

THE Freethinker

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The Discovery of the Future.

THERE is nothing easier in the world than prophecy, and usually there is nothing that repays effort less. George Eliot called it the most gratuitous form of error. No one is compelled to prophesy, and if they do so and fail there is not left to them even the consoling reflection that the art was forced upon them. Probably it is the ease with which it can be done that tempts people. All that is required is unlimited confidence and a ream of paper, and the stock-in-trade of the average prophet is complete. And if the prophecies are sufficiently vague, or the date of their realisation sufficiently distant, or, better still, if they are without date altogether, one is tolerably secure from exposure.

Nevertheless, there is prophecy and prophecy. There is the prophecy that one meets with in religious writers or social dreamers, based upon nothing and leading nowhere, and there is the prophecy that science indulges in which consists of a careful collection and examination of verifiable data, and building upon this basis a forecast of the future. And this latter species of scientific prophecy is not only justifiable, but it constitutes the chief value of real science. It is a knowledge of what *will* occur in astronomy, biology, or chemistry that makes these sciences of practical value to mankind, and in the newer science of sociology its chief recommendation lies in it putting within our power the ability to forecast what events will occur, given certain admitted data. Without this element science would have a purely speculative value only.

Among the writers of fiction in England who have taken this species of prophecy as their special field, Mr. H. G. Wells stands in the front rank. And in *Anticipations*, as well as his recent lecture at the Royal Institution in January, he has carried something of the same principle into the more serious essay. Mr. Wells's lecture, the title of which appears at the head of this article, is not, however, concerned with depicting what events will occur, or what society will be like in the year 3000 A.D., or thereabouts; his address had reference rather to the changed point of view from which we contemplate man and the universe. There are, he reminded his hearers, two broadly-contrasted types of mind—the one judging the present from the standpoint of the past and attempting to regulate it in accordance with the dictates or customs of the past, the other looking upon the present as only the material for the future, and therefore judging everything with more of an eye for consequences. Of course, this is only a convenient division; all people are more or less influenced by both methods, and criticise alternately from the standpoint of the "has been," or from that of the "is to be." Still, most definitions and all classifications are convenient ones only, and this is as good a working classification as any.

The real text of Mr. Wells's address is the power of the past over the present, and the imperative necessity there is of modifying its influence. It was Comte who said that the empire of the dead increased in strength with the passing of each generation. Each generation, by the bare fact of having lived, forges fetters for those that are to follow, and the human portion of the environment to which man has to adapt himself thus becomes larger year by year. But in the clear light of reason there is always a *prima facie* case for regarding rules that have been framed by the past, and instincts that have come down from the past, with suspicion. All

these things have only a certain reference to the present, they can have no certain reference to the future; and, when the present becomes the past, and so more distant still from the every-day exigencies of life, there is always a need for carefully examining all that has come down to us, modifying all that admits of improvement and discarding all that is not.

"The truth is," says Richard Jeffries in that wonderful piece of autobiography, *The Story of My Heart*—"the truth is, we die through our ancestors; we are murdered by our ancestors. Their dead hands stretch forth from the tomb, and drag us down to their mouldering bones. We, in our turn, are at this moment preparing death for our unborn posterity..... Let us begin to roll back the tide of death, and to set our faces steadily to a future of life. It should be the sacred and sworn duty of everyone, once at least during lifetime, to do something in person towards this end..... Erase the past from the mind—stand face to face with the real now—and work out all anew."

Rather vehemently put, and yet not too vehemently to rouse attention to this point. We all of us live too much with the past, and too little with the present and the future. It is the power of the past that sits like an incubus upon us, partly paralysing our best efforts, and striving to keep life down to the same dull dead level. Why is it that in social matters we maintain obsolete institutions and perpetuate old-world privileges but because of the power of the dead hand? We have what Winwood Reade called "tailed minds" as well as tailed bodies; and, just as our bodies show their relation to the lower animal world, so we retain in social life privileges and customs and institutions the utility of which really belongs to a bygone stage of civilisation.

But the difficulty is to get people to test things by the standard of present or future requirements, or even to realise that such a standard of measurement is necessary. Let us take, as an illustration, an example dwelt upon by Mr. Wells. The mass of people, it may safely be assumed, in discussing ethical questions, are quite content to base their moral judgments upon the past. It has been written, "Thou shalt not steal," and that, for the majority, is the full reason why stealing is wrong. There is no perception of the fundamental reason *why* stealing is wrong, and there is no attempt to trace out the connections between an act of theft and its social consequences; indeed, they often resent such an inquiry as next door to immorality itself, as is witnessed by the attacks made upon all who have tried to place ethics upon an inductive basis. Or, when the reason of ethical rules is not decided by a frank appeal to tradition, we get the ghost of it in the familiar maxim that we must do right regardless of consequences—do right even though the heavens fall; a perfectly nonsensical brace of maxims, since it is always the consequences of actions that constitute either their goodness or badness. Clearly, if an action were *without* consequences, no one would trouble whether it was performed or not; and if murder, say, had exactly opposite consequences to what it has, we should all cease to deprecate it. What is called doing right without regard to consequences really means taking the experience of the past blindly and on trust; and, because that has decided that certain consequences follow from certain actions, never to discuss its conclusions, and never to overhaul its decisions. And, as Mr. Wells suggests, what is required is to shift the point of view from the past to the future; instead of saying a thing is right because it has been so decided in the past, to say it is right because it will have certain consequences in the future. And if

anyone asks, "What does it matter, seeing that the decision may be the same in both cases?" the reply is that it always matters very materially whether we do or do not exercise whatever intelligence we possess upon the questions that come before us. The mere tracing of consequences is an education, and the most valuable education that a man can receive. It is, indeed, precisely because the past tends to cramp this species of education that it presses so heavily upon the present, and does so much to cramp its life.

But an even better field than ethics for the illustration of the power of the past over the present is that of religion; for here everything refers for authority to what has gone before. Because thousands of years ago superstitious people believed that the day devoted to the planet Saturn was an unlucky day, and that everything done upon that day would bring misfortune, and because this notion became entangled later with the Christian ascetic belief that God preferred long faces to broad ones, we continue to sacrifice one-seventh of our lives to the foolish customs of an ignorant past, and close many—the vast majority, in fact—of our museums, art galleries, and public institutions on the only day upon which they can be easily and profitably visited by the bulk of the population; and a little boy, wishing to use a public gymnasium in a public park on Sunday, finds himself debarred in the name of a hideous Oriental deity that came to maturity in the brains of semi-savages thousands of years before he was born. We continue to worship a mysterious object called a God, and believe in a non-understandable entity called a soul for no other valid reason than that these beliefs had their origin in the ignorance of our primitive ancestors, who read their own fears and passions into the world around them. And because these same half-human ancestors of ours thought to placate these angry deities by sacrifice, young men and young women continue to use disgusting language about the sacrifice of the Lamb, of being washed in the blood of the Savior, and have their moral sense so blunted by their belief as to worship a Deity who is said to have demanded human blood before he would forgive mankind being as he left them.

Again, the existence of a priesthood has reference to the past, and nothing but the past. No one now believes that priests have any information that other people have not, or any means of acquiring knowledge that are not open to other people. The only legitimate function of a priest is that of performing magical rites, or standing as a species of middleman between the gods and their worshippers—and, like most middlemen, getting more profit out of the transaction than either of the other two parties. The priest, too, is a survival of the ignorant past, as reminiscent of our forefathers' mental condition, as our rudimentary tails are of our tree-climbing ancestry. Yet we maintain thousands of these species, as we ring church bells to frighten away demons that people have ceased to believe in, profess a belief in miracles long after science has destroyed the possibility of their happening, offer prayers while knowing how useless they are, and fill our existence with the most hopeless jumble of absurdly contradictory antics and beliefs that the world has yet seen.

Why do we allow the past to dominate us to this extent? "It is," says Mr. Wells, and rightly, "into the future we go; to-morrow is the eventful thing for us. There lies all that remains to be felt by us and our children, and all those that are dear to us. Yet we marshal and order men into classes entirely with regard to the past; we draw shame and honour out of the past, against the rights of property, the vested interests, the agreements, and establishments of the past; the future has no rights. Literature is for the most part history, a history at one remove; and what is culture but a mould of interpretation into which new things are thrust.....Our consciousness, like our thoughts, are all retrospective. We travel on roads so narrow that they suffocate our traffic; we live in uncomfortable, inconvenient, life-wasting houses, out of a love of familiar shapes and familiar customs and a dread of strangeness; all our public affairs are cramped by local boundaries. Our clothing, our habits of speech, our spelling, our weights and measures, our carriages, our religious and political theories, all witness to the binding power of the past upon our minds."

