

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Sunday on the Sands.

SCENE:—Any popular South Coast resort where religionists are rampant, and the more accessible spots on the Sands are monopolised by madding Evangelistic crowds.

EVELINA (to ALGERNON, who imagines he has discovered a quiet retreat): How sweetly beautiful! The azure sky, the smiling, placid ocean, the setting orb of day, the o'erhanging rocks—and—and. What was I going to say next, Algernon dear?

ALGERNON: God knows. (*Hastily recovering himself.* N.B.—*Their honeymoon is not quite over.*) I meant to say, dearest, that you were probably going to mention the boats—or perhaps the sea gulls.

EVELINA: Yes, it *was* the sea gulls—the sweet sea gulls in their flight. Now—dear me, what a silly I am, I have positively forgotten the idea I started with. I know it was most appropriate. Ah, now, I remember it. It was—How easy here to "Look through Nature up to Nature's God"—as the poet Milton says—or was it Tennyson?

ALGERNON: No, dear; I think it was Browning. Though, 'pon my word, I won't be certain that it isn't Swinburne. Same time, it sounds to me rather like Shelley.

EVELINA (*triumphantly*): I knew you would fix it at once. How awfully nice to have the poets at one's finger-ends. Do you know, I often make the most absurd mistakes. (*Giggles genteelly.*) But how restful and peaceful, how—

Bang! Bang! Bang! (*From approaching Salvation Army big drum, accompanied by the blare of brazen instruments.*)

ALGERNON (*rising to make tracks*): I think, dear, if you don't mind, we will move a little away. Suppose, now, we take a quiet stroll round the cliffs. But, pardon the interruption, you were saying: "How restful and peaceful, how —"

[*Remainder of observation lost in the uproar. They glide away.*]

'ARRIETT: Tike yer arm off me neck, 'Enery. 'Ere's the Salvations a-comin'.

'ENERY: Bli'me, so they are. What a lot o' guys. Oh, Jeroosalem, look at the ole joker wiv the big drum. Don't he whack it—a treat. Git up and let's go and see the fun. Ain't they a bloomin' circus, and no mistike? Just like as if they was in the Borough. An' look at the young kippers in their poke bonnets.

'ARRIETT: Mind what you're a-sayin' of, 'Enery. If you get lookin' at them gells, I might tike on wiv the bounder that's bustin' hissself wiv the trombone.

'ENERY: Garn. D'ye think they could strike me fancy? Wiv fices on 'em like that.

[*Salvation Army corps take up position on the Sands, and prepare for a hideous and continuous din.*]

S. A. CAPTAIN: Now, my dear friends, we'll begin at once by the singin' of a yim to the per-aise and glo-ree of Gawd. Then we'll fire a volley for our own dear Lo-ard and Master's sike—the risen Siveyer of us all—yes, of all the sinners and the ungawdly and the scoffers and them as laughs. (*Sozte voce*) You boys er'll 'av to be shifted pretty quick if you don't be 'ave. (*Aloud*) Yes, my dear friends, with 'is own precious blood he died for us all. Now, then, let us sing:—

I am so glad that Jesus loves me,
That Jesus loves me, Jesus loves me.

No. 1,046.

TOUCHY TRIPPER (*considering himself personally denounced as one of the "ungodly," and resenting the imputation*): Jesus loves you. Which of yer—all of yer?

SALVATIONIST LASS: 'Ow many can yer see, guv'nor?
TRIPPER: 'Ow many? Why a 'bus-load—enough to fill a good-sized Chamber of 'Orrors. And Jesus loves these (*appealing to the wide ocean and sky*), includin' that bounder with a voice on him like a foghorn. I shouldn't ha' thought it. No, not if anyone had gawn on his bended knees aud sworn it to me.

S. A. CAPTAIN: Yes, dear friends, he loves all—even this infidel.

TRIPPER: Who are you a-infidelling? Infidel yourself, you bally cuckoo. I'm Church of England, if you want to know—bred and born—and I don't 'old with these 'ere goin's on. Now I've told yer.

[*Walks off with victorious air.*]

SHRILL CHORUS OF CHILDREN (*seated at a distance in a semi-circle on the Sands, and led by a Church Sunday-school worker—young, spectacled, consumptive-looking, and in amateur-clerical guise*):—

Onward Christian soajlers,
Marchin' as to wo-er,
With the Cross of Jesus
Goin' on be-foer, etc.

SUNDAY-SCHOOL LEADER: Now to-day, my dear children, I want to talk to you about the missionaries. All of you have heard of those brave men who have gone to convert the heathen from their blindness, and have sometimes been slain, and even eaten up, whilst engaged in the Lord's work.

YOUNG HOPEFUL (*aged six*): What's he talking about, ma?

MA: S-s-sh. Listen, and you will understand.

YOUNG HOPEFUL: I mean him with the spectacles. D'ye think the giants are going to eat *him*? That would be fine. When will they do it, ma? Couldn't you take me to see, ma?

MA: S-s-sh. How wicked of you to think of such a thing.

YOUNG HOPEFUL: But he said it, didn't he, ma? (*After a pause*) Oh, take me away, ma. He's shaking his finger at me. I want to go and play by the waves.

MA: You sit down quiet where you are. Playing on Sunday, indeed! Remember the fourth commandment. How do you expect to go to heaven?

YOUNG HOPEFUL (*whimpering*): I don't want to go to heaven. I want to go where we're building a sand castle round by that cliff.

MA: You'll go home and go to bed—that's where you want to go to.

[*YOUNG HOPEFUL led off howling.*]

OLEAGINOUS TRACT DISTRIBUTOR (*to FREETHINKER*): Might I ask you to look in at our service in the Christian Gospel Tent just over there? All are welcome. A bright service—plenty of singing. May I invite you?

FREETHINKER: Yes, you may.

O. T. D. (*brightening up*): Then you'll come?

FREETHINKER: I didn't say so.

O. T. D. (*rather puzzled*): Our services are adapted to Christians of all denominations.

FREETHINKER: But I'm not a Christian of any denomination, and don't desire to be one.

O. T. D.: Perhaps you haven't seen this little tract entitled "Have you found Jesus?"

FREETHINKER: Is Jesus lost then?

O. T. D.: You know what it means. Will you read it?

FREETHINKER: Yes, if you will read this (*offering him copy of "Freethinker"*).

[O. T. D. looks at it for a moment, and drops it like a hot potato.

O. T. D.: You are bound for hell, my dear friend.
Refrain from Gospel Tent:—

Oh, that will be joyful,
Joyful, joyful, joyful,
When we meet to part no mo-er.

PRAYER (*offered by little knot of independent Christians stationed a short distance off*): O Lord, help and save us. Give light unto the 'eathen, and especially we ask thee to help those who profess the faith in 'igh places to a truer understanding of thy Gospel as once delivered to the Saints.

ONE OF A TRIO OF BOOKMAKERS: Infernal hole on Sundays. Let's toss for half thick 'uns. Or perhaps we'd better go for a sprint, or back to the hotel, though they won't let us play billiards. Who can stand the bally din here?

MRS. GUSHINGTON (*at a remote part of the sands*): What a really lovely sermon this morning at St. Ignatius'-on-the-Hill. So touching and moving. By the way, Gwendoline, what was it about? You have a better memory than I. You're younger than I am, though Mr. Simpkinson *did* take me for your sister.

MISS GWENDOLINE: Aunt, Mr. Simpkinson did nothing of the sort, or he didn't mean it. (*A pause.*) Yes, as you say, aunt, the incense was extremely nice—so soothing and sneezified. The Rev. Chasuble has a most delightful intonation and a lovely ring on his little finger. His sermon? Oh, yes, that was real sweet—something about St. Augustine. Wasn't it? I'm not sure. But so very refined and quite Catholic. His leading points—they were, indeed, so—what shall I say?—so *very* pointed. But, aunt, I think you have *Concerning Isabel Carnaby*. Will you lend it me?

MRS. GUSHINGTON: Certainly not—on a Sunday. And a low Dissenting novel, too! I am surprised at you, Gwendoline, brought up in the Church as you have been. I have a book of sermons by that delightful vicar of St. Ignatius. What *is* his name? I forget it for the moment. But they are so restful to the soul—

[*Bang! Bang! Bang! from the Salvation Army contingent, now marching along the Sands.*

I think, dear, we'll go home. Oh, the din of these places! I wish people weren't so hysterical in their religion. I feel so faint, and we have invited the Rev.—what's his name to supper, and I am sure I shall be unable to take the slightest interest in his new theories of "plain song." [They retire.

OLEAGINOUS TRACT DISTRIBUTOR: I will now hand out to the people, as they leave the sands, our much-admired tract, "Peace, Peace, Perfect Peace." (*Espies his wife.*) Oh, hell, there *she's* coming. No peace for me now.

TIRED FOLKS: Nor for anybody else, when the howling brethren of Christ are let loose on the sands, and haven't even the competition of the niggers.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Atheism and its Critics.—VII.

(Concluded.)

IN justifying Atheism by the method of showing the untenable character of Theism, I have not dwelt upon any conclusions as to the moral nature of Deity that might be derived from an examination of natural phenomena. I have not done so because the questions of whether there is any evidence for the existence of mind in nature, and whether it is of such a kind as to command our moral approbation, are quite distinct. Of course, if the answer to the first is No, there is no second question to give a reply to; but the answer to the first might be Yes, and still the second be replied to in the negative.

I do not agree with the expressions one hears so often, to the effect that, if there is a God, he must be good or wise. I could never see any logical necessity why, granting a God, he must also be a moral being.

The two things seem to me quite distinct. Existence and morality are by no means synonymous terms, and there is certainly a great deal in nature that would favor the hypothesis of some almighty malignant power working out a plan with a complete disregard to human suffering. That "the rain falls upon the just and the unjust alike" is, from one point of view, the bare expression of a physical fact; from another, it may either be an expression of God's kindness to the unjust or his brutality to the just.

So I have preferred to discuss the question solely from the point of view of whether the belief that nature expresses the operation of a creative intelligence is one that can be reasonably upheld. I have shown, I think, that it cannot be, and that any attempt to do so can only result in an unwarrantable transference of human feelings to the physical universe. In such a matter we are absolutely without data upon which to proceed. The certainty of any man's reasoning is always dependent upon his knowledge of the subject at issue, and, where nothing can be known, our reasoning resolves itself into a number of unverifiable guesses. We know nothing, and can know nothing, of the supernatural. We have neither facts from which to reason, nor circumstances to which to appeal for justification. Even on the most favorable consideration of the Theistic case, the probability that some intelligent cause is necessary to explain natural phenomena exactly equals the probability that science cannot, either now or at any future time, furnish the desired explanation by means of the operation of natural forces. And when we look at the past of scientific thought, and observe how one set of phenomena after another has been brought under the operation of natural law, even the complex phenomena of social and mental life falling into line with the rest of nature, the probabilities in favor of Theism grow steadily weaker. At any rate, no man has the right to say that an utterly unknown cause is necessary to explain the phenomena of nature until he has exhausted the possibilities of known causes, and we are still far from being in a position to make that assertion.

