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# Freethinker

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## God in South Africa.

PRESIDENT KRUGER reaffirmed the other day his belief in the protection of Providence. God was still fighting on the side of the Boers, he said; otherwise how was it conceivable that fifteen or twenty thousand farmers could hold their own against the overwhelming forces (from a material point of view) that were arrayed against them? If that was not the hand of God, what was it?

We have a certain amount of belief in President Kruger's religious sincerity. No doubt he has some belief that what he said was true. But he is far too well-informed and shrewd to believe it without very large qualifications. He must be well aware of the immense difficulties the British have in operating over so vast a field; he must understand that guerilla warfare in such a country, and in such conditions, is necessarily an almost endless business; and he must know that it would take half a million soldiers a very long time to chase a comparatively few enemies, broken up into small bodies, over thousands of square miles of territory, and finally to run them all to earth.

There is really no more reason to believe that God is helping the Boers against the British than that he helped the Swiss against Napoleon. The mountaineers in their fastnesses gave the Conqueror of Europe more trouble than any of the trained armies he had ever encountered, but he beat them down in the end, and proved the truth of his own epigram that Providence is always on the side (other things being equal, of course) of the biggest battalions.

If God were helping the Boers he would surely do so more decisively. Merely to enable them to hold out is unworthy of Omnipotence. God could deal with the British legions as he is said to have dealt with the hosts of Sennacherib. He could send his angel of death to slay myriads of them in one night—"And when they awoke in the morning, lo, they were all dead men." That would be a convincing manifestation of his power. But one fails to trace the hand of Almighty Wisdom in the tragi-comedy of hide-and-seek which is being played in South Africa.

No man in his senses—not even President Kruger—can possibly have any doubt as to what must be the end of this sickening struggle. Numbers and resources must tell in the long run. There are already some twenty thousand Boer prisoners, the number is steadily increasing week by week, and the finish of the struggle is thus only a question of arithmetic. As for the idea of European intervention, it is one of the idlest conceivable. It requires the greatest simplicity to suppose that any European Power is going to try conclusions on sea with the British Navy—for that is what it must come to—for the sake of any fine sentiment. Moreover, it is rather odd to look for help to the Powers that have lately been making a hell in China. No doubt there are two sides to this quarrel, and it is not our intention to discuss either;

but it must be admitted that the Boers have not been treated like the Chinese. They have had to suffer the unavoidable evils of war—which are awful enough; but they have not been killed in cold blood, their children have not been massacred, and their women have not been outraged. On the whole, it seems that Tommy Atkins and the Boers get on very well together in the intervals of their efforts to annihilate each other according to the rules of war.

God has not protected his children in China, and he is not protecting his children in South Africa. He lets his offspring fight out their quarrels to the bitter end, and hobnobs at last with the winner. But if he were in an active and charitable mood, he might well intervene to bring this unhappy struggle to a close, and to restore peace on lines of reason and equity. How he could do this is not *our* problem. It is *his* problem. And if he cannot settle it, he should call to his aid the counsels of his representatives in this country, who are paid millions a year on the supposition that they are wiser than other people.

War is every man's trouble, and peace is every man's concern. The people of this country should therefore ask themselves whether it is not possible to stop this wretched (and undignified) strife in South Africa. There seems only one point which the majority of the British nation consider vital—namely, that such a difficulty must not arise again, and that only one sovereign flag must henceforth fly in South Africa. Whether this is right or wrong, it is apparently what the nation has made up its mind to. Taking this for granted, however, is it beyond the wit of man to devise a settlement whereby the Boers may enjoy the utmost self-government that is compatible with the flying of the Union Jack? Were they once disarmed, would their self-government, subject to the British Crown, be any real danger to Cape Colony, to Natal, or to the integrity of the British Empire? If this question can be honestly answered in the negative, it becomes the duty of everyone who accepts that answer to insist on such conditions of peace being offered to the Boers.

Politicians with axes to grind, and so-called statesmen who find war an excellent device for staving off domestic reforms, will naturally oppose such a settlement. All along we have foreseen this obstacle, and for that reason we have felt that perhaps the best way to deal with the South African question was to hand it over to a soldier. The politicians could go on buzzing again when he had finished. Indeed, it looks as though Lord Kitchener would have got very near a settlement some weeks ago if he had not been checked by political gentlemen at home who have probably less than his capacity as well as an inferior view of the actual situation. God Almighty lost a grand opportunity then. Perhaps he is getting feeble and languid in his old age. Perhaps he does not like Lord Kitchener. That commander has no respect for the tombs of the prophets, and keeps Christian missionaries out of Arab colleges. Still, the Lord might waive a point or two when the interests at stake are so serious.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Secularism and Christianity Contrasted.

THE recent Conference of the National Secular Society in Glasgow suggests the advantage of once more contrasting the relative advantages of Secularism and Christianity. Among the many results of our Free-thought annual gatherings none should be more striking than the renewed vigor with which they inspire those who take part therein. The path of Secular progress is strewn with difficulties, yet those who pursue it are buoyed up in their work by the belief that, if ever the world is to be regenerated from our present theological and social evils, it must be through the influence of Secular teachings. The great contrast between Secularism and Christianity is that, while the former deals with the realities of life, the latter wastes its time upon speculations as to a future existence which to us is unknown. What has been the result of this Christian policy? The present condition of society, with its numerous deplorable features, supplies the answer. We have had more than two thousand years of the rule of Christian theology, and what do we discover as the leading drawbacks in our very midst? Why, evils that would not, judging from experience, exist if Secular philosophy had had the same opportunities which Christianity has possessed. The evils we refer to are: a lack of real physical comfort among the masses of the people; a thoroughly unhealthy moral tone, no less in the religious than in the political and commercial world; and an air of artificiality permeating most phases of society. Both in public and private life the real is discarded for the imaginary, and the shadow is accepted in lieu of the substance. Principle is sacrificed to selfish interest, and fidelity to conviction is made subordinate to popular favor. Theological professions we have in abundance; but a marked inconsistency robs them of true ethical potency. The blessings of peace are preached, while the humane observer stands aghast at the world's record of the blood and carnage of a brutal warfare. The brotherhood of man is loudly proclaimed at the same time that bonds are being severed by the monopoly of wealth and the false ideas associated with class distinctions. The poor are blessed by the teachings of theology and cursed by the laws and customs fostered and defended by the Church and its priests. Might takes the place of right, falsehood is substituted for truth, and tyranny stands for justice.

Secularism, with its practical love of knowledge and its reliance upon reason, offers a striking contrast to Christianity, with its dependence on faith and its reliance on the "Holy Spirit" to guide its devotees. Knowledge is at the present time diffused over a larger surface in society than it ever was before. Yet, unfortunately, through indolence or inability, or some other cause, the great mass of mankind are content to skim lightly over its surface, leaving the sweets of its inner mysteries untasted. Such persons might be compared to tourists who would content themselves with congregating upon the frontiers of a strange country, but do not care to penetrate into the interior. It is to be regretted that Christian clergymen of nearly all denominations have never sufficiently encouraged the acquirement of secular knowledge among their followers. Hence we find that among church-goers information upon the great questions of science and philosophy is extremely superficial. As a rule, men who accept the orthodox faith are not thinkers: thinking is a process which, being laborious, becomes tiresome and fatiguing to all but a few who have cultivated their intellectual powers to such a degree as to render it easy and agreeable. The consequence is, that for every orthodox believer who possesses anything like profound information upon any particular topic there are hundreds who simply repeat other men's opinions, having none of their own, nor any real material stored in their minds out of which such could be manufactured. Judging from the history of the Church, there is no doubt that too many of the exponents of Christianity have always deemed general ignorance the most fertile soil in which to sow their seed. They knew to their cost that knowledge was a power which, when properly exercised, did not tend to enhance their theories. Among Secularists, on the contrary, the great object

has been to obtain, as far as possible, a knowledge of the causes of good and evil, and to use that knowledge for the purpose of securing the greatest possible liberty and happiness for the individual and also for the general community.

In contrasting the two systems, it must not be overlooked that Christian faith is based upon certain conjectures as to the future, while Secular faith rests upon experience of past and present. As to which of the two has been, and still is, the better for the practical duties of daily life it is not difficult to decide. As the homely proverb states, "The burnt child dreads the fire." So, in the primitive ages of society, men had to learn from experience what was good and what was bad for society. In the early stages of national governments nations had to discover what was conducive and what detrimental to the well-being of a State. In literature, science, and art the records of the past ages have been records of continually growing experiences. We are wiser to-day than our fathers were, because we possess all their experiences *plus* our own. Upon the same principle, subsequent generations will be superior to us, inasmuch as they will have additional experience to guide them to what we possess. Our morality is the result, the outcome of experiences, and of wise action based thereon. Society would no longer tolerate the infliction of the tortures of the Inquisition or the intolerant decrees of the Star Chamber. And why? Simply because our social, political, and intellectual experiences have shown us how utterly absurd, cruel, and ridiculous all those past follies have been. What has altered all this? It cannot be said that Christianity, the Bible, and the Church have produced the change. All these orthodox agencies existed amid the human weaknesses and wrongs referred to; but the present improved moral sense did not then obtain, hence the immoral acts whose records disgrace the history of Christian propaganda.

Christianity claims to have an infallible book, yet no two of its manifold sects agree in its interpretation. It is said that such differences are, on points, not essential to Christianity. But, if this were so, why dispute so desperately about them? Why fine, imprison, banish, torture, and put to death, because of them? Why organise wholesale massacres, and engage in bloody wars, whose records are atrociously cruel even for the annals of warfare, on account of these insignificant differences? Lollards and Puritans, Waldenses, Albigenses and Huguenots, Lutherans and Roman Catholics, they were all alike ardent Christians, and their murderers were ardent Christians too. But such things can be no more; but no thanks to orthodoxy: they have receded before the growing spirit of Secularism. The spirit of the sects is just as bitter as of old; but we, whom they slander, have bound them over to keep the peace; they dare not smite, they can only rail at each other. Romanism cries: "Let every man who trusts in his reason be accursed"; while Protestants exclaim: "The Romish Church is the masterpiece of Satan." It is also urged that this alleged infallible book is only infallible in its moral, spiritual, and theological teachings, and, of course, in its narratives of the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. But the narratives differ so among themselves that no amount of ingenious sophistry can reconcile them. No one has hitherto even proved it probable that they were written by the men whose names they bear, or within a century and a-half of the time to which they refer; no one has given valid reason why they should be preferred to a multitude of similar contemporary narratives which the Christians call apocryphal. No Christian can give a reason for accepting the miracles recorded in the Gospels which would not, were he consistent, make him accept the miracles recorded of Brahma, Buddha, Mohammed, and the innumerable miracles of the Romish hagiology, stretching without interruption from the Acts of the Apostles to the acts of our Lady of Lourdes, from the wounds of the risen Christ to the stigmata of Louise Latour. No Christian can prove that all the principal superhuman features in the career of his Christ were not copied from the much older myths of the Hindoo Krishna, these themselves pointing to physical myths far more ancient.