Mr. Wells is largely correct in finding the cause of this bondage and sheep-like obedience to the past to be that the mind follows the line of least resistance, and that it requires less mental exertion to take the food that is already served than to get a meal of one's own providing. It is so much easier to go with the stream than against it; a dead fish can do the former, but it requires one that is very much alive to do the latter. And the mass of men do not reason. They possess minds like so much putty, which retains the impress of the last hand that grasped. The average man has no *opinions*. He has a number of prejudices that masquerade as such; but he has no opinions that have been reached by a process of analysis, comparison, classification, and verification. Yet the past has no *claims* upon us; it can be made neither better nor worse by our action. The future alone can be affected by what we think, by what we say, and by what we do; and therefore it is the future alone that we are really concerned about. We are only concerned with the past so far as it may furnish us with examples of other people's experience, and thus help us to regulate the present. Let the dead bury the dead, and let the living present lend its energies to the task of preparing for the is-to-be living future.

We have no space to follow Mr. Wells into his speculations concerning the man of the future. Prophecy is always a dangerous game, and it may be questioned if our knowledge of the complex forces determining human growth is sufficiently exact for us to safely venture upon any prediction. We may grant, of course, that if we knew all the forces at present operating in human society, and all the relations between these forces, systematic explorations of the future would be no more difficult than an astronomer's prediction of the date of a planetary conjunction two thousand years hence. Only we hardly possess that knowledge yet. There is, too, always the danger in such prophetic work of taking human nature as a settled quantity. And human nature is not fixed, but, within limits, extremely variable. The slowly-changing environment of man—an environment of which every man is himself a part, and which is modified even by his having existed—must effect a corresponding change in human nature, the exact character of which it is impossible, at present, to determine. We can only detect tendencies, and one of them certainly is towards what Mr. Wells has excellently called the "Discovery of the Future." People are slowly realising that to submit blindly to the power of the past, merely because it is the past, is the most hopeless and the most degrading form of slavery. We are beginning to realise that the past, because it was the past, must, under normal conditions, have known less than we do; that it is the duty of the present to reject its errors, correct its misrepresentations, and remedy its injustices. And the man of the present who works most strenuously along these lines, who realises that in the course of human evolution nothing is lost, and that all our thoughts and actions are making for good or ill in the life of the race, is preparing in the surest manner the better life of the future.

C. COHEN.

Delusion or Hypocrisy: Which?

DESPITE the constant boast that Christianity has exercised a unique influence for good upon the general community, society is impregnated either with delusion or hypocrisy. There is certainly little to be said for the beneficial effects of the Christian faith when we find that after centuries of fair trial it has failed to establish intellectual stability or mental honesty amongst even its leading exponents. The Church, which is supposed by some persons to be the depository of fidelity to principle, of conscientiousness of belief, and of real ethical rectitude, is in fact an institution for fostering delusion or hypocrisy. This may appear to some to be a very sweeping statement, but I make it advisedly, having ample evidence at my command to justify the allegation. Recently Father Ignatius contributed an article to the *Rambler* on "The Real Crisis in the Anglican Church." It is not, he asserts, questions of ritual that are at stake, but the question between the higher

critics and the Christian believer. He is appalled to find it stated by one of the former, and the statement acquiesced in by others, that we "are not to pretend that the Scriptures are absolutely perfect in any part." He names Canons Gore, Cheyne, and Driver; Deans Fremantle and Farrar; Archbishop Temple and Bishop Ryle, as some of the teachers of this "blasphemy." "The really appalling thing," says Father Ignatius, "is the dishonesty of persons holding such views remaining in the Anglican Church as dignitaries and chief instructors of the people."

The distinction made by the clergy and their followers between precept and practice is not even confined to minor points of their profession, but it pertains to the very basic feature of Christian belief—namely, the person and teachings of Jesus Christ. Of late I have been an attentive reader of the selected sermons published weekly in the *Christian World Pulpit*. These contain the utterances of the Archbishops, the Bishops, and Canons of the Church of England, and also of the leading Nonconformists. Now, in the whole of these sermons the principal theme is the perfection of Christ's character and the effect of his teachings in the formation and regulation of human conduct. Whatever is the subject of the preacher's discourse, Christ is brought in, and he is described as the greatest inspiration to human advancement. This fulsome adulation rests entirely upon a fictitious estimate of his character and of his supposed teachings. There is nothing to be found in the Gospels to justify such groundless claims, while much could be cited from his biographers in support of totally opposite conclusions.

To me it appears marvellous how men possessing an average share of intellectual discrimination and knowledge of history should appear to form opinions of Christ and his influence which are the very contrary of truth. It must be the result of either delusion or hypocrisy, inasmuch as the Jesus of the New Testament in no way corresponds with the idealisations with which emotional worshippers have invested him. It must therefore follow that they either mistake the true character of their hero, in which case they are deluded, or they profess to follow an example which they know cannot be emulated, and that is an evidence of lack of sincerity. I am less inclined than ever to be aggressive in my propagandist work, but I cannot be silent while attempts are made to palm off upon credulous minds delusions for realities, and to substitute a semblance of conviction for honesty of belief.

This delusive or hypocritical exaltation of Christ has been very much in evidence of late. Only a few weeks since the Bishop of London preached a special sermon upon "Following Jesus," but he never told his hearers upon "how the thing was to be done." Dr. Ingram was sagacious enough to recognise that the question of the "call" to follow Jesus involved "three possible dangers." He said:—

"The first is the danger of unreality. It is so easy to think that, because we call ourselves Christians, and name the name of Christ, therefore we have followed Him.....The second danger is that we may think this call comes to only a few.....The third danger is—and this is often suggested by books which describe people as doing what Jesus would do—that of thinking it is only possible to follow Him in one way. What, then—comes to the next question—is meant by following Christ? Although we cannot really split ourselves up into three parts—we are so complex that we cannot divide ourselves and analyse ourselves into three parts—yet it is perfectly true that there is a mind, and there is a conscience, and there is a spirit in man. If we follow Christ, we must follow Him with all three—mind, conscience, and spirit."

Does not the Bishop see that the three dangers he mentions show the fallacy of supposing that Jesus is followed at all? A fourth danger, however, may be added, and that is, that the result of an attempt to follow Christ would be to expose the follower to the charge of lunacy or criminality. Hence professed Christians never attempt the task. Father Ignatius, when preaching in Boston a few years ago, referring to Jesus, said: "If the world had followed his example, society would have ceased to exist. If his were the utterances of a man, then they rank with the ravings of a lunatic!" This accords with the Rev. Charles Voysey's opinion that Christ's mind gave way, and that he was not responsible

for his actions. It also agrees with the statement of Christ's own personal friends that he was "beside himself." The Jews considered he was "mad."

The Bishop says if we follow Christ we must do so with "mind, conscience, and spirit." Is this possible or desirable? I allege not; and, if Christians think I am wrong in my allegation, let a few of them, commencing with even the Bishop of London himself, try the experiment. Let us have practice, not preaching; action, not words. We have had too much of clerical hypocrisy and pandering to the credulity of the thoughtless multitude. Candor of statement and honesty of purpose are the requirements of the present day. If Christ were alive now, he would probably discover many within the Church to whom he would repeat his words: "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them" (Luke xi. 44).

It should be remembered that the only Jesus Christians profess to follow is the one whose character and teachings are set forth in the Gospels. To speak about any other imaginary Jesus or Christ is quite beside the question. Now, if it were even possible (which it is not) to obey the New Testament hero, what would such obedience mean? We read: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" (Matthew viii. 20). The cause of this difference is clear. Foxes dig their holes, and the birds make themselves nests; but Jesus wandered about, neglecting his daily labor, and failed to provide himself with a home. He put into practice his own unfortunate teachings to "Take no thought for the morrow," to "Labor not for the meat which perisheth," and to "Lay not up treasures on earth"; the result being that he was worse off than the foxes and birds. Had he kept to his carpenter's bench, as an industrious man should have done, no doubt he would have had a place "where to lay his head." Let anyone follow Christ in this particular, and he would at once be regarded as a pest to society. The instructions of Jesus to his followers were to give to those who take their coats their cloaks also; "Ask and ye shall receive"; "The lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"; "The birds.....sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly father feedeth them. Ye are of more value than they"; "Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" To follow Christ would be to substitute faith for work, to depend upon God rather than upon one's own exertions, and to rest assured that "all things, whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew xxi. 22). "Follow Christ," and peace would be impossible (Matthew x. 34, 35); domestic hate would be supreme (Luke xiv. 26); tyranny would be triumphant; persecutions would be rife; self-mutilation would be in practice; and all mundane affairs would be regarded as of secondary importance. Let certain teachings ascribed to Christ be universally adopted, and the world would be an abode of woe. The few people remaining in it would be eunuchs, or mendicants. All the forces of nature would be left in their primal condition. Cities would not be built, States would not be organised, fields would remain uncultivated. No ships would plough the ocean. There would be no commerce, no law, no government. The wheels of industry would remain forever silent. The plough, the loom, and the anvil would be unused. Books would not be written, and man would return to his native wildness and ignorance, relying for food, raiment, and shelter on his "heavenly Father who clothes the lilies and feeds the ravens." Follow Christ, and courtesy towards opponents would be rare (Matthew xxiii. 17-19); unfilial treatment of mothers by their sons would be justified (John ii. 3, 4); and freedom of thought would be impossible.