So far, then, the Atheistic position is justified by the dual fact that all the supposed proofs of the existence of God turn out to be either unrealisable in thought or unwarranted by facts. But the evidence on behalf of Atheism is not by any means exhausted at this stage. If the God-idea existed as a simple, unexplainable fact, its rejection would probably depend very largely upon temperament. Yet we not only can furnish very strong reasons for rejecting it as an hypothesis, but can also adduce clear and unmistakable evidence as to how it came to be. The whole history of the genesis and development of the belief in intelligences ruling the course of nature is before those who care to study it; and, although many stages in the process may not be clearly made out as yet, nor the precise power of different factors determined, yet the essential outlines of the story have been sketched, and the filling-in can only make it clearer and more striking without producing any fundamental alteration. Whatever doubt there may be as to which is the primary form of the God-idea, there is at least a common agreement among anthropologists in tracing it back to a purely human origin, and in finding its cause, not in any innate perception of the supernatural, but in the fear and ignorance of primitive man, with the consequent misunderstanding of the commonest of every-day events.

There are two sources from which the idea of gods is derived. One of the sources of the god-idea is the misunderstanding of subjective phenomena, such as sleep, dreams, visions, epilepsy, etc. The savage constantly confuses the real with the imaginary. The echo he hears is a real voice; the shadow of himself on the ground, or the reflection of himself in water, are real existences. His dreams, too, supply him with a series of impressions that are everywhere among savages, and even among semi-civilised people, interpreted in the same way. To us the idea that we have been to distant places during sleep, or that people have appeared to us in dreams, is dismissed as sheer phantasy. To the savage they are actual occurrences. And these things admit of one explanation only—that is, that something inhabits the body which can visit distant places and return at will. Catalepsy and epilepsy are also explained on the grounds of some

mysterious entity taking possession of the body; and, finally, death itself is due to the unwillingness or inability of the double to return at all. But, although the double of the dead man has left the body, it may still linger near at hand—may still wreak vengeance for neglect shown, or confer favors for services rendered. Hence one source of the practice of performing ceremonies at the graves of the dead—ceremonies that increase in proportion to the importance of the dead man in the estimation of the tribe. As time passes, the exploits of the dead leader are extolled and exaggerated, until finally he takes his place as one of the deities in the tribal pantheon. The belief in a double thus leads to ancestor worship, and ancestor worship results in the creation of a god.

It is this theory which has been worked out with such marvellous skill by Mr. Spencer, and supported by facts drawn from all parts of the uncivilised and civilised world. Additional strength has been given to the theory by the researches of Sir A. C. Lyell and Mr. W. Crookes, the former of whom, in his *Asiatic Studies*, and the latter in his *Popular Religion and Folklore in Northern India*, have collected numerous instances of the gradual transformation of village heroes into tribal deities. The classical histories of Greece and Rome likewise furnish numerous instances of the same description.

The other source of the god-idea is the almost unconscious, but perfectly natural, interpretation of natural phenomena by the savage in terms of himself. The conception of mechanical causation being absent, the savage, when he reasons at all upon the physical phenomena around him, is bound to think in terms of the only force of which he has any knowledge—his own will and intelligence. It is to this simple circumstance that the deification of natural forces owes its origin; not as the result of any profound philosophising, because this the savage seldom indulges in. Both the belief in a double and the belief in natural forces are reached more unconsciously than consciously; it is the constant presence of the same class of facts which gives rise to these beliefs—at first dimly, but more clearly as time advances.

These beliefs become more elaborate as the philosophising powers of man increase; but we are not concerned now with these later stages. All that we are concerned with is to indicate, in as few words as possible, the manner in which the belief in nature being tenanted and governed by spiritual agencies came into existence. And, whether we agree with Spencer that the deification of natural forces is the result of the transference to them of the spirits of human beings, or with his opponents that it is due to the direct reading of man's own feelings into phenomena, the result as against Theism is the same. In either case the belief has its origin in illusion; and that it should afterwards have been supported by learned arguments and subtle reasonings only places it upon the same level as the belief in good and evil spirits, which, too, could once enlist multitudes of learned arguments in its defence.

The Atheist, therefore, has more than a mere theoretical case to go upon. His rejection of all theisms is based, not only upon the logical weakness of all the evidence brought forward in support of Theism, but also upon a full perception of the origin and nature of all gods. He sees that, however refined the conceptions of God may become, they all spring from the same root; and a belief that has illusion for its sole origin can scarcely become truth even in the hands of a modern apologist.

The cardinal truth is that the hypothesis of mind in nature does not owe its existence to knowledge or scientific investigation, but the reverse. It has persisted, owing to a variety of extraneous circumstances, in the teeth of scientific advancement; but its origin has to be sought in an essentially pre-scientific age. And it would, indeed, be a matter of much wonder if this question—said by Theists to be the most profound that can agitate the human mind—should have been satisfactorily solved by savages, or that the people whose ignorance prevented them understanding aright the common facts of existence should have successfully grappled with a problem such as the one under discussion.

From the age of fetichism downwards the history of the god-idea has been a history of modification and

rejection. Every invention has slain a superstition, every scientific discovery has marked the burying-place of a dead god. Each age of criticism has reduced the gods in number and limited them in power. In early times the gods were everywhere; their presence was seen in the simplest as well as in the most complex of events. Advancing knowledge pushed them further and further back, until nature, "rid of her haughty lords," is conceived as a huge complex of unconscious forces in place of the volitional powers of our ancestors. To-day, even in the mouths of many religionists, "God" stands for little more than a force. We cannot, they say, describe "him" as personal, as intelligent, as conscious; and between this non-personal, non-conscious, non-intelligent force and the force postulated by the most thorough-going Atheist it is impossible to detect any difference.

Atheism, then, takes its stand upon the observed trend of human history, upon an impartial scrutiny of the facts of nature, and upon a careful examination of the origin and contents of the god-idea. Every god the world has seen has been man-made, and man, mortal himself, cannot confer immortality upon any of his creations. I have not concerned myself with a refutation of any of the supposed direful consequences of Atheism. Mental uprightness and moral integrity are obviously not the exclusive property of any one religion, and, looking at their past histories, it is a fair presumption that neither are they their necessary accompaniments. Fortunately for us, nature has not left the operation of the fundamental virtues dependent upon any speculative hypothesis we may frame or hold. The social and family instincts, which are inseparable from our nature as human beings, and which operate in ways of which we are largely unconscious, are the grounds of all the higher and finer virtues, and, while a change in opinion may modify action here and there, it cannot alter their fundamental character. What Atheism would mean in practice would be an enormous concentration of energy upon purely human affairs, and a judgment of human actions in terms of present happiness and prosperity. The gods die; but man, their creator, still lives; and the creative energy which plastered the face of nature with deities, and called forth a heaven to redress the wrongs of earth, may, if properly applied, yet cover the earth with homes in which men and women, rendered strong by love and knowledge, may rise the superiors of the gods before whom they once bowed in blind adoration.

C. COHEN.

Christianity Found Wanting.

A SERIES of articles are appearing in the *Christian World* upon "Reasonable Faith," from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Horton, M.A., and they are addressed to "young men and young women." The rev. gentleman tells his readers that his object is "to talk with you when the heart cries out for God and the mind demands a reasonable faith; when the religion in which you have been brought up fails to satisfy, and you feel, though you by no means say, Who will show us any good?" There can be no objection to what is here proposed, for, beyond doubt, there is among the rising generation an increasing demand for a "reasonable faith"—which demand is caused by a marked dissatisfaction with the religion in which they have been "brought up." Throughout the articles an effort is made to show that Christianity is the reasonable faith required. The question, however, arises, Does Dr. Horton succeed in his object? My answer to this is decidedly in the negative. It appears to me that groundless assumption, proofless assertion, and reckless statements permeate the whole of his articles. The capacity of the minds of his readers must be exceedingly limited if they are satisfied with his pleadings, which are fair samples of the usual orthodox taking-for-granted that which should be proved by the production of facts. It is thus that youthful minds are misled and traditional errors perpetuated. In no other field of inquiry but that of theology would such special pleading be accepted in the place of argument. Instead of reasoning the Doctor relies upon preaching, and in lieu of demonstration he puts forward merely speculations.

He commences with the reckless statement: "If I were asked to characterise Christianity so as to distinguish it from other religions on the one hand, and from non-religion on the other, I should unhesitatingly fix on this *differentia* (forgive the logical term)—Love." He says that, according to Christianity, "God is love, morality is love, and the object of human life is love." And herein, he asserts, is the *differentia* of Christianity, which distinguishes it from aught else. Now, far be it from me to depreciate love; it is, to my mind, the grandest sentiment of our nature. The world would doubtless be much better than it is if we had more real love amongst us. Jealousy, selfishness, and mistrust would not then be so prevalent as they are now. But to say that we are indebted to Christianity for the manifestation of love is the very opposite of the fact. Love and the brotherhood of man were taught and practised long before Christianity existed. Dr. Horton should know that Plato emphatically taught both; and, according to Lecky, love was an active factor in Rome long before the dawn of the Christian faith. Cicero and Seneca both asserted it forcibly. Surely no sane person will contend that love at the present time is absent from the non-Christian world. It is an essential part of humanity, and its manifestation is the more marked where theology is not allowed to interfere with its genuine ebullition. It is the avowed foundation of the religion of the Positivists, their motto being, "Love our basis, order our method, and progress our end." Certainly love was not the paramount teaching of Christ. The very conditions of discipleship which he imposed would, if complied with, exclude the possibility of love among men, as would also his teaching as to destroying the peace and harmony of the domestic circle. He exhibited the very opposite of love when he threatened to have his revenge upon those who denied him; when he instructed his disciples to "go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not"; and when he told his followers to shake off the dust of their feet against those who would not hear their words. Finally, there is but little love in the announcement that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The rev. gentleman says: "Nature knows not love; the gentle pigeons peck to death their sick comrade; the pert robin murders his sire; Nature's heart is emotional, but hard. Like a beautiful sensualist, she looks you in the eyes languishing, and strangles you in her long hair. Men, by nature, are strangely loveless." This imperfection of nature was better stated by J. S. Mill; but does it not occur to professed Christians that this cruelty in nature is an impeachment of God's love if he were the creator of all things? Besides, it is evident from the history of Christianity that it has failed to inspire love within its own devotees, for its accounts are sad narratives of hate not only towards its opponents, but also towards other professed Christians. Hence the dark pages of the recital of instances of persecution which mar the Christian records. We are told that whatever conflicts with the teaching that "God is love" must be eliminated from the Christian faith. If this be so, its fundamental doctrines are doomed. Making man imperfect, and then punishing him because he was so; causing the innocent to suffer for the alleged guilty; seeking to compel all to believe one thing under penalty of damnation; creating a devil and hell with its torments "for ever and ever," do not go to prove "God is love." If it is said these doctrines are now given up, then my answer is that so far Christianity is given up, for they are all its teachings.

Dr. Horton makes the strange admission that Christianity is not "demonstrated with the accuracy and certainty of science." Now this is quite true, but does it not imply that the discoveries of man are better authenticated than the alleged divine scheme which, we are told, is sufficiently potent to regenerate the human race? We have the further admission that "Christianity has not solved all mysteries. What does? It has not expounded in detail the Ineffable First Cause. Who has, who can? It does not relieve us of the huge weight of the unintelligible world. It cannot drown

The still sad music of humanity.

The mistake has been in claiming that it did these things." Let the exponents of so-called Christian evidences note this. Here we have the Freethought position granted. But most of the would-be Christian debaters contend that their theory of the universe is the only one that can be understood. It would be well if the "lesser lights" of the Christian propaganda would remember what Dr. Horton here admits, and also his candid confession that man "does not know *what* God is; he has no faculty which by searching can find out God..... We surmise, we dream, we reason, we aspire, but we do not *know*." This is precisely what the present writer has frequently stated, and for saying which his opponents have dogmatically condemned him. The Doctor's position is practically Agnosticism, a word at which the less informed orthodox believer sneers.

