble efforts! We shall always remember this day. Your lordship's mansion has been prepared, and we hope your lordship will be consoled for the loss of your lordship's castle of Duria. Yes! and if there is any improvement or any little comforts your lordship might suggest or require, they shall be attended to. Oh, yes; they shall have our prompt attention."

"And, whilst Sampietro was bowing and abasing himself before the rich Baron, and the rich Baron nodding to Sampietro, the angel-guardian of Lazzaro beckoned through the open gateway, giving him such a sort of look that courage and determination fired Lazzaro, and he arose and walked boldly into the Garden of Paradise, snapping his fingers at the rest."

Even choicer, perhaps, are the stories of *Sampietro's Mamma*, *A Caprice of Some Cherubim*, *The Heresy of Fra Serafico*, and others. But get the book; it is one of the most original published for the last few years, and is to be obtained at all the libraries (my copy came from the "Grosvenor"), from the publisher, Mr. John Lane, and through all respectable booksellers. If, some day, Frederick Baron Corvo were to contribute one of Toto's stories to the columns of the *Freethinker*, I think he would be addressing a body of readers capable of enjoying, at their true value, their most excellent and charming qualities.

SAINT-JEAN.

Man His Own Providence.

MAN BEGAN IN UTTER AND ABYSMAL IGNORANCE, WITH UNTRAINED FACULTIES, AND WHAT HE KNOWS HE HAS LEARNED WITHOUT TEACHER OR GUIDE FROM THE SKIES—HE HALTED IN KNOWLEDGE WHEN HE MADE RELIGION—THOMAS PAINE'S SAYING ABOUT REVELATION.

ONE marvels at the stupidity and the ignorance of the world, and he marvels none the less at its knowledge and wisdom. He is a careful observer who can see enough of this various and ample world to strike a fair and just average. Most men are under the necessity of taking narrow and limited views; they are like one watching from the window of a tower, and can see but one landscape—there is before them but one view. The habit and routine of our life tend to restrict our vision; purposes that are worthy and aims that are high and noble are often manifested by the one-sided looker. Paul announced it as his determination to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. That single view shared by all would have kept the world in night. John Brown saw nothing but the slave and his chains. There are some women in Kansas that can see nothing but joints. There are public teachers in the political world who persist in seeing but one thing at a time; it may be an injunction, it may be the question of finance, it may be an octopus—whatever that may be.

ONE-SIDED VIEWS OF LIFE.

In the higher fields of thought the one-sidedness appears. There are those in the realm of philosophy who consider the question of fate; they know the force of heredity; they contemplate tendencies that come with us into life; they reason, and profoundly, about the inevitable connection between everything that is and all that has been, and they arrive at the conclusion that there is no such thing as freedom: all is fated, all is determined. On the other hand, there are those who contemplate the power of human volition, the wide variety open to individual choice; they look upon the

power of self-determination, and they reach the conclusion that there is no such thing as fate; that all is subject to the individual freedom. Or, upon another question in philosophy, some reason that, since the Infinite is all and within all, there is nothing but the Infinite; all beside is a passing or transient manifestation of himself; while, on the other hand, there are those who say that the Infinite is so vague and evanescent, so undiscoverable, invisible, gaseous; that matter is so compulsory, and the human being is so much of this world; that laws are so supreme; that there is nothing else but matter and man and nature's laws. In both these views there are the good and the bad; each is right in a limited sense, and in a limited sense each is wrong. None of us are wide enough in our seeing to comprehend all of the horizon of existence; none of us view life and the world from a summit so high as to bring all within the field of our vision. The particular and one-sided view has its use in the world, but the wise man is he who finds, if possible, an average; he makes an allowance for the particular and the one-sided, and arranges it in harmonious relation with the whole.

PRIMITIVE DISADVANTAGES.

The greatest marvel in this world is that there are knowledge and wisdom when we remember how man began in utter and abysmal ignorance—that he knew nothing whatever about himself or the world. He was no more than a child; he was brutal and gross; he had no trained faculties; he could not observe and compare; he had no power of consecutive thought; there is ground for believing that there was a time when he had little, if any, language; he spoke with signs, and used symbols and figures. It was necessary for him not only to learn the power of thinking, but it was necessary for him to learn the power of speech; he must form words; he must build up the marvellous structure of human language. He began in ignorance and night, and there is no marvel so great as that which appears when one contemplates the vast advance man has made in the knowledge of himself and of his world. Imagine the race upon the earth without any knowledge even of food; impelled by hunger, they must take something and eat; it was roots or fruits or nuts, or whatever they found ready at nature's board. They had no knowledge of producing articles of food. When they came to eat flesh, they had no knowledge of fire or of its uses. No one knows how or when man began to change food with fire.