Possibly some persons may think my indictment against Christ is too severe; but the question is, Are my statements true? I am no hero-worshipper, and therefore could never understand the extravagant and unqualified praise claimed for Christ. That he, like most men, possessed some noble traits of character I admit; but that fact does not make him perfect, nor

establish him as an example for our guidance to-day. And it is noteworthy that the Bishop of London and Christians in general, while they are never tired of extolling their idol, do not mark their appreciation of his supposed virtues by endeavoring to follow him in their daily lives. The man we need as a model to-day is an exponent of truths that can be verified by reason and experience—one who possesses an educated and a refined mind; who is indifferent to the frowns of the vulgar or the bribes of the wealthy; who is always courteous; who is ever ready to relieve the distressed; who treats the humble and those in high places alike with respect; who has no words of abuse or reproach for anyone; and who is deaf to censure or applause. The Christ of the Gospels was not such a man, and to assert that he was is only to yield to delusion or hypocrisy.

CHARLES WATTS.

Should Happiness be Our Aim?—II.

THE broad fact is that we all act on the principles or promptings of natural or self-gratifying Hedonism, and that it is impossible to do otherwise.* As conscious agents and reasonable beings, we cannot act without motives or inducements of some kind. We are moved by feelings or desires or impulses which we satisfy or gratify in various ways. In all this we follow attractions which give pleasure, and we shun such conditions as cause or threaten pain. Those who revile hedonistic principles most bitterly act on the very principles they condemn. They work for infinite happiness in heaven; for the emotional pleasure of serving an adored deity, or mankind, or those they love; for the pleasant prospect of advancing their own interests or securing social approval or self-approval; for the pleasure of promoting some ideal or satisfying some desire. They endeavor to escape the dreaded pains of hell or divine wrath, and the discomforts or agonies of social condemnation and self-condemnation or remorse. They avoid the painful shock of violating treasured ideals or firmly-established habits. They do their best to preserve themselves from death and loss and injury and anxiety and disease, and from all other horrifying or terrifying or otherwise painful conditions, just the same as people who are confessedly Hedonists. They naturally and inevitably accept the positive or relative happiness of obeying the strongest of the attractions and repulsions which act upon their minds. The balance or resultant of the various attractions which are pleasures, and repulsions which are pains, decides their actions just as it decides ours. If any baseness attaches to the pursuit of happiness and the avoidance of pain, the Christian must share that baseness in a pre-eminent degree. He seeks to wallow in the mire, if it be such, far more than the hedonistic "materialist" with his limited expectations and desires.

One great source of prejudice against hedonistic principles is that most people have an absurdly imperfect idea of the pleasures and pains that actually govern human conduct. When they think of pleasure, they allow their attention to be engrossed by a few special indulgences or excitements,† often of inferior type and temporary character. Uninstructed or misinstructed in such matters, they forget or under-estimate the altruistic emotions, the higher intellectual and moral pleasures, and the quiet, steady, enduring pleasures which sustain the activities of every-day existence.

* Although in one sense we are all Hedonists, since in practice we all naturally and inevitably pursue the greater pleasure and shun the greater pain, it does not follow that we should apply the term to all men indiscriminately. We shall find it more convenient to let the word "Hedonist" mean one who holds the doctrine that pleasure is the chief good—just as we limit the use of the term "Evolutionist" to believers in the doctrine of Evolution, and do not apply it to all who take part in the evolutionary processes which are moulding man and all other organisms.

† The fashion set by ordinary people in this misleading appropriation of the word "pleasure" is followed by literary men. Macaulay, for instance, writes: "In one mind avarice predominates; in another, pride; in a third, love of pleasure." This could more accurately be re-written thus: "In one mind, the pleasure of gratifying avarice predominates; in another, the pleasure attending pride; in a third, what is ordinarily called 'love of pleasure.'"

Religion, by neglecting or suppressing the teachings of science and philosophy, has been responsible for much of this ignorance and prejudice.

We may learn from Darwin's account of the evolution of the Moral Sense (*Descent of Man*, chapter iv.) how the higher pleasures and higher pains override the urgent but temporary appetites by their persistence, until the enduring social instincts attain the mastery. As atheistic Evolutionists, we have to teach men the *lasting* pleasures of the higher intellectual and moral stages of human evolution. The "grovelling materialist" will impress upon mankind the necessity of avoiding the misery of defying the social or moral obligations, while soaring saints are teaching men that pleasure and happiness are identical with the reckless lusts and appetites of unbridled sensualism, and that there is no reason for restraining indulgence in vice if we lose faith in the current superstitions. The responsibility of such pious deluders of the young and thoughtless is a frightful one. When they teach mankind that vice is happiness they practically recommend vice, for mankind is so built as to follow happiness. What is really needed is a truer view of pleasure or happiness and a keen enlightened sense of the troubles or miseries that accompany or follow vice, together, of course, with the rightly-evolved and rightly-trained capacities for reasonable and useful pleasures.

The ethical difficulty or problem lies in the fact that the immediate feelings of pleasure and pain which decide our actions* do not adequately coincide with the course of conduct which, in the long run, would secure the greatest amount of happiness to all. Man is imperfectly evolved. He is short-sighted and selfish. The fundamental, though slow, remedy is only to be found in Evolution by the Selection without which all goes wrong both in the social economy and in the race itself. But, as Evolution has already fitted us in a considerable degree for social life, the suitable *training* of our present moral or social capacities, together with the aid of social penalties and rewards, will do much to bring Natural or self-gratifying Hedonism into accord with Philosophical or "Universalistic" Hedonism. To raise the former to the level of the latter we have to make it more pleasant (or less painful) to do right than to do wrong. As the conduct-deciding pleasures and pains of the moment include hopes and fears, and sympathetic and imaginative pleasures and pains in general, such as accompany the various emotions and ideas aroused by our perceptions, associations, memories, anticipations, reflections, etc., we cultivate such higher and finer motive powers, and we endeavor to establish their continual or immediate supremacy by the help of use or habit, which is said to be "second nature." All teachers recognise the importance of the formation of good habits. It is to be hoped that mankind will also learn to recognise the importance of Selective processes or methods in evolving sound minds and bodies as the indispensable foundation of the happiness of the race.

Hedonism is usually divided into "Egoistic" Hedonism and "Universalistic" Hedonism. This division, however, seems to me to be inaccurate and misleading, since it fails to give separate recognition to altruistic Hedonism, although altruistic and egoistic forms of Hedonism are equally necessary as joint basis of the ideal embodied in "Universalistic" Hedonism. I have preferred to speak (1) of what, for lack of a better name, I have termed "Natural Hedonism" (which cannot rightly be called "Egoistic" Hedonism, since it embraces altruistic pleasures and pains equally with egoistic), and (2) of Philosophic or "Universalistic" Hedonism, which alone is complete Hedonism, or Hedonism proper. By "Natural Hedonism" I mean the obedience to pleasure and pain which inevitably governs us all, whether we know it or not, and whether the pains and pleasures are altruistic or egoistic. But the expression, though it may be convenient, involves, I must confess, a limited, and sometimes inconsistent, use of the term "Hedonism." The doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the chief good to be sought after must logically favor the greater amount of happiness as against the lesser. Hedonism must, therefore, demand

* As Leslie Stephen says: "What determines conduct is not a calculation of future pains and pleasures, but the actual painfulness or pleasureableness of the whole action at the moment."

the happiness of the greatest number, just as the principle of liberty requires the greatest extension of liberty, and not its restriction to oneself only. To cause misery, or to disregard the sufferings of others, is a *rejection* of the principle that happiness is the chief good to be aimed at. A thorough Hedonist must desire to increase the sum of happiness in the world to its utmost. "Natural Hedonism," even in some of its altruistic impulses, and still more, of course, in its purely egoistic phases, will often be more or less antagonistic to true Hedonism. So far as a man deprives others of their share of happiness for the sake of his own pleasure, he is an imperfect Hedonist, or even in practice an anti-Hedonist, for the destruction of happiness is obviously the direct contrary of practical Hedonism, which aims at the promotion of happiness. Thorough or "Universalistic" Hedonism, which is merely Hedonism in its complete or proper sense, is more commonly called Utilitarianism.

W. P. BALL.

(To be continued.)

Letter from an American Freethinker in England.