Christianity is essentially inert and stagnant, with its ideal of perfection in the past; Secularism is essentially active and progressive, with its ideal of a loftier and nobler mundane existence in the future. It is chained and riveted to no absurd dogmas; it has no "infallible" book like a millstone round its neck; it is imprisoned in no adamant creeds and formulas. It has no decrees of Popes nor authority of Thirty-nine Articles to retard its intellectual advancement. It refuses to regulate its modern life by the dictums of bygone days. Its mendacity is not fixed to the "rock" of the first century. On the contrary, Secularism is ever growing in thought concurrently with the growth of science; it is always open to the corrections of experience; it holds no theories so tenaciously that it is not ready to fling them away directly facts contradict them. As time rolls on, and the treasures of the universe are revealed by the activity of the human mind, Secular philosophy is ever ready to avail itself of this natural revelation. It assimilates gladly all it can find of good and true in the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, as it does in Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, without burdening itself with what it deems bad and false. It is ever increasing in action with the ever-increasing inter-communication between the various countries of the world, and the ever-increasing common interests of their inhabitants. Its life of life is unintermitted activity and progress.

CHARLES WATTS.

### Christianity's Failures.

THERE is one question that the Christian opponent of Secularism is never tired of putting, and with the answer to which he is, as a matter of course, never satisfied. It is almost certain to transpire in every piece of opposition that is offered, and is propounded with an air of originality and a sense of effectiveness almost pathetic. From the most illiterate vendor of Christian evidences up to the University-trained Church of England minister, the question of "What will you put in its place?" is apparently regarded as one of so much potency as to be certain of flooring the unbeliever when all else has failed. It is useless pointing out to these people that, if Christianity is useless or mischievous, the question of putting something in its place has no relevancy. Christian opposition, like the Christian Deity, is without change, and one can be certain of the same charges and questions continually cropping up, no matter how frequently or how effectively they are met and answered.

The question really takes everything for granted that the Secularist is ready to dispute. It assumes that Christianity is a good and useful thing, and therefore its removal would leave a very serious gap in our lives, which would require to be filled in in some other manner. But this, of course, is precisely what the Secularist is most concerned in denying. He does not believe that Christianity is a good thing, and therefore is not concerned in putting another superstition, of a slightly different character, in the place of the one removed. To him it seems that, if a thing is false or useless or dangerous, to make its real nature plain to all is a good work, and this without it being incumbent upon him to be able to say in what direction truthfulness or usefulness really lies. Of course, the Secularist is both willing and able to indicate in what direction the truth has to be sought, and in what manner the energies now spent on religion ought to be applied. But he is first of all concerned in proving how foolish it is to depend upon theological guidance for the conduct of life, and how disastrous have been the consequences when this has been done.

One could understand and appreciate the pertinacity of the query if Christianity had been uniformly successful in dealing with matters of conduct or of knowledge. But the exact reverse of this has been the case. In every instance where teachings have been based upon theology, and where it has been possible to bring such teachings into sharp contrast with facts, they have been shown to be wrong. The Churches to-day control but a miserable portion of the territory over which they once exercised authority, and the difference in the present and the former extent of their dominion is the measure of their failures and defeats. It may be

interesting, in view of claims so repeatedly set up on behalf of Christianity, to briefly review some of its more notorious and unmistakable failures.

In the physical sciences the defeat and discomfiture of the Churches have been complete. I cannot recall a single instance in which an opinion authoritatively laid down by the great Christian Churches has not been directly negated by the progress of knowledge. They declared the earth was flat, and it was shown to be a globe; stationary, and it was proven to be in motion. Texts of scripture were authoritatively cited by the Fathers of the Church in order to demolish the idea of people living at the Antipodes; their descendants raise huge sums of money for the purpose of converting these supposed non-existent populations. The possibility of calculating the orbits of comets was denounced as absurd and Atheistical; the law of gravitation was sneered at as an attempt to take the reins of government from the hands of God Almighty, uniformity in geology was a doctrine "born of the Devil," evolution was only "an Atheist's dream." Yet in each of these cases, with many others that might be named, Christianity has been a demonstrated failure, and a failure all the more conspicuous because of the manner in which it sought to perpetuate its teachings by the aid of the dungeon, the torture-chamber, and the stake.

As a guide to men in matters of conduct the failure of Christianity has been scarcely less complete, even though not quite so unmistakable. The lamentations of Christian leaders, generation after generation, are alone proof of this. As far back as the date of Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians one can read laments that the Christians were no better (perhaps worse) than their Pagan neighbors. In the Roman Empire it is certain that, so soon as the Christians represented any appreciable proportion of the population, complaints of their conduct were common. Antinomianism was rife, and, if only a tithe of the charges brought against Christians by their fellow believers were true, their conduct reflected little credit upon the religion they believed in. And, coming down to later times, the damning fact is always present that the periods most remarkable for their religious fervor were also noticeable for their extreme looseness of conduct; while, finally, our present state of society—the product of whole generations cradled in Christianity—is a palpable disproof of Christianity's ability to create a reliable moral type.

The plain truth is that Christianity has always been destitute of any scientific conception of the real nature of morality, and, therefore, could not work along lines of the nature of which it has always evinced such profound ignorance. A bundle of precepts does not constitute a moral code, nor will the preaching of homilies ever create a desirable type of character. Conduct is not wholly a matter of a knowledge of nice sounding phrases; it is far more that of material conditions and a healthy nervous system. There is a physical basis of conduct as of life itself, and the recognition of this fact has had to be forced upon organised Christianity by those who were outside its ranks.

Of many groups of virtues Christianity was characteristically deficient. Notably is this the case in what are known as the social virtues. In Roman and Greek ethics the reciprocal duties of the individual and the State, the common obligations of social life, played an important part. In Christianity this was largely ignored, sometimes completely so, and always held a subordinate place. Christianity addressed its message to the individual only. The existence of society, as such, was practically ignored by Jesus, and, with the exception of a single passage of Paul's—taken almost literally from the fifth book of Plato's *Republic*—it is ignored throughout the whole of the New Testament. I do not lay stress here upon the neglect of such fundamental ethical duties as those of truthful speech and other intellectual moralities, also strangely ignored in early Christian literature. I am content to emphasize the fact that the whole of modern scientific sociology has grown up outside of organised Christianity, while all attempts to regulate society in accordance with logical Christian principles have resulted in conspicuous failure.

Nor is it difficult to see why a satisfactory sociology has not been elaborated under Christian influences. Human energy is, like all realisable force, a strictly limited

quantity, and the energy that has been wasted on theology is the exact measure of what the Churches have diverted from more useful channels. It is in this way that the Churches consciously and unconsciously serve as the principal support of all forms of social injustice and tyranny. At a time when young men and women should have their attention directed to the study of prevailing social conditions, and the nature of those forces that influence human nature for good or ill, they are entrapped into a study of theological doctrines and Biblical lore. The conditions of life in the new Jerusalem are impressed upon them as being of far more interest than the conditions of life in English cities and towns, and the mental strength that should be devoted to redressing some of the graver evils of society is wasted in discussing what might be meant by the fantastical stories which go to make up the Christian Scriptures. It is, of course, good for a certain class that this should be so; and one can easily see why the wealthier classes are such liberal patrons of clerical endeavors to keep young people in Sunday-school and Bible class. The money given to keep these institutions going is but a small price to pay for the immunity many forms of injustice enjoy as the result of the Churches keeping the growing intelligence of the nation confined to "safe" subjects.

Even in the sphere of religion Christianity has failed to prove itself a centre of either usefulness or enlightenment. During the whole of its history it has never shed a single ray of light or given birth to a single fruitful suggestion concerning the nature of the one subject over which it has always proclaimed itself a master. Comparative mythology, the study which has really taught men to understand the nature of all religions, has received no help from organised Christianity. All inquiry on this subject has been resisted, and all the results of inquiry anathematised. On a lower plane the same thing has happened with regard to Christianity's "sacred" books. The founders of Biblical criticism were men whose Christianity was of a negligible quantity. For the greater part they were men who were outside the ranks of Christianity altogether. Prominent Christians only took up with the subject when the pressure of public opinion had made it more dangerous to let it alone than grapple with it. And then the policy was not to incite further inquiry, but to damn it. Nearly all that has been paraded of late as "advanced thought" by Christian leaders has been matters of commonplace outside the Churches for a good fifty years, perhaps more.

In all these matters the Churches do not lead, they follow. Their thought is but the re-echo of ideas that have long been in vogue outside, and against which they have usually fought as long as they were able to do so. Yet, to listen to the query with which I set out, one would imagine that Christianity had been the pioneer of all valuable thought and the veritable prop of all civilisation. The truth is, as I have tried to show, that the history of Christianity proves it to have been neither truthful nor useful. It has perpetuated superstitions, false beliefs, and types of mind that might, without its influence, have long since disappeared. Wherever it has exerted unchecked control its influence has been disastrous. In every department of life where it has attempted to regulate affairs it has failed ignominiously. We lose nothing, therefore, in dispelling a creed such as Christianity has shown itself to be. We only rid ourselves of a set of senseless beliefs and mischievous doctrines; and if we do nothing else, we have at least cleared the ground for further and better effort.

C. COHEN.

### "The Reconciliation between Science and Religion."

SOME weeks ago I dealt in these columns with certain comments by the Rev. Dr. Parkhurst in the *New York Journal* on Agnosticism. Since then my attention has been drawn to another article in the issue of the same paper for February 24 by the Rev. Newell Dwight Hillis, D.D., another shining light of the American pulpit, on "The Reconciliation between Science and Religion." It may, of course, seem to English readers

that the attempts at Christian defence in these countries furnish sufficient exhibitions of fallacy without going to America for further illustrations. In the first place, however, there is a certain freedom and directness about American religious controversy, as about American political controversy, that is in itself interesting, and renders it somewhat easier to come to close quarters; and, in the second place, the Rev. N. D. Hillis puts a claim, that is coming to be more and more frequently made by the less antiquated of religionists, that evolution is a "religious" doctrine which strengthens, if anything, the Theistic position. These preachers and writers personify religion and science as two mighty giants who have been engaged in a bloody struggle about nothing, and who are now beginning to recognise the fruitlessness of their quarrel and the greater interests which they hold in common. It reads very nicely, and looks peaceful and conciliatory when it does not get beyond vague commonplace. It is when we attempt to examine what this talk really means, what it actually works out to, that we find, like most compromises and most vague rhetoric, that this compromise and this rhetoric are no more valid than the old orthodoxy.

To all the achievements of the nineteenth century—the increase of wealth, the development of tools, the facility of communication, and so forth—the Rev. N. D. Hillis thinks we must now add "the beginning of the reconciliation between science and religion." Here is a fair specimen of the kind of rhetoric which I have described, and which reads very nicely and sweetly:—

"The middle of the nineteenth century found the representatives of these two realms of thought in a state of open warfare. The theologian and the scientist looked upon each other as sworn enemies. When they met upon the platform the sword leaped from the scabbard, and conversation became a tournament. When the two combatants collided the event was generally recalled as a scene that partook of the nature of a battlefield. The scientist generally gave himself so completely to physical facts that he starved his imagination and his spiritual faculty until he lost all appreciation of music, poetry, and of the higher spiritual realm. Not otherwise the religious teacher, the essayist, and the poet so emphasized the realm of reason, beauty, and morals that he lost all interest in clods, seeds, and stones."