Man knew nothing about clothing, or how to make it; the only source of his covering was the skin of wild beasts. He knew nothing about sanitary laws, nothing about the preservation of health; he was a prey not only to his ignorant fears, but to the conditions that he created around him. The beasts began life with vastly more knowledge than did man; they came with some strange power of instinct; they came already clad; they did not need to devise clothes; they came with a knowledge of food that was suitable and proper for them; they came with a certain knowledge of architecture and a little knowledge of husbandry, and they began at once such a career as the world afforded them of happiness and content. Man had all of these things to learn, and he had no teacher, no guide from the skies. He must come out of his ignorance by his own efforts.

NEGLECTED BY THE "BEING" WHO MADE HIM.

One would imagine that, when the Being made man (if he was made by a Being), the great Author would have at least given him a primer of a language; that he would have at least put down in the garden some child's blocks, and taught him to read, to spell, to think. One would imagine that he would have given him certain laws about taking care of his body, certain knowledge about nature's laws, that he might not, out of his ignorance, people the darkness with fears; but there is no evidence that man had any such aid. So man was left, through thousands upon thousands of years, to stumble blindly, to struggle with pathetic helplessness, and at last to attain to the broad light of the full day of knowledge. Nature, or God, seems to have had confidence that man, possessing reason, would not only develop it, but would become wise enough to use it to ameliorate, to mount, to discover for himself out of the darkness of night and

superstition whatever was necessary for his higher and his permanent good. Such being the case, it must be inferred that whatever light was given to man was given as a universal endowment—that is to say, as reason. If it had been given to a few, it could not have been universal. If it had been given to a few, it would have become necessary for that few to become the teachers of the world; but, having been universally conferred, humanity became, by the terms of its possession of reason, its own savior. It could not look to the exceptional individuals nor the exalted few; it must rely solely upon itself.

BIRTH OF RELIGIOUS THEORIES.

The religious theories had their birth in that time when man was first awakening to knowledge; they arose partly from a spirit of enthusiasm and partly out of a spirit of despair. When man began to understand a little about the vastness and extent of his world, about the majesty of the forces of nature, he began to conceive of a being that would exemplify or personate these forces; and, when he had imagined a being like that, he found it the easiest way of all to refer all events, all operations of the world and its life, to that power as its direct source. Man did not progress in knowledge; he halted when he made religion. Religion did not come as a result of the illumination; it came as the result of the too dazzling light of knowledge that temporarily blinded man; and, after the religious theories had been adopted and were promulgated, all advance in knowledge stopped, because they had explained everything; they had left nothing else to be found out; they had walled around the narrow and limited field of knowledge, and pronounced the frightful curse upon anyone who should say the wall did not enclose all, or who should climb upon the ladder of discovery and seek to over-peek its forbidding heights.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

(To be continued.)

Correspondence.

A MORAL ATHEIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—When dealing with the expressed reasons for action, it is well to remember that, whatever the current interpretations of human activities may be, such interpretations must ultimately devolve upon considerations of man's true nature, and its corresponding relations to environment. Concerning the nature of the individual there can be said to be but two definite positions—first, that he is of dual nature; second, that he is wholly of material organisation. The first position, it is hardly necessary to add, represents the basis of the Christian view of man as a responsible being; while among those who array themselves as opponents to theology, in support of the latter position, are those who are known as Secularists—that is, Secularism claims man to be entirely the product of evolution, the inevitable result of his environings; and therefore the name Secularist can only apply truly to one whose interpretations of the actions of individuals are consistent with this position. Judged by this standard, the interpretations advanced by Mr. Charles Watts in his writings would by no means establish him as a supporter of Secularism, and it is for the purpose of showing this that I take, as conveniently embodying his general moral teachings, his article on "Ethical Confusion" in the *Freethinker* for September 16, 1900. In the article in question many statements are made which, far from constituting a defence of Secularism and a refutation of orthodox principles, really go to show how greatly Mr. Watts lays himself open to Christian claims. He says: "It is not correct to allege that we, as Secularists, set up political power.....as the 'means of making society happy and just.' Undoubtedly such means are useful in progressive work. But the Secular Society is not a political organisation."