The rev. gentleman further grants that the evolution of man, as taught by Darwin, "must be accepted broadly as the scientific teaching on the subject." True, he adds that "Christ never based his teaching about man on the story of Adam and Eve; he never referred to those 'first parents,' as they are called. He never spoke of the Fall. He never uttered a truth which in any way depended upon that reputed fact." And he contends that a modern evolutionist could accept Christianity and still believe in Darwin's theory. He agrees with Romanes that the story of Adam, the Fall, and the story of evil has long been recognised by thoughtful theologians as allegorical. "Indeed, read with unprejudiced eyes, the first chapters of Genesis ought always to have been seen to be a poem as distinguished from a history; nor could it ever have been mistaken for a history, but for preconceived ideas on the matter of inspiration." If Dr. Horton is right, the Christian Church has been for centuries trying to impose a fraud upon the people, for it has taught, as essential to its faith, the belief in the Bible account of Adam, the Fall, and the origin of evil. St. Paul's opinion is clear upon the subject. His words are: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The Doctor does not attempt to reconcile the facts of evolution with the Bible statements that man was specially created about six thousand years ago, and that his history has been one of retrogression instead of progression. He merely asserts without even attempting to prove his allegations.

In replying to certain correspondents Dr. Horton writes: "To those who write in doubt and perplexity, courage, patience; we may yet find the Divine power of Christianity convincing our understanding as well as captivating our hearts." This is "playing to the gallery" with a vengeance. It is just the language indulged in by the Christian advocate who does not possess too much of "the wisdom of this world." It is "a short and easy method" to adopt with those who demand "a reasonable faith." What "we may yet find" is at least problematical; but what we have found is that the Christian religion has failed to satisfy the needs of the human race, and that nothing the rev. gentleman has said tends to prove the faith either reasonable or practicable.

CHARLES WATTS.

Shakespeare and the Great Lying Church.

"What damned error but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text."

"Stuffing the ears of men with false reports."

ORTHODOX people repeat, like a parrot's recitative, the statement that Shakespeare was a Christian. They wish to claim the greatest Englishman as one of themselves, and from time to time publish volumes of undaunted special pleading which would have put an Old Bailey pleader to the blush. But perhaps the most curious and interesting work of this class is Father Bowden's *The Religion of Shakespeare*. Its object is to show that Shakespeare was a Roman Catholic. This work in no wise differs from its predecessors. Monumental disquisitions, as numerous as "quills upon the fretful porcupine," have been published to demonstrate that Shakespeare was a player, a lawyer, an archer, a Puritan, and things beyond count. Ardent Baconians

dispute Shakespeare's claim to his own books. Other lunatics allege that the Almighty inspired his pen. Even Father Bowden cannot surprise us after these cranks.

This publication reminds us of the farce of *Box and Cox*. For the book has two authors, and the result is as bewildering as the evergreen work beloved by generations of playgoers. The work, as Father Bowden tells us, is chiefly from the writings of the late Mr. Richard Simpson. Three chapters are pointed out as Father Bowden's own work; the rest is mainly Mr. Simpson's. But this "mainly" does not permit us to distinguish between Box and Cox, between the layman and the priest. Therefore, by way of convenience, we shall usually refer to Father Bowden as the author, since he makes himself responsible for the opinions of the deceased layman, who "does in vile misprison shackle up" the thoughts of Shakespeare. This book is the work of a man who has read his Shakespeare. Its scholarship is sound. But it is a monument of misdirected energy. Criticism, sharp as Shylock's knife, soon pricks Father Bowden's bubble. Shakespearean commentators are adepts in bringing startling meanings out of a Shakespeare text, as a conjurer brings eggs from an empty hat. But this attempt to prove Shakespeare a Catholic easily surpasses them, and leaves the unfortunate reader gasping. At the very outset we are asked to observe, as a proof of the poet's genuine Romanism, how he employs Catholic vestments and ritual as symbols of "things high, pure, and true." Why, think you? Because he makes wily old Henry IV. remark that he kept his

Presence, like a robe pontifical,
Ne'er seen but wondered at.

A phrase which as much recalls non-Christian as Catholic sacerdotal pomp. Unbelievers employ such similes daily. The monasteries were destroyed, it is alleged, through avarice; therefore Timon's tirade against "gold, yellow, glittering, precious gold," must be Shakespeare's protest against the avaricious spirit of the Reformation. Nay, is it not clenched by the detail that "this yellow slave," as the Master says, "will knit and break religions"?

A more curious perversion is that of the Countess's speech in *All's Well that Ends Well* regarding Bertram's desertion of his wife:—

What angel shall
Bless this unworthy husband? He cannot thrive
Unless her prayers—whom heaven delights to hear
And loves to grant—reprise him from the wrath
Of greatest justice.

"Helen," supposes the ordinary reader.

"Nay," answers Father Bowden, "nothing less than the Holy Virgin! Prayer to the Virgin."

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" Then again, when it is said that Desdemona could persuade Othello

To renounce his baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,

it shows that Othello is represented as a Catholic. Naturally, for he is supposed to live in a Catholic country, though we cannot see how the passage demonstrates it. We could pile up such amazing and amusing inferences from the poet's text. A handful of customary, every-day ejaculations dramatically put into various mouths, such as the "God rest all Christian souls" of Juliet's nurse, are cited as proof that Shakespeare was an adherent of what Carlyle calls the Great Lying Church. One supreme morsel remains. Portia says playfully to her lover:—

Aye, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
When men enforced do speak anything.

Father Bowden, with solemn want of humor, actually demands: "Is not this an expression of contemptuous disbelief in all the evidence upon which so many pretended Papist conspirators suffered the death of traitors?" Where cannot such an eagle-eye spy Catholicism?

The speech of Lorenzo about the stars

Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim

must also be a proof. We cheerfully admit it need not have been drawn solely from the pages of Montaigne, the sceptic. It was "the tradition of fifteen centuries," as Father Bowden says, and of antiquity before that. Why need Shakespeare have been a Catholic, therefore,

because he employed a tradition common to Christian and Pagan? Bah!

I had rather be a dog and bay the moon
Than such a Roman.

Father Bowden lays very great stress on the religious opinions of Shakespeare's relations. He reminds us that Mary Arden (the poet's mother) came of a Catholic family. The probability is that she was herself a Catholic, but there is no evidence either way. Shakespeare's father is not so doubtful. He was a member of the Stratford Corporation during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and he must have conformed to the Protestant religion. The total result seems that young Shakespeare was brought up under a probably Catholic mother, and a father who was at least a professing Protestant.

At the very outset of the inquiry Father Bowden fails to prove his case. If the circumstances of his childhood were, as Father Bowden depicts, the more clearly is emphasized Shakespeare's revolt from Catholicism. Whilst on this subject of Shakespeare's relations it is worth recalling that the epitaph on Mrs. Hall, Shakespeare's eldest daughter, clearly implies that his life had not been one of piety:—

Witty above her sexe, but that's not all,
Wise to salvation was good Mistris Hall;
Something of Shakespeare was in that, but this
Wholly of Him with whom she's now in bliss.

She derived from Shakespeare her powers of wit, but none of the influences which conduced to her salvation.

This assertion of Shakespeare's Catholicism is a most unwarranted inference. Shakespeare was so ignorant of Catholic ritual that he makes Juliet ask the friar if she shall come "at evening mass." No Catholic could have made this mistake. *King John*, obviously, is not the work of a Romanist. The purport of *Love's Labor Lost* is to show the uselessness of vows. The Duke in *Measure for Measure*, playing the part of a friar preparing a criminal for death, gives Claudio consolation. Not a word of Christian doctrine, not a syllable of sacrificial salvation and sacramental forgiveness, is introduced. This omission is most significant. Shakespeare's view of life is never ascetic or religious. He seems to say throughout, with Sir Toby Belch:—

Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?

Queen Elizabeth and King James could scarcely publicly have favored a Catholic, nor could the Pembroke have given him their patronage. Such things would certainly have been marked and remarked upon.

Father Bowden, however, makes one point. He shows that Shakespeare was no Puritan, no conventional Reformation Protestant. But far too much stress has been laid by the Reverend Father upon isolated passages from the plays. We must discriminate between the dramatist and his puppets; Shakespeare speaks through the type. But the creation only betrays a momentary predominance of the individual over the general truth which he strives to reach. It either speaks less or more than the creator would care to confess in his own proper person. His art, in short, is simply the natural and obedient outlet of his genius. Of course, Shakespeare does reveal himself in his writings. We certainly learn something authentic of his humanity, honesty, and patriotism. His art also tells us something of his own burning passion for justice, his righteous hatred of spiritual superstition and tyranny. Although his characters are born of Shakespeare's mind, sung of his muse, they are not Shakespeare in the sense in which the sightless Samson of the *Agonistes* is Milton forsaken by his wife, blinded and betrayed, and the mockery of the Philistines of the seventeenth century.

Shakespeare's dominant note is rationalistic. With the sanity of genius he manifests as much caution as courage in his quest of truth, and seldom indulges acute perceptions at the expense of judgment. He fully realised the impossibility of solving the insoluble and knowing the unknowable. With regard to all speculative problems he wisely suspends his assent. He belongs emphatically to the secularistic, as distinguished from the superstitious, order of minds. In fact, his Secularism is one of the chief causes of his artistic supremacy. In art and religion alike his instincts are positive rather than speculative.

This customary judicial attitude of his gives much greater value to his occasional indignation at the arrogance, intrigue, and aggression of the Great Lying Catholic Church.

In no sense was Shakespeare a bigot. With smooth tranquillity of mind, with equal interest and with equal ease, he portrays Hamlet's philosophisings, Wolsey's piety, Falstaff's blasphemy, Timon's despair, Iago's villainy, Juliet's credulity, Lady Macbeth's malignity, and the martyrdom of Lear, closing with the chord:—

O let him pass! He hates him much,
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

In the termination of Lear's sufferings tragedy reaches its supreme height. We see the panic-stricken King bearing in his nerveless arms the cold, limp body of the dead Cordelia. The description lives. The wild anger that first found vent in those fierce words—

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O you are men of stones.
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. *She's gone for ever—*

is submerged by sorrow, lost in fatherly tenderness.

Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little.

Critics claim *King Lear* as Shakespeare's greatest work. It is the most Æschylean of his productions, and as entirely free from Christian dogmatism as the works of the grand old Pagan himself. There is but one ray of sunshine in the gloom of the tragedy. But what avails the pure heart and the heroic love of Cordelia? Her pathetic invocations to the deaf and sightless gods remain unheeded and unanswered. No sadder image of human life and fate could be conceived. We look upward and downward, to the earth and to the stars, from the dumb unresponsive earth to the stars which give no man light, over a world full of death and life as bitter as death, without resting place or guidance, a land as dreadful as the circles of the Inferno in Dante's immortal poem. *King Lear* deals with the most familiar facts of actual life—the relation of father and children, the vice of ingratitude, the virtue of filial affection, the consequences of misdirected ambition. It touches the root-springs of human nature. The scope of the tragedy is an impeachment of providence, and the blinded Gloucester sums up its teaching in the biting lines:—

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport.

Shakespeare deals in his great tragedies with the deepest issues of life and conduct, but he never points to the Cross as the solution. In an age when religious wars and schisms were convulsing Europe, and in this England of ours the reformed religion was still struggling with the Old Faith, it is remarkable that Shakespeare turned his back on Christianity. Not, observe, from hostility—he was too free from prejudice for that—but from a knowledge that, as a philosophy of life, it threw no light over the deep abysses of human thought and over the "awful tides of human circumstance." As year by year one great drama succeeded another in unbroken series, his scepticism deepened. His poetry, the attractive garb in which he clothed his practical wisdom, moved naturally and inevitably with the march of his mind. We can discern, in his ample pictures of life, his own settled Secularistic convictions on those momentous questions which loudly knock for answer at every heart. It is well. Shakespeare's name is the greatest in literature—

Deep in the general heart of man
His power survives.

