

Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

The Perplexities of Religion.

CHRISTIAN literature represents rather a curious phase of the religious mind. It affords a striking proof that in the very thing where certainty should obtain the greatest perplexity is to be found. From a theological standpoint, religion should be free from all insurmountable difficulties, whereas the fact is that no other subject is involved in so much mystery and so many doubtful issues. Not only is it hard to decide which out of the many existing religions is the true one, but when one is selected it is almost impossible to understand its nature, and why it has been differentiated from all the others. Apart from the many religions which are distinct from Christianity, it is not easy to see the superiority of the one professed by the "National" Church over that of Dissent. Neither are the so-called heretical Churches entirely free from the logical difficulties which belong to those termed "orthodox." As a disbeliever in all supposed supernatural religions, it appears to me next to impossible to harmonise the teachings of any of them with the intellectual requirements of the twentieth century. A strong confirmation of this opinion has just been furnished by the Rev. J. Brierley, one of the ablest exponents of "heterodox" Christianity, and by the Rev. F. C. Spurr, the orthodox exponent of the Baptist Union. The former in an article in the *Christian World* of October 10, and the latter in a sermon fully reported in the *Christian World Pulpit* of October 9, deal with the difficulties of religion. As both these gentlemen are representatives of Christianity, it may be useful to notice what they urge in defence of their respective views.

However much they may differ as to certain aspects of religion, each exponent admits its perplexing features. The Rev. J. B. Brierley commences his article, "The Two Religions," thus:—

"The present religious outlook, both in our own and other countries, is singularly confusing, and demands far more than a surface examination to arrive at any safe conclusions upon it. There are certain aspects which lend themselves easily to pessimism. The English Establishment, for instance, is confronted with some very ugly statistics. One of its organs, discussing the continuous decline in the number of candidates for orders, declares that the Church, so far as it is represented by its clergy, is bleeding to death, and that if this goes on a point will be reached when there will be no candidates at all. A daily paper has been discussing the failure of Sunday-schools. And there is, undoubtedly, in many quarters, a shrinkage of church attendance. But that is not all. What with some is a still more ominous symptom is the apparent credal collapse. The head of an American divinity college is recently quoted as saying: 'It is not simply that the old systems are going—they are gone.'"

Evidently the writer of the above recognises the decline of religious belief, and he is honest enough to acknowledge it. But he does not seem to be impressed with the fact that this confusion as to religious belief and the "shrinkage of church attendance" are potent arguments against the boasted influence of his religion; as, indeed, is the admission that "It is not simply that the old systems are going—they are gone," which is a refutation of the repeated assertion of the "unbroken continuity of the Christian religion." As was pointed out in my article last week, a religion that is constantly changing could not have been perfect at its inception; and a faith that is incapable of meeting the intellectual requirements of to-day is nothing more than the outcome of the

human mind, subject to natural mutations and improvements made through the intelligence of man. There is no escape from the perplexity in which the believer in the "divine origin and nature of Christianity" is placed. If his religion came from a God of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, it should be the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Christianity has been the very opposite of this, and, therefore, it has no claim upon us, except so far as the good it contains, like the good in all systems, may be useful in daily life.

It is true Mr. Brierley endeavors to meet the difficulty by contending for the existence of two religions, the one fixed and the other free; but the attempt is made by the sacrifice of reason to theological exigency. By fixed religion he means that which is "inherited," "always of a certain age." "It creates a dislike of change." In plain language, this signifies the traditional religion of the earlier centuries, which admits of no innovation or modern interference. The rev. gentleman adds: "Living in the same mind and heart with the religion that is fixed is the religion that is free. Bound together by an unbreakable tie, they have to make what they can of each other. It is impossible for each to be without the other." To say the least, this is a curious position to take. Why limit the religions to two out of the many which exist? Further, which of the two is the correct one? Moreover, how can they be "bound together by an unbreakable tie"? No religion can be "fixed" and "free" at the same time. Besides, the word "free" has no consistent relationship to the Christian religion, inasmuch as its teachings compel its followers to adhere to certain forms of thought. If a genuine Christian could be found, he would be forced to believe that he was "a fallen creature," destitute of any power of self-redemption, and that his salvation could be obtained only through reliance upon the efficacy of the alleged sacrifice of Christ. The Christian religion is very emphatic in its statement that the only way to escape the consequences of sin is through belief in Jesus. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12).

While it may be admitted that the Rev. J. Brierley's effort to reconcile the dead past with the living present is exceedingly ingenious, it appears to the present writer a futile essay to perform an impossible task. It has yet to be shown that any of the so-called supernatural religions possess the intellectual status and mundane requirements necessary to satisfy the reasonable demands of the present critical age. Mr. Brierley's repeated endeavors to rescue religion from its traditional errors is a regrettable instance of the prostration of a keen intellect to the influence of an effete theology.

The Rev. F. C. Spurr's sermon was on "The Easy Way to Certainty in Religion." It is a fair sample of the orthodox absurdity that is being taught to the thoughtless masses who attend churches and chapels. He informs us that, among those who heard Christ preach, and who witnessed the "signs" which he "wrought," "by far the greatest number remained in a state of indecision concerning him." It is evident, therefore, that neither his words nor his deeds had a very powerful influence over those who heard what he said and beheld what he did. This may explain, perhaps, to some extent, why his reported sayings and doings have now such a limited effect upon the majority of his followers. The religion that the rev. gentleman refers to is, of course, Christianity, which, he says, "as a system, is invaded with many difficulties and mysteries.

.....There are difficulties about God, about the fate of some men, about the rapport between faith and science, which may, during our entire earthly career, remain unsolved. Or it may be, as our minds and hearts expand, that what we regard as at present inscrutable will yet become luminous and harmonious." If this be so, do not this "may" and "may be" destroy the theory of certainty? The more important question, however, is, How are these difficulties to be met? Secularists would say, By an appeal to reason and to intellectual investigation. The rev. gentleman says no, for he alleges: "While intellect is a grand part of the life of man, it is inferior to the heart, which governs us in all the highest matters. And religion is *par excellence* an affair of the heart." This is placing emotion higher than reason, which Christians generally do. Of course, emotion ought not to be ignored, but it should always be under the control of reason, or fanaticism will be the result.

And this is just what has happened with Mr. Spurr. His sermon is a fanatical exposition of emotional orthodoxy, and a depreciation of philosophical and scientific investigation. To him, the philosopher who studies intellectually the "problems of atmosphere or food" is inferior to the farmer's daughter who never troubles her head about any of these scientific problems, but who eats, drinks, sleeps, takes plenty of out-door exercise, and becomes the *beau-ideal* of a perfectly healthy person. Now, if the rev. gentleman exercised his reason more, and yielded to his emotions less, he would see that "the farmer's daughter" was adopting the scientific principle, and not following the religious instruction as given in the sixth chapter of Matthew. He says "science without experience is poor consolation." But is not science based upon experience? When he talks reasonably he admits this, for he truly says: "Experience always comes first, and science follows in its train. What is science but arranged facts and experiences?" He tells us God "wants us." If so, why does he not incline us to go to him? He also says "self-redemption is an impossibility, an absurdity." If this be true, we are powerless; and, should we not be redeemed, the fault will not be ours.

Such are some of the perplexities of the Christian religion, and they must, so long as they exist, prevent its acceptance by persons whose minds are not clouded with a crude and delusive theology.

CHARLES WATTS.

The Archbishop and his God.

THE appeal of the Archbishop of York for a Day of Humiliation, because, apparently, the British generals cannot match the Boers in military ability, is one of the funniest things of all the funny things which have set off the grim horrors of the South African war. I hope I may be pardoned for recalling a memory. Early in September, 1899, there was a Cabinet Council held at the Foreign Office, and, having occasion to go to Victoria Station, I passed the corner of Downing-street. As I heard the Ministers were coming out I waited in the crowd. This, it may be mentioned, was more than a month before the Boers issued that "insolent" ultimatum which rendered war "inevitable." All the same, the talk of that London crowd, like the talk in the newspapers, was all about the war "against the Transvaal." The crowd were discussing how many weeks it would take to get to Pretoria, and as one can feel the effect of a mental atmosphere, that atmosphere gave one the feeling that the Boers were fools to court destruction. When the Cabinet was over, Mr. Balfour, amongst others, came forth and stepped into a hansom, smoking a cigarette and attired in holiday dress, and the crowd cheered enthusiastically, while the idea of the whole affair was as of men who had only to press a button and, lo, a little nation thousands of miles away disappeared. "Sweep out the vermin once for all" was a sample of the expressions which reached my ears from gentlemen who were terribly shocked a month or so later when the Boers issued their emphatic complaint—for that is really what the ultimatum was—against the British, for, bless them, only moving about troops in their own territory, in the most guileless way

possible, never dreaming of attacking the Boers at all. However that may be, in September, 1899, the question really in the mind of that crowd was: "Shall we spare the Boers or not?"

And now, after two years of military and moral disaster unknown in the annals of England for a century, an English Archbishop comes along and proposes to pray to God to enable the British to do what 250,000 men and £200,000,000 have failed to accomplish. Verily the surest sign of intellectual and moral decay in man or nation is the loss of the sense of humor—the sense which enables us to get at least sufficiently outside ourselves to see when we are utterly ridiculous; for that is the plight of his Grace of York, who, in that respect at least, typifies a very large proportion of his countrymen.

Let it be noted that Dr. Maclagan questions neither the justice of the war, the policy of "seeing it through"—or "muddling through," or whatever it is; nor does he object to military measures. "Neither," he says, "need we doubt the justice of our cause, nor the beneficial results which our victory would bring even to the very people with whom we are now at war." So that the praying is not to be a substitute for the strategy which is always "drawing a cordon" round somebody, only to find he is somewhere else—though, to be sure, its results could scarcely be less appreciable. The Archbishop only thinks that, in the multitude of critics, like Mr. Herbert Gladstone, who are assailing poor Mr. Brodrick, and demanding that "something should be done"—though they themselves don't know what—the Archbishop thinks he might as well come in with a volley of prayers, and probably considers they would be as useful as the Yeomen who cannot ride or shoot. Mr. Brodrick should next send out a troop of bishops and archbishops. Of course, they could stay well in the rear; and in cases of great emergency, when things got very bad, they could be sent to trick bicycles out of Boers, and ride for reinforcements. When things settled down again they could resume the praying operations, which, as the Archbishop tells us, need not interfere with the military operations.

Mr. William Watson, whose verses are conspicuous alike for their form and their feeling, and who, unlike so many of his brother poets, prefers still to chant of humanity rather than brute force, writes a letter to the *Daily News* on the Archbishop's outburst, which strikingly exposes its absurdity. "His Grace," says Mr. Watson, "while postulating the justice of our cause, and, by implication, the injustice of the enemy's cause, attributes the relatively high measure of success which has attended the military operations of the Boers to their superior diligence in the practice of prayer. Is, then, the Archbishop's God a God who can be won over to either side by the persistent petitions of its representatives, independently of the rights and wrongs of the matter at issue? Is it all a question of gaining the Divine ear? A sort of backstairs influence with heaven? The unjust judge of the parable was at last wearied into reluctant equity by the intolerable perseverance of the importunate widow; but, apparently, the God of the Archbishop is a Judge who can be importuned into injustice by the like pertinacity. This opens up a vista, one may say. It hints at the unexhausted possibilities of prayer in a way which is reassuring and alarming in about equal degrees."