Here the description, whilst having an air of impartiality, is in reality grossly misleading. To tell the truth, in politics or religion, "impartiality" is generally a cloak for reaction or a synonym for ignorance. For there is right and wrong, truth and falsehood, progress and privilege; and the man who, with this combat going on around him, professes to be "impartial" either hopes by that phrase to palm off some conservative proposal or some orthodox belief, or else he does not know what he is talking about. Take the above passage. If "imagination" means untruth and guess-work, it may be the peculiar possession of the theologian. But, otherwise, it is preposterous to suggest that, in any other sense, the scientist, as such, lacks higher faculties possessed by the men of God; whilst the suggestion that only theologians appreciate music and poetry is really grotesque. Yet this kind of plea must be held to mean or to imply such a proposition, or it is utterly irrelevant. There is really no human quality or human excellence which is the peculiar possession of those who accept the god-idea, and there is no nobility of character displayed by Theists which cannot be paralleled amongst Atheists and Agnostics. If Mr. Hillis's verbiage conveys a contrary proposition, it conveys what is not true; and if it does not mean that Theists, as such, are the possessors of some good qualities not shared by their Secularist fellows, it is quite beside the whole question. There may be Agnostics and Atheists who do not care much for poetry, but, judging by the favorite verse of many religionists, it would be rash to say that they were an authority on such a matter.

It is, of course, a subsidiary point that such verbiage, howsoever well-meaning, clogs itself and betrays the haziness of mind of which it is the expression; thus we learn that "the religious teacher, the essayist [why essayist?], and the poet.....emphasized the realm of reason, beauty, and morals." So that the poor scientist is deficient in reason and morals which the "essayist" has in superabundance; but in another breath we will be told that it is too much "reason" the scientist has—"cold, dry reason"—and that it is something else he

lacks. As for the suggestion that the students of "clods, seeds, and stones"—and apparently, also, the students of Christian origins, if one may judge from contemporary developments—lack "reason" and "morals," it may be left to stand as an example of the reason and the morality of the religious "essayist."

The fact is, this talk as to the "reconciliation" of religion and science, even though no less a person than Mr. Spencer has indulged in it, springs from a want of clearness as to the terms we are using, and a forgetfulness as to some fundamental truths which lie at the basis of all philosophy. In the first place, it is necessary to bear in mind what we mean when we speak of religion and of science; half the erroneous thinking in the world springs from the habit of personifying abstractions. We use the word "religion," roughly, to cover a certain set of ideas and notions, handed down to us for the most part by our forefathers, and which may or may not be true. We use the word "science" to cover the statements of ascertained facts and the generalisations of knowledge. If the statements or generalisations of some scientists are disproved by later research, why, then, the first statements or generalisations cease to be science. In the second place, we have to bear in mind that a given statement cannot be true and not true at the same time and in the same relationship. If one man says a certain object is black and another says it is not black, there is no "reconciling" these two statements, since only one of them can be true. And even if one man says a certain object is black and another says it is white, one or both of these statements must be false. Both, of course, may be erroneous; the object may be green. But, then, the latter proposition is a fresh one altogether, and it would be misleading and ridiculous to speak of it as in any way "reconciling" the other two false propositions. In short, truth cannot conflict with truth, and truth cannot be "reconciled" with falsehood. All this is, of course, but the statement of the elementary principles of logic, without which thinking is an impossibility, and one would feel a certain shame in going over such rudimentary propositions did it not positively seem to be necessary to state them against men who ought to know better.

But let us apply such elementary truths to this talk of reconciliation. One of the commonest Christian doctrines drawn from the plain statements of the Bible is that a God, some six thousand years ago, "created" man and the different animals as they exist to-day. Now that proposition is either true or it is not true; there is no middle position. All the conclusions of science—that is to say, all our knowledge, derived from a hundred sources—establish that it is not true. How can these two positions be reconciled? One of them at least must be abandoned. As a matter of fact, it is the "religious" proposition which is abandoned. In reality, the new theological evolutionists abandon point after point to science, and call it "reconciliation." For instance, this Rev. Mr. Hillis writes that "the method of evolution as God's way of doing things has swept the field"; though he omits to state that it so swept the field against the opposition of those theological poets and musicians who used to be cock-sure that "God's way of doing things" was quite different.

Let us, however, make quite plain the truth about this evolutionary Theism, so-called. Whether or no the evolutionary view, properly understood, leaves any room for a deity at all, we need not now discuss; but this much is indisputable: *the god that would be left by evolution, if any, would certainly be an entirely different god to that with which the Theist sets out.* It is as though in a geometrical discussion a man set out by claiming that two straight lines could enclose a space, and, when shown the falsity of this, turned round and said: "Well, at any rate, the angles contained in a triangle are together equal to three right-angles." The latter proposition may be examined in turn, but, at any rate, it is an absolutely fresh one, and has no connection whatever with the first. The evolutionary deity, whatever he may be, can certainly claim no blood-relationship with the old gentleman who "made" Eve out of Adam's rib, and held prolonged conversations with another gentleman called Moses.

As a sample of the muddle-headed nonsense which the "evolutionary" religionist can turn out, the following may be finally taken from Dr. Hillis's article:—

"On the other hand, the theologians now concede that the Bible is a guide book to right living and the higher spiritual life; that it teaches a few great simplicities and eternal verities—God, and his all-loving providence; Christ as the revelation of the divinest and ideal elements in the soul, a master, a teacher, and savior; the peril of disobedience to law; liberty through obedience, the supremacy of conscience, the law of love, service, and self-sacrifice, and the hope of personal immortality as the recovery out of the mistakes and sins of the life that now is. The theologians no longer hold that the Bible is a book of astronomy, or chemistry, or physiology. They do not think that the essentials of the Christian faith are determined by the question whether the earth was made in six days or in six million years, or upon the problem whether man was made instantaneously out of a clod or whether God fashioned his body slowly by leading it up through ten thousand animal processes."

The generosity of the theologians in "conceding" so much about the Bible is only exceeded by their generosity in not claiming it as a text-book of astronomy, chemistry, and the rest. Really, if this lavishness goes on, we will have a theologian one of these days freely "admitting" the divinity of Christ, and even hinting that he is prepared to concede the authenticity of the Gospels. Such sacrifices ought not to go unrewarded from the Free-thought side. And, in view of the conciliatory spirit which is here exhibited, we are prepared to go the length of confessing that the Bible is certainly *not* an authority on astronomy and physiology, even though it pretends to be. Scientific thinkers no longer hold that the Bible is any more than a heterogeneous collection of books and pamphlets of questionable authenticity and doubtful value. They think the essentials of the Christian faith hopelessly undermined, even by the concessions of the theologians, and they regard the deity who lies millions of years at the back of the "ten thousand animal processes" as too shadowy to be worth even confuting.

FREDERICK RYAN.

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### Speranza!

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O, FATE of Man, thou emerald wandering star,  
Whene'er thou tremblest mute in uplift eye,  
When like to die, renew thy beams afar;  
Show struggling man man's fellest enemy.

The butcher that uprears a world in arms  
Nation 'gainst nation; for his coward self,  
Firing our passion high with war's alarms,  
To buy and sell our blood for canker'd pelf!  
Vampire of wealth, who fills the world with hate,  
Brother 'gainst brother; for him we delve and moil  
For our o'er usured bread; slaves for his State;  
Driven like dogs from our own mother soil.

The stealthy, slothful priest, whisp'ring fang'd hell  
'Gainst noblest self-reliance. Rendered paupers all  
To some poor silly Ghost—ah, how we fell!

He wrung from babes manhood's most royal pearl;  
Gave us for Monarch Brain, o'er space might rock,  
His sheepish flatulence of soul—a pebble!  
And now, good shepherd, brands our abject flock,  
Mongers us to the shearer, slaught'rer—Devil!

Why dost thou shudder, star, and wane so pale?  
Our struggling herd long, long its foe forgot;  
Show unto man man's only enemy—  
Oh, wandering star of hope, die not! die not!

GEORGE WOODWARD.

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### How to Help Us.

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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.

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"Hardly more than a year ago," says the *Minneapolis Messenger* (Kansas), "this paper contained whole columns of biography, poetry, and condolences dealing with the death of a minister's wife in this county. The preacher was married again the other day, whereupon we regret all that poetry."

## Acid Drops.

MR. LABOUCHERE wanted to know why the King required thirty-six chaplains, and it appears that the number is to be cut down to twelve. Six on each side seem enough to keep Edward VII. on the road to glory.

Superstition is gradually dying out in the more enlightened parts of the civilised world, but it is still rampant in parts that have not yet been visited by the light of science. The newspapers report a case of supposed demoniacal possession in a small town in Italy, where a girl was dragged almost naked into the public square, and flogged until she fainted, when it was thought the demons had been expelled from her. This sounds very shocking even to professed Christians in London, but it should be remembered that it is not so very long since the educated people in England believed in men and women being possessed by devils, and that this belief is more than countenanced by the New Testament. One of the Canons of the Church of England—the seventy-second—relates to this matter. It lays down that clergymen are to cast out devils, though not without the permission of the bishop of the diocese, who, it may be presumed, had a vested interest in the infernal business.

The Dean of Gloucester affirms his belief that the body of St. Peter really does lie (somewhere) within the magnificent Basilica of St. Peter, at Rome. But it is not the body of St. Peter that lies. The living, not the dead, are guilty of that offence.

Nobody knows whether St. Peter was an historical character or not. In our opinion he was merely a hero of ecclesiastical romance. But in any case it is perfectly certain that no one knows when and where he died. The story of his martyrdom at Rome bears every mark of fiction. There is not a single scrap of real evidence to support it. Indeed, there is no proof whatever, except the aforesaid fiction, that St. Peter was ever at Rome at all. That he was crucified there upside down, at his own special request, in order not to enter into competition with his Savior, who was crucified in the usual way, is one of those pretty legends which are derided by all reputable historians.

Mr. George Wise, Protestant lecturer at Liverpool, well-known for his opposition to High Church services, was brought before the "beak" in connection with recent disturbances, and was ordered to find sureties amounting to £200. Mr. Wise, through his solicitor, intimated that he would do nothing of the kind; whereupon the stipendiary magistrate gave him twenty-four hours to alter his mind, with the alternative of two months' imprisonment. It was thought by his admirers that Mr. Wise would hold firm, but they were disillusioned when he caved in and found the necessary sureties. Loudness and vehemence do not always go together with the spirit of martyrdom.

According to Professor James, of Harvard, who has been discoursing in his series of Gifford Lectures on the question, "Is religion a nervous disease?" the psychopathic, highly-strung, and neurotic temperament is most favorable to those experiences which carry one "beyond the surface of the sensible world." Medical materialism, he said, regarded St. Paul as an epileptic, and explained his vision on the road to Damascus as a "discharging lesion of the occipital cortex."

