

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXI.—No. 42.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1901.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

Clotted Bosh.

I AM not certain as to the precise function of a "Missioner of the Baptist Union," but I assume that he is one who is specially selected for his ability to convince waverers and unbelievers of the error of their ways. Or it may be that he is selected on account of his cast-iron imperviousness to anything in the shape of common sense or humor; and after reading an address by Mr. Frederick C. Spurr, one of the body mentioned above, I incline to the latter view of the case. At first glance I felt obliged to the sender of the sermon. It was entitled *The Easy Way to Certainty in Religion*, and I was impressed with the fact that, if Mr. Spurr could only rise to his subject, he would rank with future ages as the Newton of the theological world. Huxley once said that, if Faraday's education had cost the nation a million sterling, it would have been cheap at the price; and surely the man who could point out an easy and certain method of convincing people of the truth of religion might be considered of more value than even the great chemist. If such a result did not lead to any good positively, it would at least benefit negatively by putting a stop to the janglings and jealousies of rival creeds, and this would certainly be a most desirable consummation.

But Mr. Spurr is evidently not built upon the right lines for such an achievement. It is one thing to choose a title, but it is quite another thing to write up to it; and in this case the performance falls sadly behind the promise. It reminds one of *Hamlet* being played by an infant school. "It is unfortunately true," he plaintively remarks, "that vast numbers of people are outside the kingdom of God," and "it is of these unhappy men that I am thinking in this discourse." There is nothing so cheap as sympathy—of a kind, nor so easily excited, nor so readily extended, and as one of the "unhappy men" "outside the kingdom of God" I most humbly and heartily thank the fates that I am born in a society where men, occupying the lofty position of missioner to the Baptist Union, do not hesitate to extend their sympathy to such hopeless creatures as myself. And, having expressed my thanks, I venture to turn and discover in what way I am to arrive at "certainty in matters of religion."

The first thing necessary is that we must possess "a fitting disposition." If it is objected that one's judgment may be biased by this predisposition, Mr. Spurr replies by drawing a distinction between this and prejudice. Prejudice may bias judgment, but a "proper disposition of mind for the understanding of truth is a radical necessity which is insisted upon in every department of life." It might be suggested that a predisposition to believe in Jesus—which is what the preacher means—and a disposition to seek for truth are not exactly identical, and it *does* seem as though the changes were being rung upon the word "disposition." A disposition to get at the truth will leave a man free to form an unbiassed judgment on any matter, but a disposition to believe in religion prejudices the result before examination.

The second condition of belief in religion is the removal of the delusion that "Christianity is a problem to be mastered and squared with other problems of life." So far, at least, numbers of the "unhappy" class will agree with Mr. Spurr. To them also it is clear that Christianity is not to be "squared" with the other problems of life, or with our knowledge of

life. The two things are usually in flagrant contradiction. However, the real way to set to work is not to study Christianity as a system, and then seek to apply it to practical life (a method which one would think is the only sound one); the proper way is to begin by believing in Christ as a "person," and "you shall know the doctrine without doubt." Doubtless. Begin by believing in Jesus, and all the rest will be easy. When Voltaire was told the story of the saint who walked for forty paces after he had been decapitated with his head under his arm, he replied that he had no difficulty in believing in thirty-nine of the steps, but it was *the first one* that presented an insuperable difficulty. There is really no difficulty in believing in any special miracle; the real difficulty is in believing in miracles at all. Once again we agree with Mr. Spurr. Believe in Jesus, and the rest is easy. The man who can swallow the miraculous conception, the virgin birth, and the resurrection is verily straining at a gnat when he rejects the minor inconsistencies of the Christian system.

In a spasm of confidence Mr. Spurr admits that "Christianity as a system is invaded with many difficulties and mysteries." But, then, there are difficulties elsewhere. "There are difficulties about the atmosphere. Do you, therefore, refuse to breathe? Difficulties about digestion. Do you, therefore, delay your meals? Difficulties about human nature. Do you, therefore, withhold your confidence from your fellow-men?" Perhaps I may venture to suggest that our being faced by difficulties that cannot be evaded or dismissed is scarcely sufficient warranty for our adopting other difficulties which are perfectly gratuitous. We cannot rid ourselves of the atmosphere, our digestive organs, or of human nature; but we can rid ourselves of Jesus, and be little or none the worse for his absence. Besides, the influence—and, on the whole, the beneficial influence—of these things is admitted; whereas it is this very thing that is questioned in regard to Christianity. And, finally, we are not called upon to believe anything concerning the operations of the atmosphere, of the digestive organs, or of human nature, that we do not understand. Science does not say: Believe certain teachings about these things, and you will understand it after. It says, rather: Do not believe anything until you have clear and certain grounds for your belief. We know that the atmosphere exists, and we know certain things concerning atmospheric action; and our beliefs represent the sum of our understanding on these matters. Of some matters connected with the atmosphere we may have no knowledge and no understanding, and we have consequently no beliefs. This is *scientific* belief; Mr. Spurr's article is of a far different kind. Really one wonders if it is ever possible for a Christian preacher to use the same expression twice without surreptitiously changing its meaning. "Thou shalt not bear false witness" *is* in the Decalogue; but "Thou shalt not use misleading language" represents a much-needed addition to that over-praised document.

Mr. Spurr returns from this semi-digression to enforce upon his hearers the customary religious doctrine that the intellect of man must not be pampered or indulged overmuch. "It is inferior to the heart which governs us in all the highest matters. And religion is, *par excellence*, an affair of the heart." I verily believe that Mr. Spurr is, as they say in one of the games of children, "getting warm"; he is getting near the truth. Religion is an affair of the heart. Why not of the liver, or of the digestive organs? How much of our view of the world is colored by the state of these organs, and how much of our religion may not spring

from disorders in these regions? Was it not Ingersoll who said that many a man who thought he had got religion was only suffering from indigestion? Can Mr. Spurr have been reading Ingersoll, and have stolen one of his witticisms without having the native humor to appreciate its subtlety? It looks like it.

Of course we may take the expression, "Religion is, *par excellence*, an affair of the heart," more seriously, but I do not know that by doing so we shall make it more sensible. If the religion of one man is an affair of the heart, why not the religion of another also? The religion of the Mohammedan, the Parsee, the Hindoo, or the savage, is an affair of the heart. The mere sentiment of one man is as good as the sentiment of any other man. How, then, shall we discriminate? Not by appealing to the intellect, because, in Mr. Spurr's opinion, the intellect is "inferior to the heart," and this would be judging the superior by the inferior. On what ground, then, do we decide the relative value of religions? I presume it never dawned upon the Baptist Missioner that intellect and feeling may not be two opposing entities struggling for mastery, but really two aspects of one and the same mental process? Really, the Baptist Union should pay some attention to the education of its preachers before they are inflicted upon a long-suffering community.

In the same airy strain Mr. Spurr asks his audience of men only (presumably because the intellect of woman would be unable to bear the strain of the preacher's profound reasoning and weighty logic): "Tell me which is better—a philosopher, pale and sickly [I suppose to be pale and sick is, in the speaker's mind, the invariable characteristic of a philosopher; in which case, his should be a life at which an insurance office would jump], confining himself to his study and dealing intellectually with the problems of atmosphere or food, or a farmer's daughter, who never troubles her head about any of these scientific problems, but who eats, drinks, sleeps, takes plenty of outdoor exercise, and so becomes the beau-ideal of a perfectly healthy person, winning the admiration of all who see her?"

Well, I suppose the answer to the conundrum would depend very largely upon the person to whom it was addressed. Addressed to the average young man of amatory proclivities, the odds would be very much in favor of the farmer's daughter. She would win hands down. But then there are others who *might* argue that it is not at all unlikely that the rosy cheeks and bright eyes of the farmer's daughter are not altogether unconnected with the "pale and sickly" philosopher. Probably it was an improved sanitation, combined with many other conditions and circumstances, all of which may have resulted from the "pale and sickly" one's labor, that made it possible for her to win "the admiration of all who see her." Perhaps we are taxing Mr. Spurr's intellect unfairly in suggesting such things, and, if so, we apologise, and for this reason refrain from dwelling upon the fact that all philosophers are not "pale and sickly," farmers' daughters do not all win the admiration of local swains, nor is science one thing and experience another, as he declares.

And if anyone doubts the accuracy of his contention that religion is an affair of the heart and not of the head, he refers them to history—Christian history, that is—for confirmation. In the great majority of conversions, he asserts, "the heart was surrendered to Christ apart from the activities of the intellect"—a statement with which all, I think, will agree. "St. Paul, under the empire of intellectual rebellion against Jesus Christ, yields his heart to the Son of God, and at once becomes a changed man." "Yields his heart," I presume, is the preacher's equivalent of sunstroke, which was the real cause of Paul's transformation; and certainly Paul was not the first nor the last whose mind has undergone a change from the same cause. "And in our own time we may encounter, if we will, thousands of people who, to save their souls, could not at the hour of their conversion give a coherent account of the Christian system.....Gentlemen, pardon me referring to myself; I, too, belong to that number." The frankness of the confession is so charming that it seems cruel to say that it is unnecessary. No one, after reading the address I have quoted from, would ever dream of accusing Mr. Spurr of being overweighted with intellectual considerations, either at his conversion or at any subsequent period.

I am far from doubting Mr. Spurr's accuracy on this point. Indeed, I should be the first to support him if his estimate of the nature of conversion were challenged. It is altogether a question of sentiment—or of the heart, as our preacher would say. Those who are converted do not embrace Christianity because they understand it; they believe it first, and understand it afterwards—sometimes. Or as Mr. Spurr says—the address is such a storehouse of gems that I cannot forbear one more—"I am willing to do, and afterwards I shall know." Which, being interpreted, signifies: "I do not know what to do, or why I am doing it, but I will do it all the same."

Admirable, Mr. Spurr! It is the existence of such as he that enables people to see what genuine Christianity is. Other people may profess to ground their faith upon sheer intellect; but he will have none of these petty palterings with heresy. His conversion had nothing to do with intellectual conviction; the conversion of thousands of others, as he truly points out, was destitute of a like element, and therefore he is justified in asserting that religion is before all else a "matter of the heart." To some this may sound like a surrender to modern thought; but the truly religious will recognise a kindred spirit. And, after all, Mr. Spurr addressed his sermon not merely to "men only," but, as he is careful to explain, his sermon was "intended for certain men only."

C. COHEN.

Ill-fated Gospel Shops.

THE recent destruction of Stepney Church by fire and the misfortunes which have happened from time to time to other churches and places of worship, involving occasionally the deaths of worshippers, remind us very naturally of the Canticle, *Benedicite, omnia Opera*, which is included in the Church of England order of morning prayer. The Canticle is a very curious, not to say amusing, composition, in which all the works of the Lord are rhapsodically called upon by name to "bless the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever." Even whales are apostrophised with that object, as thus: "O ye Whales, and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever." But the portion of the Canticle of which we are now specially reminded is as follows:—

"O ye Fire and Heat, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever.

"O ye Lightnings and Clouds, bless ye the Lord: praise him, and magnify him for ever.

"O ye Seas and Floods, bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him for ever."