Now, Secularism, as a reaction against theology, cannot possibly treat the individual from otherwise than a general or social standpoint, or recognise other means than political power as of any utility in bringing about social reform. As an exposition of the material structure of man, and the natural basis of all his activities, it considers him as the concrete expression of the summed-up operations of his physical and social environings; and to refer to the general

conditions of development for the explanations of the individual's characteristics is to repudiate the possibility of there ever being changes in his organism without the moving causes in his environment. Consequently, in thus holding the impossibility of the individual being what he is apart from such environings, the Secular Society pledges itself in favor of the secular control of all social institutions and general resources, on the principle that, to improve the individual, it is necessary to alter the social structure by systematically removing all such influences that hinder development and promoting all such conditions that favor development. On the other hand, Christianity, in claiming man to be a free agent, treats progress from an individual standpoint; and it is here that Mr. Watts steps inside the Christian religion. In denying, as he does, that changes in the political institutions or alterations in the general conditions of existence are the only mediums through which the individual can be attacked, he lends himself to the position which holds the necessity of attacking the individual first, for the purpose of inducing individual effort in the production of self-development, and so bringing about the reform of society through the morality of its members. He goes on to say that "vice should be shunned because it is wrong to individuals, and also to society, to indulge in it; and that virtue should be practised because it is the duty of all to assist, both by precept and example, to elevate the human family." And if this does not constitute an appeal to the individual, if this does not mean that the development or welfare of society will have to come by the discontinuance of vice and the practise of virtue on the part of its members, what does it mean?

Mr. Watts, however, somehow mixes the two positions up, and comes a regular cropper in consequence. He involves himself in the paradox that nature constitutes, on lines of natural selection, the originator, the director, and altogether the tribunal of morality; for, in giving what he considers to be Secular teachings, he says that "there are in nature certain laws, independent of any supposed supernatural religion, and that what we term the 'moral state' is one wherein man is enabled to recognise the wisdom of compliance with such laws. It is quite true that men may refuse to obey the moral law; but, if they do, they must suffer in consequence." In thus attempting to retain religious fundamentals apart from their full corollary, in thus trying to reconcile morality with the Secular position that men's actions are determined by natural law, Mr. Watts endeavors to transfer to nature all those supernatural qualities that he, in his regard for the title of Secularist, has believed it his duty to object to if applied to God by others.

Now, inasmuch as the position of man's dual nature is the only safe standpoint from which we can regard morality, we shall further see that Mr. Watts, judged purely in his capacity as a moralist, supplies his own contradiction to the statement of his just quoted. Indeed, his assertions that "Secularists do 'lay down good character and right conduct as the starting-point of all social reform,'" and teach "that right conduct is of supreme importance," are really so many expressions on his part of the idea that the causes of action are to be sought for in the individual and not in his environings. For would Mr. Watts proclaim the supreme importance of right conduct, etc., if he thought that all our actions were essentially involuntary—if he held, for instance, that the one who is nurtured amidst crime and poverty has no power in himself to defy and rise above the influences of his sordid surroundings? Would he recognise individual merit in the "man of honor," or see immorality in the criminal, if he considered that both were equally incapable of controlling themselves? In fine, would he talk about "character," "conduct," and also "vice," "virtue," and "duty," if he was confident that our consciousness owed its traits and very existence to a material environment, and could only retain such traits so long as the demands of that environment continued to favor their existence? On the contrary, the very use of such terms is sufficient to show an attachment of intrinsic value to mentality. We do not praise a shoe for fitting well, or a flower for having a pleasant odor; neither do we blame a shoe for pinching, or a flower for losing its petals, a ship for sinking, or a machine for not working. And why not? Simply because we should consider it absurd to regard the ship or the machine as anything else but automata, or to endow the shoe or the flower with conscious control. Anyone who holds man to be responsible for the results of his actions upon others cannot hold that he has no control over his own actions; for to say that in society certain actions are moral or immoral, and to hold that the one who performs such actions is, considered by himself, unmoral, would be to say that cause and effect have nothing in common. The individual, regarded as an integral part of natural sequence, could no more partake of moral responsibility than the ship, the machine, etc.; but, taken as a moral or free agent, he constitutes an unanswerable refutation of the argument for indissoluble connection between human activities and material environment. So far as he is concerned, the possession of a free will is the only element which can go to constitute him a moral and responsible agent. In other words, to be responsible is to be dual in our nature; for responsibility implies freedom to act, and there must be the necessary concomitance of freedom of action and conscious control.

In his position as an exponent of morality, therefore, Mr. Watts defends that which can only be referable to a factor far above the unconscious mechanism of a universe such as Secularists postulate; for, as I have shown, if we are moral beings, the guarantee for our actions cannot come from without, inasmuch as "virtue" and "vice" can only exist through the entire freedom of conscious motives in determining action. It would be more than difficult to decide, for example, how much Mr. Watts's statement, "There is in the mind of every properly-constituted person an appreciation of right and a detestation of wrong," contains that differs from this position, the Christian one, that, through our power to the utilise the right and avoid the wrong, we have in us the means of our own salvation, or that is any way dangerous to the doctrine of rewards and punishments hereafter.