Judging by analogy, the outlook in this case is rather alarming. For if it comes to a praying contest, the Boers are as likely to out-manœuvre the British in that respect as in the military contest. And the Boers, to judge from accounts, are no novices either at the praying game. In fact, the Archbishop of York has largely been moved to propose this Day of Humiliation by observing the exploits of the Boers in the same direction. Indeed, there is a horrible suggestion of cold-blooded analysis about the Archbishop. He observes the praying of the Boers and marks the military results, and proceeds virtually to argue that similar results might be expected to follow his own people's prayers. The Day of Humiliation is to be, in fact, a political speculation. When, some years ago, the late Professor Tyndall proposed to test the efficacy of prayer, in a truly scientific manner, by means of experiments in London hospitals, the suggestion was scouted as blasphemous. Tyndall's suggestion was to have the patients

in a given ward prayed for, and then to observe whether the percentage of recoveries was higher in that ward than in the others. The clergy were aghast.

We should observe God's ways, to be sure; but the observation should not be so close or accurate as that. But now, as is frequently the case, the professed Godite is more "blasphemous" than the man of science; and, whilst Tyndall only proposed the praying experiment on the recovery of the sick, the saintly Archbishop of York proposes to see whether, by judiciously-directed appeals to God, he may not be gratified by greater slaughter of the brave men who are defending the independence of their country with a dogged heroism that has few parallels in history. There is at present a death-rate of something over four hundred per thousand per annum amongst the children in the concentration-camps. Who knows but, if the Day of Humiliation be successful, this figure may be raised until the little children are absolutely exterminated? To this level has official Godism come in England in the first year of the twentieth century.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Rationalism and Social Reform.

ONE of the aims of a rational Secular propaganda is the destruction of all forms of supernaturalism. This is one of its objects, not because there is any mental satisfaction in the mere act of destroying someone's cherished beliefs, nor because there is any personal mental gratification in proving that the hundred and one tales of supernaturalism—particularly Christian supernaturalism—are unreasonable. A man must be queerly constituted who finds any pleasure in proving that the fable of the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, of Noah's flood, of Jonah and his whale, or of the virgin birth of Jesus, is a fable. Intrinsicly, such stories are absurd; and whatever importance the Freethinker attaches to their removal is not at all due to any sense of their inherent value. The real reason for seeking their removal is that they stand in the way of a higher and more useful social life, and the work of the Freethinker no more ends with the destruction of theology than the labor and life of a chicken end with the breaking of the shell.

Our ultimate aims are of a social nature. We look round and find men and women everywhere devoting time, energy, and money to the service of supernaturalism. We find theology poisoning the life of the race by raising artificial prejudices, hatreds, and divisions between people of different countries and of the same country. We find it obstructing useful legislation, stunting education, and diverting attention from the permanent and vital issues of life; we find it acting as a spasm in the heart, and a cramp in the intellect; we find that as it is now, so it always has been; and we assert that one important step towards opening the eyes of humanity to its real position, and engaging its energies in its legitimate work, is the complete and final destruction of all supernaturalism.

We fight supernaturalism, therefore, because we desire a saner and better social state than at present exists. But at this stage we are met with a question and an objection. "Why," it is asked, "if you profess to regard theology with so much disdain, and if your object is a social one purely—why do you not leave theology severely alone; set about your work of social regeneration direct, and leave theology to sink or swim, as the denizens of that better social state may determine?" To this the answer is two-fold. First, the removal of an obstacle in the way of a desirable development is as much a part of the general process of growth as the actual work of reconstruction; and, secondly, an essential pre-requisite to all social development is the diffusion of sound knowledge and the cultivation of a well-balanced mind. Revolutions by political machinery are good—on paper, but the revolution that is not prepared for by the diffusion of knowledge, and supported by an educated intelligence, is apt to miss fire. Indeed, in this way revolution loses its anarchical character, and becomes evolution.

I dwell upon this point for the reason that Lord Rosebery's recent speech at Birmingham, while not

avowedly in the interests of militant Freethought, yet emphasized the principle that underlies all Freethought propaganda. The central teaching of his address was the one indicated above—namely, that political stability and social improvement depended ultimately upon the existence of a trained and informed intelligence among the mass of the people. This teaching is not only sound, but it is one that ought to be, and must be, brought home to the mind of all if our welfare is to rest upon an assured basis. This is not by any means a new doctrine; it belongs properly to classical Freethought, and was a fundamental article of faith in the French school of Freethinkers of the early eighteenth century. Condorcet, Diderot, Mirabaud, Voltaire, all laid this down as a first principle, and subsequent events have fully justified their doing so. Political machinery may be created, but all the political machinery in the world will be useless unless controlled by the right kind of intelligence. In the long run it will be used by, and in the interests of, the class that understands its own interest best. We have seen this to be true in the case of every extension of the franchise, in the case of the Education Act of 1870, and in various other directions that might be named. A vote in the hands of a wise man may be an instrument of great good; but in the hands of an uninformed one it will be equally potent for ill.

Moreover, independent thinking of the right kind is the only real guarantee of a democracy working smoothly and profitably all round. It has been said that a people will always have the kind of government it deserves, and I suppose that, in a general sense, the maxim is a sound one. Any Government ultimately rests upon the willingness of the people to put up with it, and this is true whether they support it from a consciousness of its actual worth or from inability to see how it can be altered, or from sheer indifference. But the maxim holds with peculiar force in the case of a democracy. You cannot have fifty or sixty millions of legislators; you must delegate this power of legislation to a certain few, and there is no *real* check upon their action save the existence of a general intelligence sufficiently informed to judge at their proper value the acts done in their name. Given this condition, and a democracy becomes the surest method of securing the fullest measure of justice for all; eliminate this condition, and a democracy may furnish the occasion for a tyranny far more intolerable than that of the most pronounced autocracy.

Lord Rosebery, therefore, was well advised in impressing upon his hearers at the Midland Institute the fact that "there were few things the nation required more than independent thought," although there was little or no reason given for the lack of independent thinking, or as to the means by which it might be stimulated. Still, the man who calls attention to an evil does a public service, and it is not the least beneficial of Lord Rosebery's public acts to have directed the attention of his hearers to this one. And with a sentence like the following all rational minds will find themselves in complete agreement. I quote from the *Daily News* report:—

"We lived in old cells. We moved in old grooves. We went on using old watchwords apparently unconscious that those were out of date and had lost their savor and their meaning.....Their country sometimes reminded him of a man emerging from the eighteenth century in periwig and ruffles, unable to understand why he was out of touch with his neighbors, who stared and laughed at him. The fault was not with him, he was convinced. Did we not constantly need a leaven of independent thought to make us distinguish what was from what had ceased to be real and essential?"

The truth of the indictment is undeniable. Take any number of men haphazard, and ask oneself what proportion could give a coherent and intelligible reason for their opinions on politics, religion, or sociology? In the vast majority of cases they would be found to be the slaves of phrases, led away captive by the last sermon heard or the last newspaper read. Can anyone honestly feel that they could safely trust the decision of important questions to any hundred men picked out of the first five hundred people met in an hour's walk? And if we cannot do this, are we not living in something like a fool's paradise when we talk about the permanency of

our civilisation or the certainty of our continued development? I do not believe in the somewhat fanciful analogy drawn between national and individual life to the effect that nations *must* decay even as individuals do. There is no reason inherent in the nature of things which would prove that ancient civilisation must have decayed, or that modern civilisation must share the same fate. But I do believe, and that most strenuously, that we are preparing for decay when we allow prejudices to assume the functions of reasoned convictions, and when the majority are content to take opinions that are prepared for them by a class obviously interested in giving them a particular bent.

Unquestionably we need a "leaven of independent thought," and it is difficult not to believe that Lord Rosebery could not, "an' he would," have pointed to one very powerful reason why such a necessity exists. It would be inaccurate to attribute all the mental weakness, hypocrisy, or flabbiness now existing to the influence of the Churches, but it is downright folly to leave them out of sight in considering such a subject. The influence on national thought of some fifty thousand men writing and speaking upon theology cannot be ignored, however much we may depreciate its existence. For good or ill, the effect of such persistent advocacy is bound to make itself felt, and a very little study shows it to have been for ill. In the nature of the case theology can never act as a stimulating force. It belongs to the past, it is always uncomfortable in the present, and it dreads, more or less, the future. Not a single existing religion belongs to the present; all have come to us from bygone ages, and whatever is essential in them belongs to a frame of mind that is, happily, on the decline. As a necessary result, the general influence of the clergy is steadily against new ideas and independent thinking; and it is so just in proportion as they believe honestly and earnestly in the value of their religion. Their influence is on the side of what is, in so far as what is agrees with the religious ideas of the past; they appeal to the past not for lessons of guidance, but rather to use its influence to crush new ideas and progressive tendencies. The very watchword of the Churches, "The faith of our Fathers," is enough to prove the truth of this. We do not hold the "faith of our fathers" as regards our mode of dressing, of eating, or of government. Why should we in matters of religion? The answer is that the interests of a class demand it, and because of this, even while the words "progress," "development," "civilisation," are on our lips, we stupidly maintain, as national teachers, a body of men whose influence is inevitably cast in the wrong direction.

And, necessarily, the influence of the Churches is not limited to the present. It reaches backward into the past, and forward into the future. For over fifty generations Christian Churches have enjoyed a reign of power such as few other Churches have ever possessed. They have dominated the life of man from the cradle to the grave—burning people for a difference of opinion, punishing the strong with death, and terrorising the timid with the threats of a future life. Until but yesterday the expression of honest opinion called down the severest punishment, and even now it is attended with some risk. There is little need to labor the moral. We are the children of our ancestors, and bear in minds and bodies the results of their training and their experience. Independent thinking being such a risky occupation, and independent speech being even more so, but few ventured on either one or the other; and the few who did venture were seized wherever possible, and stamped out, as exhibiting qualities that must not, in the interests of Christianity, be permitted to become racial characteristics. Let anyone look back over the history of the Christian Church, Catholic and Protestant. Observe how sedulously independence of thought and speech was crushed out; observe next how the same policy is pursued by the Churches to-day to the exact extent of their opportunities; let anyone reflect what a tax has been placed upon mental independence and honesty, and what a premium upon indolence, apathy, and hypocrisy, and there will be little need to look further for the prevailing mental weakness of which Lord Rosebery rightly complains. With such a training as the race has experienced at the hands of the Christian Churches the wonder is, not that there is so little independent

thinking, but that there is any independent thinking at all.