The "winds of God" are also adjoined to join in the general praise and glorification of the Lord. Apparently the idea is that this more or less poetical composition, with its rather wearisome refrain, is a sort of incense grateful to the Creator of the Universe. Those who sing it must believe it to be pleasing to him as well as to themselves, otherwise there is not much object in giving it tongue. We know from various parts of Scripture that the Lord delights in praise. And it is largely in order to provide him with a plentiful supply of that cheap commodity that Christendom is dotted over with so many "houses of God."

We may, by a stretch of imagination, believe that the Christian God is gratified to hear his elements specifically invited to magnify his name, even though the praise may be thought to be a kind of thing that "goes without saying." On the other hand, he must suffer some chagrin when he sees how wildly and erratically certain of these apostrophised elements behave, when perhaps, as in the Genesiac days, he is taking a little well-earned repose. Can we not imagine him waking up in some "sleepy hollow" of heaven, and learning with anger and disgust of the reckless doings of these his servants when they have thought themselves relieved of control?

"O Fire and Heat," we can imagine him saying, "what *have* you been doing at Stepney? Is this the way you 'bless me, and praise me, and magnify me for ever'?" Burning out one of my historic houses in the East of London, and destroying ancient features that can never be replaced. Well might the worldly-minded

worshippers have doubts about your possible performances or my watchful control and insure this my house of prayer and praise for £11,000. If you felt that you must be doing something, why didn't you burn down a Secular meeting place, or a music hall, or a drink palace, or even Dr. Parker's City Temple, which belongs more to him than to me? What mean ye by this Devil's work on earth? Haven't you enough to do in Hell? Out upon ye, caitiffs! Avaunt! Quit my sight! Oh, who would be a God—never able to take a moment's rest in this monstrously prolonged eternity without something or other going wrong with his works!"

Or we can imagine other Divine expostulations—*e.g.*: "O Lightning, why didst thou strike that church? O Floods, why didst thou sweep away that chapel? O Wind, why didst thou blow down that steeple? O Sea, why hast thou submerged that east coast abbey?" Truly the indiscriminate havoc of the elements must be distressing alike to gods and men.

The Lord himself is said to "ride upon the storm." Does he, indeed! If he drove a motor-car in the same furious devil-me-care fashion in the City, he would be liable to be fined for driving "to the common danger." If he hurls the thunderbolts himself, he might take care that they didn't drop on his own tabernacles. If he himself raises up what the ha'penny evenings call a "Big Blaze," he might at least exempt from its ravages conventicles dedicated to his own service. If he himself arranges a devastating flood, he ought to be able to avoid swamping or swilling away some poor little Bethel erected, with infinite sacrifice and pains, to his honor and glory.

Perhaps, however—and that seems to be the sensible conclusion—he has nothing to do with these calamitous events in any way whatever. They are, from an infinite point of view, mere trifles, insignificant details.

He builds his house, he builds his walls,
And he doesn't care where his chimney falls.

Nor, in fact, whether the whole structure doesn't come rattling to the ground. Still, these by no means infrequent mishaps to the "Houses of God" must have a more or less depressing effect on zealous worshippers, who are for ever urging each other and the outside world to "trust in God." Worst of all, we fear, they give the ungodly opportunities for sardonic laughter and impious comments. They have, too, a bad effect upon possible converts from heathenism. Not so long ago there was an Anglican church in the diocese of Calcutta which suffered severely from a subsidence. The educated Hindoo became then more than ever averse to the worship of a God who could not, or did not, take care of his own temple.

Each of these burned-down, washed-out, lightning-stricken, submerged, or subsided places of worship has at one time or other been solemnly dedicated to Deity. In the Anglican Church there is always on such an occasion an imposing and impressive ceremony at which the Bishop of the diocese prominently figures. The Divine blessing on the structure and all that is connected therewith is sought by prayer, and everybody is supposed to be worked up to a spirit of holy zeal, and especially of liberal offering. "Loving hands," as the reporters say, decorate the interior of the edifice, and all seems to point to years of sanctified work for the blessed Lord and his kingdom. Then there come, in scattered cases, these demons of Fire and Heat, or Wind, or Lightning, or Flood (not to mention Earthquake, which is overlooked in the Canticle), and the "house of God" is damaged or destroyed. Now does not this savor of ingratitude on the part of Deity? He may give everything, and therefore take everything away; but we think some discrimination should be exercised even by a God—that is, if he is a Being about whom we can think and talk at all; and if Freethinkers can't, then the parsons must "shut up," for they know no more than we do.

It is true that in certain instances the worshippers of the dismantled and ruined fabrics—nowise shaken in their "trust in God," and perhaps supported by the other and better string to their bow in the shape of timely insurance—may set to work and erect a much more beautiful edifice. This is not always so, but, even if it were, what a waste of much-needed material in that which has been damaged or hopelessly destroyed.

Why doesn't the Lord preserve that which is in existence, and move the faithful to church-building elsewhere? The answer is—Because he doesn't seem to care a rush about what happens, spite of all that the clerics may say.

The fact is the worshippers care a great deal more for God's house than God seems to care himself. If there is a proposal to remove a church for the purpose of some great public improvement, what a howl goes up from the pious, and what terrible denunciations of the proposed "sacrilege" and "desecration." But in a light-hearted way the Lord, we are led to believe, goes smashing and battering and burning and inundating conventicles whenever and wherever he thinks he will, absolutely indifferent to consequences and regardless of cost.

But, of course, we shall be told that we must not expect Divine intervention in these matters which happen in the operation of the general laws that govern the Cosmos. Very well; what, then, do we want any houses of prayer for at all? If general laws are so immutable that even God's own houses enjoy no special immunity, where is the use of offering up the supplications for which, in a large measure, these houses are built? The reign of law is a useful term to trot out on the ashes of a burned-down Church, but when the Church is intact and in full swing—ah, it's a different story then! The hand of God is then discerned in almost everything, providentially helping at critical periods, showering blessings on all who are engaged in his work, guiding the parson or pastor who is always his special favorite, and watching and succoring the faithful with ever-present love and care.

FRANCIS NEALE.

Another Change of Front.

THE history of alleged supernatural religion reveals nothing more distinctly than a series of changes, modifications, and reconstruction of beliefs. The religious impressions of one age have been replaced by subsequent ideas of a superior intellectual order, born of increased knowledge and more disciplined thought. This is in strict accordance with the natural law of mental evolution, but how does it affect the claim that religion was divine in its origin, and has been under the special control of God in its operations? From a human standpoint, improvements can be understood, because progress is a natural law; but, if divinity means perfection, where is there room for advancement? The completeness of a God-sent religion should be evident at its inception; for, if it is not, its future character will depend upon the intellectual ability and personal desires of its believers. The truth is, all religions are the outcome of the human mind, apart from what is termed the supernatural.

The Christian religion, to a greater degree, perhaps, than any other, has been subject to changes not only in its method of advocacy, but also in its doctrinal presentations. The modifications which have taken place during the last half century in reference to the belief in God, the nature of the Bible, the origin of sin, the means of salvation, the existence of the Devil, and the reality of hell torments, all show that "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" is not deemed acceptable at the present day. The Rev. Dr. H. Rashdall, M.A., in a special sermon recently preached at Oxford, and reported in the *Christian World Pulpit* of September 25th, says:—

"I need hardly say the present is an age of great theological change, the age of greatest change, perhaps, since the sixteenth century. About the origin of the human race, about the meaning of inspiration and revelation, about the future life, about the interpretation of traditional dogma, the most conservative among us are rapidly, whether they realise it or not themselves, coming to believe very differently from their forefathers. To some, perhaps, with regret or with exultation, our age presents itself as an age that has lost the Bible."

Even Christ is now regarded by his followers in a very different light to what he used to be in former times. As the Rev. J. Brierley recently stated in the *Christian World*: "The twentieth century cannot see the Christ, if it would,

with the eye of the Middle Ages. It sees with its own, and the later view will carry in it something different from the earlier." The Unitarians, the most advanced of the Christian sects, are becoming more and more heretical to the orthodox faith, and are seeking to reconstruct their religious views upon the basis of modern thought. Hence, in the *Inquirer* of October 5, in writing upon "Twentieth Century Unitarianism," the Rev. Mr. Walters says:—

"For, though we still employ the word in the old sense to emphasize the personal unity of God, yet there can be no question that during the last fifty years the connotations of Unitarianism have swept beyond its early theological limits; and now our Unitarian Churches stand for the unity of Creation, that cosmic order which is only another name for the unchangeableness and fidelity of the Creator; we stand for the unity of man, the organic solidarity of the race; we stand for the homogeneity of truth, the authority of conscience, the validity of reason."

The Church Congress, which has just been held at Brighton, has furnished another proof of the failure of Christianity as a reforming agency, and also of its inadequacy to meet the religious requirements of the twentieth century. The Congress was composed of a motley gathering; its time was occupied with third-rate talking, without producing one practical result except a demonstration of the fact that the clergy are impotent in devising and carrying out any secular reform. One of the principal avowed objects of the Congress was "to promote the union of all sections of the Christian community." The attempt, however, was useless, for a feeling of antagonism was visible throughout the proceedings. The special reporter of the *Christian World* informs us "that friends of religious reunion are grievously mortified by the way the proceedings were mismanaged." The report speaks also of "hair-splitting theologians" and "insensate wrangling," and it goes on to say:—

"There was absolutely no justification for Nonconformist ministers making an address of welcome the excuse for lecturing the Church of England about the necessity of 'putting down superstition' in her pale, or for teaching the Church her business in various other respects. How would the Congregationalists like it if a bishop came to Dr. Horton's church and blandly commiserated with the congregation on the spread of Protestant heresy in the Free Churches? The Free Churches have arrived at a point when they rightly insist upon their equality as religious communions with any episcopal denomination. But if so they must choose as spokesmen those who will observe the first principles of diplomatic restraint, or, by sheer want of tact, they will indefinitely delay that recognition for which they are—as it seems to me, rather unnecessarily—so publicly hankering. I heard it freely said on the platform that no address of welcome would ever again be permitted."

It is not surprising that at the commencement of the proceedings the following prayer was offered: "Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord." Neither is it to be wondered at that this supplication was unheeded when we remember, as Dr. Wilberforce said, "that their differences went deep down to the roots of their respective views of the Church."

It appears to us that uniformity of belief in Christian teachings cannot reasonably be expected, and we have often said so. Our reason for arriving at this conclusion is that the supposed truths of the New Testament are subjective, not objective. This partly explains why so many contradictory impressions obtain as to the correct meaning of what the book really teaches. Evidently the Bishop of London (Dr. Ingram) saw the difficulty of securing uniformity of belief in the Church, for he attributed the "want of unity" to the fact that "so much time was being wasted in striving after an impossible uniformity." It is said (John xvii. 21) that Christ prayed to his Father that his followers "all may be one"; but that prayer has never been answered, and probably never will be, as the time for miracles has long since passed. Thus in this assembly of representative professors of Christianity we have further confirmation of the lack of unity amongst Christians, and also an acknowledgment that their existing differences pertain, as the Rev. Dr. Irons and Dean Farrar have already shown, not merely to unimportant

matters, but also to some of the very essentials of the Christian faith.