London, March 1st, 1902.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am very much grieved to learn of your serious illness, and the bad turn which has taken place in your financial affairs, and I am sending you herewith my cheque for five guineas, and I only hope that this small offering (through Mrs. Foote) will act as a gentle hint to your many admirers to do likewise.

We have among us a great number of superstitious and unthinking people, who at least pretend to believe in supernatural agencies, and who contribute liberally to the support of the men who lecture them weekly for the fortification of their minds against the reception of truth, and to strengthen their faith in what a good many of them know to be the impossible. Why, then, should not the Freethinkers who are devoted to truth and justice also contribute something towards the support of a man who is the greatest champion of Freethought, and the greatest enemy of falsehood and superstition, that we have in England to-day?

I have read in the past with great interest many of your pithy little essays on Freethought, as against superstition, and recently I have profited very much by reading your little work entitled *Crimes of Christianity*, vol. i. I have never come across a book in the whole course of my life in which so many historical facts are compressed in so small a space. It is true that it is very largely a compilation, but a compilation from Gibbon and a great many other historians, and it is all the better for this, because each statement is backed up by indisputable historical facts. It is the "multum in parvo" of books.

I have purchased a considerable number of your works, which I have given to inquiring friends. I have also sent a good many to foreign countries, where I think the "poor heathen" who can read English will find that they compare very favorably with the sickening gush found in missionary works.

When Mrs. Bishop was travelling in Japan, she asked a high priest in a Buddhist church what the obstacles were to the spread of the New Buddhism in Japan, and his reply was: "The same obstacle that prevents the spreading of Christianity—English philosophy. Our people buy and read the works of Darwin and Spencer, and other English philosophers, and they become philosophers instead of Churchmen."

Although your health is shattered, and you are poor in purse, still you occupy an extremely enviable position. Your name will go down to posterity as the last of the English martyrs, the last man to be criminally proceeded against and imprisoned for criticising an ancient and absurd superstition. You are a martyr. You have devoted your life and your splendid energies to a good cause—a cause, it is true, which cannot, in the very nature of things, be appreciated during your lifetime; but your turn will come when mankind becomes sufficiently educated and freed from folly and superstition to understand and appreciate that your teachings were absolutely true and fact, and that your intentions were the very best. But I myself have no desire to be a martyr. I find it is better to keep my mouth shut and not to speak on the subject of religion to anyone. Religious people are exactly like an irritable horse that has a bad sore. The sore represents the religion. They cannot bear to have the flies find the sore spot, much less touch it. It appears to me that a good many people appreciate to some extent that their religion is an extremely delicate plant—a plant that has to be very carefully tended, and to which the last particle of daylight or pure air will prove fatal. It is also a sore spot that must not be touched. They therefore keep it covered up, and never refer to it if they can help it, while many of them do

everything they can to prevent their children from finding out that there is any other kind of religion in the world. To criticise any of their absurdities, or even to refer to any of the paradoxes connected with their faith, is regarded as the greatest possible offence—an offence which at once arouses in these loving Christians a state of frenzy, and makes them ready to do every possible injury in their power. I am not therefore particularly ambitious to stir up this theological "hornet's nest," so I hope that if you publish this letter you will not mention my name.

The doing away with superstition and substituting in its place reason and truth must of necessity be an extremely slow process. No rapid religious change has ever been wrought in the world except by one agency—the sword. After 200 years of teaching of Christianity in Rome, only an extremely small percentage embraced the faith, and it was only when the Christians resorted to the sword and fire that they succeeded in driving the pagans into the Christian Church, and even then the pagans absolutely refused to abandon their old forms and superstitions, but took them over with them, and they became incorporated in the Christian Church, where they still remain even to-day.

The Mohammedans extirpated the Christian faith from three quarters of the civilised world in a few years, and, notwithstanding that their religion was much less absurd than the Christian faith, which they supplanted, they would not have succeeded without the sword.

When Christianity was introduced into Japan, the Jesuits found that the process of conversion was extremely slow. However, when they had obtained about 35,000 adherents, they determined to propagate their faith on the old and infallible plan, which contemplated the murder of the emperor, the royal family, and all the nobility, after which they expected that the sword and the stake would convert the rest of the people. But the particulars of their little plot, unfortunately for them, leaked out, and we find that Christianity was completely wiped out of Japan by the killing and expulsion of the priests and the slaughter of all their adherents. It is therefore obvious that, in order to make a clean sweep of any form of religion, it is necessary to resort to very drastic measures—measures which could never now be employed in England.

Thomas Paine prophesied that superstition would die out in England and America in about a hundred years, and in this he was correct, if we take his own definition of superstition. He believed in an omnipotent God; he believed in an after-existence; but there were a great many things he did not believe in. For instance, he did not believe in the existence of devils. He did not believe in revelation nor prophecy. At the end of a hundred years we find that the greatest Christian minister among us, Henry Ward Beecher, believed practically the same as Thomas Paine, so the world moved forward in a hundred years quite as much as Thomas Paine prophesied. But to-day philosophers do not agree with Thomas Paine, and it will certainly take another hundred years to practically do away with a good many of the absurd superstitions of to-day.

I have read much of martyrs, and it has given me great pleasure to have known and to have shaken hands with the last of the great English martyrs.

Hoping that you will be greatly benefited by your sojourn at the seaside, that your health will be fully restored, and that you may live long to continue the good work which is and always will be associated with your name. T.

Imprisonment for Debt.

THERE is a popular belief that imprisonment for debt has been abolished. How erroneous this belief is, is shown by the County Court Returns for 1900, which have just been published. No fewer than 4,692 debtors were imprisoned! It would be interesting to know what was the aggregate sum for non-payment of which 4,692 debtors were imprisoned during the year 1900, and what was the cost of the imprisonment (not reckoning the loss of their labor, and, in some instances, the public money expended on the maintenance of their families while the debtors were locked up and prevented from earning their bread). The truth is that the State has become a debt-collecting agency for the harshest and most grasping of creditors; and, in collecting these debts, it incurs considerable expense and charges no fee. It would appear, too, that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor. A man who has a moderate amount of assets, though much less than his liabilities, can evade the whole procedure by becoming bankrupt. And it seems doubtful whether the appeal to the Home Office, which is open to every convict, is available to the imprisoned debtor—at least, we never heard of the release of a debtor ordered by the Home Secretary, even for ill-health.—*The Humanitarian*.

A fire broke out in the parish church of St. Enoch, Glasgow, and burned the roof off. The Christian Deity really ought to look after his own buildings if he looks after anything.

Acid Drops.

In this age, when ninety-nine per cent. of the whole output of our printing-machinery consists either of exceptionally frothy froth or amazingly dense dregs, it would be a pity to quarrel with the *Spectator*. It is a good, solid organ, and, as such, plays a variety of tunes, mostly of the dirge order. It boasts an old and glorious name, and sometimes it forgets its corpulent dignity—unconsciously, no doubt—and becomes really funny.

On the present occasion it perpetrates a gem of priceless worth, and heads it "POETRY" in healthy capitals. The alleged poem consists of two verses, and the God-fearing author of the same, scorning all thought of a future laureate-ship, merely signs himself "E. P. B." The poet is certainly a Christian, but, in the usual way, he forgets that little Biblical statement concerning the Deity and individuals. This delightful pearl of poetry is entitled "The Queen's Passing." "E. P. B." is quite convinced that when Queen Victoria died the shades of all our gallant lads who perished in South Africa were assembled at the Golden Gate (doubtless by divine command) to watch her enter. We presume that the "Mysterious Place" is heaven.

The second verse is quite worthy of reproduction:—

But where in that mysterious place,
The spirits of her soldiers dead,
Who died before they saw her face,
Day after day were gathered,
Those awed, expectant ranks between
The whisper ran: "The Queen! The Queen!"

And still "God is no respecter of persons"! It is hard to imagine anything more silly and anything more insulting to the rank and file of Christians who have been taught that, in God's sight, all men are brothers. No doubt the Boers paraded to welcome Mrs. Kruger, and perhaps they had a previous parade for General Joubert. If so, heaven has been wearing quite a military aspect of late, and the golden harps have strummed merrily to "Soldiers of the Queen" and "Tommy Atkins." But it is a sad theme to make light of.

In the humble opinion of a Freethinker, however, the very suggestion is an insult to the memory of a good woman. If such parades are common in the realms above, fancy the reception "General" Booth, for instance, will receive. All deceased Salvationists will assemble with massed bands, and the din of the big drums and the rattle of the tamborines will give the angels a bad headache. We can imagine some of the hot-tempered old gentlemen of the Old Testament, like Elisha, hurling the furniture at them out of the bedroom windows of their particular mansions, and hear poor Job groaning in agony and swearing that boils and blains were perfect bliss to the raucous chaos of sound which the great-unwashed saints of Mr. Booth consider soft and fragrant melody to charm the ear of the Most High.....And it is more difficult for a camel to go through the needle's eye! Good old *Spectator*!