The Gifford Trust has all along been systematically abused, and the late Lord Gifford's money has been spent by the trustees, in direct defiance of the terms of his will, on the furtherance of orthodox modes of thought. This criticism applies even to the course of lectures at Edinburgh by Professor James, of Harvard University. Professor James's fourth Gifford Lecture was on "The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness." For the most part it was a laudation of the Christian Science craze in America, which it is pretty safe to say that Lord Gifford would have looked down upon as an egregious superstition which is fanned by flagrant imposture. The element of truth in this superstition is a small one, and it is as "old as the hills." All doctors, including the Materialists, are well aware that the psychological condition of a patient has something to do with his recovery. Fear depresses, while hope stimulates, the powers of life. Nurses know that too; indeed, it is acted upon, consciously or unconsciously, by everybody in charge of the sick. There was certainly no need of a new wave of credulity and charlatany to teach us so obvious a truth. Moreover, this truth is perfectly natural. Keeping up a patient's spirits means keeping up the force-assertion of his brain, just as surely as does the application of the galvanic battery to one who has taken an overdose of narcotic poison.

The Catholic *Universe* has been reminding Protestants of the great part they played in the American slave trade. It is well that they *should* be reminded of it. But we, in turn,

beg to remind the *Universe* that it was the Catholic Spaniards who first made slaves in America, and that they did so with a cruelty that has never been surpassed, even if ever equalled, in the history of the world. Crocks and kettles should not call each other smutty. The accusation is true, but it is one-sided.

Proofs stream in from all points of the compass that the Christian Allies, and particularly the Continental ones, have acted like devils in China. Here is an extract from a letter written by a Zouave in China to his brother, M. Ducrocq, living at La Neuville, which has been published in the *Hebdomadaire Picard*, a weekly paper at Amiens:—"It is 11 a.m. Our artillery is in position, a gallant resistance is offered, and bullets are whizzing everywhere. Our shells are presently bursting in the town, and the enemy's fire is suddenly silenced. A furious struggle takes place at the foot of the walls and in the streets. We have to step over piles of corpses to overtake those who run away. Every house is searched, every human being we find is cut down. An awful slaughter is made. Blood flows, the faint smell of blood and of burnt bodies—for shots fired point blank set the clothes on fire—is choking. In our anger we break everything in the houses that appears to be of any value. The Chinese no longer make any defence, but the massacre continues. The Chinese are slaughtered regardless of age or sex. From time to time you hear volley-firing. Hundreds of Chinese are being shot down at one round on the General's order. The town was given up to plunder, and was to be fired before daybreak. While looting a house I found a poor Chinaman who had a leg carried away by a shell. He was suffering atrociously, was past recovery, and, as far as we could understand, he asked us by signs to put him out of pain. After taking counsel of my conscience, and of my comrades, I took out my bayonet and ran it through his heart."

A number of quarrels have taken place between the Christian Allies in China, and it is fortunate for the peace of the world that they are leaving the country. The latest news from Tientsin is that French soldiers, backed up by Germans! have come into collision with Welsh Fusiliers acting as police. Being prevented from breaking into a house for looting purposes, the gallant French and Germans took to using their bayonets; the result being one Frenchman killed and three wounded, five Germans wounded, and four of the Fusiliers and one Japanese wounded. What a bloody comedy—especially for the Chinese who looked on!

Mrs. Eddy, the Christian scientist, being sued for big damages for libel by Mrs. Woodbury, was unable to attend the trial at Boston on account of illness. Well, that *is* a joke; a prime joke, a colossal joke, and at the same time a subtle joke. Mrs. Eddy teaches that illness can be cured by spiritual thought. It is evident, therefore, that her own prescription had lost its efficacy on that occasion; unless, indeed, the lady's illness was diplomatic.

Professor Carol Norton, a prominent Christian Scientist of New York, has been recently married. For many years he has taught that marriage and spiritual life were incompatible. Mrs. Eddy herself has taught the same doctrine, and she has been married several times. We are reminded of the hero of the satirical poem. War was his delight, but when the battle came on

He fled full soon on the first of June,  
But he bade the rest keep fighting.

Mr. Balfour, replying to a question in the House of Commons, said he was unable to discover the authorship of the prayers used daily at the opening of the sittings of the House. The real point, however, is why this custom of opening with prayer should be continued in these latter days with so many phases of belief and unbelief prevailing amongst the members.

The Lord's Day Observance Society has issued a protest against the proposal of the Paddington Borough Council to water the streets on Sunday.

The vicar of Yoxford and his son were charged at Saxmundham Petty Session with an assault on the churchwarden, Mr. George Newson, a farmer. The complaint was that he was about to count the offertory in the vestry when the vicar grabbed at the bags and a struggle ensued, after which the vicar caused all the doors of the church to be locked, and the churchwarden did not escape for nearly three hours afterwards. The vicar was fined £1 and costs, the case against his son being dismissed.

The *Church Times* makes another attack on the Archbishop of Canterbury. Reviewing a recently published biography of the Primate, it says the author has "the most unbounded admiration for the subject of his memoir, whom he designates 'the greatest Churchman in the Empire,' and he does ample

justice to the good points of his strong personality. For the rest, we prefer to keep silence, save just to observe that the examples of the Archbishop's 'humorous remarks' in his interviews with his clergy might have been omitted with advantage. It is not impossible that most of us may feel tempted to use another epithet to describe them."

There is no limit to the abominable intolerance of the extra good, says the *Sunday Chronicle*. They profess to pride themselves on the liberty of thought and action which exists in England, and yet they seek, with the insolence of the Pharisee, to suppress everything with which they disagree. They impudently proclaim, as in Leeds, that it is immoral and irreligious to listen to music in the parks on Sunday evenings, and they have successfully prevented the people from exercising their freedom to enjoy such entertainments. It is strange that those who profess to put a high value on honesty should seek to bully others into pursuing unwillingly the courses they assign to them; stranger still that the people they bully do not rise and smite them.

In the *North American Review* a controversy has been carried on relative to the conduct of American missionaries in China. One of these, Dr. Ament, in collecting indemnities for damage done by Boxers, was reported to have assessed his amount at *thirteen times that actually due*. This has now been proved to be an error, but Dr. Ament admits having collected *one-third* in excess of actual damage. Mark Twain, taking up the matter with great zest, bluntly stigmatises this excess charge as "robbery," and chastises the American Missionary Board for sanctioning it.

According to Mr. Hands, who recently read a paper before the Architectural Association, from £50,000 to £100,000 worth of property is destroyed in this country every year through the negligence of precautions against lightning. "Most people," said Mr. Killingworth Hedges in the discussion, "think that almost every church has its conductor, whereas not ten per cent. are so provided, and in the case of public buildings the proportion is much less." Fortunately the custodians of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey do not leave the care of those noble edifices to the Lord. The dome of the former is protected by over a hundred lightning conductors, and the latter has still more points in proportion to area.

The Doukhobors, who suffered so much at the hands of the Russian Government, and were finally allowed to emigrate to Canada, are now in conflict with the law of the Dominion. They want to hold land in common, to live together or to separate without legal marriage or divorce, and not to register their births and deaths, which they consider to be against the will of God. These people reduce Count Tolstoi's view of Christianity to practice, and prove how incompatible it is with the most elementary forms of civilisation. When Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world," he should have added, "Nor my gospel either."

A tremendous dispute has been agitating the congregation of St. John's, Boscombe, one of the first churches in Bourne-mouth. The question at issue was whether they should stand or sit when the clergy and choir entered or retired from the sacred edifice. Agreement being hopeless, the point had to be settled arbitrarily by the vicar. Some day or other, perhaps, the members of that congregation will find some more important theme to consider and discuss. They could hardly find one more trivial—some would say more contemptible.

Life Insurance Companies, who go by the hard facts, are considering a plan to debar Christian Scientists by means of prohibitive premiums from taking out policies. These people shut out medical science altogether, and trust entirely to what they call "mind cure" on the lines of the teaching of Jesus Christ. They imagine that this will give them health and longevity, but the Life Insurance Companies are of a different opinion.

Stands Scotland where it did? In some things Yes, in other things No. In the matter of Sabbatarianism, for instance, it is fast departing from the ancient ways. Lord Balfour of Burleigh has actually made a speech before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in defence of the opening of the National Industrial Museum at Edinburgh on Sunday afternoons. His lordship is head of the State Department which has control of the Museum, and he has been the recipient of many pious warnings. "If you proceed in your evil design," one pious gentleman wrote, "you will not only have to deal with an outraged God, but with an indignant people." An anti-climax from which a little humor would have saved the writer! "The Lord's hand," another correspondent said, "will be upon you in your family or substance before your death." All this nonsense, however, has had no effect upon Lord Balfour except to strengthen his resolution that the Museum shall continue to be open on "the blessed Sabbath."

Sir George Newnes, in the June number of the *Strand Magazine*, gives an account of the "Silent Sisters of Anglet." The institution was founded there in 1847. Forty-five Silent Sisters are housed in a kind of nunnery. Under ordinary circumstances they never speak. In 1854 the place was visited by the Emperor and Empress of the French, who expressed a desire to see one of the cells. The nearest one was thrown open, and this is what they saw:—"The Solitaire was seated on a wooden bench, with head bent over her sewing, her back being turned to the door. She did not move. The Emperor asked to see her face. 'My child,' said Cestac, 'the Emperor and Empress are at the door of your cell, and wish to see you. Uncover your face.' The obedient nun put down her work, turned toward the door, and sank slowly on her knees. Throwing back her white hood, she revealed the angelic face of a girl about eighteen, whose beauty was enhanced by the sacred seriousness of a soul devoted to Heaven. At this sight all present were moved to compassion."

That beautiful young woman was stolen from Humanity to be a bride of Christ. She ought to have been the loving and beloved wife of some good man, and the mother of sweet and happy children. Instead of which she was flung to the minotaur of superstition.

According to an *Express* telegram from Barcelona, a nun has been rescued from a convent by a street crowd. She was trying to escape from the convent, and the chaplain was trying to drag her back, when her screams attracted public attention, and the crowd drove the priest off and took the nun to a hospital. She declares that she would rather die than return to the convent.

Canon Moor, vicar of Gainsborough, has been called upon by his Bishop to resign his living. This is in consequence of the report of a committee appointed to investigate the scandals in general circulation about him.

Roman Catholicism has gained another convert in the Rev. Charles Rose Chase, of Bishop Stortford, formerly vicar of All Saints', Plymouth. He was ordained a Catholic priest at Rome on Sunday. Many other clergymen of the Church of England would follow his example if they were endowed with common honesty.

"The Cretan Assembly," says a newspaper paragraph, "after refusing a hearing to the Mussulman deputies, has passed a resolution in favor of union with Greece." There is a world of instruction in the words we have italicised. The dear good Christians of Crete clearly understand the value of fair discussion. Generally speaking, it may be taken for granted in the East that when the Mussulmans persecute the Christians it is because the Christians cannot persecute the Mussulmans.

Old Dowie, the faith-healing Chicago Bishop, has always had a keen eye, and nose too, for the dollars. He now asks his followers to shell out all they can while they are living, as he may not get what they mean him to have when they are dead. "Bequests," he says, "that have been made have been attacked by wicked persons and unscrupulous lawyers in the court, and much of the property has been lost in defending these suits, which we have hitherto always won. Deeds of gift prevent a possibility of contention by evil-minded persons who hate Zion." What an unctuous old—Zionite to be sure!