We have said that the only important fact brought to light at the Congress was the failure of the Christian organisation as it has hitherto been carried on. This was made clear by Dr. Welldon, Bishop of Calcutta, whose sermon, we are told, "was a brave appeal to the Church to face the question of reconstruction of religious belief. But the Church was apparently impotent to essay such a reconstruction. She was disposed to hide her head under the old formularies, as timid children hide theirs under the bed-clothes; but she must boldly and calmly face the new learning and the new temper of the age." The President of the Congress, Dr. Wilberforce, also confessed that they had "to meet the problems of the new century—questions of public morality, of social well-being, the distribution of wealth, opportunities for advancement, and the decent housing of the poor." The Bishop of Exeter (Dr. Ryle), in his sermon in connection with the Congress, was no less emphatic in condemnation of Christian stagnation. Here are his words:—

"The Christian faith is, roughly speaking, nominally paramount; yet what real hold does it exert over the lives of the masses? How does it control what is so significant, the pleasures of the young? How does it correct their tastes? Who reigns? Is it Christ, or Mammon in the garb of Christ? Does the Church, in a word, hold the social community captive? Or, on the other hand, do the forces of the modern world rein and hold in check the living authority of the Christ on earth? If so, there must come a great awakening.....The tremendous changes of thought which have characterised the last century cannot but deeply influence and mould the life of the Christian Church in our land."

But when is this "influence" to commence? When will the Church make a serious effort to obtain the required remedies for existing wrongs? Dr. Wilberforce says: "When men became Christ-like the world would become Christian—then, and not till then." If this is so, there is but little prospect of society being Christianised. Who will attempt to become Christ-like? Suppose the bishops and other leading followers (at a great distance) of "the meek and lowly Jesus" set the example. Let them renounce some of their riches, content themselves with less gorgeous palaces in which to reside, and pay more attention to affording the poor an opportunity to provide for their bodies, leaving their "souls" to look after themselves. "Blessed be ye poor" is a constant theme for these "servants of the Lord" to preach about, although their principal aim is to avoid being so "blessed."

But the question arises, Are we justified in believing that the Church will be more successful in the future than it has been in the past? We allege we are not. It lacks—and it seems as if it must for ever lack—the elements of progress. Moreover, during the many centuries of its existence, the Church has been an enemy to all political and social advancement. It has marred educational reform, and opposed all liberty outside its own theological domain. To science it has been no friend, and to Freethought it has been a determined opponent. It has professed to have more consideration for God than for man, more concern for heaven than for earth, and more regard for belief than for conduct. Such has been the policy of the exponents of the Church up to date. They now consider it necessary to reconstruct their belief. If they succeed, they will thereby show that the ingenuity of man is more valuable to progress than the device of God. But will they succeed? Time will tell; although, judging from the nature of their faith and their past history, we think the effort will fail.

CHARLES WATTS.

Richard Jeffries.

SIR WALTER BESANT, in his eulogy of Richard Jeffries, after descanting on the keen insight and love shown by him of nature at all times and at all seasons, says:—

"I remember the delight with which I drank, as a bright, refreshing draught from a clear springhead, the story of the country life as set forth by him, this writer of whom I had never before read. Why, we must have been blind all our lives; here were the most wonderful things possible going on under our very eyes, but we saw them

not; nay, after reading all his books and all his papers, after learning from him all that he had to teach, I cannot yet see these things."

He then continues to mourn his inability to perceive these beauties with the eyes of Jeffries, and adds: "None of us poor street-struck creatures can see the things we ought to see." It is strange that a man like Besant—a man who has made a special study of London, and, as he himself says, has lived in it for half a century—should be the one to undertake a biography of Richard Jeffries. Surely never were subject and biographer more dissimilar. The one a dreamy poet, unmethodical, reserved, and moody; the other bright and genial, delighting in the society of his fellow-authors, and working hard to enlighten and enliven his poorer fellow-citizens. To Jeffries life in a town meant death; we find him frequently saying that he must live in the country, he must feel the sweet, fresh air and rain, and the warm sunshine, and that he cannot live without them.

He was born at Coate, a little hamlet near Swindon, in Wilts. The farmstead in which he was born had been in the possession of the family for very many years. As a boy he was very delicate and very reserved, never joining in the sports of cricket and football with his schoolfellows; never happier than when poring over some old, dusty tome, unearthed from the masses of useless lumber which had accumulated for years in the forbidden loft, or when roaming alone the wide stretches of undulating downs, noting and observing what we should consider such very trivial things—the various shades of the cornfields when swept by the wind, the little unheeded weeds and grasses that will insistently encroach upon the footpath (he feels for their very shabbiness), or the angry hum of the humble-bee as it becomes entangled in the matted grasses. Until eighteen years of age he lived this dreamy life; he was constitutionally unfitted for the duties of a farmer—those his younger brother (a strong, sturdy young giant) undertook; and he was left to choose his own career.

Naturally being a great reader, and having a strong imagination, he turned his thoughts to literature, and (although laughed at by his relations) he secured a humble position as reporter to a local paper, the *North Wilts Herald*. This was his first step. After five or six years of work, more or less pleasant, came his first real success. This was a letter written to the *Times* on the subject of the relation of the farmer with the agricultural laborer; the letter was accepted; it occupied two and a-half columns, and created quite a sensation in agricultural circles; it was noticed in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and in the *Spectator* of that period. Had he continued to study and to write about things agricultural, he would have been saved much disappointment later on. As it was, his sole ambition seemed to be to write a novel. He did, in fact, write three or four, all utterly crude and amateurish, novels which he had published at his own expense, and which were severely criticised.

Besides these, he wrote two or three books dealing with country life, in each of which there was a faint suspicion of a story interwoven in the descriptive matter. At last he decided to write only of the country and its animal and human life, and it is in these series of articles, which appeared in the *Spectator*, *Athenaeum*, *Daily News*, and other well-known papers, that he found his true self. Many of them since have been published in book form. They are all exceedingly beautiful. In all his observations one sees the poet, the philosopher, and the artist. Although he made no pretensions to be either, yet he was a combination of all three. The loveliest of them all to me is his *Pageant of Summer*. So often have I read it that I think I could almost repeat portions of it, yet can I never tire of it. "A London Trout" is also a very fine article, full of loving observation. The saddest and most remarkable of his books is the one entitled *The Story of My Heart*. In it he tells of his striving and praying for the perfect life, both physical and spiritual, and mourns the lack of sympathy shown by nature towards mankind. By no means orthodox, he nevertheless did not doubt the existence of a soul. For many years he suffered unmentionable agony from an internal disorder; this finally caused his death, when only thirty-eight years of age, and when at the height of his literary fame. A great deal of his best

work was written, or rather dictated, whilst on his bed of sickness. That his works will ever become what is known as "popular" is, I think, impossible. So very few people really care for the things of which he speaks. There is, however, a small but steadily increasing minority who love and appreciate his books, and who speak of him as the finest writer on his chosen subject that ever lived, not even excepting Thoreau. As a finish to these few remarks I will quote a passage from his *Pageant of Summer*; he has been describing the glories of a summer's day, the warmth of the sun, the songs of the birds, and the rustling of the leaves swayed by the gentle winds, and he adds:—

"I cannot leave it; I must stay under the old tree in the midst of the long grass, the luxury of the leaves, and the song in the very air. I seem as if I could feel all the glowing life the sunshine gives, and the south wind calls to being. The endless grass, the endless leaves, the immeasurable strength of the oak expanding, the unalloyed joy of the finch and blackbird, from all of them I receive a little. Each gives me something of the pure joy they gather for themselves.....The hours when the mind is absorbed by beauty are the only hours we really live, so that the longer we can stay among these things so much the more is snatched from inevitable time."

FRANK HALL.

Acid Drops.

THE nauseous flattery of the Czar in Republican France was just calculated to provoke bitter and unmeasured protests. M. Laurent Tailhade expressed his protest so strongly in the *Libertaire* that he has been sentenced to a fine of one thousand francs and a year's imprisonment. The technical charge was inciting to murder. But the rhetoric of M. Tailhade's article ought not to have been taken too literally. Zola, who appeared as a witness, said that he admired the article, though it was too violent.

Mr. Graham Wallas, Chairman of the School Management Committee, on the London School Board, deserves the highest praise for the way in which he has withstood the action of the Local Government Board in regard to vaccination. Nothing could be more absurd, in the first place, than the way in which the small-pox scare has been worked up of late in London. In such a vast population the number of cases is trifling, and the death-rate quite inconsiderable. Yet we hear of nothing but "small-pox, small-pox," as though there were no more fatal diseases about, or as though it alone were killing half the people who die in London. It is not creditable that the medical fraternity should imitate one of the old tricks of priestcraft—namely, frightening people into patronising a certain specific. But, in any case, medical nostrums ought not to be allowed a free run in the public schools, which are places of education, and not of pathological experiment. Moreover, as the State has put a Conscience Clause in the Vaccination Act, and practically made Vaccination optional, it is a gross impertinence to try to thrust it into the Board schools.

Why will the men of God be always trespassing on the province of the police? Here is the Rev. Dr. Townsend, for instance, President of the National Free Church Council, calling upon Nonconformists to attack gambling. If he meant that the moral evil of gambling should be exposed by preachers, class leaders, and Sunday-school teachers, there would be no fault to find with his utterance, except the general fault that moral evil of any kind is very little, if at all, affected by such exhortations. But that is not what he means. "They must destroy the bookmakers," he said, "and give scoundrels who encouraged gambling the justice they deserved." Whether this would be just and sensible it is beyond our purpose to discuss. What we wish to say is that the hunting down of bookmakers is no part of the duty of Nonconformist ministers. If they want to do that, they should resign their pulpits and join the police force. Those who preach should not prosecute, and those who prosecute should not preach.

Dr. Townsend also asks how long we are going on without a measure of Sunday Closing? But what on earth has he, as a minister of religion, to do with that matter? Let him make as many pious grimaces as he will, he will find it difficult to persuade the outside world that he is animated by non-professional motives. The man in the street sees clearly enough that the men of God want the public-houses closed on Sunday in the hope of filling their gospel-shops. Monday is the great loafing day with the lazy and improvident, but nobody proposes that the "pubs" should be closed then.

M. Santos-Dumont, the airship gentleman, has not yet

won the Deutsch prize for aerial navigation, but he has received a very valuable present from the Comtesse d'Eu, ex-Princess Imperial of Brazil. It is a medal of Saint Benedict, who prevents accidental falls from great heights. M. Santos-Dumont is safe now, anyway. He can sail round the very top of the Eiffel Tower without the slightest fear of coming to the ground in the form of a human poultice. Good old medal! Good old Saint Benedict!

The Archbishop of York's way of ending the war is prayer and humiliation on the part of Englishmen. God will then give them a speedy victory. President Kruger is just as pious—on the opposite side. Speaking on the war to an *Eclair* interviewer, he said: "God will put an end to it by making us always victorious." How they must laugh up in heaven—if there is a heaven to laugh in! Would it not be a cheap and comfortable way out of the South African trouble, to stop fighting, and let York and Kruger settle it by rival prayer-meetings? They are well matched in most respects, each of them holds one of the divine ears; but York is the younger of the two, and might tire out his competitor. We should lay our money on York. But the odds ought not to be heavy. Say five to four.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain's favorite hymn, according to a musical monthly, is "Peace, perfect peace." Really!