People who point to the benevolent works of the Salvation Army, or the Jesuits or other Christian bodies, may do well to notice how popularity and power were secured by the Tammany Ring, which for many years ruled New York by corruption and bribery of the grossest kind. A description which appeared at the time of the overthrow of Tammany last year concluded with the following remarks on the insidious benevolence employed: "The precinct leaders take care that the people are looked after. The district leaders are a sort of earthly providence to the poor and unfortunate in their constituencies. They get work for growing boys; they come to the rescue of wayward youths who have 'got into trouble'; they establish clubs; they give dances and 'excursions'; they aid the sick and the unemployed; and they bury the dead. Thus Tammany laid hold of the Irish and the foreign vote, and thus it has turned many an election. The Reformers have no means to rob the city for the performance of such charities."

Ignorant and thoughtless people concluded that Tammany was justified of its works, and rushed to the polls to support it. Many people support Christianity and priestcraft on similar grounds. We have to remember the "inherent evils," as well as the accidental benefits of superstition, as of corruption and falsehood in general.

Another important lesson is taught by the past success of Tammany. That success was largely due to the puritanical tyranny of its enemies. Tammany was defeated once before, but the Reform party then introduced, and rigidly enforced, such oppressive regulations at the bidding of pious Sabbatarians, teetotallers, and others, that they provoked a popular reaction, which placed Tammany in office again at the next election. It is to be hoped that the present Reformers will make a wiser and less intolerant use of their victory.

A book just published, entitled *The Isle of the Shamrock*, gives particulars of the superstitions that prevail on the west coast of Ireland. The peasants believe that the seals possess human souls, which were allowed by the Deity, as a special favor, to survive the deluge, and to remain in this shape to await the last judgment. Hence the peasants do not like to kill or molest these animals. The people also believe in mermaids, and in fairies who sometimes spirit away healthy children and leave wretched little dwarfs in their place.

The recent important discovery that a decoction of the root of a new variety of cassia is a remedy for blackwater fever should greatly help the progress of civilisation in Central Africa. Blackwater fever is the most deadly of the diseases which have hitherto prevented Europeans from settling in tropical Africa. Such discoveries, like that of quinine, which is so useful in cases of ague and malarial fever, have to be made by man. Revelation never reveals them. If the 200,000 lepers of India are to be cured, it will be by purely secular means, and not by the killing of a pigeon over running water, or similar absurdities, such as are revealed to us as God's methods of curing or preventing diseases. Lupus and other frightfully disfiguring diseases are already being cured by the X-rays.

Mosquito-hunting is another method by which man is defeating the efforts of Providence to kill off our race in tropical regions. The discovery that "anopheles" is the great means of diffusing malarial and other tropical diseases is already bearing fruit. In Cuba the American doctors are exterminating infected mosquitoes by burning pyrethrum powder in houses where cases of yellow fever have occurred, and in all the neighboring houses. By this means, and by other sanitary measures, the invasion of Cuba by the United States army will soon have saved more lives than it cost. Not a single case of yellow fever occurred during October, 1901, thanks to these improvements.

The mortality on the West of Guinea is also being greatly diminished by man's efforts. Formerly it was so great among whites that one-fifth of them died annually, and another fifth had to be sent home invalided. The mosquitoes are being destroyed or reduced in numbers by draining the swamps in which their *larvæ* flourish as small worms, and by pouring paraffin into the pools.

In South Africa Providence has taken a hand in causing the deaths of some 18,000 people, mostly children, in the Concentration Camps, for measles and other diseases have been largely responsible for the heavy mortality. That the Almighty should kill off thousands of British soldiers with typhoid fever was quite what pious and grateful Boers might expect of him; but that he should also destroy thousands of their children by epidemic diseases must be disconcerting to a race which regards itself as his chosen people.

India is experiencing the "visitation of God" on a far larger scale, for a thousand persons a day are being carried off by the plague. These, however, are not Christians, but only heathens with colored skins.

The squabble over the consecration of Canon Gore has drawn renewed attention to the farcical fashion in which the formal election of bishops is conducted. The *Methodist Times* calls it "an awful farce" for the dean and chapter to "pray to the Holy Spirit when one of them has a letter in his pocket informing them that, whatever the Spirit of God may desire, the King has already selected the Bishop, and the King's nominee must be elected under threat of imprisonment."

Practically, as everyone knows, the appointment is made by the monarch in consultation with the Prime Minister. Church people are already beginning to exercise their minds as to what may happen when the bishops and deans will be chosen by Mr. Chamberlain, who seems likely to become Premier in the course of time, and who is nominally a Unitarian, though seldom seen even in a Unitarian chapel.

Berlioz, the composer, is said to have been the only man who really puzzled the great linguists who are always ready to help the Church of Rome in its censorship of literary and other works. In his *Damnation de Faust*, and in another work, he has a chorus of demons, who sing an unintelligible jargon which is supposed to represent the language of the lower regions. When Berlioz required the censor's permission to print one of these works at Rome, trouble at once arose. The officials, and all the interpreters summoned to their aid, could make nothing of the words. So, as Berlioz tells the story, the matter was "hung up," till one of the censors, after deep consideration, suggested to his fellows that, as the interpreters could not understand the mysterious language, it was probable that the Roman people could not understand it either; so that it appeared to him that they could authorise the printing, without risk to morality and religion. The demons' chorus was authorised accordingly.

The *Christian World* has opened its columns to a correspondence on "Why are Sermons Dull?" The obvious answer seems to be, Because they are mostly preached by dullards; or, if that reply is not acceptable, it might be suggested that even a clever speaker must find it a difficult task to make theological nonsense absorbingly interesting.

Rev. Dr. Horton, who is responsible for the statement that the Jesuits have placed an emissary on the staff of nearly every leading London newspaper, and who asserted that the Bible condemns betting, and utterly failed to show where, now relates an astounding instance of prayer being specifically answered. He says that during a summer excursion to Norway a lady missed her "golosh" on a path untrodden before and difficult to retrace. Diligent search was made, but without success, and she returned disconsolately to the hotel. In the afternoon the idea struck her companion: "Why not ask for Divine aid?" Accordingly they prayed that the "golosh" might be found, and, rowing back to the end of the fjord, there it lay on a spot which they fancied had been well searched in the morning, "as though it had fallen from heaven."

This is a fair specimen of the sort of drivel Dr. Horton retails to the long ears of his admiring followers.

Says the Rev. F. B. Meyer:—"The state of religion in this country is sufficient to break a man's heart." It doesn't, however, seem to very much disturb the One Above, who might be supposed to be largely, if not chiefly, interested. At any rate, he affords no evidence of his anxiety or of his disposition to interfere. If, indeed, Omnipotence were moved to action, there could hardly be a state of affairs "sufficient to break a man's heart."

There seems to be a wonderful Bible class in connection with All Saints Church, Sheffield. It was recently visited by Bishop Quirk. A correspondent who was present says that six publicans sat there in one row! What brought the "bungs" there? Had they been reading Mr. Foote's treatise on *The Bible and Beer* and convinced themselves that there is nothing essentially antagonistic between the two? Or were they there to be converted to what is called "Gospel Temperance"? There is no subsequent record of any of them forsaking their calling.

The late Rev. Dr. Newman Hall, the Nonconformist preacher, who died a short time ago, said when on his death-bed: "I have been thinking of the intermediate state; I cannot imagine what it will be." He might well be puzzled. The Bible never tells its readers what becomes of the soul between death and the judgment-day. Ordinary people imagine the souls of the children flying straight to heaven, but intelligent students of Holy Writ cannot suppose that the decision of the judgment-day is thus anticipated. Where, then, do the souls wait, and what do they do to fill up the time while they are waiting for the final decision as to whether they are to pass in with the sheep or go to the warmer regions with the goats? If the Bible were a genuine revelation, it would hardly leave such a gap in its information. The early Christians did not trouble about so small a matter, because Christ told them that the end of the world was close at hand. But seeing that the last day has been postponed for some two thousand years, and may be delayed for thousands more, the problem becomes of more moment to inquiring believers.

A clergyman who particularly wished to take a photograph of the capital of a beautiful column in the *façade* of Girard's College in Philadelphia found his way barred by the special provision by which the founder forbade the admission of any clergyman within its gates. He had to resort to "telegraphy," or telescopic photography, by which means he readily obtained an excellent picture from a distance.

A few years ago Bethnal Green paid the Church about £20,000 in order to abolish the "Composition-Rate," which was a disguised church-rate for paying the rector's salary and defraying church expenses. The Church is relieved from the odium of the "Imposition-Rate," as it was often called, and has cash in hand to invest as it pleases. Not content with the legalised plunder it has thus obtained, the Church now receives what is practically an additional income from the ratepayers by the exemption of its schools from all rates. One school alone is thus relieved to the extent of some £200 a year.