MIMNERMUS.

A Summer Rhyme.

"Oh, for a booke and shadie nooke,
Eyther in door or out;
With the green leaves whispering overhede
Or the streete cryes all about,
Where I may reade all at my ease,
Both of the newe and olde;
For a jollie goode booke whereon to looke
Is better to me than golde."

Acid Drops.

"SECULARISTS at Variance" was the heading of a news paragraph in the *Daily Telegraph* of August 2. This was doubtless thought smart, but it was really very silly. The case was not one of a quarrel between Secularists as Secularists. A man called Harry Hunter had been sending Miss Vance threatening letters. They were of such a character that it was reasonable, as well as charitable, to conclude that he was mad, or at least temporarily deranged. He threatened to have blood, and said he had sharpened a knife for the purpose; and all, apparently, because the West London N. S. S. Branch were making a new open-air platform a few inches higher than the old one. The matter was brought before the N. S. S. Executive, and it was decided that Miss Vance should have the man arrested, for his own sake no less than for the sake of others. He was known to be a man of very violent temper, who had committed several assaults, and it was time to prevent him from doing irreparable mischief. Hunter was brought up at the Mansion House and remanded for a week, so that the state of his mind might be reported on.

During the past two or three years we have ourselves received several letters from this Harry Hunter. They were not threatening letters, but they were madly written, and contained foul charges against various Secularists in West London. We did not know the man from Adam, and, as his letters were so grotesque, we threw them into the wastebasket along with other curious communications that reach us from time to time when the spirit of lunacy is particularly prevalent.

"The King's Declaration, in all its blood-curdling brutality," is the way in which a High Church paper alludes to the original form, to which, as a matter of fact, the King has already subscribed. According to the accounts of the ceremony, the King did not seem to regard this item as "blood-curdling brutality." Nor can anyone who has in view the really brutal Blasphemy Laws, and remembers those who have suffered from them. All the indignation aroused in regard to this endeavor to preserve the Throne from Popery might have been better spent in removing from the statutes the Blasphemy Laws and that absurd Act of Charles II. in regard to Sunday observance, under which a number of petty persecutions are from time to time instituted. These persecutions are not absolutely "blood-curdling," but they give rise to "swear words," not only on the part of the victims, but of the magistrates who are obliged to enforce the law.

Perhaps it is because an Earl Marshal of the realm is annoyed that so much fuss has been made about the Declaration, whilst no attention is paid to laws which are of infinitely more importance to the community. Roman Catholics have had a sentimental grievance, and they haven't been idle in ventilating it. But, after all, the Protestant succession does not depend upon this idle ceremony imposed on monarchs, any more than truth is ensured by kissing the "Sacred Book" in law courts and elsewhere.

The King's Declaration Bill was adjourned from Tuesday to Thursday in the House of Lords because of the races at Goodwood. This is funny considering the grave importance attached by ultra-Protestants to the Bill and their terrible fear that some time or other a Roman Catholic will ascend the Throne. Put off because of Goodwood races! And the House of Lords has a standing committee on the evils of betting. The Bill has now been practically dropped.

At the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, recently held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, a letter was read from Dr. Jacobs, the bishop of the diocese. He wrote that "more and more Christian men are recognising that the real conflict is between the forces of our Lord Jesus Christ on the one side, and indifference, unbelief, and open sin on the other." No doubt Christianity finds itself engaged in a real conflict—indeed, a fight for its very existence. But why should Dr. Jacobs link "unbelief" with "open sin"?

Sunday-schools do not seem to be flourishing. According to a statistical statement presented to the Wesleyan Conference, there has been a decrease of 650 in the total number of officers and teachers connected with the Sunday-schools of that denomination, and a decline of close upon 2,000 in the number of scholars.

The alleged "left hand of St. James the Apostle" is to be presented by a Roman Catholic family to Cardinal Vaughan, and will be placed in a reliquary in the new cathedral at Westminster. The relic has a known history of eight centuries, but that does not carry it half the way back to the period when the Apostle is supposed to have lived. There is no interest in a relic unless there is absolute certainty as to its genuineness, and even then, to the rational mind, the interest is limited, especially in regard to such fragments as bones and nails. They do not *speak* as a scrap of writing or

a mere autograph does. As for any other virtue in them, it is a bitter satire on the boasted progress of the age that people can still be found who seriously believe that these wretched old oddments possess any miraculous power.

"There is a temptation amongst cyclists to put their bicycle first and God second." So said the Rev. E. Hubbard at a Cyclists' Church Parade at St. Michael's, Folkestone. Poor God, to have to take a back seat because of the superior attractions of the "bike." Perhaps, after all, he doesn't mind. Possibly it is not God, but the man of God, who really feels slighted.

How Christians love one another has been once more exemplified by religious feuds at Belfast. Several shipyard workers are in hospital or under medical treatment as the result of rough handling. Six hundred Protestants, it is said, chased a small body of Roman Catholics from their work, and then destroyed their tools. Two Protestants have been sentenced to twelve months' and six months' imprisonment respectively for "conspiring to incite people to riot" on the occasion of the Corpus Christi procession. Some 1,500 men have been thrown out of work, the Belfast Harbor Commissioners having suspended operations, "owing to the repeated attacks on Roman Catholic employees by shipyard workers."

The Bishop of Ripon does not think it wise for a preacher to leave his people ignorant of what is taking place in modern criticism. But, whether wise or not, that is exactly what the bulk of the clergy and ministers are doing. As spiritual guides it should, of course, be their first and bounden duty to afford all possible enlightenment to their flocks on matters affecting their faith. Dr. Boyd Carpenter feels that "some sort of general light ought to be given." That is rather a curious way of putting it. Ought he not to have said "every possible light"? But the clergy still shrink from imparting even the "some sort" of general information which the bishop thinks should be given, and which church-goers certainly have a right to expect.

A little time ago, when Bishop Potter, of New York, was travelling in Minnesota, a man approached him on the railway platform, and scanned his features closely. "Excuse me," he said, finally; "but haven't I seen your picture in the papers?" The bishop was compelled to admit that his tormentor might have done so. "I thought so," continued the inquisitive one. "May I ask what you were cured of?"

In the churchyard of Stanton Harcourt is a curious epitaph. It is placed on the tomb of two lovers who were killed by lightning on July 31, 1718. There was every disposition on the part of the pious writer of the epitaph to do honor to the memory of the lovers, but he failed in his object by naïvely remarking in verse:—

Victims so pure Heav'n saw well pleas'd
And snatched them in eternal fire.

The character of the fire is not that generally associated with heaven.

The clergy have a mighty fine opinion of themselves when they get into the pulpit, where the law protects them from criticism and opposition. Recently, at St. Margaret's, Westminster, Canon Hensley Henson was giving out the text of his sermon, when there was a stir in the central aisle, caused by several people leaving. It seems that here, as in many West-end churches, it is usual for some people to leave before the sermon begins. On this occasion the preacher stopped, and said, in a severe voice: "I will wait till those people leave the church. I thought we were getting over these bad manners."

The "bad manners" seem rather on the part of the preacher. It is perfectly conceivable that persons may choose to attend the service, and feel not the slightest inclination to hear the sermon. Why should they stop to be bored? But it is obviously undignified, and an exhibition of bad taste, for the preacher to take any public notice of the departures. To do so is to let it be seen that he realises how weak is the attraction of his discourses. Decidedly our sympathies are with the persons who leave, for the vast bulk of sermons are fearful inflictions—without a gleam of sense or a spark of eloquence—and apparently imposed on worshippers because of their sins.

An incident which caused a considerable flutter among the brethren occurred at the recent Wesleyan Conference. To the surprise and horror of the fathers, it was discovered that a reporter had, by some means or other, managed to get in the building and be present at the communion service. What added, in the eyes of one leader in Israel, to this enormity was the fact that the said pressman had on a colored tie! Shade of Wesley, has it come to this? On hearing of the excitement caused by his villainy, the reporter (he was attached to a London daily) sent to the Conference a letter, in which he explained how it was he was present, though he gave no reason for the colored tie. His letter was appreciated

by the brethren, who were able to proceed to business; but in future the communion will be celebrated with closed doors.

"St. Paul's Dome in Danger" is the startling heading to a special article in one of the London evening papers. We have been keeping a watchful eye for some little time past on the big structure at the top of Ludgate Hill. It would be a nice sort of thing for us if some day the Cathedral should come toppling over and bury the *Freethinker* office in the ruins! Though not immediately within its shadow, we are sufficiently near to St. Paul's to be gravely apprehensive. We haven't the least faith that the Lord would do anything to preserve his own house. If he did anything at all, it would probably be to carry a few hundred tons of masonry down the hill and dump it on to 1 Stationers' Hall Court. It is therefore with some relief that we learn that Dean Gregory is having the immense dome, and other portions of the structure, carefully overhauled with a view to repairs.

The Bishop of London has heard, with some concern, that prayers for the war are not now regularly said in all the churches in the diocese. He "strongly feels that this time of deferred hopes and weary waiting for the end of the war is just the time when our prayers should be offered with the greater diligence. He hopes, therefore, that at least one of the prayers may be said regularly, in all the churches, in the Daily Office."

So speaks the Bishop of London, "with some concern." Is this episcopal pronouncement a condemnation of the Churches who have ceased to pray, or a veiled threat at the Almighty? The Churches prayed before the war had really begun. Then they prayed for peace, but war ensued. Afterwards they prayed that it would immediately terminate, but it didn't. Isn't this suggestion about renewed prayer somewhat in the nature of a forlorn hope? Or is there a latent suggestion that the Lord can be forced to do something if he is only sufficiently worried?

The common-sense view of the matter is that the Lord has had nothing to do with the war in any way from the commencement, nor is likely to worry himself about its end whenever it may come. If he has been awake or in any way observant, events prove that he has been unwilling to interfere. Why pester him further?

One is always glad to sit wonderingly, if not obediently, at the feet of that great Gamaliel on the marriage laws—the *Church Times*. Here is one of its latest declarations on Church law in regard to marriage ties which have been dissolved, not too readily, by Sir Francis Jeune: "The Church of England recognises no claim even of the innocent party in a divorce case to be married to another woman while the canonical wife is alive. The canons are explicit on this point. The civil law compels no clergyman to officiate at such a marriage, and a firm attitude adopted in the matter would probably result in the parties going elsewhere. The registrar's office is open to them, and they suffer no damage by having the Church refused to them."

The *Church Times*, for once, has said a sensible thing on this subject. We agree that the parties would "suffer no damage by having the Church refused to them."

A great anticipatory howl has been made by pious people lest the coming Coronation in Westminster Abbey should be attended by a scrambling for Coronation medals in the "sacred edifice" as at the Coronation of Queen Victoria. But the following directions or rubrics for the service at the late Queen's Coronation have been turned up: "*The Homage*.—The exhortation being ended, all the peers then present do their homage publicly and solemnly unto the Queen upon the theatre, and, in the meantime, the Treasurer of the Household throws among the people medals of gold and silver, as the Queen's princely largess or donative."

The scrambles at these functions have their counterpart in throwing "hot coppers" to the crowd in the streets on Lord Mayor's day. We don't suppose Westminster Abbey, though a place of worship when it is not one of curious inspection, will suffer very much from a scramble by peers and fat duchesses for whatever is thrown to them.