The *Church Times* is still very much "nettled" by its exclusion from the reading-room of the Wood Green Free Library. It returns to the subject in its latest issue. What seems to annoy it most of all is that the *Christian World* is admitted. It will be seen how equally well the following remarks which it makes apply also to the exclusion of the *Freethinker* from many public reading-rooms:—"The fact is that popularly-elected bodies are peculiarly susceptible to a complaint which takes the form of hallucination. They exist, of course, for the community; but they entertain the fond notion that the community exists for them. Consequently they indulge their likes and dislikes according to their own sweet fancy, and treat the public as though they had parted with all their rights. It is not surprising, therefore, that the people of Wood Green may only read such books or papers as may commend themselves to a faddist majority on the Library Committee. But the remedy for the tyranny of local government is that men of light and leading should come forward and take a more prominent part than they do in local affairs, and that the electors should studiously withhold their votes from everyone whom they know to be a crank."

The Earliest Gospel is the title of the historical study of the Gospel of Mark by Dr. Menzies, Professor of Biblical Criticism in the University of St. Andrews. The Professor has a dread of the miraculous element, and makes desperate attempts to explain it away instead of boldly rejecting it. Some of his efforts are most amusing.

Endeavoring to account for the feeding of the five thousand, he says it is possible that some or most of the groups into which the company was divided "had some provisions of their own"; that nobody got a full meal, but only a small piece, and that here we have to recognise not a mere material act of feeding, but an act of spiritual communion. Again, in accounting for the stilling of the storm, Dr. Menzies tells us that "Mark no doubt means to represent Jesus as having had power over the winds and waves, but that power is not claimed by Jesus himself; it belongs to the interpretation afterwards put on his words and demeanor. The Church early came to think that Jesus could do all things for his followers, and that when they had him they were safe from every storm."

Now isn't this absurd self-stultification? Either the stories are true or false. There can be no question as to their interpretation. They are presented as plain matters of fact, and must be accepted or rejected from that point of view. It is positively pitiable to see men of Dr. Menzies' stamp paltering about the stupid stories in this disingenuous way.

Looking through the full reports of the Church Congress, which were only concluded in last week's Church papers, we notice that there was a discussion on the "Work of the Church in the Army." The Chaplain-General said that, whereas our soldiers were apt to be listless in regard to religion whilst at home, "in South Africa Jesus had had a chance with these men." It is well to know that he has "had a chance" with them somewhere. We should hope, however, that Jesus Christ did not bring about or allow the war, wholly or partially, in order to get at Tommy Atkins. That would, indeed, be very much like burning down a farm in order to get roast pig. If the Savior has really been so busy, he might as well have prevented the war to start with, and then have devised some means of evangelising the troops at home. But God's ways are not our ways, and sometimes it is a good thing they are not.

Anyhow, the Lord Jesus has "had a chance" with the soldiers in South Africa through his devoted servants, the

Army chaplains. These holy men were described in the discussion as "Christ's ambassadors," and much was said in their praise, though it was not all unmixed panegyric. Some of these men of God, it seems, have been assuming too many military airs and graces. The Chaplain-General said he differed from some chaplains (whom he respected) in this matter, but he must be true to his own convictions. A chaplain, he explained, had what was called relative rank given him; that decided his quarters, allowances, etc.; but it was not real rank—it did not give a right to any military title.

He had therefore, he said, been grieved and amused during this war by reading letters from "the Rev. Major So-and-So." Miss Violet Brooke-Hunt agreed with the Chaplain-General that the officer-chaplain ought not to exist, one type of which, she said, used to pop his head into the hospital-tent at a certain camp, and say: "Any desperate cases here for the chaplain?"

It was a very striking thing, said Dr. Horton at the induction of Dr. Forsyth as Principal of Hackney College, that when a recent writer on psychology wished to give an illustration of boredom he spoke of the effect produced by listening to a sermon!

The Baptist Union recently met at Edinburgh, and the presidential address was delivered by Dr. Alex. Maclaren. He spoke on the subject of "Evangelical Mysticism," and was about as unintelligible as might have been expected. He made one observation which we can understand, and which his hearers would hardly thank him for. He said: "It is open to doubt whether the abundant works of the Churches at present are the outcome of life, or whether they are not in some cases galvanic movements that simulate vitality and mask death."

Dr. Maclaren offered a few vague remarks on modern criticism. According to him, whoever lives in Christ, and has Christ living in him, "may well possess his soul in patience amid the dust of present critical controversies as to Scripture, its manner of origination and its authority." Indeed! And where does the believer get Christ from except from the Scripture? And are not questions relating to the origination and authority of the Scripture of the highest importance as affecting the basis of belief in Christ?

Perhaps this is a part of the mysticism of Evangelicalism on which he dilated. The *British Weekly* thinks it necessary to offer the mild comment that Dr. Maclaren "touched lightly, perhaps too lightly, on this burning question of criticism." It adds: "The problem is not to be disposed of in this easy manner. We must face the fact that certain critical conclusions, if established, will destroy Christianity."

There seems to be not only mystery about Baptist doctrine, as Dr. Maclaren indicated, but also mystery about Baptist personality, for one of the Edinburgh evening papers published the portrait of Mr. Baynes as "the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare," and that of Mr. Shakespeare as "Mr. A. H. Baynes." We notice an unkind remark made as to the selection of the *locale* of the annual meeting, a contemporary suggesting that it would be much better to select some quiet little town for such a purpose than a great city like Edinburgh, with all its distracting features and varied attractions.

Principal Fairbairn, unlike Dr. Maclaren, feels himself called upon to recognise the grave importance of modern criticism. The other Sunday he devoted a sermon to dealing with the problems that are emerging in connection with the tide of criticism which is now being directed towards the New Testament. It is reported that "he dealt very fully with what was once known as the Mythical Theory, and which he said he felt sure would again come to the front."

The declaration of Rev. G. H. R. Garcia, of Union Church, Sunderland, that he would like to see in connection with every church a billiard room and skittle alley, as well as reading, dancing, music, and other rooms necessary for the living of a broad social life, has evoked considerable discussion and criticism in the correspondence columns of the local Press. Mr. Garcia is not, however, to be easily intimidated. The other Sunday he challenged his opponents to a public debate on the utterances to which they take exception.

Demonstrative piety sometimes leads to ludicrous results. "I remember," says the Dean of Bristol, in *Phases of My Life*, "on one occasion when I was administering Holy Baptism, a friend of considerable wealth expressed a wish to be present. He joined rather loudly in the 'Amens.' I noticed after the service that something was being pressed upon him which he seemed unwilling to receive; but I heard the father of the baptised child say: 'Let me persuade you to accept this. I always give the clerk something.' And he insisted on thrusting into the palm of his hand a large, flat five-shilling piece!"

The decline in Sunday-school attendance, which has 50

much disturbed the pious in England, is also the subject of anxiety in the United States, where last year there was a falling off of 10,000 in the schools. In 1897-8, too, there were serious declines.

Says the *Christian Age*: "The estimated number of heathens throughout the world is between 800,000,000 and 900,000,000. Parts of Tibet, Afghanistan, Belochistan, Central Africa, and probably remote parts of the inhabited polar regions, are still unevangelised." And, we may add, are likely to remain so for a long time to come. A pretty sort of Divine revelation which is confessedly unknown to so large a number of the world's inhabitants!

The absurd suggestion by the Archbishop of York of a Day of Humiliation in view of the state of affairs in South Africa does not commend itself to the *Christian World*. That journal says: "With all respect, we venture to characterise it as in the highest degree unfortunate, and calculated to prejudice religion in the eyes of sensible men. The present state of things is clearly attributable to our own blundering, and to lay the results of our folly on God is not piety, but something very different."

With the Wolverhampton Bench at any rate the Word of God carries but little weight, though the witnesses are sworn upon it. The other day a hawker charged with being drunk and disorderly replied with a quotation from Scripture. It was taken from the last chapter of Proverbs, and runs: "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and good wine to those that be of heavy heart." The Mayor said they did not want a sermon, and fined the defendant 10s. and costs.

This seems to have been a rather off-handed way of dealing with Holy Writ. What is still more striking is the apparently contemptuous allusion to "a sermon." The sky-pilots will like that least of all. The Bench did not seem equal to quoting texts on which teetotallers rely. Or perhaps they thought that this would only prove how contradictory, and therefore unreliable, the teachings of the Bible are. After ruling the Scriptures out in this unceremonious fashion, the least the Bench could have done was to order the removal of the Old and New Testaments from the witness stand. But, Inconsistency, thy name is Christianity.

A serious religious affray has taken place in the province of Kharkof, South Russia, between the Stundists and a party of the Orthodox Greek Church by whom they were attacked. Eighty persons were killed and a Russian church was wrecked. What an inestimable blessing religion is!

One of the lay speakers at the recent Church Congress who took part in the discussion on Sunday Observance seems, according to his own account, to have received a well-deserved snub. This champion of the Lord's Day—a Mr. T. Cheney Garfit by name—announced that he had just had some correspondence with Mr. Wyndham, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, on the subject of official Sabbath-breaking. He had asked the Chief Secretary whether it was true, as reported, that he sent a telegram to Mr. Stoddart, secretary of the Clare County Council, informing him that he would arrive at Lisconnon Harbor, West Clare, at four o'clock on Sunday, when he would be prepared to meet a deputation of the Clare Council and other bodies who desired to interview him.

Here is the reply Mr. T. Cheney Garfit received: "Mr. Wyndham directs me to acknowledge your letter of the 17th (September), and to say that the paragraph in the newspaper referring to his visit to Lisconnon Harbor, County Clare, on Sunday, the 8th ult., was substantially correct. Yours truly, P. HANSON." No attempt at explanation; no expression of regret at this dreadful desecration of the Lord's Day! Mr. Wyndham simply says: "It was so, and you can say and do what you darn well please about it." Of course, Mr. Garfit denounced the Chief Secretary to the Congress, and no doubt there were many shudders amongst his hearers at this official indifference to the Holy Sabbath. But, all the same, Mr. Garfit must have felt himself snubbed, and if he had had any sense he would have said nothing about that correspondence.

The Rev. the Hon. James Adderley—who seems to be a sort of Socialist monk—is reported to have said in regard to the housing of the poor problem: "If some of the excellent people who spent thousands of pounds in fighting a half-starved ritualist would fight *Christian* jerry-builders, *Christian* slum-owners, and *Christian* sweaters, it would result in a great deal more good." We don't know anything about the "half-starved ritualist," but presume that his limited rations must be very much a matter of choice. As to the other part of his declaration, we quite agree with him, and think he deserves credit for having spoken out. It is not so long ago that a clergyman of the Church of England was twice summoned and fined as the owner of horribly insanitary dwellings in London.

A band of Mormon elders who have been touring the State of Maine all summer seeking converts to their faith have left for Utah with the results of their labors. These consist, says the New York *Truthseeker*, of about thirty elderly spinsters from various parts of the State who were attracted to Mormonism by what the elders held out to them.

An Indian who was recently called as a witness at Stratford Police-court caused considerable amusement. Before taking the oath he shouted out something unintelligible, and, taking off a pair of elaborately adorned shoes, threw them to the rear of the Court. He then gave the name of Rajamali Roosie, and proceeded with his evidence.

A leading light in the Church of Christ at Hampden, Dunedin, has been visited with the maximum penalty of ten years' imprisonment for incest.

The hon. treasurer of Trinity College, Melbourne, has disappeared, and large defalcations have been discovered in his accounts. He had passed through St. Joseph's College as a theological student, and had acted as lay reader at Christ's Church, Melbourne.

Alexander McLean, who was convicted of the murder of a woman and her daughter and her little grandson at Lyttelton, New Zealand, appears to have been "jerked to Jesus" after the usual pious preliminaries. He passed the greater portion of his time in reading devotional books and singing Sankey's hymns, "of which he appeared to be particularly fond." His favorite hymn was "One by one we cross the river."