Bethnal Green, of course, is not the only parish thus saddled in effect with a new church-rate. All over the country the so-called "voluntary schools" receive the same privilege of exemption from rates, as a little addition to the handsome present of several millions a year given to the parsons and the squires by the present Government. This subsidising of the Church and the rural land-owner is the price which the nation pays for placing the Conservatives in power.

The Dean of Gloucester has written a book on *Early Christianity and Paganism*. His method of writing history is to refuse to examine critically the documents on which the most important portion of that history is based. He alleges that the Gospels "defy analysis," and are "too sacred for ordinary analysis." This is the spirit that preserves belief in superstitious absurdities. The Acts of the Apostles, however, he says, "does not defy analysis," because it deals with the actions of "mere mortals" like ourselves.

The Pope does not appear to be much disturbed by such teachings as "Blessed are the poor," "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," or by the railings of Christ at the rich. Last year he received in the shape of offerings from the faithful £92,000. Papa Pecci accepted it all without complaining. It is stated that this amount was less than the average had been for many years past.

The Pope is said to be somewhat alarmed at the prospects of a schism in France, many of the bishops being in favor of the Associations' Bill, which is directed by the Government against the religious orders.

The Pope is a very old man; and, as the vice-regent of God on earth has no more charmed a life than the most wicked Atheist amongst us, it is natural that the question of his successor should be exciting some interest. It is not often that such an office goes begging.

In this connection it seems that the question of a veto, which certain Catholic Powers used to exercise in Papal conclaves, is receiving some attention. Dr. William J. D. Croke deals with the matter in one of the Catholic papers, and quotes from one of the Cardinals an emphatic repudiation of such a claim. One of the reasons put forward is that this veto was allowed because "certain Catholic States bound themselves to the defence of the Church and the Papacy, and received in return compensating privileges and indulgences," whereas now "the States no longer defend the Church or the Papacy." "Thus," we are told, "the support which the Church might receive is less valuable, while, for the same cause, the interest of States in a Papal election has greatly diminished."

In other words, the Church is really not befriended as it once was, and the political powers have grown comparatively indifferent to the matter. There was a great struggle over the election of Pius VII., and Austria tried to prevent the election of Pius IX. Zola has drawn a picture for all the world of the intrigues that revolve around the Papal Chair. In the next election the most successful intriguer will come off best, and, whoever he may be, the faithful will clearly recognise in him the infallible interpreter of Omniscience. It is touching.

There is trouble among the "unco' guid" on the other side of the herring pond. Professor Pearson, of the North-Western University, a Methodist institution, has recently been the cause of no little consternation by his outspoken criticism. He declares the policy of the Methodist Church to be one of inactivity, obstruction, and jesuitical on the views in which the leaders and scholars of the Church have come to believe. He says that the Sunday-school teaching is almost farcical, and entirely inadequate; both of which statements we find no difficulty in believing. We are too accustomed on this side the Atlantic to Church leaders either teaching things which they *must* know to be false, or else maintaining a cowardly silence concerning them.

There is nothing new in the Professor's attack on the miracles of the Old and New Testament; but the following is interesting, in view of its origin. "It is impossible," he says, "to draw any dividing line between these alleged miracles in the Old Testament and similar accounts in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. When a gate opens of its own accord to let Peter through, we think of Elisha and the axe he made to swim. When Jesus is represented as multiplying loaves and fishes to feed a great multitude, we think of the widow's barrel of meal multiplied by Elijah, and of the cruse of oil increased by Elisha. When Jesus is represented as walking on the lake of Gennesaret, we think of Moses dividing the Red Sea, and of Elijah and Elisha cleaving the waters of the Jordan. The story of the raising of the son of the widow of Nain by Jesus recalls the story of the raising of the son of the Shunnamite woman by Elisha. The legendary element is as obvious and as indisputable in the New Testament as in the Old."

Of course, this outspoken criticism has evoked the usual exhibition of Christian brotherhood. At a minister's meeting a Mr. Hardin is reported as saying of Professor Pearson: "If I had the power and ability I would skin that man, salt his hide, and tack it up on the barn door before the ordinary preacher could sharpen his jack-knife.....I would like to see him stood upon his head and his ears filled with vinegar until he would come to his senses." There is nothing like religion for bringing out a man's better qualities!

Influenza, according to the Registrar-General's report, killed off 104 people last week, besides those who died of other diseases directly or indirectly brought about by an attack of influenza. Balfour and various Members of Parliament are for the present disabled by this complaint. Providence is also busy spreading the small-pox epidemic, so that, in spite of human efforts to stay its progress, London has now over 1,300 cases of small-pox under treatment.

The Rev. J. W. Horsley, preaching on suicide, said that it is a worse sin than murder. He might as well say that getting rid of one's own money is worse than stealing other people's. The reverend gentleman also said that suicide was more cowardly than murder. Does he think that ancient Roman heroes who fell upon their swords rather than surrender ignominiously to a triumphant enemy were more cowardly than the Sunday-school teacher who is to be hung for the Tonbridge horror?

In Portugal, which is as religious as Spain, only thirty-three per cent. of the population can write. In Italy there are fifty-two illiterates in every hundred people. No wonder the Italians are still so superstitious that a Divorce Bill causes the overthrow of a Government.

St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome is said to be the largest building in the world. It cost three and a-half millions, which would be equivalent to a very much larger sum at the present day. The Vatican has 11,000 apartments. Whether religion benefits people is matter for argument. That it takes huge sums of money from their pockets is a fact beyond all doubt. The money for building St. Peter's was largely raised by the sale of indulgences, which relieved purchasers from the future punishment of their sins and opened the way to paradise. It is by such banknotes on the next world that religion pays its dupes, and receives their hard cash in return.

A recent message from Lord Kitchener announced the success of a great "drive," and concluded with the remark that such satisfactory results were "very appropriate on the anniversary of Majuba." When this was read out in the House of Commons, Mr. A. Davies rose and asked whether the reference to Majuba was "in accordance with the policy of a Christian nation." Is Mr. Davies so simple as to suppose that "Christian" nations trouble themselves about the maxims of Christianity any more than Christian individuals do? If so, he should recommend the "Christian nation" to turn the other cheek to the Boers, and if they ask for South Africa give them Australia also. The fact is that the Christian nations are more warlike than the heathen nations, and would severely punish any of their Christian soldiers who deliberately followed out Christ's command to resist not evil.

It is true that if the Boers asked for rifles our Tommies would give them bayonets also; but, although the Christian combatants on both sides are always ready to give the enemy more than he asks for, there is room for argument as to whether this method of loving your enemy represents the true spirit of Christianity or not. Judged by the acts of the Church towards its enemies, it *would*, indeed, represent the true spirit of Christianity, only that our soldiers are too ready to spare a defeated foe and make him as comfortable as possible under the circumstances; whereas the Church, when it had the power, always favored the policy of utter extermination so often enjoined by the savage God of the Old Testament, whom Christians still worship and still profess to obey.

Father McLaughlin, according to the *Irish Catholic*, addressing his congregation in the Parish Church, Roscommon, on Sunday night, spoke very strongly on false swearing. "The jurors of the county," he said, "had so little regard for their oath that, no matter how clear the evidence was against the accused, he was permitted to escape. The fact that the Winter Assizes were taken from Roscommon was a great loss to the town, and the fault lay with the jurors of the county. He also applied the same strictures to the conduct of local publicans in openly breaking the conditions of the Sunday Closing Act. When they were detected by the police they had no hesitation in entering the witness-box and pledging their oath before God that the parties found on their premises were guests, and were not charged for the liquor they consumed."

The absurd formality of slobbering on the Scriptures in courts of law is rapidly growing into disfavor. Recently the Dudley Deputy-Coroner made a departure in the method of "swearing" the jury. He remarked that certain representations had been made which had resulted in permission being given for juries to be sworn in Scotch fashion, with uplifted hands, instead of "The Book." He administered the oath accordingly, the jurors individually answering, "I will."

The healthy swearing of the publicans is as refreshing as what their "guests" consumed. When Christian priests thus bear public testimony to the worthlessness of the oath as a

guarantee of truthfulness, it is time that senseless and degrading formality was abolished.

As "ex-monk" Widdows is defended by members of the Christian Evidence Association, who still protest that he is a persecuted victim of Roman Catholic plots, it may be worth noticing that Mr. Ritchie, replying to a question in Parliament, said that Widdows "had an infamous character, which was well known to the Home Office, and he (Mr. Ritchie) would be very glad if that statement would prevent persons being deceived by this individual." The Victoria Park Branch of the Christian Evidence Society, which is never tired of vilifying Secularists, should note this authoritative endorsement of the justice of the long sentences of imprisonment undergone, and being undergone, by the preacher, who, like their own champions, labored for the Lord, and against the Catholics in Victoria Park and its neighborhood.