T. W. KINGHAM.

"THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I entirely agree with "E. G. G." when he says I have reason to be "grateful" for the hospitality of your columns. But I differ from him altogether when he seems to think a courteous sceptical letter would not be admitted by a religious newspaper. Let him make trial. With regard to your permission "to convert your readers," permit me to say I have no unworthy motive. I have not had for years a penny piece from any church or religious society; I only wish to win them to my own spiritual knowledge.

"Ex-Acolyte" misrepresents me terribly in the beginning of his letter, when he says I argue "for the truth of Christianity because it has the majority of adherents." He gives no quotation to show I did aught so absurd, and I believe your readers will agree with me when I say that, if he cannot produce evidence that his accusation is true, he owes it to himself to retract his words. Here is what I wrote: "Forty-nine out of every fifty respectable Englishmen are professing Christians; when a man, then, who belongs to the fiftieth position revises the preponderating majority as imbecile hypocrites, it is clear he employs an unusual method of reasoning." It is plain that what I argue here is merely that Mr. Watts reasons after an unusual fashion, and to this I adhere. "Ex-Acolyte" will, I hope, excuse me for thinking the argumentation of the rest of his letter is on a level with what I have given.

My final remarks on Mr. Watts will be brief. Paragraph five begins: "The imperfection of Christ is evidenced by the fact that He was subject to such human weaknesses as hunger, anger, and petty passion." Such language betrays strange notions of perfection. When Christ assumed humanity He became like unto us in all points, sin only excepted, and His assumption would not have been perfect had he been without a tendency to hunger. In sober truth, a being who was never hungry would not have been a man. Further, the theory that "anger" is a weakness is at variance with all philosophy. Anger, at certain times, is clearly a virtue. A man who does not feel anger at beholding oppression, hypocrisy, and so forth, is a very defective character. As regards Christ being subject to "petty passion," no evidence is offered, and I am quite sure none can be produced. Should Mr. Watts attempt to prove his words, I pledge myself (with your permission) to refute whatever he may advance. Next we are told Christ "failed to practise His own teaching." This objection springs from deliberately ignoring Gospel information that Christ was both God and man. Thus He forbade us to call neighbors "fools," because we cannot read their hearts, while He Himself, the searcher of hearts and our future judge, condemned persons as "fools" when a proper occasion arose. Thus He anticipates for their warning the judgment awaiting them should they not repent. The weakness of the objection lies in holding that Christ and we are ever to be guided by the same rule of propriety. Lastly, we have a shocking blunder founded on Christ's saying no one could be His disciple, if he "hate not his father and mother," etc. The word hate ever meant intense dislike, but it formerly had in addition the meaning of loving less. Thus, we learn Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. This implies Leah was loved, but in a less degree, and subsequent history shows Jacob never failed to show her love and respect. Still, in the next verse we are told God saw she was hated (Gen. xxix. 30, 31). Now, that hate in Luke is used in the sense of loving less is clear from the parallel passage which runs, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. x. 37). Yea, further, it is clear from the verse itself, when it is read with a critical eye, for it is added he must hate "his own life also" (Luke xiv. 26). It would be a strange way of collecting disciples to tell them they must intensely dislike their own life; the result of such teaching would be suicide, and not discipleship. But, when we understand disciples should love their own lives less than Christ, the meaning is plain—viz., that, if their witness should lead to martyrdom, they are not to shrink.

Paragraph six requires no long discussion. The reference to Christ's method of speaking to the Virgin Mary springs from the error, already pointed out, of ignoring that, according to the Gospel, He was both God and man. As to the miracles of judgment on the fig tree and the swine, I am prepared,

should I hear my remarks would be welcome (not otherwise), to show Christ's conduct on both occasions was worthy of a Divine Being.

Paragraph seven may be, I think, safely left to answer itself.
(REV.) HENRY J. ALCOCK.

"THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Alcock says: "In every part of the world are men who will testify that Christ's influence upon their will has enabled them to break the bondage of sin." I beg to submit, sir, for your correspondent's explanation, two concrete cases where Christ was said to have broken such bondage, but where it was ultimately proven that "sin" was finally victorious. I will give the names of the victims. The facts are well known in the religious world, but have always been suppressed by the Christian press and by the pulpit.