In 1865 Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by a devout Catholic and democrat. In 1881 James A. Garfield was assassinated by a devout Protestant and stalwart Republican. About ten years later the mayor of Chicago was assassinated by a man orthodox in religion and politics, and last year the governor of Kentucky was assassinated by men of the same brand. These incidents furnished no texts from which the pulpit and Press could preach sermons demanding the "stamping out" of Atheism and Anarchy. The murderer of William McKinley professes to be an Anarchist, and no evidence is adduced that he is a believer in Christianity. This is a great opportunity for the priests, who declare that not only must Anarchy be fought to the death, but our godless public schools must be turned into moral engines by combining religious with secular instruction. They are oblivious of the fact that the President's assassin was educated in a parochial school.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Before sentence of death was passed upon Czolgosz, his record was read, in which, amongst other items, appeared: "Religious instruction—Catholic." When commanded to swear to the record the prisoner did so, showing no repugnance to the religious oath, but placing his hand upon the Bible and assenting to the invocation, "So help me, God," without demur.

Ping-pong in our churches is rather an innovation. We should hardly have thought it practicable; but *Il Gazzettino*, of Venice, does not see any difficulty about it. It seems that the Customs House officials at Modane were curious a little time ago about a mysterious box amongst the luggage of the Mayor of Exeter. Whereupon that civic dignitary explained that the box contained the requisites for the English society game of Ping-pong, which he said was played by children of all ages in the nursery or on the breakfast table; "and sometimes," *Il Gazzettino* reports, "in church if the sermon should be unusually dry, as it is so small that it can be played on the seat, and the only sounds produced resemble so closely the rise and fall of the preacher's intonations as to be of no inconvenience."

Bishop Ellicott takes anything but an optimistic view of the present position and prospects of the English Church. He points to the falling-off in ordination candidates, the "unhappy divisions," and the "sad indications of the silent decline of learning in the clergy when intellectual difficulties and indifference to revealed religion are seriously and ominously increasing."

Certain Protestant missionaries are alleged to have been stirring up a revolt on the Congo. They have been watched by the Congo Free States authorities, and, the complicity of two of these missionaries having been proved, measures have been taken to secure their arrest.

There is a Congregational Fire Insurance Company, Limited, at Bradford. Of course the distinction is in the "Limited." Every Christian Church is a Fire Insurance Company, issuing policies against blazes in the world to come.

Sacred music was played on the organ and several hymns were sung by school children at the lying-in-state of Jennie, a favorite pug belonging to Mrs. S. E. Bowser, of Trenton, New Jersey. Jennie, having recently "departed this life,"

was placed in a black-covered coffin lined with pink satin, and had a huge bow of white ribbon about her neck. She is to have a tombstone. The obsequies were rather novel, but were probably quite as well deserved as those which are arranged for *some* Christians who are said to die in the Lord.

Dr. Savage, lecturer on mental diseases, Guy's Hospital, in a recent address to the York Medical Society, said he had "never seen religious sentiment of a healthy type produce insanity." This announcement was received with the "applause" which was no doubt expected. But everything turns on the qualifying words, "of a healthy type." Of course, no healthy sentiment is likely to produce insanity. It did not require a lecturer from Guy's Hospital to announce that obvious fact. The question is whether any of the religious sentiments, acting on weak and ill-balanced minds, are not specially calculated to produce insanity. That this has been the effect in many cases is shown by the returns of nearly every lunatic asylum.

Zadkiel appears again rising on the wings of prophecy and dilating on the future. Some carping critics, it seems, pointed out that the death of Queen Victoria was not foretold for January, 1901, and the dignified reply is that "We have from time to time presented some of the most important of the primary directions in Queen Victoria's nativity, but have refrained from making predictions of danger to life which might have caused alarm." For this reason, presumably, nothing was said of the murder of President McKinley.

According to the resident commissioner, missionary efforts in the Ellice Islands (Polynesia) are rendered, to a great extent, nugatory owing to the conflicts of rival creeds. Poor natives! Something of the sort happens even in our own happy Christian land.

Dean Farrar, at a meeting in the Chapter House, Canterbury, added his lament to that of many others on the "remarkable deterioration in the Sunday-schools." The number of scholars had gone down despite the enormous increase in population, and the number of teachers had also greatly diminished. He regarded this as "a very serious thing." We think it a matter for satisfaction. Children will have less to unlearn when they grow older.

We published Mr. G. J. Holyoake's reply to Mr. M. Rogers, who wrote to him concerning Mr. Stead's apparent misrepresentations in the *Review of Reviews*, and we have now to print Mr. Stead's reply to the same correspondent. It is as follows:—

Mowbray House, Norfolk-street, Strand, W.C.

DEAR MR. ROGERS,—

October 8, 1901.

I am very sorry if my use of the phrase "the Word of God" should have led you or anyone else to imagine that Mr. Holyoake had used it. I expressly described him as an Agnostic. I suppose I should have said after "recognition of the Word of God"—as believers would phrase it—"that finds expression in the Bible." But that I left to be understood. That Mr. Holyoake did not query it in proof shows that he did not misunderstand my meaning. I hope that this explanation will be satisfactory to you.

I am, yours truly,

W. T. STEAD.

Mr. Rogers does not say whether Mr. Stead's explanation is satisfactory or not. He leaves it to our judgment and criticism. Certainly it is characteristic of Mr. Stead. The sweet inaccuracy with which, intellectually speaking, he shuffles through the world is well illustrated in that "I suppose I should have said." He is not quite sure, even now, that he ought to have been precise. He still appears to think it allowable to leave his meaning to be "understood" by his readers, although it is perfectly clear that they could not understand it without knowing all the facts, in which case there was no room for the understanding. It does not occur to him that mental honesty is a virtue to be strictly expected of a publicist. "Really, now," he seems to say, "some people are so particular!"

Mr. Stead says nothing whatever about the "passionate longing" for another life which he falsely ascribed to Mr. Holyoake. Perhaps he thinks it a sufficient condescension to admit, however remotely, that he may have made *one* mistake.

And now for a final word about the ethics of this sort of interviewing. Mr. Holyoake says he saw a proof of Mr. Stead's article, but did not feel it was any business of his to correct that gentleman's "impressions." Mr. Stead says he sent Mr. Holyoake a proof, and, as nothing was corrected, he assumed that everything was all right; or, if anything was not quite right on the face of it, it would easily be "understood." But where do the rights of the public come in? One would think it was a private matter between Mr. Holyoake and Mr. Stead, whereas it was really a public matter between both of them and the readers of the *Review of Reviews*. Common honesty suggests that an adequate correction should appear in the next number of that magazine.

The recently-deceased Ameer of Afghanistan, when he mounted the throne, extirpated every real or fancied enemy or rival. He is said to have ordered a baker who gave short weight to be roasted in his own oven. He was great at torturing persons who incurred his resentment. He used to have the public executioner walking behind him at times, in readiness to slice obnoxious people's heads off. Still, he was a very religious man. The name of God was constantly upon his lips.

Like a true Mohammedan, the Ameer was able to see the idolatry of Christians. Speaking to Dr. Lillias Hamilton, once his lady court physician, he said: "You say Christians do not worship idols; don't try to teach me. Have I not been in their churches when I was in Russia? Have I not seen one image called the 'Mother of God,' and another the 'Son of God'? I am not ignorant on these matters." Evidently he wasn't.

A *Daily Telegraph* correspondent gives a sad account of the "deplorable condition" of Persia. The people can hardly go from bad to worse, for they are just there already. The Shah is old and feeble, and affairs are conducted by a powerful minister, who has enlisted the support of the clergy. "The people, accordingly," the correspondent says, "may deplore their hardships, but they will find no advocates amongst the priesthood."

Arnold Fairley, the young actor, who committed suicide, seems to have addled his brains over Marie Corelli's *Sorrows of Satan*. What was fun to the lady was death to him. He made the mistake of taking it too seriously.

The late Marquis of Bute's heart—not really more valuable than any other bit of dead meat—was taken all the way to Palestine and buried in a tomb that had been specially prepared for it on the Mount of Olives. This was done at his request. His idea was (we have no doubt) that Jesus Christ would descend the second time from heaven at that spot, and that those buried handy to it would stand the first chance of meeting him.

"Beware of imitations" is a frequent advertisement of the patent medicine men. Pursuing the same policy, Canon Barker, rector of Marylebone, begs people to beware of imitation weddings. "Being married at a registry office," he says, "is more like jumping over a broomstick than the real thing—it is simply entering into a civil contract without the holy binding, which is done by the Church only." He forgets to add "for the usual consideration." When that little fact is introduced, it is easy enough to see why the clergy want people to believe that only the Church can tie them up properly. The "binding" is just the same, whether you are married in a church or at a registry office. The "holy" is simply a matter of opinion. Let those who believe in it, and want it, pay for it; but don't let them accuse their more sensible fellow-citizens of looseness. After all, it is the law, and not the minister, that ties the matrimonial knot.

What is called "a terrible murder" is reported from Italy. It strongly reminds one of the Cenci story, which Shelley made the theme of one of the very finest dramas written since the death of Shakespeare. Two girls slew their own father. They were taken by him to his country house, where he was accompanied by a woman of ill-fame. There they shot him. When arrested they confessed, and said that they had killed him because he had ill-treated their mother until she died, and had subjected them to all sorts of humiliations.

Legally, of course, what these poor girls did is a crime. But how much was it so morally? Fortunately, the world is wiser and more considerate than it was in the days of Beatrice Cenci; and, if these "criminals" can make their story good, they will probably be let off with a light punishment, or no punishment at all.

Shelley, by the way, like Shakespeare, put the irreligion into the mouth of his stronger character, the religion in the mouth of the weaker. When the executioner is waiting to do his work on Beatrice Cenci and her mother Lucretia, the latter bids her daughter "Trust in God's sweet love." And this is the answer:—

'Tis past!

Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill.
How tedious, false, and cold seem all things. I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God;
I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

What beautiful and noble writing! And how superb the last sentence! Yet some have denied that Shelley was a great poet!

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

- October 27, Athenæum Hall.
 November 3, Athenæum Hall: 10, Camberwell; 17, Bradford; 24, Leicester.
 December 1 and 8, Athenæum Hall; 15, Liverpool; 22 and 29, Athenæum Hall.

To Correspondents.

- CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—November 10, Athenæum Hall, London; 24, Birmingham. December 8, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 15, Glasgow; 22, Camberwell. All communications for Mr. Charles Watts in reference to lecturing engagements, etc., should be sent to him at 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W. If a reply is required, a stamped and addressed envelope must be enclosed.
- C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—October 20, Athenæum Hall; 27, Liverpool. November 3, Birmingham; 10, Stanley; 17, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 24, Athenæum Hall. Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.
- M. ROGERS.—We are obliged to you, as no doubt our readers will be, for the trouble you have taken in this matter. The curious thing is that neither gentleman seems to recognise an obligation to the *public*, though both answer *you* with civility.
- C. H. GRANT.—Pleased to know that you regarded the Birmingham Town Hall afternoon lecture on Mr. Hall Caine's book as a "great intellectual feast." Thanks for the extract from the *Sporting Times*, but we fear our readers would not be good judges of Mr. Caine's inaccuracies as a huntsman.
- A. C. BROWN.—Thanks for your kind letter and good wishes. We hope you will never have occasion to think less of the photograph.
- J. GILHAM.—Not without promise, but hardly up to our level for publication.
- C. NEWELL.—Thanks. See list of acknowledgments.
- JAS. MORLEY.—We cannot refer you to an English book dealing with the Reformation from a Freethought standpoint. There are some good essays on the subject in Professor Karl Pearson's *Ethic of Freethought*.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—The further subscriptions from Birmingham are acknowledged this week. They arrived too late for the last list.
- W. H. H. DOWLING.—We should be glad to hear that the Bristol Freethinkers had drawn themselves together for a propagandist effort. Thanks for the reference, but we are not free to reproduce articles from other English papers.
- J. YOUNG.—The "Trio" is not of your best. Shall be glad to have something else.
- H. E. HIGGINS.—The reverend gentleman you refer to reeks with conceit, but his bombast is tempered with prudence; a mixture of Bobadil and Pistol. Like so many of his tribe, he wants to discuss anything but his own principles. Surely it is the business of a Christian to defend Christianity. Theism could as well be discussed with a Jew, a Mohammedan, or a Brahman. He knows very well that he can have a debate whenever he musters up courage to champion his own faith. After that he can have a debate on Theism too, if he likes; only he must not expect to dictate the conditions, which should be arranged through a joint-committee, if only to prevent friction between the disputants.
- W. E. GORDON.—Professor Alexander Bain wrote two monographs on James Mill and John Stuart Mill. In the latter work occurs a striking passage on Mill's eulogy of Jesus, which Dr. Bain did not share, and which he rather quizzed.
- A. E. GRAMME, who wrote the letter on "Bigotry in the Bank" in our last issue, should have signed himself A. E. Smith. He has used the former name for other purposes, but he prefers to be known in this connection by his proper name.
- W. P. MURRAY.—Thanks for the cutting from the *Morning Leader*. We had already seen by American papers that Czolgosz, the assassin of President McKinley, is an American by birth, and was educated in a Roman Catholic school at Detroit. By the way, the Catholic Church has always applauded assassination, when it was performed on the right persons. We intend to prove this in an article shortly.
- G. THOMSON.—Thanks for the cutting. Mr. Shaughnessy's letter in the *Glasgow Evening Times* on "Sabbath Observance" ought to do good.
- J. G. BARTRAM.—See paragraphs.
- R. GRANT.—Many of the late Charles Bradlaugh's writings are still in print, and can be obtained through the Freethought Publishing Company.
- A. W. HUTTY.—Much pleased to hear that your daughter, Jeannie Wren Hatty, has matriculated at the Durham College of Science, Newcastle, and has won the Corporation Exhibition, entitling her to two years' free tuition. The old order of female ignorance and suppression is passing away, and in time the old order of priestcraft and superstition will follow.
- IPSWICH HERETIC.—We welcome your good wishes, and are glad to hear that you have sold, through a local newsagent, two dozen copies of the new *Age of Reason*, subscribing 1s. 6d. per dozen yourself, and thus allowing him half profit on the sale price. It is to be hoped that many others will do their best to put this immortal work into wide circulation.
- W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your welcome cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Truthseeker (New York)—Boston Investigator—Torch of Reason—Two Worlds—Searchlight (Texas)—El Libre Pensamiento—Discontent—Public Opinion (New York)—Freidenker—Dumfries and Galloway Standard—Yorkshire Evening Post—La Raison—Crescent—Progressive Thinker (Chicago)—Tunbridge Wells Advertiser—Truth (Christchurch)—Lyttleton Times (Christchurch)—Morning Advertiser—Echo—Sydney Bulletin—The Age (Melbourne)—Beeston Times—Edinburgh Evening News.

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.

Personal.

IN accordance with my promise I now make a final statement with respect to my affairs. I shall not be able to complete it this week. Something will remain, but that will be dealt with next week.

Let me say, first of all, that I have taken the preliminary steps to applying for my discharge. When the hearing takes place, a few weeks hence, it will be seen whether any opposition is forthcoming. As far as I can see it could only come from Mr. Anderson. But he was not represented at my public examination, and it is hard to perceive what interest he can have in worrying me any further. Besides, my case is a very simple one, financially speaking; for my means are strictly limited, and there is no prospect of any immediate change for the better. Moreover, I have never concealed the fact that I feel under no particular obligation to exert or distress myself for Mr. Anderson's sake. He elected the game he would play, and he must abide by the result.

My other creditors, of course, are in a different category. I hold myself morally bound to pay them when I can. My discharge from bankruptcy will give me legal freedom. It will not relieve me from ethical obligations.

Courts and officials do not move for nothing. I had to pay thirty-nine shillings for the document I applied for, and which I wanted for the purposes of this statement. When I got it I found it was not what I wanted. It turned out to be a merely formal certificate of the number of my creditors. But that was all I could get, and I must therefore rely upon unofficial figures.

Four of my creditors may be easily disposed of. The receiving order was made against me on June 29. There were then due, in the usual way, a quarter's rent at my residence, a quarter's parochial rates, a quarter's gas, and a quarter's water-rate. These were all paid by my wife. Still, the routine has to be gone through, and four parties to whom nothing is owing will be formerly notified that they will have an opportunity of opposing my discharge. Of course I have to pay for these superfluous notifications. At which I can only exclaim, "Great is the law, and may its shadow never grow less."

Creditor number five's name need not be mentioned. He had to be included because I had to account for a sum I paid him. He is the gentleman who bought my Deferred Shares for £200, in order that I might be able to offer that amount to Mr. Anderson, as the full balance of the old advances he made to me, on condition that he fulfilled his pledge to take Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. The amount for which this gentleman stands as my creditor in the bankruptcy proceedings is only £18 10s.

Creditor number six is the Freethought Publishing Company. When my offer was refused by Mr. Anderson I used the £200 for various purposes. I dealt, for

instance, with five comparatively small creditors, who had invested money in my business many years previously. They were not rich men, like Mr. Anderson, and I thought they deserved my first consideration. I was also obliged to purchase five fully paid-up Shares in the Company, or I might have been disqualified as a Director. But that did not seem to me sufficient. I thought I ought to have a larger holding, so I bought a hundred more Shares and paid the amounts due on application and allotment—£37 10s. in all. This left me indebted to the Company to the amount of £62 10s. on my Shares. But I reckon this, and I suppose everybody else will reckon it, as a special debt, which may be eliminated from the normal statement of my affairs.

Creditor number seven is Mr. George Anderson. He has proved for the judgment of £200 he obtained against me. To this are added the costs in the action; something, I understand, over £20. These are taxed costs, and nothing like the bill I presume he will have to pay his solicitors. He also notifies that he has an action still pending for the balance of his full claim—namely, £367. But that balance of £167 simply represents interest, which it was monstrous for him to expect me to pay him, especially as I never undertook to do so. The sum of £200, therefore, represents the whole balance of the *principal*. Really it represents rather more. The actual amount on the debit and credit account, apart from interest, is about £185. But he obtained an interim judgment for £200, and that judgment stands.

Creditor number eight is a firm of paper merchants. I dealt with them from 1885, and had a running account with them until 1894, from which time I paid them cash for everything. Unfortunately, their account against me was a large one. It amounted to £525. Against this I paid them £360 in 1900. This left a balance of £165. But they also have run up a large extra bill for interest, etc., and I understand that they prove for nearly £350. Legally, I suppose, this is all right, though it seems rather odd in view of the fact that they retained my custom, and afterwards the custom of the Company. But I need not waste time in complaining of what I cannot help. Creditors are, generally speaking, a more fortunate class than debtors, and the law shows them a more friendly consideration. Besides, the Agnostic creditor has treated me so roughly that the Christian creditor might very well smile at my expostulation. All I am concerned to say, therefore, is this: that £165 represents the value still unpaid of all the goods I ever had from my paper merchants, and that this is the sum I hope to pay them some day. They are a wealthy firm, and will not feel the loss of the somewhat fantastic difference.

Really then—that is to say, substantially—I was £200+£165+£18 10s. behind; the total being £383 10s. It was a trifle to the fabulous sums of my indebtedness that were invented by malice and whispered around by scandal. The thousands turn out to be hundreds, and not very many at that. For thirty years I have been working for Freethought. For twenty-five years I have been editing and maintaining Freethought organs. For twenty years I have carried on the *Freethinker*. Now, if £383 10s. be divided by 30, the result is £12 16s. I have therefore dropped behind at the rate of £12 16s. a year. And considering what I have done, and the obligations I have assumed—because there was no one else to assume them—I am inclined to say (after Warren Hastings) that I am astonished at my moderation.

Creditor number nine was a secured creditor, and consequently not connected with my deficit. On this point I shall have something to say next week, when I shall also give the total of the subscriptions to the Fund for Mrs. Foote, who, by the way, is now the sole and absolute owner of what were once my furniture and my library. Whatever happens out-of-doors I can now go home with a light heart. And that is all I ever cared for. My one vulnerable spot has been dipped in the water of security, and (thanks to my friends) I can now laugh at all my enemies. They cannot hurt me *there*.

For the present I redeem the promise I made with respect to the old investments in my business, long before there was any idea of forming a Company.

When the fire occurred at my place of business, a few years after my imprisonment, I lost all the

money I had sunk in my stock of publications, amounting to hundreds of pounds. I was not insured, nor since then have I been able to effect an insurance. When I brought my stock, long afterwards, to the premises of Mr. C. A. Watts, in Johnson's-court, where the *Freethinker* was printed, I still found that the Fire Insurance Companies would have nothing to do with me. No reasons were assigned, but I believe they have a common objection to anyone who has ever been in prison. Anyhow, when Mr. Watts applied to insure my stock as goods under his care, the thing was carried through cheerfully. I mention this to give an idea of the disabilities under which a man in my position suffers. But to recur to the point. Having lost all in the fire, I had to begin afresh with borrowed capital. Many persons put money into my business, with the right to withdraw it at six months' notice. It has been hinted that none of them ever got their money back. This is a lie. The following is a list of investments that were repaid. It is not quite complete, because I lost some memoranda in the bag that was stolen from me in August, but it is near enough. I withhold names, having no right to publish them, and only give the first letter in each case:—

A.	£150	M.... ..	£20
A.	50	M.... ..	5
A.	5	N.... ..	100
B.	50	O.... ..	10
B.	20	P.	200
B.	10	P.	130
B.	5	P.	30
C.	10	P.	5
C.	10	R.... ..	10
C.	5	R.... ..	10
D.... ..	20	S.	20
D.... ..	5	S.	20
D.... ..	5	S.	10
F.	20	S.	10
F.	5	T.... ..	12
G.	50	T.... ..	10
G.	50	T.... ..	5
G.	50	U.... ..	12
G.	10	W.... ..	150
H.... ..	6	W.... ..	10
K.... ..	20	W.... ..	10
L.	20		

Here is a total, and that not quite complete, of £1,365. To that extent investors were satisfied, with respect to the principal; and of course a good deal was paid, according to contract, in the shape of interest. I hope, then, that I have heard the last of the villainous nonsense, which rogues invented and weak persons believed, as to the crowd who lost their money, and even their fortunes—yes, it was *fortunes* in some tales—by trusting me.

G. W. FOOTE.

(To be concluded.)