I daresay that reflections such as these would not have pleased the bulk of Lord Rosebery's audience, but they are inevitable under the circumstances. After all, the essential condition of physical freedom is mental liberty. Given the latter, the former is a question of time only; but without this condition our liberty is apt to occur by spasms, and can offer no real guarantee of its permanence. It is for this reason that the militant Freethinker concentrates his energies upon the destruction of theology. He believes that in fighting theology he is attacking injustice, ignorance, and tyranny in their secure stronghold. You cannot, as Paine realised, have the "Rights of Man" unless you prepare the way by an "Age of Reason." You cannot expect men to use whatever intelligence they possess well and wisely, while thousands of preachers are discouraging all thought beyond a certain limit, and all speech but of a certain kind. The analogy of a man's mind with the water-tight compartment of a ship is illustrative, but somewhat misleading. The mind of man is not a number of separate parts, one of which may act illogically without detriment to the rest, but a unity; and it is, therefore, impossible for one to encourage habits of mental indolence and apathy in religion without it affecting the mind in other directions. And, when all is said and done, it is not so much particular religious doctrines against which the Freethinker wages war as it is the frame of mind from which these derive their present strength. There *may* be as little mental discipline about the man who rejects religious beliefs as there is about the one who accepts them, although the chances are against such being the case; and one cannot too often enforce the lesson that, in the development of society, *what* a man believes is often of minor importance compared with the mental habits he brings to bear on the vital problems of life.

C. COHEN.

A Doleful Story of Wales.

HAVING spent many happy summer months in Wales—chiefly in the northern region—I cherish a special regard for the Principality. Their Sunday-closing arrangements annoyed me at first, but I found they were easily evaded. Perhaps I drank more bottles of Bass than I should have done, simply from the pleasure of knowing that it was contrary to law. Not that I have any objection to law *per se*, but because I resent stupid Sabbatarian restrictions. And that sentiment, I know, was shared by many of my personal friends, and by visitors generally.

South Wales—apart from Cardiff—I don't know much about. But I am sorry to hear so bad an account of the two counties, Glamorgan and Monmouth. Perhaps the recent magisterial observations passed upon them are open to some explanation or modification. These counties are said to "fairly reek with religion." That is very likely. "Gallant little Wales" is Radical to the core, but it is also religious. Yet Judge Gwilym Williams, at the Glamorgan Quarter Sessions, found it necessary to say that Glamorgan and Monmouth had for some time past held the "unenviable position of being amongst the worst for crime in all England and Wales."

Some figures were given by Judge Williams, but it is not worth while reproducing them. Though the counties are "reeking with religion," they certainly do manage to total up an extraordinary record of crime. The probable explanation is that the counties cover mining districts to which all sorts of aliens flock for employment, and that the bulk of the criminals are not Welshmen at all.

A Church paper, glad, apparently, of these distressing statistics, says specially of Swansea: "This is a place where Dissent more than holds its own, and where colliers in their cups will sing hymns by the hour." This is sad; but still the poor colliers, though convicted of drunkenness, might claim some consideration from a Church paper on the ground that even "in their cups" they sang hymns. Probably the sanctified songs were not from *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, but

from Moody and Sankey's collection, which still survives.

Judge Gwilym Williams thought that more licensed victuallers should be prosecuted, and that there should be more places of amusement. "But," says this Church paper, "he made no reference to better religious effort as one way of stemming the tide of vice and immorality. We wonder why?" Well, the paper has already supplied the answer by saying that the place "fairly reeked of religion." Of course, it was in the way of Dissent; but that appeals to the multitude more than Church of England teaching.

But let us hear what this Church paper has to say in the way of rebuke to Judge Williams:—

"Perhaps his Honor knows too much of the internal affairs of religious circles to look in that direction for the elevation of the masses. Some of the School Boards in Glamorgan have lately betrayed a good deal of uneasiness at the low moral tone of the children they educate, and attempts are being made to introduce some sort of moral and religious instruction in schools where this important element of education has been for years put on one side. The Boards have sown the wind; they are reaping the whirlwind. The children brought up under secular training are proving its inutility as a guide to the higher life; they have no reverence, and, in spite of Sunday-schools, very little, if any, knowledge of sacred truth. Some of the clergy do not hesitate to say that Biblical references, when made in preaching, fail to bring that responsive look of intelligent interest which once characterised Welsh congregations."

This is a terrible indictment of two counties. The children "have no reverence." As a grown-up person, I am happy to say that I have no reverence for the religious stupidities referred to, and I should be sorry if children should make any pretence of "reverence," because naturally they know nothing at all about it, and the "reverence" would be simply mechanical. As to the School Boards, all their troubles have arisen from departing from the platform of the old National Education League, of which Joseph Chamberlain was a prominent member. He has since deserted that platform, and is an ever-present example of a "good man gone wrong."

Wales, "reeking with religion," ought really to rise up in wrath when the clergy "do not hesitate to say that Biblical references, when made in preaching, fail to bring a responsive look of intelligent interest." There I stand by the side of my Welsh friends, whether Dissenters or Agnostics, and say: How can we affect a responsive look or intelligent interest in the nonsense offered by the Anglican Church?

FRANCIS NEALE.

Anarchism: Impartially Viewed.

[The following article is from the *Open Court*, an excellent monthly magazine published at Chicago, and in London by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., Limited. The article is from the pen of the editor, Dr. Paul Carus.]

ANARCHY means lawlessness, and Anarchism is the theory that there ought to be no laws, no government, no ruler. Now, in the original sense of the word, the tendency of the American political ideal is Anarchistic, for liberty and independence are the key-notes of our history. The underlying principle of our political institutions is that the men to whom the public affairs of both the several States and the United States are handed over are not the rulers but the servants of the nation. Properly speaking, we have no government but an administration. The President of the United States is not a sovereign, and the citizens are not his subjects; but he is the chosen leader, the *primus inter pares*, entrusted to attend to certain duties which are in the interest of all, but can in their very nature be performed only by one person.

The people of the United States never found fault with Anarchism so long as Anarchists merely expounded their theories, and we must state here that there are quite a number of avowed Anarchists who are opposed to law on account of the *compulsion* to obedience which the idea of law implies, and are therefore consistently opposed to all violence as a matter of principle. These Anarchists—the peaceful Anarchists so-called—long ago gained a hearing, and preached their doctrines to limited

audiences. They were, however, ridiculed by some of their own friends as milksops and sissies, and the word "Anarchism," as commonly understood, accordingly denotes, with the large masses of the people, a defiance of the law by assassination and destruction.

The American people are very patient, and are always inclined to allow every theory to be put into practice to show the results to which it leads. Anarchism cannot complain of not having had a fair trial. The Anarchist papers were not suppressed, and Anarchist speeches were tolerated. But now that violent Anarchism exhibits dangerous consequences, the people become indignant, and feel like stamping it out as a nefarious weed that threatens to choke the harvest of good citizenship.

But if we love liberty and abhor government, why are we not all Anarchists, and why do we believe in law? The old conception of law is the view that law is the ukase of the Government, and serves to maintain the machinery that keeps the people in subjection. What, then, is the American conception of law where the term "government" has ceased to mean sovereignty over the people, and has actually become the administration of public affairs? How can law, which inevitably means compulsion, be united with liberty?

Kant said that the principle of ethics consists in laying down maxims of conduct, and all those sentiments or motives to action are moral which can be made universal maxims. Now, as to liberty, we mean to assert our own liberty, and, as a matter of moral consistency, respect the love of liberty in others. For the sake of maintaining liberty as a general principle, we deem it wrong to trespass upon the rights of others, and recognise the necessity of self-restriction. If all men were truly honest, well-intentioned, and moral, there would be no need of enforcing self-restriction by law, because everyone would, as a matter of course, refrain from wronging his fellow-beings, and the truth is that the higher a civilisation the more lenient the laws can be. Progress implies a wider scope for individual liberty and a relaxation of legal coercions. American civilisation has actually reached the point where law has ceased to imply the idea of suppression, and indicates the order which, *for the sake of preserving our liberty*, must be maintained. Our laws are not imposed upon us by rulers, but are established by the legally-chosen representatives of the people. Law, in this sense, is nothing but Kant's principle of morality applied to the domain of social life. Law empowers the authorities of the administration to employ force against those who do not possess sufficient self-control to abstain from trespassing upon the rights of others.

It is true that there are laws which are neither wise nor just; and frequently there are men in authority who are unworthy of their trust, and abuse their office for personal gain. But we ought to be wise enough to remember that the world is nowhere perfect, and that we can improve conditions only by constant vigilance, and by the repeated endeavor to correct our mistakes. There are hours in which we feel desperate about the slowness of progress; but we should not lose patience. *Eppur si muove!* Liberty has been increasing slowly, but constantly, and its progress would be quicker but for its false friends, who identify liberty with lawlessness.

The world would gladly accept the gospel of freedom were it not for the skeleton in the closet, the grinning sham freedom of violent Anarchism, with its gospel of hatred, its bloody deeds of darkness, its contemptible treachery, its narrow-minded and stupid logic, and its insanity-begotten aspirations.

Anarchism—*i.e.*, the violent Anarchism that would sanction assassination—is as erroneous as it is immoral. Its doctrines can never become universal maxims. The Anarchist's notion of liberty is license; his ideal of progress is the destruction and ruin of his betters; his propaganda consists in preaching hatred and spreading terrorism; the methods he commends are felony and murder. Should his ideas gain a foothold in the minds of our people, it would not lead us onward to a higher civilisation, but back to barbarism—to a state of society in which the hand of every one is against that of every other and war is the general rule.

Happily we need not be afraid of Anarchism; but, though we must deeply deplore the erratic deed of a

criminally insane individual who figures as an exponent of this dangerous doctrine, there is no need of being alarmed or resorting to means of repression that would make the remedy worse than the evil.

Acid Drops.

THE Archbishop of York will probably not induce this country to go in for a day of humiliation. In the first place, John Bull is very little in the humility humor at present; in the second place, he has pretty well outgrown his old belief in such nonsense as "York" prescribes. Even as far back as 1854 Queen Victoria, it seems, objected to a "fast day for the war"—the Crimean war, to wit. She said it was very absurd, and objected to it *in toto*. Lord Aberdeen urged that the religious part of the community were clamoring for it. It was their contribution to the success of the campaign. So the Queen had to give way. But she still insisted that it should not be a "fast," and the Privy Council agreed to a day of "humiliation." It was, however, finally altered into a "fast day," in order that the merchants might not lose a day with their bills. What a curious mixture of religion and worldliness!

This stupid business was repeated on September 14, 1857, during the Indian Mutiny. It has not been repeated since, and probably it never will be. They seem fonder of it in America than we do. Having no State Church there, the President takes it upon himself to tell the nation when it ought to batter the Almighty's ears collectively.

M. Reminger, sub-director of the Pasteur Institute at Constantinople, has been addressing the Paris Academy of Medicine on the hygiene of churches. Such edifices, he says, lack ventilation; indeed, he appears to regard them as tanks of stagnant air, which poisons the worshippers, and causes the dizziness and fainting fits for which these places are notorious. This is bad enough, but what M. Reminger says about holy water is still worse. When examined under a microscope, it was often found to be fuller of microbes than the worst drain water. From a scientific point of view this is abominable. From a religious point of view, however, it is quite harmless. Holy water is supposed to work a miracle—that is, God operates a miracle through it; and why should he not work a negative miracle as well as a positive one? It is just as easy for him to render the microbes innocuous as to impart supernatural virtues to common water. The moral, then, is to go the whole hog in trusting to the Lord. "Trust me all in all or not at all," as the poet says. Though it doesn't sound very poetical, does it?