Musolino, the notorious Italian bandit, was evidently a religious man. When he was arrested it was found that he carried about with him a small crucifix, a "sacred heart of Jesus," a number of small medals of saints, pictures of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, and a rosary.

Harold Apted, the young man who was so regular in his attendance as a Sunday-school teacher, has been found guilty of murdering a little girl, aged seven and a-half, near Tonbridge. He is sentenced to death, but is recommended to mercy on the ground of his youth.

Providence, who watches the sparrows that fall, can hardly be unaware of the sad state of things in India as described in a recent telegram from Lord Curzon. No rain has fallen, and distress is increasing in the Punjab, and the number on relief in Bombay is rising rapidly. Watchfulness which does not lead to interposition is not of much avail. An inactive God might just as well be unobservant.

New South Wales has found it necessary to draw the attention of the One Above, by means of a day of humiliation and prayer, to the fact that there has been a long-continued drought. The implication is that he has been tardy with remedial measures, and that it is about time for him to hurry up. It is estimated that the Colony lost in the last seven years of drought no fewer than fifty million sheep, while the loss in other ways is incalculable.

The Bangor City Council propose to purchase the Bishop's palace and park, with the view of converting the former into municipal offices, and giving about three acres of the land as a site for the University College of North Wales. Other episcopal palaces and parks might with advantage be turned to similar purposes. A preacher of the Gospel of Christ living in a "palace" surrounded by a park must always be a monstrous anomaly to those who give the matter a moment's thought.

The *Pilot* prints some sensible notes on English Church music. It is very truthfully observed that "churches and chapels are too often the homes of the most grotesque travesties of what is beautiful in music. Tunes that tickle the uneducated ear are wedded to words of steamy sentimentality."

"Steamy sentimentality" is good, as applied to the words of many ancient and modern hymns. The *Pilot* further speaks of the "sickly feast" and the "silly imagery of words wholly unsuited to men and women with hearts to be braced and burdens of flesh and spirit to be borne." This "silly imagery" is "matched with strains so ignoble, so cheap in their employment of the elementary tricks of popular musical phrase-making, as to be nothing but offences to ears even slightly accustomed to music in its nobler forms."

Joseph Hatton, writing in the *People*, says: "The newest idiot is the 'religious politician' who fulminates in the *Express* against our alliance with Japan because the Japanese are not Christians!"

The Rev. H. B. Blogg startled his clerical brethren at a recent Church Conference by advocating the playing of cricket, football, and golf as recreations on Sunday afternoons. There is a certain amount of good sense, after all, in some of the clergy.

An amusing announcement was made at the Humanitarian League's recent discussion of "Richard Wagner as Pioneer," that some tickets which had been sent to a leading member of the Wagner Society were returned by him with the remark that he could not attend a meeting of a society that is "associated with notorious rebels and pro-Boers." It was pointed out in reply that, while there is no reason to suppose that any members of the Humanitarian League are in rebellion against their country, Wagner himself *was* a rebel, and, as such, was in exile for many years, and was officially described as "a politically dangerous person."

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 9, Athenæum Hall. April 6, Sheffield; 13, Bradford; 20, Glasgow. Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—March 9, Aberdare, South Wales; 16, Forth.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

BRAHMA (India).—Pleased to hear from a correspondent so far afield, also to hear you express pleasure at the reading of Messrs. Foote and Cohen's articles. Yes, we have a fair number of subscribers in India, although, for obvious reasons, we cannot supply names and addresses. Still, Freethinkers in India are far more numerous than most people imagine. Generally, we should say that English people living in India either lose their religion or get sunstroke and retain it. Miss Vance is writing you on other matters. You will probably find Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* contains what you require. Your kindly words to Mr. Neale will be conveyed in due course, who will, as we do, value them highly. For the rest, your letter needs no apology—rather the reverse.

EAST LONDON BRANCH.—Can you not send lecture-notice on a separate slip of paper? It is a little extra trouble for the writer, but saves much trouble in preparing for the press.

"BROCKWELL PARK" writes: "I send another £1, still to Mrs. Foote's Fund, as I do not want my remittance to be intercepted. Your case is indeed a distressing one in the history of religious freedom, and anyone with a thought for the cause might well have wished that the little hammer which the preliminaries of Brookwood bequeathed you would have brought with it a happier course of office, freed, at all events, from the financial persecution of obscure opulence. Poor Bradlaugh went to Worthing when the fourteen scoundrels chucked him out of the House. Thou might do likewise.....But, in any case, *buck up*. The cause is likely to go to Jericho if you don't keep well and vigorous."

G. L. ALWARD, our veteran Grimsby friend, is sorry to hear of our breakdown in health, and sends a cheque in recognition of the "valuable work" we are doing for Freethought.

W. HALL.—The kind treatment of children does not in any way depend upon Christianity. Children are treated with the greatest kindest in many "heathen" countries, such as Japan and Burma. On the other hand, even in Christian England, a Society is necessary for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This Society carries on thousands of prosecutions every year. If you were to tell this to (say) a Kaffir, he would wonder what sort of a country you lived in.

F. J. VOISEY.—Your kind telegram was answered by post. We hope you received the letter.

L. GIMRE.—Many thanks. See acknowledgment in list elsewhere.

MAJOR JOHN C. HARRIS, R.E., writes: "I beg to offer you my sympathy in your troubles, and enclosed cheque; hoping that you may find many other friends like-minded, and that your pluck will carry you through."

"RANK-AND-FILER" writes: "I knew a public man who died in poverty, and after his death his townsmen erected a marble statue in his memory. How many others have died and been honored under the same conditions. Personally, I don't like this *post-mortem* recognition of merit. I prefer a little vital sympathy to crowning a dead martyr with dead bay leaves. Following the example of 'Two Clifton Admirers,' I forward ten shillings for the new Fund (of course) for Mrs. Foote. It is not much, but if every Freethinker gave as much in proportion to his means our worthy President would not be martyred so quickly. This is Self-Denial Week with the Salvationists. We pity or despise them, but *they give for the good of the cause*. It is a pity some of us have to go to them for a good example. Even Mr. Anderson admits that our President has been hard worked and ill-paid; and certainly we cannot spare him yet."

J. COOMBS.—If you write Miss Vance, Freethought Publishing Company, for Ingersoll's *Thanksgiving Sermon* (post free twopence-halfpenny), she will be pleased to supply you with a copy.

I. W. DE CAUX writes: "You must take care of yourself, not only for the public weal, but also for the sake of your family. You will, perhaps, remember what I wrote to you some time ago—that every year you should take a long and really recuperating holiday, and that the Freethought party should provide you with the means. I am very glad that your 'Two Clifton Admirers' have started a subscription for the present purpose. It should grow like a rolling snowball. I enclose my own contribution to it."

THE FOOTE CONVALESCENT FUND.—Subscriptions to this Fund are all gifts to Mrs. Foote, to be expended by her at her absolute discretion in the restoration of her husband's health, and in defraying the expenses caused by his illness. The following have been received:—Major John C. Harris, R.E., £5; G. L. Alward, £5; L. Gimre, £2 2s.; Brockwell Park, £1; W. W. Kensett, 2s. 6d.; E. Painter, £4; Rank-and-Filer, 10s.; John Reid, 5s.; J. W. de Caux, £2 2s.; W. P. Ball, £1; W. Cody, £1; W. Mumby, £1; A. Hopkins, 2s. 6d.; W. Bean, 2s. 6d.; T., £5 5s.; John Bland, 5s.; C. Hylton, £1; S. J. W., 10s.; Sympathy, 10s.; C. A. W., 5s.; T. Jones, 10s.

A. HOPKINS.—Will find room for your letter in an early number, perhaps next week's. Thanks for your good wishes.

W. MUMBY.—Always glad to see your handwriting. Much obliged for the enclosure. What you call "the change of air prescription" is the only one of much efficacy.

W. CODY, sending cheque, hopes others "will quickly rally" to Mr. Foote's assistance.

W. P. BALL.—Considering all things, your subscription is the most touching; we deeply value your confidence and good wishes.

T. JONES says: "You have my ardent sympathy. I hope your friends will rally round you." This correspondent is a veteran Freethinker of some sixty years' standing.

JOHN BLAND.—Thanks for your sympathetic letter. There is more truth, perhaps, than you imagined in your quotation about "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

C. A. W. says he was not surprised to hear of Mr. Foote's breakdown. "Many a man," he says, "would have been ill long before under the circumstances, and you may thank your constitution it is no worse. It is to be hoped your friends will all come forward now."

SYMPATHY.—A good word, and all the better for being sincere.