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE intended to reopen the Athenæum Hall himself this evening (Oct. 20). He finds it advisable, however, to give his voice a rest. He strained it somehow a little while ago, and he is still troubled with a slight hoarseness, which he wishes to drive away entirely. His place at the Athenæum Hall this evening, therefore, will be taken by Mr. C. Cohen, whose subject will be "Man's Chance of a Future Life." Mr. Foote will deliver two special lectures there on the following Sunday evenings—October 27 and November 3, of which a full announcement will be made next week.

Mr. Foote paid a successful visit to Hull on Sunday, in spite of the unfavorable circumstances that were referred to in last week's *Freethinker*, and the Branch is very well satisfied with the day's work. The audiences in the Empire Theatre were good, and the collections were gratifying. The evening audience was large, and particularly appreciative and enthusiastic. Questions were asked, and discussion took place, at the end of each lecture. It was rather trying to the lecturer, thrice in one day, but it added to the interest of the meetings. We understand that the Hull Branch will arrange for other lecturers to follow Mr. Foote as soon as possible.

Mr. C. Cohen opened the new season's Sunday evening lectures at the Secular Hall, Leicester. He had the best audience that has greeted him there, his lecture was highly

appreciated, and was followed by an interesting discussion. Mr. Sidney A. Gimson presided.

Mr. Charles Watts had a capital and enthusiastic audience at Camberwell last Sunday evening, when he delivered the opening lecture of the winter season. Friends were present from the North and East of London. Mr. Victor Roger presided, and Mr. Watts was in his best form.

Miss Vance is happily improving, but she is still in quarantine. By the time this week's *Freethinker* is in the readers' hands she will have removed to the country, in order to regain strength after her trying illness. She will return to her duties when she is really fit for them, not before. It is bad policy to kill a willing worker.

Under the heading of "Some Sensible Remarks on Prayer," the New York *Truthseeker* reproduces Mr. Foote's article on "Praying for President McKinley" from our columns. We sometimes "lift" a bit—of course with acknowledgment—from our esteemed American contemporary.

George Macdonald, the humorist of the New York *Truthseeker*, who contributes "Observations" occasionally—too occasionally—writes the following paragraph on the subject of Mr. Foote's bankruptcy: "A publication that reached me a while ago from England contained an 'exposure' of G. W. Foote, President of the National Secular Society. The publication said that Mr. Foote pocketed the money contributed to the Secular Society, and was thereby enabled to live in luxury and hire 'parlor maids.' Later advices, coming by way of Mr. Foote's paper, the *Freethinker*, are to the effect that he has been forced into bankruptcy, and had to appeal to his friends, on behalf of Mrs. Foote, to get funds enough to save his furniture. I would rather it had been true that he could afford the 'parlor maids.'"

"Mr. Foote," George Macdonald continues, "in a recent issue of his paper suggested that American Liberals sink their differences and attack more strenuously the common foe. In the same number he promises the readers of his next a lovely roast of George Anderson, the wealthy Rationalist, who finances the opposition to Mr. Foote."

On the face of it this looks like a hit, a palpable hit. But is it so when you look deeper? We said nothing against Mr. Anderson during all the time that he was worrying us. It was only when he forced us into the Bankruptcy Court that we spoke out; that is, when silence was no longer possible. Similarly, Eugene Macdonald is quite justified in defending himself against the personal attacks of C. C. Moore, of the *Blue Grass Blade*, and his friend Dr. Wilson. But it should be remembered that this acute quarrel was preceded by years of "chipping" between the two parties. That was the great mistake. For our part, we have always tried to avoid internecine quarrelling in the *Freethinker*. We let other Freethought journals and editors here alone—whether they let us alone or not. And we are satisfied that this is the only sound and safe policy.

The Newcastle Branch is having a "drawing" for the late Peter Weston's watch, which will doubtless be treasured by the winner. The proceeds go to the Branch funds. Ticket-holders are advised that all unsold tickets should be returned not later than Friday, October 25.

The Newcastle Rationalist Debating Society meets at Lockhart's Cocoa Rooms, Clayton-street, every Thursday evening at 7.30. The local Freethinkers would do well to drop in. On October 24 a debate on "Positivism" is to be opened by Mr. J. T. Looney, who, we understand, is to succeed Mr. Malcolm Quin as minister of the Church of Humanity.

Mr. G. L. Mackenzie, whose name is well known to our readers, takes the opportunity now and then of writing a brief, pointed, and telling letter to the newspapers. The one in the London *Echo* on "The Coronation Oath" was excellent. Such letters are of great service to the Freethought cause. They carry its ideas into fresh circles of readers.

Robert Burns, poet and Freethinker, died in poverty and distress. It was death that saved him from arrest for debt. But what a change in a century! In one single week recently 45,100 tickets of admission were sold to the famous Burns cottage, where he was born, and the adjoining monument on the banks of Doon. So great, indeed, is the resort of pilgrims to this shrine that the Ayr Town Council has decided to construct an electric tram-line to it—a distance of two miles. We may add that edition after edition of Burns issues from the press in England as well as in Scotland.

An admirable old gentleman, named Thomas S. Pierce, died last week in Middleborough, Mass., leaving the town 600,000 dollars richer by his will. He was a man without religion, and when someone asked him if he had made his

peace with God his reply was: "I will do so when I meet him. I deal with no middlemen."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The *West-End* publishes a strong article by Mr. A. G. Hales, the war correspondent, on "The Hall of Heroes," at Berlin. After describing a Crusader's sword, Mr. Hales proceeds as follows:—"When I look at that murderous bit of steel and picture it in the hands of a brawny apostle, half-Viking, half-fanatic, I don't wonder at the quaint assertion of the old-time chronicler who states that the Abbot Jungfrausin, being very zealous, made many converts by the help of sword and cross. When you come to think of it calmly you don't wonder at the spread of the Christian religion. When a man has only a choice between becoming a convert or a corpse he is apt to choose conversion. I am not acquainted with any particular brand of religion that I would decline on the same terms."

The Fund for Mrs. Foote.

William J. Morley, 10s.; Edwin Painter, £5; A. C. Brown, 1s.; Mr. Dixon, 5s.; B. Attra, 5s.; W. Smithyman, 10s.; Mr. Hyman, 1s. 6d.; Mrs. Pope, 5s.; Miss Rayner, 1s.; J. W. Lawrence, £1; Stamps, 1s.; Ipswich Heretic, 5s.

English as She is Sung in Churches.

("Hymns Ancient and Modern," No. 59.)

OAK-UM mau ye fay-ayth-fool
Joy-fool land try-yum-fent,
Oak-um ye, oak-u-um ye to Beth-lea-yum;
Com mand bee-yold dim,
Bawn the King of vain gills;
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa daw-aw ri-im,
Cry sthe Lawd.

Gaw-awd dov Gaw-awd,
Lie-ie-yite of lie-yite,
Lo we er-baw-waws not the virgin zwoom;
Ver-ree-ye Gawd bee
Gaw ten not cre-yay-yay-tid;
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa daw-aw ri-im,
Cry sthe Lawd.

Sing choir zov vain jills,
Sing in eggs-zuel-tay-shun,
Sing all ye sit-tea-zun zov vev'n ner-buv;
"Glaw-ree to Gaw-awd
Ee-eee-in the yi-yi-yest;"
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa daw-aw ri-im,
Cry sthe Lawd.

Yay Law dwee gree-eat Thee,
Bawn this sap-pee maw nin;
Gee zoo to thee-ye-ye be glaw-ree giv'n;
Wer dov the Fah-thurr,
Now win flesh shup pee-er-ring;
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa door rim,
Oak-um let tussa daw-aw ri im,
Cry sthe Lawd.

ESS JAY BEE.

Shaken Faith.

A religious old darkey had his faith badly shaken not long ago. He is sexton for a white church in a Fayette county town, and one afternoon, as he was in front sweeping the pavement, a strong wind arose, tearing a piece of the cornice off and taking a few bricks out of the wall. Realising that a good run was better than a bad stand, the old man sought shelter in the station-house on the opposite side of the street.

Several minutes later a member of the church of which Uncle Isham is sexton came by, and, noticing him in his retreat, remarked that he thought the station-house a strange place for a man of faith to seek shelter in a storm when a house of worship was near.

"Dat's so; but what's a man gwine ter do when de Lord begins to frow bricks at 'im?"

Echoes from Everywhere.

FROM A LIBERAL REVIEW.

THERE is a curious article by Francis Grierson in the *Westminster Review*, with the strange title, "The Agnostic Agony." It will interest *Freethinker* readers to know, on the author's authority, that "an avowed sceptic is never welcome in any company of people." "The reason is obvious," declares the writer, and then (by way of illustrating its obviousness) he proceeds to tell us what the reason is. An Agnostic, we are informed, "can sympathise with no one's sentiments." Obvious, is it not?

Here are some more gems of Griersonian sagacity: "As soon as we say we don't know, we assume a negative attitude." "The man who hopes and expects is far more interesting than the man who believes nothing, expects nothing." "Every thinker who has accomplished anything excellent has begun by believing in something." "There came a day when Colonel Ingersoll found himself too old, too fixed in his ideas, to take any interest in the new order of things." Altogether it is an astonishingly stupid article for the *Westminster Review*. When the statements are not solemnly banal, they are wildly inaccurate. The remark about Ingersoll is a downright—well, I will call it a religious truth.

FROM THE FRONT.

In some recent war correspondence Lord Kitchener appears in the startling rôle of theologian. The Boer leaders having made some reference to the Deity, he retorts with the text: "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

This, from the head of an invading army of some 250,000 soldiers, is a little more than rich. The South African outlook must, indeed, be serious when he of "the iron hand" tries to subjugate the enemy with Scripture texts. It only remains for Kitchener to shave off his moustache, don a surplice, and convoke his field-officers to a prayer-meeting.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

FROM THE CITY OF ANCIENT EMPIRE.

Freethought and Socialism (the twin sisters of the Continent) are well represented in Italy by *l'Asino*, a Roman journal written in crisp *Toscano*, and illustrated as only Italians can illustrate. The ironic title, "The Donkey," typifies the useful, patient, and ever-beaten people of the Peninsula—a people rich in intellectual and artistic genius, but oppressed on the one hand by a grasping priesthood, and on the other by the incubus of militarism.

Here, as everywhere, it is the *woman* that supports the priest. The men of Italy are extremely logical, though wanting in education. Freethought is quite common among them; but they are very easy-going, they like domestic concord, and detest the thought of difference with *la moglie*. The credulity of the women, and the *dolce far niente* of their husbands—such is the basis of Italian clericalism.

FROM A CHRISTIAN SOCIALIST.

In a recent number of the *Clarion*, a contributor to the "Round Table" opines that, "face to face with Christ, we grow ashamed of our meanness and selfishness, and reach after nobleness and truth."

A good many of us "reach after" things. According to some foreign journals, it is a trait of the Anglo-Saxon nature. This gentleman is reaching after nobleness and truth, and he is reaching towards Jesus! He might with advantage "reach after" the saving grace of common sense. He is not the only slave to religious prejudice who talks contemptuously of "form and ritual, priestly orders and sacerdotal claims," while retaining the essence of them all. In the words of the Jewish visionary he so greatly admires: *Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.*

E. R. WOODWARD.

The Pope does not view favorably the migration of French monks and nuns to Rome. There are enough in the Eternal City already to worry and vex him. He would rather they went to England, or even Spain. The farther off the better.