As newspapers go, the Special Double Number of the *Echo* published the other day was excellent. All sorts of readers have to be catered for by such a journal, and most of them are Christians. The latter fact, doubtless, accounts for the inclusion of a long string of pious platitudes from the pen of the Rev. Mark Guy Pearse. The interview with Mr. Hall Caine was, of course, a business attempt to make something out of a celebrity of the hour. Even the people who don't read books—and their name is legion, or rather million—like to read something about them, or about the men who write them.

Mr. Hall Caine told the *Echo* interviewer that he had not yet written his projected *Life of Christ*. For once in a way he is troubled with modesty. When he began the work he found it was "much too great" for him, and he does not know if he will ever feel equal to it. "It was Renan's *Life of Christ*," he said, "that first prompted me to that daring attempt." Indeed! There is no such book. We suppose he means the *Vie de Jésus*. Perhaps, to Mr. Caine's mind, this is a distinction without a difference; but that is only because he does not understand the facts of the case or the real questions at issue. The *Life of Jesus* is meant to be the biography of a man. The *Life of Christ* is meant to be the biography of a god. And between them there is all the difference in the world.

Canon Isaac Taylor's death will not cause much mourning in some religious circles. He was terribly outspoken, for instance, on the subject of Christian missions to the heathen; and, on the whole, he rather preferred Mohammedanism for the Africans, as it was an instant cure for drunkenness and certain sexual vices which somehow or other flourish in the countries of the Cross.

President Roosevelt has committed a great crime. He has shown hospitality to a man of education and refinement to whom nature gave a black skin instead of a white one. Millions of Christians in America, especially in the Southern States, denounce the President's atrocious action. This, however, will not prevent them from going to church and declaring their belief that all men are God's children.

While the ridiculous small-pox scare is on in London, it is as well to draw the attention of doctors to the fact that they are not (any more than priests) infallible, and that it is their patients who have to pay for their assumption of infallibility. A clever cynic, who has been writing a series of crusty articles in the *Westminster Gazette*, wants to know why doctors cannot just give their opinion like other professional men. In a multitude of cases, instead of saying they don't really know what the matter with a man, they affect to know, and go on treating him somehow. It may be an extreme instance that a patient was ordered to climb hills and take other violent exercise for his sluggish liver, and that in a very short time he died of a weak heart. But the present writer knows of a patient who died of typhoid fever, after being treated precisely the reverse of the proper way for some days because the doctor misread the earlier symptoms. Tolstoy has just told Lombroso of an old Russian lady, a neighbor of his, whom all the doctors told she was dying of consumption, and all they could do was to make her few last days easier. But she sent away her doctors, took to vegetarianism, and is now in first-rate health and spirits. Lombroso contends that she was cured by "hypnotic and religious suggestion." But, whatever is the true explanation, the doctors were not right. Medicine is not an exact science, it is very far from it; and doctors are liable to gross, as well as trivial, mistakes, like other people. This is no reason for denouncing or ridiculing them, but a very good reason for reminding them that their right to control laymen is founded on a most inadequate basis.

The Guild of St. Luke, consisting of doctors, had its annual religious picnic at St. Paul's Cathedral the other evening. Canon Gore preached the sermon. But he and his hearers were all playing the hypocrite. Peculiar People are still being prosecuted for obeying the directions they find in the New Testament with respect to the treatment of the sick. They are even sent to prison in the name of medical science and State hygiene. Yet those who are responsible for such punishment of the Peculiar People actually go to church and pretend that the book which they foolishly, but honestly, follow is the veritable Word of God. If this is not hypocrisy, the word itself ought to be obliterated from the dictionary.

The Bishop of Madras, East India, has made the startling discovery that Hindu and Mohammedan students lose all religious belief as their education advances. He says, as reported in the *Times*: "The problem of religious education in India cannot be solved by missionary institutions, nor by the Government. The solution must be in the hands of the people themselves, and especially in the hands of their religious leaders. It is they who must face the attacks of criticism, and establish religious belief on the rock of truth." The same instrumentality employed to Christianise Europe, and, later, to preserve it, would spread the system over India and China as well. The power of the sword subdued Europe. It will crush any country, and the Inquisition would perpetuate the victory.—*Progressive Thinker*.

The Scriptural knowledge of the *Times*, if not extensive, is certainly peculiar. In its issue of the 12th inst. it submits the following query: "Is there no spiritual purge to make the eye of the camel easier for a South African millionaire?"

The Hawaiians, as a people, do not seem to be taking very kindly to the Gospel. In 1856 the Congregational Churches reported a membership amongst the Hawaiians of 23,652; in 1898 it had fallen to 4,642. A pretty considerable drop!

A correspondent of the *British Weekly* agrees with the Rev. J. W. Horsley that Harvest Festivals are being overdone. "Vulgarity," he says, "is scarcely too strong a word to use for some of the marvellous displays of flowers, fruit, and vegetables which we see in our places of worship. On the ledge at the back of the pew I occupy in a well-known West London church there were placed on Sunday a cabbage, a cauliflower, a turnip, some celery, a number of dahlias, and a mass of indiscriminate greenery. As at all Harvest Festivals, the congregations were very large, and in the evening the building was crowded. Cabbages, vegetable marrows, etc., had been lying all day in a vitiated atmosphere, and were now rapidly decaying. The smell of fading cabbage leaves was so unpleasant in our vicinity that several persons left during the service."

He adds that from one of the ledges in the church referred to the whole mass of green-stuff came tumbling down on the heads and shoulders of the worshippers during the sermon.

Dr. Hoss, editor of the *Christian Advocate* (Tennessee), the organ of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, did not like a certain speech to which he listened at the Ecumenical Conference. He writes: "It is putting matters mildly to say that Bishop Walters [African Zion Methodist Episcopal] played the fool. Without the slightest excuse or provocation, he dragged in the subject of lynching, made a distorted display of statistics, appealed distinctly to British prejudices

and ended with a peroration that was a sort of a cross between a war whoop and a camp-meeting exhortation."

Now that there has been time to review the recent Church Congress at Brighton, even Church papers like the *Record* and the *News* are compelled to admit that the gathering was a failure. The *Record* says that, after the confident statements which heralded it, the organisers must have viewed with equal sorrow and regret the poor attendance and tepid interest at some of the meetings. "The total number of members did not, in all probability, much exceed 3,000. Yet at the Brighton meeting of 1874 the members of the Congress numbered 4,935."

It is complained that even the devotional meetings were mismanaged, and that at some of the sectional meetings the members present in the audience did not greatly outnumber the representatives of the Press. Says the *Record*: "The dreariness of such gatherings, the unreality and the absurdity of the whole thing, affect the minds of those present, and do not stimulate a yearning to attend future Congresses."

Writing on the Sunday closing agitation, Rev. Silas K. Hocking sorrowfully laments that the Churches have not absolutely clean hands in regard to the drink traffic. "Hundreds of clergy and ministers," he says, "hold shares in brewery companies."

In connection with the Congregational Union Conference at Manchester a Peace meeting was held in Cavendish-street Chapel. One of the speakers was Dr. Scott, Principal of Lancashire Accommodation College, and Chairman-elect of the Congregational Union. What he said on the subject of war in general was rather curious. "While saying," the *Daily News* report goes, "that he could conceive circumstances in which it would be right to draw the sword, at the same time he would rather a thousand times be shot down by the Boers than level a gun to shoot one of them." That is what the reverend gentleman said, but we very much doubt its truthfulness. We do not question his sincerity; we merely question the accuracy of his self-knowledge. Self-preservation is the first law of nature, and there has never been any deficiency in this instinct on the part of the men of God. It is our firm opinion that if Dr. Scott had to choose—not theoretically, but practically—between shooting or being shot, he would blaze away as straight as he could at the gentlemen who wanted to send him to heaven prematurely.

The writer of "Among the Churches" in the *Daily News* burst out a little hurriedly in praise of the Rev. Z. B. Woffendale. In doing so he relied upon that gentleman's accuracy. Subsequently he discovered that this was a great mistake. He had to find fault with Mr. Woffendale's "use of inverted commas." Freethinkers could have put him up to that little trick of the "Evangelist."

"Clerical poverty" is causing quite a "crisis" in the Church of England. So says the Bishop of London. He asks laymen to find another £1,000,000 a year for the clergy. It is not proposed that the wealthy Bishops, and other Church dignitaries, shall be "sweated" down for the benefit of their poorer brethren. The Bishop of London, for instance, does not want to relinquish any part of his £10,000 a year.

Old sermons, says the *Church Times*, are generally considered to be valuable only as waste paper. That is so; and, if we were disposed to be unkind, we might hint that some modern written or reported sermons have no higher marketable value. The price of lithographed sermons used to be a guinea per hundred, and they were dear even at that price. The *C. T.* has discovered a sermon in a bookseller's catalogue marked at ten shillings. But antiquity is its only recommendation. It was preached in 1754, and was published "for the use of the unlearned reader."

How many sermons since the days of Pusey, Newman, Kingsley, or Maurice, are worth looking at? The latter-day production—even some of the most admired manuscripts read by Dean Farrar in Westminster Abbey, and later in Canterbury Cathedral, or reports of the gushing outpourings of Dr. Parker or Price Hughes, or the constantly-reproduced sermons of the dead Spurgeon and the still very much alive Talmage—what are they? Weak rhetoric, which would not bear a moment's critical analysis. Sad that the Christian Church in these latter days can produce nothing better.

"Waiting upon God" is a funny sort of phrase. It sounds so much like making a morning call and leaving a card. Rev. F. B. Meyer—who is now leaving the Westminster Bridge-road Church, where, at any rate, he was amiable and inoffensive, though never very brilliant—is responsible for the phrase. He prescribes November 1—why didn't he make it April 1, All Fools Day?—for Christian people to "wait upon God, that he shall bring about the cessation of this bitter strife in South Africa. The weary months are passing by, and surely private Christians, in their own retirement, as

well as little groups in public buildings, may on that day wait upon God in concerted prayer."

The irate British taxpayer, who is disgorging at the rate of a million a week for the war, will feel himself impelled to exclaim: "Damn the concerted prayer. Let's clear out this incapable and utterly discredited War Office. New officials could hardly do worse—the apologetic Brodrick notwithstanding. Why should we worry God Almighty?" If, as the Rev. Meyer suggests, we should "wait upon him," it would naturally be in order to inquire, in the first place, why the hell he allowed the war to take place.

The great Dr. Savage, lecturer on mental diseases at Guy's Hospital, has now a case which specially commends itself to his notice. The other day he endeavored to convey the notion that religious delusions were not productive of insanity—or, as he put it, he never knew of any healthy religious sentiment tending in that direction. Perhaps the following is an instance of unhealthy religious sentiment; but, any way, he has to account for the little episode at Stafford Lunatic Asylum. One of the attendants there—not a patient, but an attendant—became suddenly mad during the night, whilst he was on duty. He was placed under restraint. He gradually became worse, and the authorities had no option but to place the unfortunate man in a padded room. The man was apparently suffering from religious mania.

There is a chaplain under whom he would have to sit every Sunday. That functionary does not seem to have preserved him from insanity. He may have hastened him in that direction, for all we know. Anyway, we may assume that the unfortunate attendant was a man of strong mind originally, otherwise he would not have been put in charge of those who were of weak mind. But, as we see, religious mania laid him low, and the comments of Dr. Savage on this case would be interesting.