Case No. 1.—George Frederick Cook, originally a showman, gave way to drink, became victim of *delirium tremens*, laid up in Yeovil Hospital, laid hold of and "converted" there by Salvation Army, reformed, and became foremost temperance orator in England. Wherever he went halls were crowded; ministers sat on his platforms and lent their choirs to sing at his lectures. I have heard him myself, and can safely say he was one of the foremost orators of the day. A masterly and thrilling platform speaker (there are only two men in England to-day, of whom Mr. G. W. Foote is one, with whom I should class him), he carried his audiences completely with him; and on the last night of every mission that he held he gave "The Story of His Life," and evidenced himself as a living witness to Christ's power to break the most awful bondage that could enslave a human being, and make him once more a free man.

Now mark the sequel. That man, who had caused thousands to sign the pledge, who had publicly, in every part of England, testified that Christ had saved him from the tyranny and slavery of drink, died the death of a *drunken suicide* in a public-house in an out-of-the-way village. His old enemy had found him out, and, undoubtedly, shame at the fact led him in his remorse to cut his throat, and he died with a watch under his pillow that had been "presented to him for conspicuous success in a Gospel Temperance Mission." What irony! What a reflection on the Christ whose loyal servant he had been!

Case No. 2.—The Rev. R. Wilberforce Starr was one of the most brilliant young ministers the Wesleys ever had. As a preacher, lecturer, and writer, he was unique. He became addicted to drink, and was turned out of the ministry. In one of his sane intervals he wrote a most interesting *Life of Peter Mackenzie*. Describing the funeral of that remarkable man, he said (and if ever a man prayed R. W. Starr prayed then): "Let my end be like his."

But what was the end of this gifted and popular minister? Only a few months later he was dangling at the end of a suicide's rope! Where was that "power of Christ"?

Finally, Mr. Alcock says forty-nine out of every fifty "respectable" Englishmen are professing Christians! How preposterous! Let him take the journalists, doctors, and lawyers of London for a start, and see how many Christians he will find. Moreover, let him explain this very curious fact: In my own immediate and local circle of acquaintances I know twelve persons who six years ago were Christians. To-day they are all Agnostics—practically Atheists. They had none or very little intercommunication; it is simply the outcome of earnest thought and a sincere desire to get at the truth that has led them to reject the absurd theological dogmas of Christianity. And this process of emancipation is going on everywhere. The Churches are eaten up with internal decay, and the parsons are at their wits' end to know what to do next.

A. E. B.

WHAT IS GOD?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I beg to thank the Rev. J. J. B. Coles for his answer to my question—viz., "I believe God is omniscient, omnipotent, and that he can make His presence felt anywhere and everywhere." This much, in effect, I had gathered from his remarks in the Athenæum Hall. It is difficult to pin a theologian like Mr. Coles to spoken words, but his written statement removes all doubt in the matter of his professed belief in his "long-suffering God." His belief is no proof of the existence of so wicked and cruel a monster as his God must be. An omniscient demon, with all the power to prevent it, has permitted countless millions of human beings to be tortured to death in *His name*—a demon in whose name are committed the ghastly deeds and rapine and blood in China, South Africa, and elsewhere. If such a God as Mr. Coles professes to believe in exists, all the evil in the world must either be the result of *His* neglect to guide mankind aright, or of *His* demoniacal nature in delighting in the blood and tears of the innocent—a proposition that, I humbly submit, will successfully withstand all the learned theological lumber Mr. Coles may be able to launch against it.

J. R. WEBLEY.

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.): Closed for Whitsun.

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Professor Earl Barnes, "Country versus City Education."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. Heaford, "God, Man, and the Bible."

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, J. W. Cox.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, R. P. Edwards, "Is Belief in God Reasonable?"

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, J. W. Cox; 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "The Gospel of Atheism."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, A. B. Moss, "The Clergy and Christianity."

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, A. B. Moss, "The Mission of Freethought."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7.30, W. Heaford, "Prayer, Providence, and God."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Davies, "Thomas Paine"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "The Idols of Faith"; 7, E. White, "The Star of Bethlehem."

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "Mark Twain's Greeting to the New Century"; 7.15, S. E. Easton, "Can Man by Searching Find Out God?" May 29, at 8.15, E. White.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Is there a God?"

VICTORIA PARK: 3.15, F. Davies, "Thomas Paine."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—Every Wednesday in the Bull Ring at 8; Fridays at Nechell's Green at 8.

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): National Secular Society's Conference.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, A lecture.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Pleasant Sunday evening—Vocal and Instrumental Music, Recitations, etc.

Lecturer's Engagements

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