The silly parson who went out to the front as Army Chaplain, and who is allowed to gush his puerilities in the *Church Times*, is rapidly becoming worse than when we first noticed him. He contributed last week a page of sanctimonious bosh. He says a mistake was made at Winburg by appointing a Wesleyan as chaplain. Perhaps there was. The Boers—who at least have proved themselves active combatants—do not seem to have carted about with them any salaried spiritual guides. They have carried their religion with them individually, as in older times the French soldier was supposed to carry a marshal's *bâton* in his knapsack.

The insolent clerics, as they have proved themselves to be in the bulk, who were sent out, and have been paid for their

services, in connection with our troops, seem to have been worthless impedimenta. From several of the best-informed war correspondents they have received well-merited castigation. No wonder the officers in the field dislike them, as the clerics bitterly complain. They may be tolerated at home in their little protected pulpits, but they are not wanted in warfare—notwithstanding all the tales they tell of soldiers requiring spiritual consolation. Which consolation they are confessedly unable to impart because of Tommy's initial want of spiritual knowledge.

By the time Tommy has been well-grounded in the principles of the Christian religion he is very often dead. And perhaps the clerical instruction, with all the usual bosh about the hereafter, has killed him, or at any rate hastened his end.

This Army Chaplain, who is relating his experiences in the *Church Times*, says: "It is not always that military authorities understand that there is a difference between Church and Dissent." Of course, what could they care about sectarian differences and fine distinctions between a Methodist and an Anglican? They are there to kill men. The surgeons are there to bind up wounds. Why the parsons are fooling about is a puzzle to everyone, and it is still more remarkable that they should be paid. This chaplain, by the way, talks very largely about his "orderly."

The Rev. Dr. Lloyd Jones, of Chicago, believes that Protestantism has been fatally given to dividing and subdividing. He asks: "What has Protestantism done?" He replies: "It has analysed and re-analysed and defined once more, until to-day we have seventeen kinds of Methodists, thirteen kinds of Baptists, twelve kinds of Presbyterians, and some 350 different denominations, all told, in the United States. This is not merely scandalous, it is imbecile. Every label on religion is a libel."

The Directors of the Alexander III. Museum in St. Petersburg have defied the Holy Synod in its ban against two paintings by a local artist named Repin. One is a portrait of Count Tolstoi, barefooted, in the dress of a peasant. The other is a symbolical picture called "Get Thee Behind Me, Satan." The exhibition of these paintings was prohibited in Moscow, yet they have been bought for a national art gallery.

A remarkable incident has occurred in connection with the swearing of a jury—mostly Hebrews—at a coroner's court in London. The court did not possess a Hebrew Bible, and the jury objected to take the oath on a book in which the New Testament was bound up. A Hebrew Bible could not be obtained in the neighborhood, and, consequently, the novel expedient was resorted to of pulling a Bible in half to remove the New Testament. The jurors were then sworn; but the formality of legal swearing under any circumstances is a piece of nonsense which might well be dispensed with.

A landlord in a small tenement case which came before Mr. Fordham at North London was sworn as a Christian. When he began to speak he was asked if he were a Christian or a Jew, and he replied that he was a Jew. Mr. Fordham (sternly)—Then what do you mean by allowing yourself to be sworn as a Christian, with your head uncovered? The landlord said that it made no difference to him whether he was sworn with his hat on or off or on the Old or the New Testament. Mr. Fordham—And do you call yourself a good Jew? The landlord—Certainly. Mr. Fordham appealed to Mr. H. Romain, who was in the solicitors' well, as to the practice in swearing Jews. Mr. Romain said that a good Jew would not consider an oath administered when the head was uncovered as binding. Mr. Fordham—To be sworn in such a way would be considered by a good Jew to be blasphemy, would it not? Mr. Romain—It would, certainly. Mr. Fordham (to the landlord)—Now, sir, put on your hat and be sworn in a proper manner. Be careful not to trifle with the court again.

The indignation of Mr. Fordham may appear to be a trifle too strong, but there is more in this kind of incident than presents itself on the surface. The stupid practice of imposing an oath on witnesses often defeats its own purposes. Curiously enough, the idea prevails with many witnesses, especially aliens, that if they can evade the actual oath-taking by kissing their thumbs or not actually touching the book with their lips, or by any other little informality, they are at liberty to tell as many lies as they please. And they do, believing themselves to be free from any possible charge of perjury.

What is called "an extraordinary fulfilment of a dream" is related in regard to a recent inquest near Sittingbourne on the body of an elderly man who drowned himself in a mill stream. A son went in search of the deceased, but could not find him. A brother-in-law then told the son that he had dreamt that the old man had drowned himself in the mill stream in the neighborhood. The son went straight to the spot mentioned, and found the body of the missing man in

the stream. No doubt the brother-in-law had, in his waking moments, bethought himself of this possibility, and it had recurred to him in his dream—perhaps occasioned his dream.

A sweetly charitable, cosmopolitan, tolerant person is the Rev. Bruce Cornford, vicar of St. Matthew's, Southsea. He has offered a direct insult to the Mayor of Portsmouth because that gentleman happens to be a Jew. It doesn't seem to have occurred to the Rev. Cornford that his Jesus Christ was a Jew, and that Christ's chief claim to the Messiahship was founded on his descent from David—a Jew of Jews. This arrogant cleric says that he has been told by several people during the past two months that the Mayor has been pleased to make "rather strong statements about his treatment by some of the local clergy, and of myself in particular, because we did not ask him to open our bazaar in May." We can hardly believe that the Mayor really desired to open the bazaar, but probably regarded the non-invitation as a slight to him in his Mayoral capacity. The Rev. Cornford explains that he acted on principle. The Church Liturgy, he says, "commands us to pray for 'all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics' as being amongst those utterly outside the pale of Christendom."

This aggressive cleric has been properly taken down in an exceedingly smart and well-written letter addressed to the Portsmouth *Evening News*. The writer concludes with some general observations on Christianity, which faith, he truly says, is helpless to elevate human nature. "Some of its exponents draw fat salaries and lie low, others fight to the death over a candle or a wafer—all are abjuring, shouting, quarrelling, and blaspheming. Let the Mayor take heart of grace. Not to be a Christian is a distinction of some importance. They are a shabby, hypocritical lot, not to be compared with the Jew, Turk, and Infidel."

A gossip in the *Manchester Guardian* has some interesting passages on present-day observance of Sunday. He says that when he first knew society this observance was in greater or less degree almost universal. Now it hardly exists. Smart people in London generally go away from Saturday till Monday to their country houses where they spend their "week-ends." Sunday is completely secularised. The keener spirits play bridge in the garden, and in the evening billiards and cards have effectually displaced those ivory letters which were the extreme limit of the gaiety permitted by our fathers.

Church-going, though a department of the observance of Sunday, has, he asserts, pretty nearly gone with the rest. The leaders of fashion, as far as he can observe, do not go to church at all. Either they "think it all so silly," as the wife of a statesman said to the Archbishop of Canterbury about the service in chapel which precedes dinner at Lambeth Palace, or they are too much fatigued by the social labors of the preceding week, or they want to look through their house-keeping-books or their betting-books, or they can't spare the time from bridge.

It is currently said that some very great ladies, wishing to combine their own freedom with a proper example to the lower orders, always carry prayer-books when they walk in the park before luncheon on Sunday. It looks well, and it imposes no burden. But though the leaders of society have thus completely delivered themselves from the tyranny of church-going, the led still carry some links of the broken chain. Very smart women can struggle to an 11.30 service where the music is good, and the performance does not last more than an hour, and the reign of the popular preacher is not yet quite at an end.

Commenting on the history of relics, the *Church Times* points out that "A church which had the custody of the remains of some noted saints was compelled to exercise the utmost vigilance against their being carried off by relic-hunters. Other churches, again, which were ill-provided with such treasures, were fain to invent them, or at least were not careful to investigate the genuineness of those they exhibited to the faithful. If Chaucer and Boccaccio may be relied upon as witnesses, the Friars were guilty of the most outrageous imposition in this respect. Before the Reformation had set in respect for once famous shrines had enormously declined, as we see in the *Peregrinatio religionis ergo* of Erasmus. When once the spirit of inquiry was aroused, bringing to the proof the beliefs of more credulous times, even veneration for sacred persons and places perished along with, and in consequence of, the childish stories that had become incredible."

An Augusta Sunday-school class had been talking of Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from Paradise, and the angel with flaming sword in hand to prevent their return. The teacher asked what it was the angel had in his hand to keep out intruders. The question was directed to one little boy, who remained in deep thought for a moment, and then said "He had a contribution-box."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September, Athenæum Hall, London.

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.

MAJOR G. O. WARREN writes: "I am very sorry that all this trouble should have arisen through Mr. Anderson's mean and cowardly action in a matter which could have been but of small importance to one so wealthy as he is reputed to be. Such action proves him to be utterly careless for the great cause of freedom of thought, and utterly forgetful of your brilliant services to that cause during the past twenty-five years. I enclose my mite towards relieving Mrs. Foote from all anxiety for the future, and trust that quite an adequate sum will be forthcoming in a few weeks' time."

G. PARR, sending a subscription of ten shillings from Paris to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, says: "I am sorry I have not ten thousand to offer you for your dear husband's sake."

S. EDMUNDS wonders what Mr. Anderson is thinking about, and hopes we shall pull through all right.

E. BARREYATT.—You are mistaken in supposing that sympathy alone is of no value. It is. We are glad to have your letter, and we hope your own clouds will soon roll by.

FOUR Sheffield Friends wish Mr. Foote all success, and hope he will continue his "great and good work."

M. SPROUL considers it his duty to send his mite to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, as he is indebted to the *Freethinker* for helping to liberate his mind from the doctrine of eternal damnation.

S.—Shall appear in our next.

J. A. B., sending another subscription to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, says: "I am sorry there is not that ready response to your call which I anticipated. I am glad you intend to take a holiday, and hope it will be long enough to benefit your health."

J. P. BROWNE (Glasgow) writes: "I can hardly understand such behavior as Mr. Anderson's on the part of anyone who ever felt in reality that he was a *Freethinker*. Had my means permitted, I would gladly have wiped the slate clean for you."

W. JONES.—In our next.

J. CROMPTON.—Many thanks for your second donation.

T. T.—We are obliged to you for your letter, and we make a note of the postscript.

DAVID WATT (Glasgow) says that nothing gave him more delight than reading in the *Freethinker* that Mr. Foote had discovered those documents in Mr. Anderson's handwriting. This correspondent thinks we are probably suffering through our outspokenness on that £30,000 scheme, and he more than shares our suspicion of contingent offers.

LOUIS LEVINE.—Thanks for the pamphlets you have been kind enough to send on.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Portsmouth Evening News—Truthseeker (New York)—Progressive Thinker—Lucifer (Chicago)—Free Society—Public Opinion (New York)—Boston Investigator—Reasoner (Leicester)—Searchlight (Texas)—Two Worlds—El Libre—Pensamiento—Torch of Reason—Zoophilist—Secular Thought (Toronto)—Blue Grass Blade—Freidenker.

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.

We have found that other religions are like ours, with precisely the same basis, the same idiotic miracles, the same martyrs, the same early fathers, and, as a rule, the same Christ or Savior. It will hardly do to say that all others like ours are false and ours the only true one, when others substantially like it are thousands of years older. We have at last found that a religion is simply an effort on the part of man to account for what he sees, what he experiences, what he feels, what he fears, and what he hopes.—Robert G. Ingersoll.

A Lull in the Storm.