We have it on the authority of a Central News telegram from New York that a number of Christian societies sent numerous packages of fruit and flowers for Czolgosz. The gaolers state that the names of the senders, if made known, would cause surprise. What does this mean—especially in America? It means that any crack-brained idiot, tired of life, without the courage to kill himself, may kill a person of distinction with the perfect certainty that he will make a splash in the world's records—for the time at any rate—and that later on he will be put to a comparatively painless death. There will be in the meantime floral offerings from ladies, cranks will regard him as a martyr, and then the chaplain will come in with assurances of eternal bliss based upon his pretences of repentance.

At Newcastle-on-Tyne two men were prosecuted for shouting mushrooms and fruit on Sunday, and thereby causing a nuisance. No one appeared to support the charge, which was preferred by the police, and Sir Charles Hamond said it appeared to him that, instead of considering the shouting a nuisance, people bought the articles offered and so encouraged them. He considered the greatest Sunday nuisance was the ringing of church bells. Both cases would be dismissed, because no one came forward to prove the nuisance. It was not sufficient for the police to say general complaints had been made.

When the "observant and critical" Russian, M. Khomiakoff, came to London, he noticed "the solemn peace and calm" on a Sunday. He is called "observant and critical" by the *Church Times*, because it wants to say something orthodox on Sunday Observance. But M. Khomiakoff is about the only foreigner we have heard of who expressed any satisfaction with the London Sunday. However, all that is "off"—the impressions of the distinguished Khomiakoff are now merely historic.

"Now," wails the *Church Times*, "the picture needs no limning. The eye aches with seeing it. Nor is it only in London or the great provincial towns that Sunday has become a day of general dissipation. From remote villages comes the cry that visitors flock in, or the inhabitants flock out, for visits. There is universal holiday, but the holiness is to seek; there is universal enjoyment, but nothing is less in evidence than the joys of religion. The rich and the well-to-do play lawn-tennis openly, and billiards in seclusion. The roads are swarming with cyclists; the trains come roaring home in the evening with crowds of hilarious excursionists. If the morning is more peaceful, it is because the world is lying late in bed; if the noonday is calm, it is because the noisier part of the population is gorging itself at the weekly dinner."

Dreadful, isn't it? A universal holiday, universal enjoyment, pleasant outdoor sports, hilarious excursionists, etc. As the *Church Times* says, "The eye aches with seeing it," but it is because there is not much more of the same sort to be seen. It does seem at length that people who are hard-worked and worried to death during the week are not to be

deterred by the white-chokered, psalm-singing gentry from "pulling themselves together" by a little innocent recreation on the Sunday.

Who constitutes these pious spoil-sports judges of what we may or may not do on Sunday? Even from a Scriptural point of view, they can't make it clear whether it is the Sabbath or the Sunday which they want to be made holy. And in regard to either days their notions of holiness are Puritanical nonsense.

Earl Russell has done his three months in Holloway Prison. He has gained in weight, and is none the worse for his experience. But then he was treated as a first-class misdemeanant. Still, he suffered the loss of three months' liberty. And all for what? Simply to vindicate abstract morality as it is understood by our bigoted old Lord Chancellor. No one can show that Earl Russell has inflicted, directly or indirectly, the slightest injury on any human being.

The newspapers last week published what they called "Jibe at the Priest." It was uttered by Dr. Parker at the autumnal assembly of the Congregational Union. "There was," he said, "one man to whom they would not give place, and that was the self-conceited, pedantic, presumptuous priest." Good! But these kind of persons do not belong to the Church of Rome or the Anglican High Church alone. We have evidences of their existence even in Congregational pulpits.

The *Awakener of India* publishes the following statement by Mrs. Annie Besant, who now rejoices in the appended initials of "F. T. S." It affords an answer to Christian Evidence advocates who are fond of pointing to her secession from Freethought:—"In Theology, Theosophy is pantheistic. It denies a personal God, and holds that God is all and all is God. Hence, as Madame Blavatsky has pointed out, Agnostics and Atheists more easily assimilate the teachings of Theosophy than do believers in orthodox creeds. *In all that I have written and said as Atheist against supernaturalism, I have nothing to regret, nothing to unsay.* On the negative side, Atheism seems to me to be unanswerable. Its case against supernaturalism is complete. I was satisfied, and I have remained satisfied, that the universe is not explicable on supernatural lines. According to the Theosophist, every idea of the existence of the supernatural must be surrendered."

The *Yorkshire Evening Post* has a smart leaderette on the absurd suggestion of Archbishop MacClagan that there should be a day of national humiliation. It quotes the observation of Canon Henson: "There is no need for humiliation of any sort, unless it be for the inadequate measures we have made in the war." The *V. E. P.* adds: "Such a service would, as the Canon says, sanction the idea of a moral government of the universe which we know very well does not exist." This latter statement is rather striking.

G. H. Barnes, 1st Worcester Regiment, Ficksburg, South Africa, recently wrote to the Spiritualist organ, *Two Worlds*, suggesting that Spiritualists should accept and follow the "great teachings and examples of Christ." In reply a very sensible correspondent—Mr. John Horton, of Queen's-road, Cwmsyfiog, New Tredegar, Mon.—writes to the *Two Worlds*: "Just fancy a man who has crossed the ocean from England to South Africa pledged to do his best to blow the brains out of his fellow man, or drive a bayonet through him at the bidding of others, asking me and others to emulate and live up to the example of Jesus."

There is a story—Browning's—in Sir James Paget's recently-published Memoirs which has a deep significance. It is of a girl in their lodgings somewhere in Italy whom they found regularly stole their tea, which they bore with, but rebelled when they found that she likewise stole their candles, yet were mollified when they found that she stole their candles in order to burn them before a little shrine in expiation of her sin of stealing their tea.

One of the speakers at the Baptist Union meetings at Edinburgh told a good story. He was from the Congo, and he said a Sambo had informed a friend that he had "done gone joined de Army of the Lord." "What branch of the Army?" asked his friend. Sambo answered that he had joined "de Baptists." "Ah," replied his friend, "but the Baptists are not the Army of the Lord; they are the Navy of the Lord."

Said the Rev. G. Gladstone, of Glasgow, at the Congregational Union meetings at Manchester: "The Lord is still eager to see India, Africa, and the islands of the sea redeemed as when He thirsted on the cross." Well, why doesn't he take means to that end? If he is hampered by any restrictions in achieving that on which he is said to be "still eager," where is the use of supplicating him for ordinary benefits in an individual sort of way? Obviously a God who cannot spread his own Gospel is no sort of person to appeal to when you are ill or in trouble.

Quite so! "The only hope," says the *Glasgow Herald*, "for the Churches in Scotland is to fight it out with the critics and doubters till a position is reached which will command the intellectual conviction of all Scotsmen."

Dr. Parker: "Never forget that the 'blood' (properly interpreted) comes first." Of course, it does in any Christian theology, and that is why the whole thing is so nauseating. As if Christ was the only person who died for his belief. As if Lucillo Varsini did not die for Atheism. As if there were not many heretics in history who went to death for their opinions, which were opposed to this sickening theory of blood sacrifice. "Properly interpreted," the Atonement doctrine is simply a horrid piece of religious humbug.

Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, is getting a lot of flattery just now from the popular press. But until he apologises for calling Thomas Paine, who made possible the office Mr. Roosevelt now fills, "a filthy little Atheist," he will get no good words from the *Truthseeker*. There is nothing meaner than a slanderer of the living or dead.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

At the Gloucester Diocesan Conference a discussion took place on the Athanasian Creed. Various opinions were expressed in regard to that delightful composition. The funniest thing was when the Bishop solemnly declared that "from his youth he had been deeply impressed and filled with profound admiration at the luminous statements of the Creed."

Prayer in a factory is a novel idea carried out by a slipper manufacturer in Worcester, U.S., who has a chapel in his workshop. He is a religious worker in that city, and believes that it is just as important to start out in the day with God as it is to have sufficient stock on hand for the making of shoes. Not many of his employees agree with him, evidently, or else they say their morning prayers at home, for the morning chapel services between 6.30 and 7 o'clock are sparsely attended. Everyone is invited, but sometimes only three are present, in addition to the proprietor, who conducts the services. For a time noon-day prayer meetings were held also, but increasing business demands on the time of the proprietor induced him to abandon the noon invocation. Thus Mammon intervenes!

A correspondent of the Amsterdam Handelsblad has heard, says the New York *Truthseeker*, the British Government's hired clergymen in the act of earning their salaries, and tells what he thinks of them: "For inane, insipid, vapid, and invertebrate sermons, commend me to the Episcopalian clergy of England. Their halting weakness is impossible to describe, and, in my experience, unrivalled."

It seems that the Corporation of Bournemouth, in carrying out a scheme of local tramways, are about to run through St. Peter's Churchyard. The vicar, Canon Fisher, announces that when the question of compensation comes before him he will decline to accept one farthing, as it is not a case in which compensation can be accepted for that which is taken from God's service. What nonsense! As if God had anything to do with his wretched piece of land!

Dr. Wood, Headmaster of Harrow, distributing the prizes at Leamington Ladies' College, perpetrated one of the silliest sneers at Darwin. "He disagreed with Darwin," he said, "that woman had less brain than man. If he wanted anything neatly, intelligently, and conscientiously performed, he would get it done by women." Naturally, considering the audience, this was greeted with applause. Probably no one thought of testing Dr. Wood's sincerity by asking how soon the male teachers would be superseded by female teachers at Harrow. Neither, we suppose, did it occur to anyone to ask whether Darwin really did say anything ungallant about ladies' intelligence. Darwin did indeed say that woman's brain was rather lighter than man's. This, however, is not a matter of opinion, as Dr. Wood seems to think it, but a matter of fact. On the other hand, it must be remembered that woman's body is lighter than man's. These things must be estimated relatively. The weight of the brain, merely by itself, is not of the highest importance. Some of the lower animals beat man in that respect. On the whole, therefore, it will be seen that Dr. Wood, unless he erred in ignorance, played the fool at the Leamington Ladies' College—which was a very poor compliment to the lady scholars after all.

"What is your favorite dish?" inquired Mrs. Frontpew of Rev. Longface, the new pastor. She felt sure it was chicken, but it proved not. "Er—the contribution plate," answered Mr. Longface, absently.—*Ohio State Journal*.

Pat: "Now, Bridget, what are you thinkin' about?" Bridget: "Sure, and if the Pope be sick, why do he have a doctor? Where are them miraculous bones that could cure him?" Pat: "Ah, Bridget, he is suffering from infallibility, and nothing can cure that."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 27, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.; 7.30, "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven."

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 27, Liverpool. November 3, Birmingham; 10, Stanley; 17, Newcastle-on-Tyne; 24, Athenæum Hall. Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

F. GUAINAZZI.—We have handed over your order to the responsible person. Thanks for the cutting. See paragraph.

R. L. SIMPSON.—It is not wisdom to distress yourself about evils that you know you cannot remedy. No single man can remedy them, nor can all the reformers in the world remedy them except little by little. Do what you find possible, according to your opportunities, and leave the rest to destiny. There is a lot of sense in Fielding's saying that it's no use damning the nature of things. Besides, over-anxiety only lessens one's effectiveness. Keep cool, if you can; if you can't, there's no more to be said.