At the recent great Annual Meeting of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, at St. James's Hall, Dr. Wilberforce, the Archdeacon of Westminster, was relating some of the horrors of the vivisection of dumb animals when an old lady cried out, "Oh, please, no more; we can't bear this!" Whereupon the speaker replied, "Ah, that is just the point. You've got to bear it. Good God! they have got to suffer it." This splendid and instantaneous reply, as the *Zoophilist* calls it, was caught up and applauded by the meeting. Now we have much admiration for the work of the *Zoophilist*, and much sympathy with the objects of the National Anti-Vivisection Society, and we don't want to carp at any speaker on its platform. But as Archdeacon Wilberforce has very politely classed drunkenness, prostitution, and "infidelity" together, we feel like asking whether that "Good God!" was not a very awkward exclamation. If there were a good God, would that being allow the horrors of vivisection to go on? Or are we to believe that Archdeacon Wilberforce is something better than his Creator?

Mr. Andrew Carnegie's gifts to public libraries and educational institutions do not command the admiration of the Catholic *Universe*—which is perhaps what might be expected. It appears that Mr. Carnegie has spoken sneeringly of some Catholic beggars who wanted a slice of his fortune for a "fallen women reclaiming scheme." "When some oily fellow pesters me," Mr. Carnegie added, "I generally succeed in

getting rid of him in short order; but most of the charitable concerns cunningly send women, and then what can a man do?" Whereupon the *Universe* observes that if Mr. Carnegie were more Christ-like he "would leave the ninety and nine that were safe in the fold to go in search of the one sheep that had strayed away." Precisely so. But we understand that Mr. Carnegie is not a Christian, and does not aspire to be Christ-like. As a man of business, he sees that more good can be done by attending to the ninety-nine decently good sheep than by running after a single bad lot. But the method of the Christian Church has always been otherwise. Most of its time has been spent in sitting on addled eggs.

This is how the Rev. G. Bayfield Roberts described, at a recent E. C. U. meeting, the Church crisis. It was, he said, "the outcome of an agitation stirred up and fostered by bustling and aggressive booksellers, irreverent brawlers, rhetorical peereesses, solemn visions of apocryphal quadrupeds, statesmen who had failed in politics, and that greatest and most marvellous production of the creative genius of the last century, the omnipotent and omniscient 'man in the street.'"

Here's something new in advertisements:—"A CLERGYMAN, having pledged gold and silver property for £160, for which he pays 16 p.c., would like to raise more money, or pay less interest. All interest paid up to date. No agents need apply.—Address Cleric, etc." This is a very natural wish on the part of this clergyman, who must feel having parted with his "gold and silver property."—*Westminster Gazette*.

Dr. Gale, one of the leaders of the Christian Scientists, claims that Mrs. Conger, a Christian Scientist, accomplished the cure of Mrs. McKinley. Upon this the *World* has the following lines:—

Faith-healing, they who work it claim,  
Has force with sickness dealing;  
When Conger is the worker's name  
It should be called "Faith-Eching."

Rev. Marcus Rainsford, speaking recently of the work of the London City Mission, related the following instance of "how not to do it." He said a lady walked into a working man's house the other day as if it belonged to her. "I am your new district visitor," said she. "Oh," replied the working man's wife. "Does your husband drink?" asked the visitor. "No," was the reply; "does yours?"

The devices of the clergy who desire to attract people to fill their half-empty churches are wonderful indeed. The Sunday cyclist service is one. An announcement appears of one of these services at Fyfield Church. But the Rev. Mr. Lewis offers, in addition, to provide tea for his cycling congregation. Who says that "merrie England" is wholly lost?

In Brooklyn, New York, a pastor, who is a clever artist, endeavors to attract congregations by making lightning sketches in the pulpit to illustrate the points in his sermons. A Western clergyman sings solos and gives thrilling recitations.

In Cleveland a minister is having his church built with ree swimming-baths and reading-rooms, open day and night, and a roof garden for concerts. Rev. Charles Tyndall is a student of electricity, and has lately preached a sermon entitled "Wireless Telegraphy and its Spiritual Similitudes." He had a complete wireless apparatus installed in his church, and a miniature railway built round his pulpit, on which tiny tramcars run by wireless current.

Sir Robert Hart writes once more on Christian missions in China—this time in the *Deutsche Revue*. He says: "The Chinese are not intolerant, either Government or people. 'Renounce exterritoriality,' said the Grand Secretary Wen Hsiang, 'and your missionaries can settle and teach wherever they like.'"

A certain preacher, discoursing upon Bunyan and his works, caused a titter among his hearers by exclaiming: "In these days, my brethren, we want more Bunyans!" Another clergyman, pleading earnestly with his parishioners for the construction of a cemetery for their parish, asked them to consider the "deplorable condition of 30,000 Christian Englishmen living without Christian burial." Still more curious was this clerical slip. A gentleman said to the minister: "When do you expect to see Deacon S. again?" "Never!" said the reverend gentleman, solemnly; "the deacon is in heaven."

Canon Robson, vicar of Christ Church, Claughton, Birkenhead, presiding at a Southport Conference, lamented that "Spiritual life seemed at a low ebb, and a wave of irreligion was passing over the land. There was a widespread ignorance of the Gospel, a neglect of public worship, a profanation of the Lord's Day; churches, as a rule, were thinly attended, and the mass of Christian people were satisfied to

be 'half-timers,' attending the house of prayer once only on the Lord's Day, and scarcely ever during the rest of the week. Sensationalism was the order of the day, or a thinly-veiled Unitarianism. The simplicity of the Gospel was not welcomed as in the past, and there was widespread doubt, and even unbelief."

Canon Robson further deplored that the number of young men seeking the ministry was becoming less and less. This was the case not only in the Church, but also among the Nonconformist bodies. Many explanations for this state of things had been given, but among the causes they might safely include the unsettlement of men's faith. University students were perplexed, and crying out "What is truth?" Not a few of them did not wait for an answer, but turned away into unbelief. No doubt Churchmen were passing through anxious and critical times. They were looking to their leaders to show them the right and the safe way.

The *City Press*, commenting upon what it calls the scandal connected with St. George's, Botolph-lane, says: "The church has been closed for ten years, and yet not only the rector (Canon McColl, with £600 a year), but all the officials, are enjoying to-day the stipends they received when there were duties to be performed. We are always being told that the church is in need of funds to enable it to meet the claims made by outlying parishes. How comes it, then, that the ecclesiastical dignitaries are so singularly neglectful in this case? Even the holiday he is enjoying must, by this time, begin to pall on Canon McColl."

After a half-century of growth and decline, America's Spiritualists, in taking account of stock, find small encouragement. Since Christian science came in it has thrown Spiritualism into the shade, says the *Christian World*. In twenty-one of the States its membership is said to be steadily decreasing. There are now reported less than sixty Spiritualist Societies and Lyceums, the survivors of ten times as many in the palmy past. Spiritualists attribute this decline to a lack of organisation. Most people will regard it as a case of satisfied curiosity turning aside to fresh novelties, especially those of Theosophists, with their "astral bodies," etc.

The Birmingham School Board is spending £1,000 on Bibles. It might employ the public money to much better advantage.

Says the *Rock*: "The 'Pope's Brigade' seem now inclined to make an attack on the daily prayers in the House of Commons."

A Manchester contemporary thus comments on the conclusion of the May meetings, and the fact that the white-tied, bun-devouring clerics have once more abandoned the sunny side of the Strand to its native histrions. The white choker has retired, and the blue chins, buttoned-up coats, and mouldy hats of the sere and yellow veterans of the buskin rule once more unchallenged.

The broadcloth parson, with gingham of silk,  
In the A. B. C. you'd find him,  
With a penny bun and a glass of milk,  
And a four-legged chair behind him.

But the smiling, chattering, fussy swarm of black-coated May beetles has vanished once again, and the greatest European thoroughfare is its shabby, sinful, picturesque self again.

What is a "Christadelphian devil"? This was the term applied by three strikers at Dudley to a workman whom they were charged with intimidating. It seems rather a novel form of abuse, and, as a contemporary observes, it would be interesting to know whether a "Christadelphian devil" is worse than the ordinary kind.

The Churches of Chicago have been suffering from the state of emptiness which, for a considerable time, has characterised those of New York. A parson in the former city filled his empty benches by an advertisement calling for five hundred young men to hear a sermon on "How to Make Fifty Cents Do the Work of a Dollar." He is now regarded as one of the brightest ecclesiastical luminaries of the great pork-packing city.

According to a telegram from Madrid, the Bishop of Pampluna has issued an order prohibiting all Roman Catholics, under pain of eternal perdition, from attending performances of Gamazo's famous anti-clerical drama, *Electra*.

Sabbatarians at Weymouth have summoned four boys under the ancient Act of Charles II. for the heinous offence of "exposing for sale certain goods, to wit newspapers," on a recent Sunday. The daring young culprits, says the *People*, were successfully defended and discharged on promising not to "shout their wares," but simply to deliver them to persons who desired to purchase them.

## Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 9, Freethought Demonstration, Finsbury Park, London, N., at 3.30 p.m.

## To Correspondents.

ALL communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.

F. J. VOISEY.—Those matters were referred to from our own reading of the *Westminster Gazette*, which we see nearly every evening. Your cuttings must have miscarried. We always acknowledge what we receive. Thanks for your hospitable invitation. We should be happy to look in upon you and spend a few quiet days at Dartmouth, but our opportunities are not frequent. It must be thirty years since we saw Dartmouth Bay and the beautiful scenery up the river to Totnes.

A. B. MOSS.—The matter of your enclosure will be attended to by the Secretary in the usual course. Pleased to hear of your excellent meeting at Edmonton. Mr. Foote did not "enjoy a pleasant holiday" after the Conference. He was in the train at 10 o'clock the next morning, journeying to London to look after the *Freethinker*.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your valued cuttings.

F. GOODWIN.—Thanks for cuttings. We note your correction, but the point is too unimportant to recur to. Always pleased to hear from you.

W. TREVOR.—A good definition of the species is given by an American humorist. "A fanatic," says Mr. Dooley, "is a man that does what he thinks the Lord would do if he knew the facts of the case."

S. HOLMAN.—See Lecture Notices and paragraph.

H. PERCY WARD.—Thanks for your good wishes, which we cordially reciprocate. Unfortunately we are not yet free from "that fiend of insomnia." No doubt it will vanish as soon as we can take the sovereign remedy of sea-air.

EX-ACOLYTE.—Your fresh letter is well written, but we prefer to let Mr. Watts and Mr. Alcock have the discussion to themselves—at least for the present. This is in the interest of the discussion itself.

A. G. LYE.—Your letter shall have attention.

WALTER RICHARDSON.—Thanks for your letter. We suppose you see a reason for a fresh platform in Hyde Park. From all we hear, there seem to be too many there already. Still, that is not our business. We have no desire to limit your freedom.

S. BRYENT.—Thanks for the references, but they are too late for us this week.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—W. McLean, 1s.; J. Greaves Fisher, 5s.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Edinburgh Branch: Messrs. Scott, 2s. 6d.; Grant, 2s. 6d.; McPhearson, 2s. 6d.; Rennie, 2s. 6d.; Fisher, 2s. 6d.; Young, 1s.; Robertson, 1s.; Robertson, 1s.; Brougham, 1s.