DURING the past week or so I have been enjoying a holiday at the seaside with my wife and children. Speaking by the card, my wife went there with her brood, and invited me to accompany them; for I have no money of my own at present, and she holds the family purse-strings. Of course I was very glad to go with them, and they were just as glad of my society. There was no sort of quarrel or disagreement on that head. My children, I suppose, are entitled to an annual holiday, even though their father is President of the National Secular Society and ought, in some people's opinion, to lead a life of poverty and mortification, just as if he were qualifying for the Christian kingdom of heaven. Anyhow, they are having one. And as I look upon their healthy, happy faces, touched with the loveliest color in the world, and see the glad light in their sweet eyes, and hear the joyous ring of their fresh young voices, I feel that there is something really worth living for, and that, even if there were no other reason, I must be strong and brave for their sakes. My wife, too, who is not as well as she should be, was much in need of a wholesome change of scene. A woman's worst terror, next to losing her husband, is losing her home; and that terror has been her daily and nightly companion for months. Byron says that man's love is of his life a thing apart; 'tis woman's whole existence. Perhaps this is an exaggeration, but it contains a good deal of truth. And surely there is a similar truth with regard to the *home*. Man is somewhat more nomadic than woman. She has been tending the first altar fire—that of the hearth—for countless millenniums; and when the home goes she feels lost on tossing seas. Nor is this mere sentimentality. It is sound and healthy instinct. For the home is the ark of civilisation. A shifting tent is nothing. We must have a fixture, a place to which the affections tend, and where the household gods may settle themselves firmly. I have seen a poor country laborer approaching his humble cottage on a summer evening; I have seen a dear little maid run out to meet him; I have seen the little hand nestle in the great strong palm; and as the setting sunlight fell upon them, and I watched the trustful eyes looking up and the protecting eyes looking down, and observed the man's proud port as he stepped towards his own door, I felt that I was near an earthly paradise. Its guardian angel was probably inside, hovering over pots and pans, or watching a kettle boil. Very prosaic, do you say? Well, that only shows your want of imagination. The most beautiful flower in the world is of the earth earthy, if you look deep enough; and a woman who is preparing food for her husband and children, putting the love of her heart into it as well as the labor of her hands, is engaged in an angelic task—far more so than any celestial messenger I ever read of, even in the verses of the great John Milton himself.

For my own part, I needed a change likewise. I was not ill, but I was "off color." I did my work as a matter of duty. I had no pleasure in it. The spring (so to speak) was not broken, but it was run down, and wanted winding up. I had passed through a very trying time, and was rather hectic and febrile. I wanted to get away from my work, or at least the drudgery of it; to leave London and its hot, dusty streets behind me; to behold the sky and the sea, to get into touch again with Mother Nature, the sustainer and consoler; to let the hours pass calmly as the sun passes from east to west, to let the heart regain its equable pulse and the brain its old serenity.

As I write I feel a little dull. But it is a wholesome dullness—the dullness of a fallow field. I wish I could do simply nothing. I have just now an immense capacity for indolence. But I must do something. For a journal is like a wheel—you cannot miss a single revolution; and a journal like the *Freethinker* depends so much upon the presence and activity of its conductor. Some day, however, I hope to do what I have never done since this journal was started; namely, to go away for a whole month, with a few good books to read, but not a word to write except a line to an old friend, which is, after all, not writing, but conversation on paper. Archbishops, bishops, deans, canons, and

archdeacons, I believe, get such a holiday every year. Happy men! I believe this is also the case with the vast majority of rectors and vicars—though I hardly know about the poor curates. And a crowd of Non-conformist ministers enjoy the same blessed privilege. Yes, and it seems hard that the President of the National Secular Society should *never* enjoy it, even if it came only once or twice in a lifetime.

Some weeks ago I mentioned that the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes had returned from a long holiday, and that some wealthy Wesleyans had presented him with a nice cottage in Surrey, just at the moment when a wealthy Freethinker presented me with a receiving order in the Court of Bankruptcy. Since then I have seen that Mr. Hughes has broken down again, and that he is to "do nothing for a very long time," by his doctor's orders. I presume his salary will go on all right—which is very comforting; and I believe his salary for one year would pay all my debts twice over—which is *not* comforting.

On Thursday (Aug. 8) I must run up to London and attend the first meeting of my creditors. Whatever is decided then, I shall return to the seaside without a suit of mourning. When I face the worst I face it squarely. The draught goes down in one gulp. I abhor sips of danger. Leave that to fools and cowards. When I was in prison I drank the cup straight off. All the rest of the time I just waited for the door to open. I knew hurry was no good, so I did not hurry; I knew fretting was no good, so I did not fret. I simply waited.

My creditors will not fill a big room. I laugh when I think of the crowd that some people (and perhaps Mr. Anderson) expected.

I will now say a word about Mr. Anderson. His solicitors sent a representative to the Freethought Publishing Company's offices, to inspect the originals of the documents referred to in last week's *Freethinker*. This gentleman saw the applications for Shares made by the original supporters of the Company, before Mr. Anderson took twenty-five of the 500 Shares he had promised to take. I suppose it was thought that *perhaps* the announcements I published at the time were bogus announcements. But it was easy enough for Miss Vance to show that (excepting Mr. Anderson's 500 *more* Shares were applied for, during the first three or four months of the Company's existence, instead of *less*, than the number promised. That little loophole of escape is therefore closed. It will not do for Mr. Anderson to say that he promised to take 500 Shares if the number of Shares subscribed were sufficient, and that the number of Shares subscribed was *not* sufficient. Besides, the number was *proved* to be sufficient by Mr. Anderson himself. He helped to found the Company on the basis of the promises in the *Freethinker*—which promises, as I have said, were *exceeded*. He signed the Memorandum and Articles of Association. He became one of the first Directors. He was legally a party, with the other Directors, to the purchase of my business. And to say, or insinuate, after all this, that the subscription of Shares was insufficient, would be simply to make himself a laughing-stock, or something very much worse.

Mr. Anderson has not asked to see the originals of the documents I fortunately discovered, showing that his promise to take 500 Shares was not a matter of my invention, but a matter of his own handwriting. Nor have his solicitors asked to see them more closely, although I offered to place them in the Secretary's hands for the purpose of inspection. Mr. Anderson's solicitors, in whose hands he appears to have put his conscience, were evidently not anxious to see anything that proved he was under an obligation. They evidently wanted to find something by means of which the obligation could be evaded. This, at any rate, is how I read their action, and I say so boldly, without the slightest hesitation; leaving them, and him, to their remedy if they feel aggrieved.

Considering the eager way in which he pursued me, it is (or should be) surprising that Mr. Anderson takes so long a time to decide whether he ought to keep his public pledge. We all know that the £500 is not a serious consideration to him. Has he not spent a good deal of money in advertising that he can afford to give away £15,000? True, he has not *got* to give away that amount, owing to the *contingent* character of his offer.

But we must assume that he *could* give it if he chose. It is even announced that he has drawn a "substantial cheque" for some "more practical object"—which, by the way, is rather a poor compliment to the magnificent £30,000 scheme. It is not said whether the substantial cheque is for a Freethought purpose, or a quasi-Freethought purpose, or a pseudo-Freethought purpose, or a Hospital, or a Cats' Home—for which last institution I could suggest a candidate. But the cheque is *substantial*. That is the chief point, at least for my object. It proves that Mr. Anderson could not be ruined, or seriously affected, by paying for those 500 Shares. And I suggest that he should fulfil obligation Number One before addressing himself to obligation Number Two.

When I hear *what* the "substantial cheque" is for, I may have something to say about it; and my suspicion is that it will be something unpleasant—something that may induce me to cast aside the last remnants of reticence, and let in the full daylight upon this matter, which, I daresay, is to some people still very perplexing.

And now a word with regard to my appeal on behalf of the Fund for Mrs. Foote. While I sincerely thank those who *have* subscribed, I must say that I feel disappointed at the lethargy or dilatoriness of some who have *not* subscribed. An occasion like this enables one to discover who are one's *real* friends. Those who reckon themselves such are invited to furnish the evidence. It is a time for plain speaking. And I may add that I shall always keep a complete list by me of those who have shown a practical sympathy with me in my present trouble. To stand aside now is, in one sense, to stand aside for ever. G. W. FOOTE.

The Fund for Mrs. Foote.

T. T., £2 2s.; G. Parr, 10s.; W. Cromach, 3s.; Major G. O. Warren, £1 1s.; M. J. F., 5s.; S. Edmonds, 10s.; W. H. S., 5s.; M. S. D., 10s.; Miss Crisp, 5s.; J. E. T., £2; Mr. and Mrs. Pickett, 10s.; Ead, 10s.; A. Tye, 10s.; P. Rowland, 5s.; R. W., 2s. 6d.; J. Strachan, 4s.; J. A. 5s.; T. W. Roberts, 5s.; Mr. and Mrs. Kimberley, 5s.; W. C. Webber, 10s.; T. Hall, 1s.; F. W. Donaldson, 5s.; H. Tonge, 2s. 6d.; R. E. D., 10s.; A. E. E., 5s.; H. Barnes, 2s. 6d.; J. Gair, 2s. 6d.; J. Davies, 2s. 6d.; S. Holman, 2s. 6d.; R. L. Maitland, £2; G. Calcutt, 2s. 6d.; F. Frangary, 2s. 6d.; M. Sproul, 5s.; Four Sheffield Friends, 6s. 6d.; J. A. B., 2s. 6d.; David Watt, 5s.; J. Crompton (second donation), £1 10s.; J. P. Browne, 10s.; Stamps, 1s.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE intends to reopen the Athenæum Hall, Tottenham-court-road, on the first Sunday evening in September, when the old frequenters of the place will probably be glad to reassemble, especially in view of the fact that Mr. Foote's opening address will very likely be on a subject of special interest to the party that has for more than eleven years done him the honor of electing him as President.

The *Searchlight*, published at Waco, Texas, reprints Mr. Foote's imaginary conversation between Satan and Michael.

The West Ham case has fizzled out so far, the magistrate deciding that he had no jurisdiction. Councillor Terrett, of the National Democratic League, and Mr. Edward Parker, of the West Ham N.S.S. Branch, were the defendants, their legal representative being Mr. W. M. Thompson, the editor of *Reynolds'*, who is also a practising barrister. Mr. Foote instructed Miss Vance to inform Mr. Parker that, if Mr. Thompson were engaged for the defence before the magistrate, the N.S.S. would contribute towards the costs. It is not quite fair, therefore, to represent the Democratic League as acting alone in this matter. Not that Mr. Thompson says so, but others have been stating or suggesting it in newspaper correspondence.

We have no idea what next step will be taken by the persons, whoever they are, that want to stop the Secularist meetings at Stratford Grove. But this we feel pretty certain of—that Councillor Terrett and Mr. Parker will pull down the fences if they are erected again. Public meetings have been held there time out of mind, and the right to hold them should not be given up without a struggle. There seems to be no certainty as to whom the ground belongs, but this is no reason why bigots should be allowed to dictate to their more sensible neighbors.

The "obstruction" case at Chatham, which was referred to in last week's *Freethinker*, was duly heard before Mr. Athawes, the magistrate, who did not conceal his bias in favor of the prosecution. The charge against Mr. R. P. Edwards was, however, dismissed. Mr. Clement Edwards, appearing on behalf of the Independent Labor Party, for which Mr. R. P. Edwards was lecturing, argued the case with cleverness and persistency, and in the end Superintendent Sargent had to give way. It appears that the summons was a bad one. But that mistake was to be rectified, and a fresh summons to be taken out under the Highways Act. This is returnable for August 12. The cost to the defence (if successful) is likely to be about £15. More, of course, if unsuccessful. No doubt the N. S. S. Executive will render some assistance, as the police attack was first directed against the Secularists. It seems pretty certain that the police see no "obstruction" in religious meetings.