R. BROWN.—Thanks for your letter. The correspondence you refer to in the *Kentish Independent* must have been serviceable to Freethought. Like you, we should be glad to see Freethought meetings held in places like the Queen's Hall. The chief difficulty is that the largest and most "respectable" halls are not available for our propaganda.

E. G. B.—Copy of the *Freethinker* sent as requested. Pleased to hear you were delighted with our article on "Bible Assassins." What you point out as an error, though, is no error at all. The so-called apocryphal books of the Old Testament are now excluded from the Protestant Bible altogether. They were not regarded as part of the Word of God, in the sense that the other books were, even by the early Reformers. They were retained, however, as the Church of England Article says, to be "read for example of life and instruction of manners." In that sense they confirm our contention that the Bible, Catholic and Protestant alike, is a sort of text-book of political assassination.

J. ELLIS.—See paragraph. Your Branch, like others, is always welcome to such things; but we should be glad of earlier notice of fixtures.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings.

W. H. BOWMAN.—Sorry we cannot inform you where you can obtain Lady Hamilton's Secret History of the Court of the Georges. Perhaps one of our readers could tell you.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Your letter shall be laid before the Executive at its next meeting, on Thursday, Oct. 31. We know nothing personally of the gentleman you mention, and cannot take the responsibility of any intermediate action.

PRIVATE J. C.—It is scandalous that soldiers should be compelled to attend "divine service," but the fact is very well known, and has often been called attention to in our columns. We do not know of any regulation that compels them; it seems to be merely a rule of practice; and if a few soldiers "kicked" in concert, it is difficult to see how they could be legally punished.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Boston Investigator—Yorkshire Evening Post—Glasgow Herald—Torch of Reason (Oregon)—Progressive Thinker (Chicago)—Freethought Magazine (Chicago)—La Raison—Echo—Truthseeker (New York)—Public Opinion (New York)—Secular Thought (Toronto)—Lucifer—Western Daily Press—Kentish Gazette—Discontent (Washington)—Two Worlds—Open Court (Chicago)—Crescent—Dowie's Leaves of Healing—Awakener of India—Nottingham Guardian—Huddersfield Chronicle—Manchester Empire—Freidenker—Herald of Golden Age—Liberator (Melbourne)—Blue Grass Blade—Sydney Bulletin.

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.

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Personal.

I HAVE NOW to finish the final statement, begun in last week's *Freethinker*, as to my personal affairs. It would have been folly, as well as impertinence, to obtrude these things on my readers' attention in ordinary circumstances. But the present circumstances are extraordinary. I have been forced into publicity by the action of a wealthy Freethinker. When a man in my position is driven into the Bankruptcy Court, it is impossible for him to pursue an ostrich policy. The ignominious part of him ought not to be exclusively visible. He is bound to show himself entirely. This is wisdom, no less than honor; self-defence, no less than justice to those who have trusted him. Consequently, I promised that, having been forced into publicity, I would make the publicity complete.

It has already been stated that the official number of my creditors is nine. Eight of them were accounted for in the first part of this final statement. The ninth, I said, was a secured creditor, and consequently not connected with my deficit. This I will now explain.

My only unsecured creditor worth mentioning, besides Mr. George Anderson, is, as I have said, a firm of paper-merchants. Their claim, like Mr. Anderson's, is an old one. It pertains to the long ago. But it was natural, and quite proper, that they should want their money, and seek to obtain it if they could. I was not quite prepared, however, for a certain incident which occurred in 1897. I understand it now, but it seemed strange then. A person since dead, and whom, therefore, I refrain from mentioning, echoed in the ears of the cashier of the firm in question the lies—which he must have known were lies—that circulated then as to my enormous income and my amazingly extravagant expenditure. I had been to America, and was supposed to have brought back a pile of dollars; although, as a matter of fact, my visit would have been an absolute and considerable loss—owing to circumstances related at the time, and which I need not go into again—if the cost of my two voyages across the Atlantic had not been defrayed by a subscription that was raised in order that I might, as a delegate from England, attend the Congress of the American Secularists at Chicago. Mr. Charles Watts was my fellow delegate, and he knows that I am telling the simple truth. Instead of gaining by this trip, except in health, I lost, for I paid my sub-editor, Mr. J. M. Wheeler, an extra £1 per week during the time that my absence threw upon him an unusual burden of work. Still, that pile of dollars bulked largely in some imaginations. Nor was this all. My house (I live in it still) was represented as a mansion, the one domestic help figured as a retinue of servants, and the rest of the picture was painted on the same grandiose scale. Well, this malignant nonsense, or much of it, was echoed by the person aforesaid (a friend! heaven save the mark!) into the ears of my paper-merchant's cashier. What did this gentleman do? He took the uncommon step of calling at my private residence on matters of business. This he did more than once, and I understood "by order." Now I am not exactly a fool. I know a hawk from a handsaw, as Hamlet says, and I saw at once what I had to do. I did not intend to be attacked in my home. That was not the security on which any debt of mine had been contracted. Moreover, if I had been attacked there, I should have been obliged to make myself bankrupt, in common fairness to my other creditors. Accordingly, I protected my home by a bill of sale; and, to avoid all appearance of collusion, I dealt with a well-known firm of money-lenders, taking the disadvantage of their high rate of interest, thirty per cent. per annum. Directly the transaction was completed I informed my paper-merchants by letter of what I had done. That was in June, 1897, and, of course, more than the £200 I raised on my home and library had been paid back in interest before the date of my bankruptcy. This ruinous bargain I entered into

for the sake of my wife and children. I care very little about myself. I have eaten skilley and slept on a plank-bed, and could do it again if necessary. But for those I love, for whom I am bound to provide, and whom I must shield, I would enter into twenty ruinous bargains, or do *anything* (in honor) that was necessary to their peace, comfort, and prosperity. I don't mind going into the fire myself when the call comes, but I will go alone; I will not take others by the hand and make them share my fate. Others may say what they will, but all they can say is useless. I am built a certain way, and I am too old to alter. In all my life I never laid any share of peril on others, if I could help it. When I was imprisoned, for instance, I positively forbade my *locum tenens* on the *Freethinker*, or anyone taking *his* place, to print such things as I had been prosecuted for—and I put the prohibition into writing; but immediately my imprisonment ended I did again, myself, and on principle, precisely what I had been told by brutal bigotry that I should not do.

This bill of sale on my home and library was no secret. Such things have to be registered, and therefore become public. In justice to myself, also, I must say that I informed Mr. Anderson's solicitors of it before they commenced litigation. It will be seen, therefore, that they pursued me into bankruptcy—on his order—well knowing that he could gain nothing financially. What he expected to gain was my ruin. But he has not succeeded in that charitable intention.

When I was made bankrupt, I understood that the Official Receiver, who became the trustee of my "estate," would sell it, pay out the holder of the bill of sale, and distribute the balance, whatever it was, amongst the unsecured creditors. It was on this ground that I appealed to the Freethought party to save my home and library by enabling my wife to purchase them. Eventually, however, after the first meeting of my creditors, I learnt that the Official Receiver preferred to take the simpler and easier course of selling his interest in what was covered by the bill of sale, leaving the purchaser to settle with the holder, the landlord, and any other claimants. My wife purchased the Official Receiver's interest, paid out the bill of sale, and settled with the rest. She is now, therefore, the absolute owner of our home and what was once my library. The home she uses and enjoys with the children as before—only she no longer dreads a knock at the door; and the library she leaves me to waste my time and wear out my brains in as before. She knows the books are much to me, and woman-like would save them *first* if she could, in an emergency; but was there ever the wife of a "literary gent" who did not secretly half-wish that his library were burnt down—of course accidentally, and that he might never collect another?

The Official Receiver sent his own valuer to my house. He came in my absence, and he valued the "effects" at £280. I think he undervalued the books and overvalued the furniture. But I made no demur to his official, indifferent valuation. It would have been no use if I had. I stand by it morally, as I am entitled to; and I ask the Freethought party what they think now about the stories of my "palatial establishment."

Of course there were several payments my wife had to make, morally on my account, which there is no occasion to recite. Legally, they were made on her own account, and she had a right to do as she liked with her own. They had no formal relationship to my bankruptcy, and therefore I need say no more about them.

"The Fund for Mrs. Foote" will now be closed. I said it would be closed when I had made my final statement. As soon as I could I honestly stated that the *danger* was over at my home. Subscriptions have been sent in since, but they were not pressed for. Whatever is received up to date will be acknowledged in next week's *Freethinker*. Then, as I announced, this subscription closes. The total amount will be printed, and there the matter will end.

Let me thank the friends who responded to my appeal, who saved my home, and averted Mr. Anderson's premeditated blow from my wife and children. I am under a deep obligation to them. But I know they do not want me to repay them in kind. They want me to translate my thanks into work for Freethought. And that they can rely on my doing. I feel

an immense relief. For my own part, I could be "bounded in a nutshell and count myself king of infinite space," but I had one apprehension, and that has been removed. My home is secured to my wife and children. That is all—but what an all to me! I smile. I laugh, I rub my hands, I chuckle over the discomfiture of my enemies. Yet I feel the inevitable reaction after the long tension. One fights right up to the point of victory, and then the knotted energies relax, weariness creeps over the strained muscles and sinews, and the nerves tell the tale of their over-taxing. A little time is necessary for restoration. I keep on with my regular, inevitable work; but presently I hope to strike out with renewed strength in the great battle of Freethought to which I am more than ever pledged.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE returns to the Athenæum Hall this evening (Oct. 27), when he will lecture on "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven." This is the address that drew such a crowded audience, in spite of the rain, at Glasgow. We dare say it will fill the Athenæum Hall on this occasion.

Mr. C. Cohen delivers three lectures to-day (Oct. 27) in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool. As these are the first special lectures of the new season there will doubtless be a good rally of the local "saints." Those who come from a distance will be able to obtain tea, which can now be provided by the hall caretaker.

The writer of "Among the Churches" in Monday's *Daily News* called attention to Mr. Cohen's *Foreign Missions*, saying that it "contains, in brief, the case against Christian propaganda abroad." "As such," the writer continued, "it may be administered as a wholesome corrective to orthodox complacency. It tells half a truth with apparent accuracy, and this half of the truth is not always remembered by missionary advocates." A qualification is made, however, to the effect that Mr. Cohen's little book, like all partisan writing, should be "perused critically." But should not *all* writing be perused in that way? Besides, the partisan writing on *Foreign Missions* is mostly on one side, and that is a strong reason why Mr. Cohen's little book should be widely read.

It is only right to thank the *Daily News* for this frank reference to Mr. Cohen's *Foreign Missions*. Several copies were sent out for review at the time of its publication, some months ago, but the organs of "public opinion," as they fondly call themselves, treated the work with discreet silence. Perhaps some of them will say something now the *Daily News* has led the way.

Mark Twain's brilliant and effective speech at the Hotel Waldorf against Tammany Hall drew much of its inspiration from Edmund Burke. We are glad to see the great American humorist, who is at bottom in deadly earnest, sufficiently cosmopolitan to draw from what many of his countrymen will regard as a foreign source. Burke was a very great man. Radicals have foolishly tried to belittle him. Thomas Paine knew better. He was a great man himself, and he instinctively picked out another great man as an antagonist. Achilles doesn't leave his tent to fight the small fry. He goes out to fight Hector.