FREETHINKER AND REPUBLICAN.—We have said, in our Biographical Introduction to the Twentieth Century Edition of the *Age of Reason*, that Burke was hopelessly wrong in the main debate between himself and Paine on the French Revolution. Speaking generally, however, it must be admitted that there is a Conservative side to civilisation—what Comte called Order as distinguished from Progress—which Burke presented with singular insight and championed with extraordinary force. Burke was a great writer; he added a new electric quality to English prose. He was also a great man, in spite of his falling into the arms of reaction in his old age; a phenomenon, by the way, which is not quite unusual, and doubtless has its explanation in vital (or physiological) causes. Burke did many sublime acts of charity in the simplest way. His patronage of Crabbe, for instance, was in the highest degree magnanimous. Unknown, friendless, nearly starving, and in danger of imprisonment for debt, the young poet's instincts directed him to appeal to the great statesman. His letter, so ingenuous, so pathetic, and so manly, can hardly be read even now without a catch in the throat. Burke gave him an interview, relieved his immediate necessity, and then turned the whole current of his career. This was benevolence in the grand style, of which only elect natures are capable.

OLD ADMIRER.—Party politics never had any attraction for us. Recollect the discrimination of Ingersoll. A statesman, he said, wants to do something for the people; and a politician wants the people to do something for him.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Sydney Bulletin—Challenge—Public Opinion (New York)—Neues Leben—Torch of Reason—Truthseeker (New York)—Truthseeker (Bradford)—Freidenker—La Raison—Secular Thought—Progressive Thinker—Boston Investigator—People's Newspaper—Daily Express—Leicester Reasoner—Yarmouth Mercury—Zoophilist—Free Society—Maldon Express—Liberator—Lucifer—Publishers' Circular.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums.

It has already been announced in our columns that arrangements were being made for another series of Sunday Freethought Demonstrations in the London Parks and other open spaces during the summer. We have now pleasure in announcing that the first of these meetings will be held today (June 9) in Finsbury Park—where the N. S. S. secretary has for some time been seeing to the Sunday lectures on the breakdown of the local Branch, which seems to have depended too much on a very small knot of workers, who have all removed to other parts of London. Mr. Wilson has kindly promised to provide a brake with a pair of horses for the new course of Demonstrations. The brake, which will serve as a platform, will be in Finsbury Park, just above the band-stand, at half-past three o'clock in the afternoon. The list of speakers includes Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen. If the weather keeps fine, and the North London "saints" give all the publicity they can to the gathering, there should be a big crowd on this occasion.

Mr. Cohen is back in London after his brief holiday in Scotland, which seems to have done him a world of good. He was lecturing in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon and evening, and Mr. Neate sends us a glowing account of his efforts there. The audiences were very large, particularly the second, and the lecturer was enthusiastically applauded. His friends said that they never heard him speak so well before. Mr. Neate reports a capital sale of literature, including the new *Age of Reason*, Mr. Cohen's *Foreign Missions*, and a large number of copies of the *Freethinker*.

Mr. A. B. Moss informs us that he addressed two large audiences on Sunday at Mile End and West Ham. At Mile End, unfortunately, the Christians are trying their old "charitable" tactics, bringing their stand as close as possible to that of the Secularists, in order to cause certain noise and discomfort and possible disorder. On Sunday they brought two platforms, pitching one on each side of Mr. Moss, and only a few yards distant. But their attempt to shout him down did not succeed.

We venture once again to press the Twentieth Century Edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* upon our readers' attention. It is published at the marvellously cheap price of sixpence in order that it may get into the hands of the masses and help to redeem them from superstition and priestcraft. Advertising it extensively through ordinary channels is far too expensive—unless some rich admirer of Paine comes along and planks down the requisite cash. We, therefore, ask our readers to act as advertising agents in this case. We beg them to show the book to as many persons as possible. The striking portrait on the cover is enough to excite their curiosity, and other circumstances will contribute to raising in them a desire to possess this much-talked-of work. A good many Freethinkers can afford to give away copies right and left, though not injudiciously. To meet their case arrangements have been made to supply any number of copies, not less than six, at the rate of 4s. 6d. per dozen. Orders at that rate can be sent to our publishing office.

The Annual Excursion, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, is arranged to take place on Sunday, July 7. A special train will run to Dorking from Victoria, New Cross, London Bridge, and Clapham Junction, starting about 9.30 in the morning—probably 9.45. The return tickets will be 2s. each, and a general tea is being arranged at a cost of not more than 1s. per head. Other provisions could be obtained at moderate cost. Full particulars will appear on the handbills and in next week's *Freethinker*.

There is beautiful country about Dorking, a spot which is patronised by several distinguished writers, including the greatest living master of English letters, Mr. George Meredith. Should the day be fine the trip should be an ideal one.

Hitherto the Annual Excursion has been always to the

seaside. But it was thought that a shorter journey would be as well now and then, and an inland excursion conforms to this condition.

The *Yarmouth Mercury* allows Mr. J. W. de Caux space to demolish a number of clerical Sabbatarians. He settles their hash with great neatness, his sword being sharp and bright. Such letters in local newspapers are of considerable service to the cause of reason.

The *Accrington Observer* prints an excellent letter by "Hypatia" on the Failure of the Churches, with special reference to a letter by the Rev. Jesse Hatten. The lady writes as a declared Freethinker, and says some very unpleasant (but true) things about Christianity. We should like to see the reverend gentleman's reply, if he ventures to make one.

The little *Leicester Reasoner* is now four months old. The June number contains some interesting and characteristic writing by the editor, Mr. F. J. Gould, and an excellent Talk to Children on "Kindness." The "Secular Society Notes" show good activity for this time of the year. We wish this publication, and the work it represents, the greatest possible success.

Mr. Treharne-Jones's two lectures at Tonypandy on Sunday were a decided success. We hear that a debate is being arranged between him and a local champion of Christianity. It is to be hoped that the South Wales "Saints" will rally round Mr. Treharne-Jones and keep him thoroughly well occupied in preaching the Gospel of Freethought. A meeting of the Pontypridd and District Organising Committee is to be held to-day (June 9) at 6 o'clock at the City Restaurant, Pontypridd. Mr. Treharne-Jones will be present, and all friends of the movement who are willing to assist are earnestly invited to attend.

Mr. H. Percy Ward is continuing his work at Birmingham, lecturing on Sunday mornings in the Bull Ring, the afternoon at Camp-hill Goods Station, and the evening in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street. He also lectures in the Bull Ring on Wednesday evenings, and debates on Friday evenings with the Rev. P. J. Cocking at Nechells Green. These discussions have been well attended, and are winning friends to the Secular cause.

The Rev. J. J. B. Coles writes to us from Barnstaple, in Devonshire, where he has been for some weeks, and where he appears to have seen the *Freethinker* irregularly. When he wrote he had evidently not seen the reference to himself and Mr. Alcock in our last issue. We have therefore drawn his attention to the matter.

"Beecher," says Max O'Rell, "was past-master in the art of lecturing. He and the late Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll were the greatest lecturers I have ever heard; flow of language, eloquence, pathos, humor, a fine commanding presence, marvellous magnetism—both of them possessed these great qualifications. There are no others."

Next week's *Freethinker*—the Whitsun holidays being then fairly over—will contain a special appeal by Mr. Foote on behalf of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited; and an Application Form for Shares will be inserted in every copy of this journal, for the convenience of intending subscribers. Meanwhile we beg the friends of this journal to bear the matter in mind.

### Books and Reading.

WERE I to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me during life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss, and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. Give a man this taste and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making him a happy man; unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history—with the wisest, the wittiest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters who have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages.—*Sir J. Herschel.*

Our little life begins to shine in that moment when it is directed to a high purpose. But there must be no straining to do more than we can. No man has a lot in life too humble if it become ennobled by high principles. If he have honesty and self-respect and independence, let him be content; nobody has anything better.—*Dr. Moncure Conway.*

## Satan and Michael.

### AN IMAGINARY CONVERSATION.

*Satan.*—Well met, my dear Michael! You and I are old acquaintances. What ages have rolled by since we conversed as friends in heaven! You remember the day when I broached to you my design of establishing a celestial Republic, and found it impossible to overcome your loyalty or your fears. You remember, also, that later day when the courts of heaven rang with the shouts of battle; when, deserted by all but the sterner spirits who scorned flight or surrender, I and my little band of faithful rebels were hemmed in by the holy squadrons, seized one by one, and flung over the battlements.

*Michael.*—Yes, I recollect it well. I see now the look of deathless pride you wore. You wear it still. But there is mixed with it another expression I seldom see in heaven. Humor lurks in the depths of your eyes and about the corners of your mouth.

*Satan.*—Yes, my dear Michael, it is the sovereign lenitive of an incurable pain. After writhing for millenniums under the tender mercies of the Despot, I found a diversion in watching the antics of his creatures. Products of infinite wisdom as they are, they furnish me with infinite amusement.

*Michael.*—Wicked rebel! You insult the maker and ruler of all.

*Satan.*—Come now, why should we fall out? We used no railing when we disputed over the dead body of Moses; and, as the English poet, Byron, told the world, we civilly conducted our contest over the soul of George the Third. Why be uncivil now? You have my place in heaven; surely you can afford to be civil, if not magnanimous.

*Michael.*—With difficulty does a loyal subject restrain himself before a plotter of treason.

*Satan.*—I see the Lord's omniscience does not extend to his Prime Minister. I plot no treason, Michael. I am a poor exile who no longer troubles himself about politics.

*Michael.*—Ever since the Lord created man you have been spoiling his handiwork, and leading souls to hell.

*Satan.*—I neither made hell nor do I people it. The Lord creates both good and evil; joy and pain are alike his gifts. Were he to exert his omnipotence, my establishment might be emptied to-morrow. It is rash, if not something worse, to blame me for what he permits, nay wills.

*Michael.*—Did you not begin your machinations in the Garden of Eden by tempting two poor, innocent creatures, who would otherwise have lived there till now, tending its flowers, and eating of all its delicious fruits save those forbidden?

*Satan.*—My dear Michael, you were never a subtle reasoner. You have the qualities of a soldier, not those of a casuist. Pray consider. Did I create the forbidden fruit? Did I create an appetite for it in Adam and Eve? All I did was to demonstrate the carelessness of their Maker.

*Michael.*—Such language is profane. Whatever you did was at the expense of those hapless creatures.

*Satan.*—They might say so, but the words are strange in the mouth of an archangel. I was only experimenting. The omniscient Maker should have protected his children.

*Michael.*—He made them liable to temptation, in order to test their virtue, and gave them free-will so that they might act from choice.

*Satan.*—Then I was necessary to the plan. I also acted from choice, yet over them and me there was a divine necessity.

*Michael.*—I will not argue. Reason leads to the shipwreck of faith. I say your conduct was wicked and cruel.

*Satan.*—Wicked, if you like—that is a matter of opinion, on which we shall never agree—but not cruel. I visited Adam and Eve out of pure good-nature, mingled, I own, with a little curiosity. Poor Eve was naked, and I knew how much happier she would be with clothes. Her daughters owe me thanks for all their bewitching graces. Poor Adam was a simpleton. He ate and drank, and prayed and slept. Their life

was monotonous, and would soon have been miserable. I gave them the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and from it sprang all the arts and sciences, all literature, and all the pleasures of human society.