Marriage and Divorce.

[So much malicious absurdity is circulated amongst Christians as to the relation of Freethought to marriage, that we think it advisable to reproduce in the *Freethinker* the late Colonel Ingersoll's essay on *Marriage and Divorce*, which originally appeared in the *North American Review* in December, 1889. The questions answered by Ingersoll were framed by the editor of that magazine.]

Question (1). Do you believe in the principle of divorce under any circumstances?

THE world for the most part is ruled by the tomb, and the living are tyrannised over by the dead. Old ideas, long after the conditions under which they were produced have passed away, often persist in surviving. Many are disposed to worship the ancient—to follow the old paths, without inquiring where they lead, and without knowing exactly where they wish to go themselves.

Opinions on the subject of divorce have been for the most part inherited from the early Christians. They have come down to us through theological and priestly channels. The early Christians believed that the world was about to be destroyed, or that it was to be purified by fire; that all the wicked were to perish, and that the good were to be caught up in the air to meet their Lord—to remain there, in all probability, until the earth was prepared as a habitation for the blessed. With this thought or belief in their minds, the things of this world were of comparatively no importance. The man who built larger barns in which to store his grain was regarded as a foolish farmer, who had forgotten, in his greed for gain, the value of his own soul. They regarded prosperous people as the children of Mammon, and the unfortunate, the wretched, and diseased as the favorites of God. They discouraged all worldly pursuits, except the soliciting of alms. There was no time to marry or to be given in marriage; no time to build homes and have families. All their thoughts were centred upon the heaven they expected to inherit. Business, love, all secular things, fell into disrepute.

Nothing is said in the Testament about the families of the Apostles; nothing of family life, of the sacredness of home; nothing about the necessity of education, the improvement and development of the mind. These things were forgotten, for the reason that nothing, in the presence of the expected event, was considered of any importance, except to be ready when the Son of Man should come. Such was the feeling, that rewards were offered by Christ himself to those who would desert their wives and children. Human love was spoken of with contempt. "Let the dead bury their dead. What is that to thee? Follow thou me." They not only believed these things, but acted in accordance with them; and, as a consequence, all the relations of life were denied or avoided, and their obligations disregarded. Marriage was discouraged. It was regarded as only one degree above open and unbridled vice, and was allowed only in consideration of human weakness. It was thought far better not to marry—that it was something grander for a man to love God than to love woman. The exceedingly godly, the really spiritual, believed in celibacy, and held the opposite sex in a kind of pious abhorrence. And yet, with that inconsistency so characteristic of theologians, marriage was held to be a sacrament. The priest said to the man who married: "Remember that you are caught for life. This door opens but once." Before this den of matrimony the tracks are all one way. This was in the nature of a punishment for having married. The theologian felt that the contract of marriage, if not contrary to God's command, was at least contrary to his advice, and that the married ought to suffer in some way, as a matter of justice. The fact that there could be no divorce, that a mistake could not be corrected, was held up as a warning. At every wedding-feast this skeleton stretched its fleshless finger towards bride and groom.

Nearly all intelligent people have given up the idea that the world is about to come to an end. They do not now believe that prosperity is a certain sign of wickedness, or that poverty and wretchedness are sure certificates of virtue. They are hardly convinced that Dives should have been sent to hell simply for being rich, or that Lazarus was entitled to eternal joy on

account of his poverty. We now know that prosperous people may be good, and that unfortunate people may be bad. We have reached the conclusion that the practice of virtue tends in the direction of prosperity, and that a violation of the conditions of well-being brings, with absolute certainty, wretchedness and misfortune.

There was a time when it was believed that the sin of an individual was visited upon the tribe, the community, or the nation to which he belonged. It was then thought that if a man or woman had made a vow to God, and had failed to keep the vow, God might punish the entire community; therefore it was the business of the community to see to it that the vow was kept. That idea has been abandoned. As we progress, the rights of the individual are perceived, and we are now beginning dimly to discern that there are no rights higher than the rights of the individual. There was a time when nearly all believed in the reforming power of punishment—in the beneficence of brute force. But the world is changing. It was at one time thought that the Inquisition was the savior of society; that the persecution of the philosopher was requisite to the preservation of the State, and that, no matter what happened, the State should be preserved. We have now more light. And standing upon this luminous point that we call the present, let me answer your questions.

Marriage is the most important, the most sacred, contract that human beings can make. No matter whether we call it a contract or a sacrament, or both, it remains precisely the same. And no matter whether this contract is entered into in the presence of magistrate or priest, it is exactly the same. A true marriage is a natural concord and agreement of souls, a harmony in which discord is not even imagined; it is a mingling so perfect that only one seems to exist; all other considerations are lost; the present seems to be eternal. In this supreme moment there is no shadow—or the shadow is as luminous as light. And when two beings thus love, thus unite, this is the true marriage of soul and soul. That which is said before the altar, or minister, or magistrate, or in the presence of witnesses, is only the outward evidence of that which has already happened within; it simply testifies to a union that has already taken place—to the uniting of two mornings that hope to reach the night together. Each has found the ideal; the man has found the one woman of all the world—the impersonation of affection, purity, passion, love, beauty, and grace; and the woman has found the one man of all the world, her ideal, and all that she knows of romance, of art, courage, heroism, honesty, is realised in him. The idea of contract is lost. Duty and obligation are instantly changed into desire and joy, and two lives, like uniting streams, flow on as one. Nothing can add to the sacredness of this marriage, to the obligation and duty of each to each. There is nothing in the ceremony except the desire on the part of the man and woman that the whole world should know that they are really married, and that their souls have been united.

Every marriage, for a thousand reasons, should be public, should be recorded, should be known; but, above all, to the end that the purity of the union should appear. These ceremonies are not only for the good and for the protection of the married, but also for the protection of their children, and of society as well. But, after all, the marriage remains a contract of the highest possible character—a contract in which each gives and receives a heart.

The question then arises, Should this marriage, under any circumstances, be dissolved? It is easy to understand the position taken by the various churches; but back of theological opinions is the question of contract.

In this contract of marriage the man agrees to protect and cherish his wife. Suppose that he refuses to protect; that he abuses, assaults, and tramples upon the woman he wed. What is her redress? Is she under any obligation to him? He has violated the contract. He has failed to protect, and, in addition, he has assaulted her like a wild beast? Is she under any obligation to him? Is she bound by the contract he has broken? If so, what is the consideration for this obligation? Must she live with him for his sake? or, if she leaves him to preserve her life, must she remain his wife for his sake? No intelligent man will answer these questions in the affirmative.

If, then, she is not bound to remain his wife for the husband's sake, is she bound to remain his wife because the marriage was a sacrament? Is there any obligation on the part of the wife to remain with a brutal husband for the sake of God? Can her conduct affect in any way the happiness of an infinite being? Is it possible for a human being to increase or diminish the well-being of the Infinite?

(To be continued.)

Missionary Work in the Mountains.

A BALTIMORE young lady, just back from a vacation, tells this one:—

Way back in the mountains of West Virginia a Presbyterian minister some time ago fell in with some people who seemed to be well fitted for the missionary efforts on which he was bent. He had been riding nearly all day, and late in the afternoon came upon a cabin set in the midst of woodland. Near the door was a spare, straight-haired woman, who gazed at him curiously. The minister spoke to her courteously and made some inquiries regarding the neighborhood. Her husband was a hunter, the woman said.

"And is he a god-fearing man?" asked the preacher.

"I reckon so," came the slow reply, "'cause he always takes his gun with him."

The visitor hastily changed the subject and inquired if there were any Presbyterians in the neighborhood.

"I dunno," said the woman, simply; "but there's a lot of skins hanging up in the cabin; you can look at 'em and see if you can find any."

A Sunday-school organised in the same district had old men and young lads in the same class. Wishing to test the knowledge of her scholars, the teacher began by asking each one who made him. An old man at the end of the bench didn't know, the next man didn't, and no one did until a small boy declared he knew, and said "God."

"Well," cried the old fellow just appealed to, "'taint been so very long since he was made."

—*Baltimore Sun.*

Ingersoll.

I remember thee

When the monarch of day is dying
Away in the west o'er the golden sea,
With the night-wind sighing.

Soft through the gloom
Each driven fleece shakes down her crimson posies,
Strewing love's dappled billows o'er his tomb,
Like fallen roses.

When 'gainst his grave
The moon's pale monument tells of his heart of fire,
*Ah! could I then forget, o'er death's deep wave,
Thy heart's majestic pyre?*

GEORGE WOODWARD.

Disheartening.

"O, sir," said a poor woman to a Scotch minister, who was by no means a popular preacher, "well do I like the day when you give us the sermon."

"Indeed," said the minister, flushing with pleasure, "I wish there were more like you, my good woman; it is seldom I hear such words from anyone."

"Maybe their hearing's stronger than mine, sir," said the woman, promptly; "but when you preach I can always get a good seat."

Cause for Lightning.

An old colored preacher in the rural district accounted for lightning in this way: "Ever' time Satan looks down en sees de Lawd's work gwine on, fire flashes fum his eyes. Dat's de lightning. En w'en he fail ter hit a church wid it, he lays back en hollers. Dat's de thunder." "But, passon," said an old deacon, "whar is Satan in de wintertime? We don't have no lightnin' den." The preacher studied a minute, and then said: "Well, hit may be, Br'er Williams, dat hell's froze over den!"—*Atlanta Constitution.*

The Chinese cook, realising the importance of the occasion, asked his mistress if she did not think it would be nice to have a motto to ornament the frosted top of the cake. She smilingly consented. When the big cake appeared she was amazed at the result. The cook was then regularly attending a mission Sunday-school; and there he had found his motto, "Prepare to Meet Thy God"!—*Cleveland Leader.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

(Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday, and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not set on post card.)

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Man's Chance of a Future Life."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7.30, H. Snell, "Shakespeare's Moral Characters—Marcus Brutus." With readings.

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Stanton Coit, "Jesus's Claim to be th: Messiah."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Stanton Coit, "The Just and the Unjust."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, Wm. Sanders, "Industry and Progress."

EAST LONDON BRANCH (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney, E.): 7, W. J. Ramsey.

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Hyde Park): Lectures every Thursday at 7.30 p.m.; Sundays at 11.30 a.m. October 20, at 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Shakespeare the Sceptic."

RIDLEY-ROAD: 11.30, Debate between Messrs. Moss and Taylor.

COUNTRY.

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall): 3.45, J. H. Gilliland.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, H. Thompson, "A Peep into my Garden Wild." Illustrated with limelight views.

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 17 Little Horton-lane): H. Percy Ward—3, "Socialism and Radicalism"; 7, "Noah's Menagerie; or, God's Water Cure."

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class—Open discussion, "International Peace Prospects"; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, "Religion: its Origin, Course, and Destiny."

HUDDERSFIELD (Friendly and Trades Societies Club, Room No. 5, Northumberland-street): R. Law, F.G.S.—3, "An Age of Ice in Great Britain"; 6.30, "My Journey to the Rocky Mountains and Visit to the Camps of the Black Feet Indians."

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, Room No. 2): 7, Gustave Smith, "What Must we do to be Saved?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): 6.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Vengeance."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond, "The Fallacy of the God Idea."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, Impromptu Social.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Ernest Evans—3, "The Distribution of Animals and Plants over the Globe"; 7, "Volcanoes: Ancient and Modern." With lantern illustrations. Tea at 5.

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