A recent number of the *Era*, the leading organ of dramatic criticism, contained a leading article on "David and the Drama," which might almost have been inspired by Mr. Foote's chapter on David in *Bible Heroes*. Starting with the announcement that Mr. Stephen Phillips was writing a play for Mr. Beerbohm Tree on the David and Bathsheba incident, the writer proceeded to give a racy account of the career of the clever and unscrupulous bandit who became the second King of the Jews, and ended by hoping that some dramatist would "depict this able villain, and dethrone the milk-and-water poet who answers to the name of David in the picture-book imaginations of the pious public."

Miss E. M. Vance is progressing favorably, but recovery from the effects of diphtheria is always a rather slow process. She is now recuperating her sadly diminished strength away from the dusty air of London. As soon as she is really well enough, certainly not before, she will return to her duties at Stationers' Hall Court. In the meanwhile the shop business goes on by routine, but the affairs of the N. S. S. have necessarily to wait to some extent. In the circumstances, however, there ought to be no grumbling. There is no use in an interim secretary, and Miss Vance (to use an Hibernicism) is

entitled to an illness after so many years of active and devoted service. Of course a holiday of the same length would have been ever so much more preferable. But fate doesn't give us the choice of these things.

The *Secular Almanack* for 1902, issued under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, will be published very shortly. Besides the usual information, it will contain special articles by G. W. Foote, C. Watts, F. Neale, C. Cohen, A. B. Moss, W. Heaford, E. R. Woodward, "Mimnermus," etc. Orders can be placed at once with the Free-thought Publishing Company.

Johnny.

MOTHER :—

"JOHNNY will go to the Devil—go to the deepest hell ;
E's shook off the yoke of Jehovah, and says he's an infidel.
Johnny has pored o'er 'is Bible, read that the Lord is kind—
Read of 'is tender mercies.....God ! But the lad is blind !
Blinded by infidel papers, fuddled by infidel tracts
Which say as our faith is nothing if we've never done no good
acts.
O, 'tis a lie ! I feel it ! Christ suffered upon the tree ;
'E suffered for rogues and scoundrels—'e even suffered for me
What never does harm to no one, but only tries hard to do
good—
And Johnny, alas ! my Johnny, you haven't been washed in
the blood !"

"So (how it cuts me to write it !) my lad will go down to hell.
Johnny, my Johnny, love Jesus !.....Let's pray for the infidel !"

FATHER :—

"John is all right as a workman, knows how to handle his
tools,
Seems to be pretty contented, never breaks none of my rules.
'Publics' he won't often enter ; betting, he says, is a curse.
John is as straight as they make 'em (ah ! if none of men
was worse !).
Yet John makes my heart ache often. I'll tell you the reason
why :
I know where the lad'll go to when it comes to his turn to die.
He's give up the dear old chapel where Tippling Timothy went
What died of Delir'um Tremendous ; he says *he* wants no
Dissent ;
He says no God ever made us to cook on a white-hot coal !
Ah, John is a fairish workman ; but I fear that he'll lose his
soul."

"John was our first little baby—John who is bound for hell ;
John might have been as I am ; but John is an infidel."

JOHNNY :—

"We think when we're little children (because we don't under-
stand)
The faith that's dear to our parents is surely the genuine
'brand' ;
But, when we're children no longer, we note, with no little
surprise,
That the Book which we once deemed 'holy' is a tissue of
foolish lies.
Saviors we cease to reverence—each one must save himself ;
Outworn and fateful godheads we place on the lumber shelf.
Better the world for the passing of dreams of eternal gain
For those who are sycophantic—for others eternal pain ;
The passing of gruesome day-dreams, belief in a Fiend above ;
Better for leaving Jehovah, and crowning the earth-god
Love."

"Love is the king I bow to ; none governs man so well ;
Love is my 'blessed Savior',.....and I am an infidel !"

J. YOUNG.

Rum and the Gospel.

Recent heavy shipments of rum from this port to heathen
lands, wherein our missionaries have been long engaged in
spreading the gospel, ought to do much towards helping to
pacify those savage peoples. It is Byron who tells us—

There's naught, no doubt, so much the spirit calms
As rum and true religion.

Armed with a Mauser rifle, a Bible, and a jug of rum, any
up-to-date Yankee ought to be able to convince a goodly
number of "foreigners" that their temporal and eternal
happiness can be secured best and quickest by following the
flag, and no back talk about it.—*Boston Herald*.

By placing to Satan's account all the evil in the world, the
priests exculpate the Deity of nothing. The invention of the
Devil does not remedy the difficulty ; on the contrary, it but
entangles the priests more and more —*D'Holbach*.

Marriage and Divorce.—II.

THE next question is as to the right of society in this
matter. It must be admitted that the peace of society
will be promoted by the separation of such people.
Certainly society cannot insist upon a wife remaining
with a husband who bruises and mangles her flesh.
Even married women have a right to personal security.
They do not lose, either by contract or sacrament, the
right of self-preservation ; this they share in common,
to say the least of it, with the lowest living
creatures.

This will probably be admitted by most of the enemies
of divorce ; but they will insist that, while the wife has
the right to flee from her husband's roof and seek pro-
tection of kindred or friends, the marriage—the sacra-
ment—must remain unbroken. Is it to the interest of
society that those who despise each other should live
together ? Ought the world to be peopled by the chil-
dren of hatred or disgust, the children of lust and loath-
ing, or by the welcome babes of mutual love ? Is it
possible that an infinitely wise and compassionate God
insists that a helpless woman shall remain the wife of a
cruel wretch ? Can this add to the joy of Paradise, or
tend to keep one harp in tune ? Can anything be more
infamous than for a government to compel a woman to
remain the wife of a man she hates—of one whom she
justly holds in abhorrence ? Does any decent man wish
the assistance of a constable, a sheriff, a judge, or a
church, to keep his wife in his house ? Is it possible to
conceive of a more contemptible human being than a
man who would appeal to force in such a case ? It may
be said that the woman is free to go, and that the
courts will protect her from the brutality of the man
who promised to be her protector ; but where shall the
woman go ? She may have no friends, or they may be
poor ; her kindred may be dead. Has she no right to
build another home ? Must this woman, full of kind-
ness, affection, health, be tied and chained to this
living corpse ? Is there no future for her ? Must she
be an outcast for ever, deceived and betrayed for her
whole life ? Can she never sit by her own hearth, with
the arms of her children about her neck, and with a
husband who loves and protects her ? Is she to become
a social pariah, and is this for the benefit of society, or
is it for the sake of the wretch who destroyed her life ?

The ground has been taken that woman would lose
her dignity if marriage could be annulled. Is it neces-
sary to lose your liberty in order to retain your moral
character—in order to be pure and womanly ? Must a
woman, in order to retain her virtue, become a slave, a
serf, with a beast for a master, or with society for a
master, or with a phantom for a master ?

If an infinite being is one of the parties to the con-
tract, is it not the duty of this being to see to it that
the contract is carried out ? What consideration does
the infinite being give ? What consideration does he
receive ? If a wife owes no duty to her husband because
the husband has violated the contract, and has even
assaulted her life, is it possible for her to feel towards
him any real thrill of affection ? If she does not, what
is there left of marriage ? What part of this contract
or sacrament remains in living force ? She cannot sus-
tain the relation of wife, because she abhors him ; she
cannot remain under the same roof, for fear that she
may be killed. They sustain, then, only the relations
of hunter and hunted—of tyrant and victim. Is it
desirable that this relation should last through life, and
that it should be rendered sacred by the ceremony of a
church ?

Again I ask, Is it desirable to have families raised
under such circumstances ? Are we in need of children
born of such parents ? Can the virtue of others be pre-
served only by this destruction of happiness, by this per-
petual imprisonment ?

A marriage without love is bad enough, and a
marriage for wealth or position is low enough ; but
what shall we say of a marriage where the parties
actually abhor each other ? Is there any morality in
this ? Any virtue in this ? Is there virtue in retaining
the name of wife, or husband, without the real and true
relation ? Will any good man say, will any good woman
declare, that a true, loving woman should be compelled

to be the mother of children whose father she detests? Is there a good woman in the world who would not shrink from this herself? And is there a woman so heartless and so immoral that she would force another to bear that from which she would shudderingly and shriekingly shrink?

Marriages are made by men and women, not by society; not by the State; not by the Church; not by supernatural beings. By this time we should know that nothing is moral that does not tend to the well-being of sentient beings; that nothing is virtuous the result of which is not good. We know now, if we know anything, that all the reasons for doing right, and all the reasons against doing wrong, are here in this world. We should have imagination enough to put ourselves in the place of another. Let a man suppose himself a helpless woman beaten by a brutal husband—would he advocate divorces then?

Few people have an adequate idea of the sufferings of women and children, of the number of wives who tremble when they hear the footsteps of a returning husband, of the number of children who hide when they hear the voice of a father. Few people know the number of blows that fall on the flesh of the helpless every day, and few know the nights of terror passed by mothers who hold babes to their breasts. Compared with these, all the hardships of poverty borne by those who love each other are as nothing. Men and women truly married bear the sufferings and misfortunes of poverty together. They console each other. In the darkest night they see the radiance of a star, and their affection gives to the heart of each perpetual sunshine.

The good home is the unit of the good government. The hearth-stone is the corner-stone of civilisation. Society is not interested in the preservation of hateful homes, of homes where husbands and wives are selfish, cold, and cruel. It is not to the interest of society that good women should be enslaved, that they should live in fear, or that they should become mothers by husbands whom they hate. Homes should be filled with kind and generous fathers, with true and loving mothers; and, when they are so filled, the world will be civilised. Intelligence will rock the cradle; Justice will sit in the courts; Wisdom in the legislative halls; and above all and over all, like the dome of heaven, will be the spirit of Liberty.

Although marriage is the most important and the most sacred contract that human beings can make, still, when that contract has been violated, courts should have the power to declare it null and void upon such conditions as may be just.

As a rule, the woman dowers the husband with her youth, her beauty, her love—with all she has; and from this contract certainly the husband should never be released, unless the wife has broken the conditions of that contract. Divorces should be granted publicly, precisely as the marriage should be solemnised. Every marriage should be known, and there should be witnesses, to the end that the character of the contract entered into should be understood; the record should be open and public. And the same is true of divorces. The conditions should be determined, the property should be divided, by a court of equity, and the custody of the children given under regulations prescribed.

Men and women are not virtuous by law. Law does not of itself create virtue, nor is it the foundation or fountain of love. Law should protect virtue, and law should protect the wife, if she has kept her contract, and the husband, if he has fulfilled his. But the death of love is the end of marriage. Love is natural. Back of all ceremony burns, and will forever burn, the sacred flame. There has been no time in the world's history when that torch was extinguished. In all ages, in all climes, among all people, there has been true, pure, and unselfish love. Long before a ceremony was thought of, long before a priest existed, there were true and perfect marriages. Back of public opinion is natural modesty, the affections of the heart; and, in spite of all law, there is, and forever will be, the realm of choice. Wherever love is, it is pure; and everywhere, and at all times, the ceremony of marriage testifies to that which has happened within the temple of the human heart.

R. G. INGERSOLL.

(To be concluded.)

A Discredited Religion.