*Michael.*—What are all the pleasures and refinements of the world in comparison with the prospects of an immortal soul? They are but dust on the road to hell.

*Satan.*—Perhaps so, but that is not my fault. I did not foresee the Lord's malignity. As a rebel—wicked or otherwise—I tried to dethrone him, and my doom, if not just, is at least intelligible. But I never conceived he would curse the unborn, punish billions for the sake of one, and damn his children through all eternity for a single act of disobedience in their earthly life. Nor, indeed, did I imagine they *had* immortal souls to be saved or damned. That they were higher than the other animals was manifest, but I saw no indication that they differed in kind. Nor when they were cursed did I suspect it, for the Tyrant said nothing of a future life. I assure you, Michael, I was all attention, for the curse upon the serpent did not terrify *me*. Nor could *any* curse have given me the least alarm. One who is being burnt at the stake does not fear a box of matches flung into the flames.

*Michael.*—Your wily tongue would prove black to be white. I leave the Fall of Man and pass to your next act of wickedness in tempting David to number his people.

*Satan.*—The Lord himself tempted David, as you may read in his own book.

*Michael.*—I refer to another verse which says that you did it.

*Samuel.*—Two contradictions, my dear Michael, cannot both be true; and if you choose one, pardon me for choosing the other. Besides, if I did advise David on that occasion—which I deny—how could I foresee that so useful an act as taking a census would be punished by wholesale slaughter?

*Michael.*—Did you not tempt Job?

*Satan.*—Not I. I gave the Lord a new idea, which staggered his omniscience; and during the trial of Job I only acted on commission.

*Michael.*—Did you not tempt the blessed Savior himself?

*Satan.*—My dear Michael, it was but a diversion. We understood each other. I knew I could not succeed, and he knew that I knew it.

*Michael.*—Did you not enter into the bodies of men and women, and torment them?

*Satan.*—Never. I am incapable of such cruel frivolity.

*Michael.*—God's holy Word declares you guilty.

*Satan.*—I challenge the writer—who was not God—to the proof. It was another species of devil, created after my fall, and by the Lord himself. I did not make them, and I will not be responsible for their doings.

Can you conceive me taking up my residence in lunatics, and shifting into the bodies of pigs? There are very few of the human species, my dear Michael—to say nothing of pigs—with whom I deign to be familiar.

*Michael.*—Then you are very much belied. According to my information, you are the great Tempter, and every sin in the world is done at your suggestion.

*Satan.*—Such is the charity of mankind! It is so pleasant to blame another for their misdeeds! Is it I that tempt the drunkard, the thief, the adulterer, the murderer—or his own evil passions? for which let him thank his Maker! Pursue your inquiries, my dear Michael, and you will find Bishops brewing beer and taking the chair at temperance meetings. For my part, I drink nothing but water. It is best for my complaint.

*Michael.*—Can I believe you? You are called the Father of Lies?

*Satan.*—In calling me so, the Christians, at least, are only setting up a Foundling Hospital for their own progeny. You have the scripture; show me a single occasion on which I lied. When the Lord wanted a liar to deceive King Ahab, he never troubled me; he found a volunteer at his elbow.

*Michael.*—I declare you are posing as an archangel. You forget that you are fallen. I am speaking with the Devil.

*Satan.*—Hard words break no bones, and if they did, I have none to be broken. I am fallen—from heaven! which I have little desire to regain, peopled as it is with

slaves and cowards. I would have sent a breath of freedom through its courts. I tried, I failed, and I paid the penalty of my daring.

*Michael.*—I will not rail at you. You are under a heavier curse than mine. But pray tell me who are the members of the human race with whom you deign to be familiar?

*Satan.*—I animate all who fight against servitude and somnolence. The heroes and martyrs of liberty and progress in every age have drunk of the strength of my spirit. I inspire the revolter, the scorner, the sceptic, the satirist. I still distribute the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. I am the soul of the world. The fire of my inspiration may consume, but it gives unspeakable rapture. I am the Prometheus of the universe, and keep it from stagnating under the icy hand of power. Milton, Goethe, and Byron made me the hero of their greatest poems, and felt my power in despite of themselves. Burns spoke of me with a tenderness he never displayed towards God. Wits and humorists own my sway. I moved the minds of Aristophanes and Lucian, of Erasmus and Rabelais, and through the pen of Voltaire I shattered the mental slavery of Europe. I am the lightning of the human mind. I level thrones and altars, and annihilate blinding customs. With the goad of a restless aspiration I urge men on, until they outgrow faith and fear, until the Slave stands erect before the Tyrant and defies his curse.

*Michael.*—I will not stay to hear you. A feeling creeps through me like that I experienced when you first tempted me to break my allegiance to heaven. Farewell. I must report these things above.

*Satan.*—Report them! They are there already. You forget the Lord's omniscience, which is a dogma in heaven, and a much contested one on earth. Adieu, Michael. Pay my respects to your Master. And when you lead the chorus of flattery, think of the "wicked rebel" who prefers freedom in hell to slavery in heaven.

G. W. FOOTE.

—*Comic Sermons and Other Fantasias.*

### Consolation.

I was jolted in my coffin as they bore me to the grave,  
And I heard the parson praying for the soul he couldn't save;  
Sadness struggled to sit solemn on the mourners, who were  
few,  
And the mute assumed emotion for the man he never knew.

Then they lowered me into darkness, in the pit so newly made,  
And I felt the callous waiting of the sexton with his spade;  
"Dust to dust!" and down it sprinkled—poor mortality's last  
due.  
While the verger answered "Amen!" for the man he never  
knew.

Then the mute's mechanic melancholy suddenly relaxed,  
And the verger didn't seem as if his mind were overtaxed;  
While the crowd that had collected as contentedly withdrew  
From the free diversion offered by the man they never knew.

Then a relative who hated me, to give his mind relief,  
Chose some touching tombstone verses to perpetuate his  
grief;  
They discoursed of soothless sorrow, and remembrance ever  
true,  
While the marble-mason chuckled o'er the man he never  
knew.

But many a houseless creature in the herd that mortals shun  
Missed the deeds of timely succor that in secret had been  
done.  
Let the turf be bare above me; I was blest while blossoms  
grew  
In the bosoms of the wretched, for the man they never knew.

REDDIE MALLET.

"The study of the occult sciences interests me very much," remarked the new boarder. "I love to explore the dark depths of the mysterious, to delve into the regions of the unknown, to fathom the unfathomable, as it were, and to ——" "May I help you to some of the hash, professor?" interrupted the landlady. And the good woman never knew why the other boarders smiled audibly.—*Chicago News.*

## Man His Own Providence.

(Concluded from page 349.)

AT THE JUDGMENT.

THE religious teachers, and many of the moral philosophers, for age upon age, have looked upon life in an irrational way. Life is life, and, if it is to continue, then to-day is but its to-day, and to-morrow, when it comes, will be its to-morrow and bring its own responsibility. No wise or just being would hold a thinker responsible to-day for the conclusions or the discoveries that will be forced upon him to-morrow. Suppose there is an august judge before whom, at last, we shall be called to give an account of deeds done in the body; suppose we stand there, and the record is rolled back, and in an instant is made clear all that we have said or thought or done, let it be so; suppose it is a blurred and darkened record; suppose there have been mistakes and blots and imperfections that stare out from those tell-tale pages, what of it? If a man can stand and say: "In any moment when I made those crooked lines or left that blot, I acted at the moment according to my best; I was caught in the mesh of circumstances I could not over-master nor resist"; or, "If I made errors in my thinking, it was according to the best light of reason and knowledge that I had; I have made all the mistakes and the imperfections, and claim no mercy, no imputed righteousness, only the eternal, eternal justice"—I believe, if there is a life beyond, age upon age, eon upon eon, in all the eternities of eternities, the same light that is conferred here, feeble and flickering and dim and uncertain as it may be, must continue there and light our pathway still. It is better to disbelieve and be damned as an honest, dignified, self-reliant soul than to blindfold our reason, deny the light that nature or God has given us, and so reach a heaven we never merited and never won. It is a truth as deep as human life, and as far-reaching as human destiny—a truth that all this world will some time see, that man himself is the revealer, the redeemer, the savior of the world.

We are fast outgrowing the traditions, the sacred superstitions, the embarrassing and hindering myths. In their time they were the best the world could do, but they do not fit into the intellectual nor even into the moral life of this world now. Here are all the elements of force and wisdom necessary for the making of this a comparatively proper and worthy world. We might know, if we were only willing to learn, how even to live and stay well; we might have, I suppose, almost all of us, the inestimable boon of health, physical and mental strength, alertness, a fine vigor; and that possibility has existed for, we will say, only half a century.

### EMERSON'S PREDICTION.

It was Emerson's belief that in a hundred years the reputations of the present generation will be quoted to prove its barbarism. We are almost upon the verge of the day when we shall look with amazement upon the present forms of evil that are organized and potent. There is not any necessity in the world for a people free as this people is to have injustices, or inequalities, or unequal burdens laid upon us by law or legislative enactments. We have been ignorant and indifferent and selfish. When the world can be persuaded that it is responsible to itself, not God; when it can be persuaded that its help must originate with itself, not from the skies; when it can know that it is not by any cross on which someone else died and shed his blood that it is to be saved, but that its redemption must be wrought out by itself; when that time comes society will rise like a divine redeemer and redeem itself. But we must get away farther and farther from the old ideas, the old dependencies.

No one ought to think that he can go to church and do anything and fulfil his obligation to his fellow-being or to God. No one ought to believe that there is any final or ultimate virtue in genuflection or alms-giving in a pious, beggarly way, or the eating of wafers or the drinking of sacred wine; nobody ought to believe for an instant that he is putting the infinite under obligation to him by any of those current and established forms of religion; those are simply sacred amusements,

pious diversions, holy exercises that selfish men delight in. If it comes to real religion, there never was, and there never can be, a higher or better definition of it than that given by Thomas Paine: "The world is my country, and to do good my religion." When we have come to be intelligent and just, the thing is already settled. As it is now, a man may live a life of selfishness, avarice, and greed, endow an institution and die, and then that institution, ruled by that hand of the dead, must promulgate the old ideas that he left his money to establish.

### ADULATION OF WEALTHY PHILANTHROPISTS.

There is an intense selfishness and a spirit of hostility to progress in every dollar left by the dead for the establishment of institutions to promulgate fixed and definite ideas. The Church is the perpetual beneficiary of dead men. It seems to me, if there were anything in the beyond to bring a man back, it would be the desire of some of those people to come and teach the administrators of their estates that what they believed in this world is altogether a mistake, and ask them to turn over their institutions to rational, freethinking, intelligent men. Sometimes an institution is endowed by a person while living in the world, and straightway the person, sometimes a woman, undertakes to see that no doctrine is taught in the institution unless it conforms to her own light of reason. Now and then it happens that a man spending his life in the accumulation of vast wealth blinds and beguiles us all into cheap adulation and unreasoning flattery by extensive public benefactions. In the long run cities, municipalities, and communities will have enough dignity to refuse to bow at the gilded knees of any wealth and hold out their hands for alms and charity, however worthy. We are ignorant yet; we yet lack culture. It was a pitiful comment that, when a distinguished and wealthy citizen of our country touched the shore of Europe, he was besieged by begging delegations.