Mr. D. Frankel, Secretary of the E. London Branch, writes: "I am glad to inform you that we again succeeded on Sunday morning in keeping the Christian Evidence Brigade at a reasonable distance from our meeting on the Mile End Waste. We had a good meeting, about twice as large as that of the Christian party, and made a good collection. Next Sunday (Aug. 11) we have decided to try a novel method of continuing to keep the Christian Evidence people in their place, and we hope that all local friends will turn out to assist us in this interesting and possibly amusing scheme."

Signor Crispi and his relatives gave no encouragement to the obliging Church dignitary who came to the house with an offer of the last sacrament for the dying statesman and *Freethinker*. Whatever his faults or his blunders, Crispi has always been a strong man, and men of his calibre can "fight their last battle" without the aid of priestly mummery.

Hell not Half so Hot.

The weather in Kansas, the first of the month, was hot enough to give rise to the following item in the *Leavenworth Chronicle*:—"As a result of the drought, John Rensburg, the lecturer and fruit grower, who lives just over the line in Atchison County, had an unpleasant dream last week. He had ridden his Acme harrow in the heat and dust all day, and went to bed with a severe headache. During the night he dreamed that he was in hell. Everything was parched around him; the sun appeared like a ball of fire above him; while waves of hot air seemed to sweep from the mouth of a furnace beneath him. Presently the Devil appeared. After exchanging courtesies, and conversing awhile, Rensburg said to his supposed host: 'I am your friend; I have always admired you, and would like more of your company; but I can't stand this climate, and I beg of you to let me go home.' 'Where do you live?' said the Devil. 'In Kansas,' said Rensburg. 'You are in Kansas now,' said the Devil. 'And what are you doing in Kansas?' asked Rensburg. 'I am troubled with rheumatism,' said the Devil, 'and came to Kansas to spend the summer, as my climate is too wet and cold for me.'"

Hope's Word.

(VILLANELLE.)

THOUGH faith and fraud still enthral men here,
Love ever whispers what Hope hath said:
The night is ending; the dawn is near.

The people's cause shall be held yet dear,
Fair freedom more than a dream shall spread,
Though faith and fraud still enthral men here.

To the people's cry do the gods give ear?
Their hour is past, their old power is dead.
The night is ending; the dawn is near.

The priests lose heart, for their God is fear,
And truth and knowledge have bruised his head;
Though faith and fraud still enthral men here.

Still folly triumphs, and Mammon's sphere
Is wide; yet wisdom with joy shall wed—
The night is ending, the dawn is near.

"Man, oh, not men!" sang the poet seer,*
Whose heart for the world's deep wrong once bled.....
Though faith and fraud still enthral men here,
The night is ending, the dawn is near!

J. A. B.

"Ah," sighed the ambitious young preacher, "I long to do some great service for the Master." "Why not stop preaching?" suggested Miss Kandor.

* Shelley.

Rationalism.—V.

REASON THE SUPREME GUIDE TO TRUTH AND THE ONLY INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY IN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.

(Concluded from page 485.)

THE next, and last, question we have to answer in connection with our subject is: What part has reason played in the progress and history of the individual and the race? Though some answer to this question is implied in what we have already said, still we will try to give some more specific answer to it, though it must be very inadequate.

If we trace back the history of mankind to its earliest periods, before there was any written history, we find, by the evidence of archæology, how low man was in his manner of living. We find him, at the same time, to be very lacking in thinking capacity. We find, indeed, that he had not yet risen to the dignity of man. At best he was a mere cave-dweller, a troglodyte, whose head was not yet brightened by the jewel of reason. But by-and-bye reason evolved, and with its evolution individual and social life evolved with it—not in one, but in all directions. In the place of the crooked stick for turning the soil, he has now the steam plough. Instead of living in caves, he can, at least, live in a one-roomed tenement house, unless he is out of a job—in which case he has a difficulty in even doing that. But he may become a capitalist or landlord, and then he can live in a splendid mansion or a gorgeous palace—nay, not in one only, but in one of many, in many parts of the world, when at any time he feels the need of a change. Most wonderful of all, he need care not at all whether he has work to do or not.

Instead of timorously sailing round the shore in his dugout, man can, by the power and application of his reasoning faculty, cross the oceans of the world, and meet with confidence the opposing winds and the heavings and the tossings and crossings of the wonderful waves of the sea. Yes, by the evolution of intellect, and especially reasoning intellect, man has made all the progress visible in the world to-day. By its further, and still freer, activity and application will he make the progress which is yet to be. Without it no progress ever has been made, nor ever can be made. Why, then, should anyone hate this great mental power, and call it "mere carnal reason"? Why, even theology has advanced by the aid of reason. Theology, in spite of its conservative nature, which is at once its weakness and its strength—its weakness when it is false, and its strength when it is true—has been rationalised and civilised by "carnal reason." The ideas men now have of God are more humane, more just, more reasonable than were those held by the primitive theologians, the naked savages and cave-dwellers of the early ages. Even the theology of Scotland has greatly advanced during the last fifty years. In that period the whole civilised world has made great strides in the evolution of its theology. Since then the crudities, the barbarities, and imbecilities once considered the very essence of the Christian theology itself have almost entirely passed away, until to-day we see the Higher Critics, the most earnest and intelligent of the Christian clergy, holding the same position in regard to theology in general, and Christianity in particular, as that held by Thomas Paine over one hundred years ago, and published by him in his still famous book, characteristically entitled *The Age of Reason*. Indeed, reason is now so much in vogue, and the importance of its function so well known and admitted, that not only, as we have already said, are the leaders of the world all Rationalists now, but even we, the people in the street, are all Rationalists too. Indeed, the average clergyman, even, is so likewise; the trouble with him being that he is more knave than fool, more humbug than irrationalist, more dishonest than lacking in intelligence or reason. The proof of this is found if you study his operations outside of his profession, for there you see him using his reason as efficiently, and with as much profit to himself, as does the most anti-theological Secularist in the land.

While condemning the use of reason in theology, the orthodox clergyman admits its usefulness, and benefits by its application in every other relationship

of life. Even to him in sickness medicine is more potent than prayer, and obedience to the natural laws more conducive to happiness than is sacrifice to the gods. He realises the truth of the Chinese proverb, "Religions are many, but reason is one; and we are all brothers." Among the many desirable effects wrought by reason in its work for human progress, the part it has played, and is playing, in unifying the truth, and separating it from the error contained in all the religions of the world, is one of the most powerful illustrations and proofs of its power for performing its function of distinguishing truth from error and separating good from evil. When this work of reason is completed, it will then be seen that true religion is also one—one with itself, one with science, and one with philosophy. It will then be clearly seen that religion is just science traced back to its final source of causation, the unknown, eternal mode of causality, with devotional feeling, and a sense of subjection to its supreme influence over our lives; just as philosophy is science traced back to the same final source of causation in a more abstract, unemotional way; that each is but a different aspect of the same universal truth, seen from two different points of view. But when our point of view is completed, it is then seen that the truth itself is a unity, and not a thing of shreds and patches. It is then seen that religion is a philosophy, and philosophy is religion; and these two are one. Reason and science and devotional sentiment are the factors by which "the power behind humanity and all other things" has produced this highest product of the human consciousness—a scientific, a philosophical, and a true religion, which the nearer he has reached it the more control man has had over himself, and the forces of nature around him. When this goal of human progress—a true religion—is finally reached, and characterises society as fully as it now characterises the most rational and cultured members of it, the theologian will not then look askance at rational inquirers, nor have anything but an honest love for the term and meaning of the once hated word "Rationalism"; but he will see, and admit, that Rationalism, and what it stands for, has been an invaluable blessing to the world; that, without its adequate development, man would still be all over the world, what he is, even yet, in many of its parts, a naked, a houseless, and a miserable savage, the slave of grotesque and foolish fears, and the doer of barbarous and cruel deeds; but by the divine revelations of reason, the progress made possible by Rationalism, he is now clothed where he was once naked, and housed where he was once shelterless, and in his right mind where he was once the victim of all sorts of fearful delusions. All will see that this supreme intellectual power, which has done so much for man in the past history of the race, must continue to have a place, and a still higher, even the supreme authoritative place, in his future career. And as it has been to him such a blessing in the past, in spite of all opposition from Church and State, from bigoted and interested persons, it will, when this opposition no longer exists, be to him a still greater blessing in the time to come; and in blessing him it will surely crown him, and in crowning him it will crown him Lord of All.

J. MACDOUGALL.

The Fetish Man Abroad.

GOVERNOR DOCKERY, of Missouri, has given the world a glimpse of his intellectual standing. A month ago he issued the following proclamation, appointing last Sunday as a day of prayer for rain: "Whereas, the prevailing drought is widespread, and disaster threatens our commonwealth, and whereas, many earnest Christian people have petitioned that a day of fasting and prayer be appointed; wherefore be it known that Sunday, July 21, be, and the same is hereby set apart as, a day of fasting and prayer, that the threatened disasters may be averted; and to this end the people are requested to assemble at their usual places of worship to invoke the blessings of Almighty God. In testimony whereof I have hereunto set my hand, and caused to be affixed the great seal of the State of Missouri." And that is all done in this year of enlightenment, nineteen hundred and one! What will the people in the year two thousand think of this age if they discover this proclamation in their historical researches? Probably about what we of this day think of the savages of Africa.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Echoes from Everywhere.

FROM A SPORTING CONTEMPORARY.

THE recent spiritualist controversy in the *Referee* (yes, in the *Referee*!) is interesting from an outside standpoint. The trouble seems to be to decide whether certain happenings are caused by "spirits" or not; but it does not occur to anyone to explain precisely what a "spirit" is. The Theist elucidates his mystery of creation by his mystery of God. In like manner the spiritualist accounts for phenomena of which we know little, by the hypothesis of "spirits," of which we know less. Inspired by the egotistic and groundless hope of immortality, he would solve one difficulty by the introduction of another. The wish is parent to the thought.

FROM THE CRITICS.

The critical genius, like genius of every sort, is subject to temperament. Two men of equal reasoning capacity will not necessarily hold the same views. Each will employ his logic to support his preconceptions, and these are the result of circumstance and temperament. Few writers, for example, have shown more acute literary acumen than Poe, and few have penned more preposterous *critiques*. He could seldom discover faults in women or virtues in enemies. In the one case his perception was dominated by temperament; in the other by circumstances.

Many fine logicians have tried to bolster up the Christian superstition. That they have failed so miserably is its most effective condemnation.

FROM THE "LITERARY GUIDE."

The pages of a Freethought paper are unaccustomed vehicles for passion; but the *Literary Guide* bears evidence of the extraordinary persistence of feeling *à propos* of the war. There cannot be an overplus of sweet reasonableness in this vale of tears when a practised disputant like Mr. J. M. Robertson finds it necessary to stigmatise as a liar one who has only ventured to criticise him. Perhaps he thought, with the disappointed hunter: "Ven ze Frenchman chase ze tigare, *c'est grand—c'est magnifique!* But ven ze tigare chase ze Frenchman, *c'est le diable!*" Well, J. M. R. has "gone for" the rash reviewer, and the reviewer has replied in kind, and the alarmed editor has felt constrained to interpose, and there are weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.

In Christian circles it was ever thus. But what the devil was Mr. Robertson doing in *that* galley?