THE trial of Christianity as to its origin and influence may be said to have begun in earnest with the latter half of the nineteenth century. All along the course of its history opponents have risen up to challenge its pretensions and deny its claims, and these combatants have increased in number and importance with the progress of time and the spread of knowledge.

The eighteenth century was a period of general and open scepticism, but as the revolt against faith was caused principally by the exercise of reason, without a sufficient basis of scientific learning, the reaction was inevitable, and emotional religion resumed the sway which it has not yet entirely lost, although its end is near. But now unbelief has another and a firmer foundation. The establishment of the study of comparative religion as an acknowledged and separate science has given new impetus to the investigation of ancient writings and sculptural remains, the result being already sufficiently destructive of the supposed divine inspiration of the so-called holy scriptures to convince every unprejudiced thinker and seriously disturb the mass of unreflecting upholders of the absurd claim.

Earlier Freethinkers had criticised many statements in both the Old and the New Testament as unworthy of belief because contrary to science and experience and common sense, such as the creation of light before the creation of the sun, the maternity of a virgin, the resurrection of the dead; but such objections were met by the asserted omnipotence of God, and orthodoxy remained unshaken. But now that the story of Genesis is proved to be only a garbled account of myths borrowed from nations still older than the Hebrews and laying no claim to be the chosen people of God, that a divine son of a virgin mother is known to be a frequently-recurring phenomenon in ancient mythology, and that the longing for immortality is recognised as having given rise in many lands and many languages to comforting legends of dead bodies restored to life by miraculous agency, all these discoveries have overthrown the chief supports of superstition and prepared the downfall of every existing institution built upon faith in the unseen.

The one God of Judaism, as well as the triune God of Christianity, must vanish before the all-prevailing light of science, and the Virgin Mary must take her place among the earlier goddesses who have served in their time to idealize and hallow the office of maternity.

It cannot be denied that in religion old things are passing away and all things are becoming new; it is also certain that former beliefs cannot be revived, because they were created by ignorance and have been destroyed by knowledge. These facts cause regret and dismay to many minds; it remains, therefore, for such to examine the past history and present conditions of Christianity in order to determine whether they have any reason to be sorry for the change.

Christianity claims to be a world-religion—the world-religion—and its adherents boast that already the majority of the earth's inhabitants are, at least, nominal Christians, and the kingdoms of the world are the kingdoms of Christ. But these boasts are as false as are the prophecies of final triumph, such as:—

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore
Till moon shall wax and wane no more.

On the contrary, his power is already broken, and his kingdom will soon cease to spread. What is really spreading is the conviction that Christ is merely a myth, and what demonstrates the inefficacy of "the scheme of salvation" is the conduct of Christian nations and Christian individuals in social life. Never has the contrast between doctrine and practice been more strikingly illustrated than in these our days.

Not all the attacks of unbelief against what is claimed to be "revealed" religion have done half so much to unsettle the faith of believers and destroy the influence of ministers of the Gospel as is being accomplished nowadays by the majority of teachers and taught in Christian communities through their own behavior towards their fellow men. We see at present the nations which are the most strenuous upholders of

Christianity engaged in wars of conquest which are a disgrace to civilisation, so barbarous are the methods employed, so shameless the outrages committed by the armies, so criminally selfish the acknowledged purpose of attack. We hear how the rulers cant and whine in the same breath which orders theft and slaughter; we know that the protests of the small minority of right-thinking and right-feeling people are unheeded. Everyone knows that the results of the wars are the untimely death of thousands, the crippling in body and mind of thousands more who survive, the increase and spread of loathsome diseases which will entail misery upon future generations, the further oppression of the poor by taxation, the lowering of the moral standard for rich and poor alike. And all this evil is justified in the name of him who is believed to have bequeathed not only the precept, "Love your enemies," but also its convenient antithesis, "I come not to send peace upon earth, but a sword."

A few honest and sincere souls in each nation recognise the incongruity of these declarations and the fatal injury of their effects. After the excitement is over other souls will see the hollowness of the pretence by which they have been deceived, and the end will be that the Christian religion will have lost forever the influence which has heretofore kept it in some degree a living and acting force. Even now we see evidences of its decline in the increasing unwillingness of the Churches to contribute to the support of the foreign missions, which have everywhere brought so much discredit upon the cause; in the rapid falling off of attendance upon religious services at home; in the failure of the spasmodic efforts of the clergy to tempt, by various devices, the wandering flocks to return to the worn-out pastures; in the frequent outbursts of fanaticism among unsatisfied religionists who have lost confidence in their earlier spiritual guides, and are ready to follow any impostor shrewd enough to invent new superstitions or to patch up the old.

Christ is, indeed, wounded in the house of his friends, and it is well for those friends that he is only a myth, and not an omniscient and omnipotent being, waiting to be their final judge. Not, however, that injustice and cruelty and hypocrisy ever escape punishment; the laws of the universe look out for that!

ELIZABETH E. EVANS.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Intense Satisfaction of Freethinking.

A SENTENCE in the quotation from Miss Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm*, which appeared on our first page of last week, strikes a note which is too often neglected by many Freethinkers. Certainly if mental enjoyment and satisfaction is any object to be attained by man, as distinguished from the mere physical gratifications common to all animals, then the satisfaction of being a Freethinker should be one of the most supreme of human pleasures. Christians frequently style themselves "free thinkers," and assert that belief in Christ gives them perfect freedom and perfect joy. Those, however, who have passed the rubicon, who feel themselves free to face the problems of existence without any mental restraints through fear of "divine" displeasure or priestly anathema, and for whom the only "sacred" subjects are those that relate to the welfare and happiness of mankind—these alone can know the "intense satisfaction" Miss Schreiner speaks of. Once acquired, nothing short of insanity could permit a Freethinker to allow his mental freedom to be again trammelled by the chains of any form of supernaturalism.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

Suburban Sundays.

Stranger: "Your congregation was rather small to-day."

Minister: "Yes, they only promise to come 'weather permitting.'"

Stranger: "But it was clear."

Minister: "Well, they mean if it rains they'll come. If it is clear they play golf or go fishing."—*Chicago News*.

Mr. Frontpew—"I am glad you belong to our church choir, my dear; it is such an orderly organisation. I never see you whispering to one another during services." Mrs. Frontpew—"No; none of us are on speaking terms."—*The Ohio State Journal*.

Quite the Thick End of the Wedge.

REV. WILLIAM S. WEDGE, it would seem by the following, which we copy from the *Chicago American*, is doing a profitable matrimonial business. He has had, already, six wives, and is about to take the seventh:—

Wife No. 1 was Mrs. Florence Wedge, of Baltimore, who now resides in that city at 520 Pearl-street. Wedge obtained a divorce from her after they had been married three years. She has a son, Russell Wedge, eighteen years old.

Wife No. 2—A native of Battle Creek, Mich.; maiden name unknown. She left him after they had been married but two weeks.

Wife No. 3—An American woman, said to have been a native of Michigan; separated in a few weeks after marriage.

Wife No. 4—An Indiana woman, drowned with her baby a short time after the child's birth; marriage said to have been compulsory.

Wife No. 5—Miss Maude Kirke, of Philadelphia, died in the sanitarium at Battle Creek, Mich.

Wife No. 6—Miss Edith Hoy, of Stratford-on-Avon, drowned while boating with her husband.

Mrs. Mary Fine, who may yet become wife No. 7, resides in Brooklyn, and refuses to believe that her fiancé is intentionally disloyal to her.

The enemies of this man of God insinuate that he is responsible for the death of these wives—that he gets the life of each heavily insured, then, when they are gone, collects and pockets what is due on the policy. There is a better explanation than that. When they get full of religion and begin to sing, "I want to be an angel, and with the angels stand," the good man helps them realise their wish. And if what is intimated be true, when Brother Wedge gets to heaven he will be welcomed by a group of angels made up entirely of his wives.

—*Freethought Magazine* (Chicago).

Getting Out of the Rut.

A CORRESPONDENT of the *Evangelical News* writes:—"I thought the following experience would interest you, and show how people are getting out of the old orthodox grooves, and where one would least expect to find them. A relative of mine was recently in the company of several gentlemen—strangers, I believe—and, the subject of parsons coming up, he was surprised at the freedom of the opinions expressed by them. One old man of about fifty or so said: 'Well, I'm a Churchman. I don't know why; because I was brought up to it, I suppose. Any way, I'm a Churchman, and I'm a churchwarden too, and I and the vicar are great friends, and get on splendidly; but I don't believe a rap he says.' 'Well,' said another, 'I'm a Wesleyan and a deacon, and do my share in propping up the chapel; but I don't believe what our minister tells us. I listen to what he has to say, and then think as I like. I like to have a good, broad mind on religious matters. And I've got a friend who is a minister, and he's in a terrible fix just now. He can't believe the doctrine he teaches, and he's too old to take to any other means of making a living, and a family dependent on him; and, as there is a demand for his kind of teaching, he supplies the demand to live.'"

Correspondence.

MR. TALLACK AND BRUTAL PENALTIES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—At a time when Mr. William Tallack is retiring from the secretaryship of the Howard Association, after a long tenure of that office, one is unwilling to say a word which might seem ungracious or disparaging. It is, therefore, to be regretted that Mr. Tallack should himself provoke criticism by the tone of his remarks to interviewers, and by his quite uncalled-for references to his humanitarian "opponents."

Mr. Tallack is well aware that the humaner system of prison treatment, introduced in the Act of 1898, was the result of an agitation which his society did its best to discourage, and that the whipping-craze to which he unwisely gave his adhesion has been thoroughly discredited in the debates of the past two sessions. A modest retirement best befits those whose policy has ended in discomfiture.

HUMANITARIAN.

Now Jonah, after the termination of his three-days' engagement with the whale, started for his old home to tell the neighbors. A thought struck him and he stopped. "No," he said, "I shall not say a word about it. They would say it was nothing but a fish story!" But it leaked out in spite of him.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Good without God, and Happiness without Heaven."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7.30, E. B. Rose, "The Religion of the Boers."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, Miss Notcutt, "The Religion of the Old Testament."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Su rey Masonic Hall): 7, H. Snell, "The Higher Criticism."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (78 Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, G. E. O'Dell, "Labour and Life."

WEST LONDON BRANCH (Hyde Park): Lectures every Thursday at 7.30 p.m.; Sundays at 11.30 a.m.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.50, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

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

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms): 7, Concert—Florence String Quartette. Mr. Davis and party.

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 17 Little Horton-lane): H. Percy Ward—3, "Crime and Criminals"; 7, "The Foolishness of Prayer."

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

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): J. M. Robertson—11.30, "The Pride of Race"; 2.30, "Darwinism and Ethics"; 6.30, "The Making of the Gospels."

HULL (Friendly Societies' Hall, Room No. 2): 7, G. E. Conrad Naewiger, "Is Christianity Dying?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Humberstone-gate): Touzeau Parris—11, "Some Political Superstitions"; 6.30, "Sacramental Superstitions."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Cohen—11, "The Farce of Christian Democracy"; 3, "Social Evolution and the Struggle for Existence"; 7, "What the World Owes to Christianity."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, S. H. Pollard, "Was Adam the First Man?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, A Member of the Sheffield Clarion Club will reply to Mr. Berrisford's "Objections to Socialism."

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

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