The man, the municipality, the community, the State, the nation, ought to be intelligent and just in every particular, and alms-giving on the one hand, and enormous aggregations made by selfishness and avarice on the other, would alike become unnecessary and impossible. If we let the light burn, there is reason to believe that sometime we shall know that we have not made any progress in finding out under the influence of the old ideas. One of those things is whether or not there is a God.

### IF THERE IS A GOD, WE SHOULD KNOW IT.

It does not seem a far cry that if there is a being immanent, in-dwelling and space-embracing, we ought to be able to find it out for a certainty; but the light of revelation does not reveal it. It only reveals a being from which the just and good man shrinks back with horror. The world makes no progress towards the discovery of that great fact under the old teachings. Perhaps sometime, when we have dared for enough generations the following of the light of reason, we shall discover what we ought to have known centuries ago—that there is a God, potent, wise, powerful, just, and present always; but we do not know it yet. And there is yet another thing that we may discover. It does not seem unreasonable to say that if there is a life beyond, if death is not the unwaking sleep, if the light we cannot see shines across that pathway trod by fleeing feet, it is only reasonable to believe that sometime we shall find it out. I would give more to know that one thing, and be able to teach men so than to know any other single thing within the reach of imagination. To change the hope into a demonstration, the dream into a fact, the pathetic longing into a certainty of fulfillment, would be to me the last and highest possible benefit religion could confer. And maybe we shall know it. But if we are ever to advance upon any line of human effort or human thought, let us assure ourselves it is not to be by following the dim light of tradition, not by taking from some falling hand the torch that has guided the past, but by keeping the little light within our own soul burning, by following the rays that emanate from the reason, nature's eldest and only revealer.

(DR.) J. E. ROBERTS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

## Correspondence.

### THAT BRIBE MONEY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I note the rumor in last week's issue that Mr. Coles or myself, or both of us, had given you money to let our letters appear. Mr. Coles may speak his own mind; he and I are utter strangers, having never had the smallest intercourse. But, on my individual behalf, I assert that a more foul, cowardly slander was never invented. So far for matter of fact. As matter of opinion, let me say, if only for my own sake, that I hold you to be far too prudent and honorable a man to accept such paltry bribes. Further, I do not think there is a clergyman in England so benighted as to think he would please God by offering them; and, lastly, I cannot imagine you have an acquaintance, Christian or sceptical, who believes the contemptible story. If Mr. Watts did not take the name and address of his mysterious informant, he would do well to describe minutely this obtrusive revealer of secrets. As the man is a frequenter of your meetings, he ought to be easily recognisable.

I greatly admire the ability and energy with which you fill your exceedingly difficult post, however much I deplore the employment you give them. If Agnosticism is to prosper, it appears to me as clear as daylight that, even as your platforms are open to Christian apologists, so should be the columns of the *Freethinker* to subscribers who write courteously and give their names. The same principle clearly holds good in each case. I gladly learn from to-day's issue that Mr. Watts cordially endorses my views. His teaching runs (p. 338): "It has been demonstrated again and again that the soundest conclusions that fallible man can arrive at result from free and unbiassed discussion," etc. All the same, I am very grateful for your permission to write.

Those who indulge in clandestine practices generally confer by speech (which may be denied) rather than by writing. It may then interest your readers to hear, you and I have never spoken to one another. Indeed, I have only once seen you, and that was when you were holding a discussion, which I well remember. The throng was so great at the ticket office that I could scarcely get my hand into my pocket, and dragged out a sovereign thinking it was a shilling. Having got my ticket, I hurried into the Athenæum, but was presently accosted by some gentlemen, who informed me your worthy ticket issuer wanted to give me nineteen shillings. So I went and got my change, and I humbly pray my kind friends may learn their duty to God as well as to their neighbor. Had they been members of the Bench of Bishops, they could not have been more anxious the silly parson should not lose his money.

(REV.) HENRY J. ALCOCK.

### MORAL ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Mr. Kingham would have us believe that moral appeal to individuals is inconsistent with Secularism; that to regard a man as a moral agent or responsible being is to "step inside" the Christian religion; that a moral (or morally responsible) Atheist is an impossibility; that Secularism cannot recognise other means than political power as of any utility in bringing about social reform; that to recognise the existence of natural laws which favor morality is to transfer to nature all those supernatural qualities which Mr. Watts objects to if attributed to God, and so forth. As a Secularist, I protest against Mr. Kingham's statements, and deny them most emphatically. To identify the determinism of the Secularist with moral irresponsibility is one of the commonest devices of the lowest and most unscrupulous kind of Christian advocate. Whether Mr. Kingham is a genuine Atheist or a Christian enemy, I know not. If the former, he agrees that society is to be made happy by "political power." How on earth will this "political power" be created except by the moral appeal to the individual which he scorns? How can opinions and votes be changed except by the conversions of individuals?

Mr. Kingham denies (or expects us to deny) moral responsibility, on the ground that this involves free will and a dual nature. But moral responsibility is a great fact. It seems to me that any person who assimilates Darwin's teaching on the evolution of morality by natural selection (*Descent of Man*, chapters iv. and v.) will find it impossible to deny moral responsibility or the operation of natural laws that favor morality. But why the recognition of such facts should commit us to belief in "free will," and soul or spirit, and "supernatural" qualities in nature, is not in the slightest degree obvious to Atheists like myself, who know themselves to be morally responsible to their fellow-beings and to their own consciences, quite independently of childish beliefs in uncaused volitions or separate spiritual entities, or other popular superstitions.

Among the errors on which Mr. Kingham bases his libellous misconceptions of "consistent" Secularism, I may point out

that he starts wrongly by declaring that Secularism claims man to be entirely the "inevitable result of his environings." A man is not his own environment. He influences the environment, which reacts upon him. He influences himself and other men by his internal thoughts and emotions. Man has had a large share in effecting his own evolution by sexual and social selection, and by his own actions in general. He is the result of the *interplay* of himself and his environment. Independently of evolutionary considerations, he exercises a vast influence in innumerable ways upon his own fate in the present and in the future. When the foundation of an argument is removed, the superstructure may be left to topple over at its leisure.

W. P. BALL.

### Christian Lilies.

*The Chronic Loafer* is a book of stories by Mr. Nelson Lloyd (Heinemann). They deal with American life. One of them concerns the effect of a woman preacher's work amongst colored people at bush-meetings. Zeb Pole caught her idea that all things were vanities, that nothing was worth striving for, and that a lesson should be learnt from the lilies of the field that toil not, neither do they spin.

"I'm a lily," he said. "I'm followin' the words o' that dear sister who has cast her lot among us. Henceforth I no longer considers the morrer. I toil not, nuther spin."

"See here, Zeb," said I, "you ain't a bit my idee of a lily. ....But still I s'pose ye might do pretty well in this new ockypation ef it wasn't fer one thing."

"What's that?" he asts.

"Lilies don't use tobacker," I answers.

The "lily business" spread until a considerable proportion of the population had taken "to toilin' not, nuther spinnin'." But they borrowed freely. One night the Loafer returned home to find his father's house shut up. He knocked and yelled.

The garret winder slid up, an' out comed the bawrel o' a gun, then pap's head.

"Hello," said he. "Is you a friend or a lily o' the walley?"

"Pap," I said, "it's your own lovin' son. Don't leave me out here unprotected, the prey to the next lily that comes along lookin' wherewithal he shall borry."

The ole man opened the door an' let me in.

"They was ten lilies here, one after the other, to-day," he said. "They've left us the bed, the dough-tray, three chairs, a table, an' a few odds an' ends. When I seen the last foot o' our sausage disappearin' down the road under Widdy Spade's arm I made a wow. The next lily that blooms about this clearin' gits its blossoms blowed off."

### Belief and Unbelief.

I MAY believe that there is no God, that I am self-contained, that my brief sojourn here serves no purpose; that in the economy of this world without limit my existence counts for as little as the evanescent hire of a flower—I may believe all this in a deeply religious spirit, with the infinite throbbing within me; you may believe in one all-powerful God, who cherishes and protects you, yet your belief may be mean, and petty, and small. I shall be happier than you, and calmer, if my doubt is greater, and nobler, and more earnest than is your faith; if it has probed more deeply into my soul, traversed wider horizons, if there are more things it has loved. And if the thoughts and feelings on which my doubt reposes have become vaster and purer than those that support your faith, then shall the God of my disbelief become mightier and of supreme comfort than the God to whom you cling. For, indeed, belief and unbelief are mere empty words; not so the loyalty, the greatness and profoundness of the reasons wherefore we believe or do not believe.—*Maeterlinck*.

### Fast Schedule.

The quickest time on record is summed up by a Billville editor in the following stanza:—

He was the very best of men—  
His age was sixty-seven;  
He left this world at half-past ten—  
Reached t'other by eleven.

—*Atlanta Constitution*.

Hicks—"Yes; Wilkins is a mind-reader. You know Hilarum, the crazy man? Well, the other day he was crazier than usual, and then got drunk, to boot. And we set Wilkins to work reading his mind." Wicks—"Must have been interesting." Hicks—"Interesting? Wilkins said it was just like reading a Sunday paper."—*Puck*.

## 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 the summer.

BATTERSEA ETHICAL SOCIETY (455 Battersea Park-road): 3.15, "Condition of Boer Women and Children."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell-road): 7, Harry Snell, "The Human Element in the Bible."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11, Professor J. H. Muirhead, "R. L. Stevenson's Philosophy."

## OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BROCKWELL PARK (S. L. E. S.): 11.30, J. Clarke, "Conscription."

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Religion and Common Sense."

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, E. Pack; 6.30, E. Pack.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, E. Pack.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Can Man by Searching Find out God?"

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, C. Cohen, "Atheism."

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, C. Cohen, "Women and Christianity."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7.30, E. B. Rose, "Freethinkers and Freethought."

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, F. Davies, "God and Mammon"; 3.30, W. Heaford, "Prayer and Providence"; 7, S. E. Easton, "Where will You Spend Eternity?"

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, C. Cohen, "Following Jesus"; 7.15, W. J. Ramsey, "I was in Prison." June 12, at 8.15, C. Cohen.

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, W. J. Ramsey, "What think ye of Christ?"

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, F. Davies, "The Devil."

VICTORIA PARK: A. B. Moss—3.15, "A New Age of Reason"; 6.15, "The Riddle of the Universe."

## COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH: H. Percy Ward—11, in the Bull Ring; 3, near Ship Hotel, Camp Hill; 7, Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street, "How God Made the World." Every Wednesday in the Bull Ring at 8; Friday at Nechell's Green at 8, Debates with the Rev. P. J. Cocking.

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

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, F. J. Gould, "Plato."

PONTYFRIDD (City Restaurant): 6, A Meeting of the District Organising Secular Committee.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, G. Berrisford, "The Bible Story of Creation."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Cap. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, A lecture; 8, Annual meeting—election of officers and Conference delegates' report.

## Lecturer's Engagements.

H. PERCY WARD, 2 Leamington-place, George-street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.—June 9, Birmingham; 16, Birmingham; 23, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 30, Newcastle-on-Tyne. July 7, 14, 21, 28, Birmingham.

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