FROM LA BELLE FRANCE.

M. Jean Jaurès, a prominent Freethinker and Socialist, has got into hot water with his friends for allowing his daughter to be educated at a religious establishment. He explains that he consents to this because he has no right to forbid his children taking part in religious exercises "under the direction of their mother." The phrase is a little ambiguous. Does he mean that *his* children act under their mother's direction, or.....?

The French Freethinkers should not be too hard upon their *confrère*. The boldest among them, if "unequally yoked" with a Christian wife, might "speak in a monstrous little voice." E. R. WOODWARD.

What Americans would Have Done.

THE *Kansas Mail and Breeze*, in reply to a correspondent, says:—"Your question as to what would have happened in the Garden of Eden if Pierpont Morgan and Hettie Green had been there in place of Adam and Eve is purely speculative, and hardly a proper subject for consideration in a great moral, political, and agricultural guide, devoted to facts, like this paper. However, we might venture an opinion. Our judgment is that the serpent would not have found Pierpont and Hettie the easy marks he found Adam and Eve. They would have shown him, before he had been long in the garden, that they knew so much more about the fruit business than he had ever dreamed of that he would have felt like thirty cents. Furthermore, they would not have been in the garden over three days before they would have had a corner on apples, and would have compelled the Devil, when he visited them, to pay for the privilege of climbing the tree."

Correspondence.

CLERICAL CRITICISM RUN MAD.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The Rev. Henry J. Alcock is still more amusing now that he has become savage. I endeavored to reply to him in a calm and philosophic tone. He calls my attempt "tall talk and lofty speculation," and invites me to descend. Well, I suppose I must descend to the Rev. Alcock's plane, though it is much too reminiscent of the style at debating societies twenty years ago, and is rather rabid in the present Dog Days.

He suggests, in his opening remarks, that I have afforded him insufficient ground for "argumentation." But—joy in Israel!—he discovers enough to go upon, and to inspire him to a lot of quite too previous pæans of triumph. If the Rev. Alcock thinks that the observations I offered solely for his enlightenment are all that I, or other Freethinkers, have to say about the Decalogue, he is mistaken. There is more than he apparently dreams of in his exegetical philosophy. Why doesn't he buy a few elementary books?

As he puts it, there might be a supposition that I had said Mount Sinai was not enveloped in "fire and smoke," but that the high priests immediately then and there persuaded the people, against their own observation, that these accompaniments to the delivery of the Decalogue took place. But I did not say so, for the simple reason that I do not believe the Biblical story at all. I said it was "represented" that these accompaniments took place, and the Rev. Alcock supplies the place where it was represented when he speaks of "getting the fable inserted in the Hebrew national chronicle." There are many other fables in that national chronicle. If the Rev. Alcock doubts that, let him ask Dean Farrar, Canon Driver, Canon Cheyne, and other well-known dignitaries of his own Church.

Mr. Alcock's choice remarks about "the wildest ravings of a lunatic" and "childish statements" do not apply to me, but to Exodus, where the representations I referred to appear. The moral he draws from this mare's-nest is equally misapplied. He says: "Truly the difficulties of Agnosticism are innumerable and insurmountable." To commence with, I do not call myself "Agnostic"; and, if I did, this question of the Decalogue has nothing to do with Agnosticism. People may be believers in the existence of God, as Paine and Voltaire were, and wholly reject the dishonoring conceptions of Deity which appear in the Bible. The Rev. Alcock may be surprised at this, but it is a fact, and I present it to him as an addition to his not too extensive knowledge.

Then the Rev. Alcock says: "Coming directly to the language I condemn, I find references only to the two first commands, all remarks on the third being omitted." That is not true. The third commandment is: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." This was covered in my general observations on the petty conceit and self-importance of Israel's special and local god. Suppose, as it has been suggested, that the commandment is directed against false swearing; why should the specific offence be the use of this god's name rather than the real moral offence of unjust dealing? But the commandment has, in fact, a wider application. It is applied to so-called "blasphemers"—that is, people who use this god's name without reverence because they do not believe he exists, and who, *ipso facto*, are not blasphemers at all. A universal God would care nothing about the mere use of his name, opprobriously or otherwise. He would be superior to it, as I am to Mr. Alcock's association of my name with the "wildest ravings of a lunatic." The universal God might smile—perhaps even that is too much to expect of him—but at any rate he would smile compassionately, as I do.

Mr. Alcock makes it a complaint that I refer "quietly to these three commandments, the third of which he has never referred to." But then I had referred to it generally, and necessarily, because it is part and parcel of the two which precede it. Anyhow, I have dealt with it specifically now. Perhaps the intended sting is in the word "quietly," as if I were trying to evade something. Doesn't it begin to dawn on the Rev. Alcock that he, too, would have done well to write "quietly"?

However, I have not done with the Rev. Alcock yet, though he seems to precipitately intimate that he has done with me. "I give him up" is the phrase with which he summarily disposes of me. He says: "Moreover, the references to the two first [commandments] are sadly confused." Apparently they are in Mr. Alcock's mind; but that is not my fault. He is talking of some of my "language," which he "condemns." I hope I never used such language as the "two first." Here, at any rate in phraseology, it is my critic who is "sadly confused." However, that is a small matter.

Coming to the broad question of the character of Israel's god, I repeat my assertion that in the first commandment this god "recognises that there are other gods, and accepts the position of one amongst many." Mr. Alcock says: "In the rightful signification of the word 'God,' there is but one." So we should think; but that

is not the signification of the framer of the Decalogue, nor of the writers of the earlier portions of the Old Testament. The text cited by Mr. Alcock from Corinthians is nothing to the point. There was another, and an entirely different, god then, as there is another and a sublimated god worshipped now. He is still called God; but the God of the present day is no more like the God of the Old Testament or of St. Paul's time than chalk is like cheese. As to the recognition of other gods by the god of Israel, read Isaiah xlii. 8: "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." That statement is repeated in Isaiah xlvi. 11. The Israelitish idea was that he was simply a king above all other gods.

Last of all I come to the declaration: "For I the Lord thy god am a jealous god, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Mr. Alcock says I have "wasted much eloquence" on this passage. Mr. Alcock is quite too fond of these question-begging observations, which he seems to regard as arguments. The reader might be allowed the privilege of passing some little judgment on the matters in dispute. I repeat that the declaration, which he tones down to a threat, is a piece of "vengeful savagery only conceivable of a mere tribal god." Mr. Alcock suppresses my accompanying statement that such malevolence is incongruous with any conceivable idea of "an infinitely powerful and beneficent Being." This important addition makes all the difference in the world to the argument I advanced, and, as I knew, would anticipate the reply Mr. Alcock now adduces. He says if I would "steadily reflect upon what is taking place everywhere, and ever has been taking place so far as we know, he (Mr. Neale) would perceive that what he holds incredible is actual, every-day fact in all lands. Sins of fathers are plainly visited on children, of which the sons of drunkards, spendthrifts, and criminals are melancholy evidence." This old reply, made, I believe, by Bishop Watson in answer to Thomas Paine, I had in mind when I carefully wrote the words which Mr. Alcock, with a disingenuousness of which I cannot acquit him, has carefully omitted. I did not say or imply that it was "incredible" that children should suffer from heredity. That would be absurd. What I said was, that this was not conceivable in regard to a god who was "an infinitely powerful and beneficent being." I say so still. That is one reason why I do not believe in the existence of such a being. There are other aspects of this old reply now advanced by Mr. Alcock, but it is sufficient to say that, instead of tending to support the Deity of the Old Testament, its direct effect is to drive Deists into Atheism. The moral sense revolts as much from the injustice of making the innocent suffer in a world said to be governed by an all-powerful and all-good Deity as it does from this malevolent declaration of the Israelitish god. Many Bible-apologists have abandoned the argument because of its Atheistic tendency, and have adopted the reply which I submitted in my first letter, and dealt with, and which I rather thought Mr. Alcock would have used. But perhaps, after all, we are doing an injustice to the god of Israel by attributing such inexcusable vindictiveness to him, for we read: "Thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people" (Leviticus xix. 18). As to any prescience in the commandment referred to, it may be assumed that the Israelites observed then, as we do now, that the innocent suffer for the guilty. Much depends upon the nature of the guilt, and none but a vain and vindictive God would punish generations unborn because their parents failed to do him homage.

There is still much more to be said on the points touched upon in this letter. But I think I have said enough, especially as I imagine that it is mainly, if not entirely, for the benefit of Mr. Alcock.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Pious Poetry.

Professor Oscar L. Triggs, of the University of Chicago, informed the class of English literature at the University that the hymns of the Protestant Church are doggerel, and that dime novels are literature when compared to Sunday-school books. "You can find very little poetry," he continued, "that is not unorthodox. Our whole modern civilisation is a mixture of Christianity and Paganism, and the Christian spirit by no means dominates. It is well for our civilisation that it is so. It would not be well if all men were Christians." What kind of talk is this? What object did Professor Triggs have in view? Was it his desire to destroy all reverence for the Christian Church? Does he not know that we live in a Christian land? Is he ignorant of the fact that it is a sin to tell the truth about the Church? If what Professor Triggs says is true, the Christian missionaries have no excuse for existence. Shall such statements be tolerated in a Christian community? And to put dime novels above Sunday-school literature is nothing short of blasphemy. Professor Triggs should be tried for heresy, for attempting to poison and corrupt the minds of the youth of the country, and should be expelled from the University of Chicago.—*Truthseeker* (N. Y.).

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.

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11, F. J. Williams, "The Strongest Man upon Earth."

OPEN-AIR PROPAGANDA.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, S. E. Easton, "Where will you Spend Eternity?"

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, A lecture; 6.30, A lecture.

STATION-ROAD (Camberwell): 7.30, A lecture.

CLERKENWELL GREEN: 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and War."

EDMONTON (corner of Angel-road): 7, E. B. Rose, "Religion of the Boers."

FINSBURY PARK (near Band Stand): 3.30, T. Thurlow, "Christianity."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY: 7, E. White, "Did Jesus Perform Miracles?"

HYDE PARK (near Marble Arch): 11.30, E. B. Rose, "The Religion of the Boers"; 3.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What Think ye of Christ?"

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, W. Heaford, "Prayer and Praise"; 7.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Ladies of the Bible."

PECKHAM RYE: 3.15, A lecture.

REGENT'S PARK (near the Fountain): 6.30, T. Thurlow, "Freethought."

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, W. Heaford, "God, Man, and the Bible."

VICTORIA PARK: 3.15, E. B. Rose, "Freethought Conquering and to Conquer"; 6.15, S. E. Easton, "Where will you Spend Eternity?"

KINGSLAND (corner of Ridley-road): 11.30, T. Thurlow, "Christianity."

COUNTRY.

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Excursion to Winster, etc., Derbyshire. Members and friends meet in front of Midland Station at 10.10 a.m. Train leaves for Grindleford at 10.25. Conveyances from Grindleford to Winster, and return to catch the 8.28 train for home.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Business Meeting.

Works by the late R. G. Ingersoll.

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ORATION ON WALT WHITMAN. 3d.

ORATION ON VOLTAIRE. 3d.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN. 3d.

PAINE THE PIONEER. 2d.

HUMANITY'S DEBT TO THOMAS PAINE. 2d.

ERNEST RENAN AND JESUS CHRIST. 2d.

THREE PHILANTHROPISTS. 2d.

LOVE THE REDEEMER. 2d.

WHAT IS RELIGION? 2d.

IS SUICIDE A SIN? 2d.

LAST WORDS ON SUICIDE. 2d.

GOD AND THE STATE. 2d.

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