S. J. W.—Acknowledged as desired. Many thanks.

C. HYLTON.—Much obliged.

OWING to Mr. Foote's absence from London, Tuesday's letters have to stand over for reply or acknowledgment till next week.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 1 Stationers' Hall Court, Ludgate Hill, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Personal.

I DID not quite realise how badly I had been hit until I took a short journey from London to a south-coast watering-place, famous for its sunshine. I then understood what my doctor meant in saying that it would be at least two months before I should be myself again. I also understood his warning that I should probably be upset at first. I *was* upset. But I will not dwell upon it. My will to live, as Schopenhauer would say, is still strong, and is slowly but surely mastering its enemy. Where I am the weather has been beautiful all the time. I am saturating myself with fine air and glorious sunshine. Gradually my strength is coming back. The horrible weakness, so much worse than pain—for you can stand up and *fight* pain—is little by little rolling away. Sleep too is coming back after all those terrible nights; little by little again, but still coming back. I have no head for work yet, but I shall have it presently. The tide of new life is creeping through my body. I cannot hasten it. I can only welcome it. I also thank the friends who have not forgotten me in my extremity.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THERE was a good attendance at the Athenæum on Sunday evening last for Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Mr. H. G. Wells and the Discovery of the Future." The lecture was followed with close attention, and gave rise to questions and discussion at its close. To-day (March 9) Mr. Charles Watts occupies the same platform, subject "Behind the Veil." As it is some little time since Mr. Watts lectured here, we hope there will be a good muster of friends to listen to him on this occasion.

To-day (March 9) Mr. Cohen lectures three times in the Court Room, Aberdare, South Wales. The South Wales Freethinkers, we understand, are looking forward to a good rally of their friends on this occasion, and we trust that the Secularists of the locality will see that they are not disappointed.

Friends of Secular Education believe that the most enduring work of the present Republic will prove to be its reorganisation and re-creation of the system of primary education throughout France. Over 35,000 schools have

been built or acquired, and every department has to maintain a training college for male teachers, and another for female teachers. The certificate of capacity has been made obligatory for all teachers, whether private or public. National education is free, compulsory, and secular. In the place of religion, which, of course, is excluded from the schools, the pupils are taught their duties as citizens and as moral beings. Manual instruction and agriculture are introduced, and the higher primary school is provided for the further education of the more promising pupils. France is now said to be "the ideal place for the education of children." The rural schools are especially improved, and the teachers' salaries have been raised. There are now over 41,000 teachers more than when the new order began, and the pupils number over 6,300,000. One-fourth of these, however, attend the religious schools by which the priesthood endeavors to check the Secular movement, and to preserve its own power and emoluments as far as possible.

Religious institutions often carry on laundries as a means of profit. Such laundries are specially exempted from the operation of the Factory and Workshops Act. A Bill to render them liable to inspection like other laundries has just passed its second reading in the House of Lords. That such a reform should commence in the Upper Chamber seems rather strange, but the Bill is favored by the bishops, and is directed more especially against Roman Catholics, who are practically the only opponents of such a measure. The priests naturally dislike government inspection, and fear its extension in the nunneries, monasteries, and other institutions under their charge.

Paris has been celebrating the centenary of Victor Hugo's birthday. The President of the Republic and M. Waldeck-Rousseau, the prime minister as we should call him, took leading parts in honoring the memory of the great genius and friend of liberty and humanity. The Minister of Public Instruction made a speech in the Pantheon, and explained that "the Government, in celebrating the centenary of Victor Hugo, wanted to mark its gratitude to the poet, who had clothed the national language with incomparable splendour, and to the citizen, who had shown one of the finest examples of civic virtue known in history. It was also intended to honor letters which, for four centuries past, had assured to France her influence in the world, and at every epoch had defended against oppression the imprescriptible rights of thought. Victor Hugo would have been honored in antique ages with divinity, and he would have been worthy of such honor. As a poet, his career was one long harvest of laurels; as a citizen, his life was one long struggle for liberty and justice. For three-quarters of a century he had astonished the world by the splendor of his productions. His work was vast, all-embracing, divine, and powerful as creation itself."

Rome has also witnessed a celebration of Victor Hugo's birthday in the great hall of its Capitol, which was decorated with flags. Amidst a large assembly, including many distinguished persons, a bust of the poet was formally handed over to the municipality as a present from the Franco-Italian Committee. All this must be gall and wormwood to the priests, who probably resent such scenes almost as bitterly as they did the erection of the statue to the great Freethought martyr Bruno.

The hard-working East London Branch purpose extending the field of its activity so as to embrace neglected Walthamstow. The first meeting will be held on Saturday evening, March 8, at six o'clock, at the corner of Mission-grove. There will be several speakers, and, as Saturday evening is an "off night," it is to be hoped that there will be a good muster of friends to encourage and support the platform.

The Leicester Secular Society, on Sunday evening last, celebrated the fiftieth year of its existence and the twenty-first of the opening of its hall. Among the speakers were Mr. G. J. Holyoake, Mr. Sydney Gimson (president), and Mr. F. J. Gould. Mrs. Charles Watts also recited. We are pleased to learn that there was a large attendance, and, as the old lady said on the occasion of her son-in-law's birthday, we wish our Leicester friends many hundreds of such anniversaries.

Mr. Francis Neale is so far better, we are happy to say, that he is now able to take walks out of doors. He has been writing to the Birmingham *Daily Post* correcting Father Ignatius's statement that Charles Bradlaugh once threw a Bible across the platform. That was not Charles Bradlaugh's way. Father Ignatius's secretary replies that the incident occurred at the Hall of Science in 1873, and the Bible was not thrown across the platform, but across the table. Perhaps there was *some fire* in the story, but there is evidently a terrible lot of *smoke*. Probably the Bible was put down a little unceremoniously on the table.

The Annual General Meeting of the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, as well as that of the Secular

Society, Limited, was to have been held early in March. Both meetings have had to be postponed in consequence of Mr. Foote's illness. They will be fixed for the earliest possible date.

Is Immortality a Fact? is the title of a new pamphlet by Mr. Charles Watts just issued by the Freethought Publishing Company. It is carefully written, and should have a wide circulation.

An Indian correspondent writes us that he sent a copy of Ingersoll's *What is Religion?* with a copy of the *Freethinker*, to a native Christian friend. The friend read it, and wrote at the end of a week that he found the reading of them so nice he threw them into the fire. Our correspondent calls this a "funny story." So it is; but there is a touch of sadness about it all the same.

More Christian intolerance! An East-end friend offered to supply the Limehouse Branch of the Stepney Borough Library with a copy of the *Freethinker* weekly, gratis. The offer, having been considered by the Library Committee, was declined—a decision which evidenced neither a sense of justice nor the possession of common sense.

The Barbarians of the West.

The War of the Civilisations. Being the record of a "Foreign Devil's" Experiences with the Allies in China. By GEORGE LYNCH. (London: Longmans & Co.)

FEW books of war correspondence are more interesting or more pervaded with healthy and humane feeling than this record of the recent outrages committed on the Chinese by hordes of European barbarians. There are few episodes in history more awful than this terrible holocaust, so pathetically described by Mr. Lynch—a holocaust which, occurring as it did only a year and a-half ago, brings home to us the fact that we have advanced very little, if at all, in humanity from the Dark Ages. Certainly nothing worse could possibly have been proved against the Crusaders.

Mr. Lynch, though in his preface he is modest enough to describe his account as "disjointed, lopsided, incomplete," has yet written a book that ought to be read by everyone who desires an understanding of what modern armies are capable of when let loose on a people who cannot withstand them, and with whose civilisation they have no shadow of sympathy. Mr. Lynch doubts if his work will be read. "Yet," he says, "if in the dreams of sleeping England there arises some faint vision of the truth, what a troubled dream it would be—of a crowded junk of helpless coolies being massacred at the river-mouth of that path of war, whose course was torch-lit by burning villages, through which the cruel Crusaders rode as Nero did of old in Rome—of women saving their honor by a watery death—of the West probing knife-like into the heart of Peking—of the ring of the armed heels on the white marble pavements of the Palace." The vision is terrible; and, as one reads Mr. Lynch's narrative, its terror is certainly not lessened; one can only hope it would produce that trouble of mind which Mr. Lynch suggests.

For here was a country, civilised and fertile, with a fairly-contented community living its own life, without bothering or troubling its neighbors in any way. Frequently in this book we have pictures of the healthy condition of things. "The district between Tientsin and Peking," says the author, "is extremely fertile, every acre of ground being highly cultivated. Around every village were to be seen plots of ground, which were wonderful examples of the skill and knowledge of these market-gardeners, probably the best in the world." And it was this country which the barbarians from the West invaded, on trifling pretexts, and rendered desolate as far as it was in their power. Here are snatches of description, taken almost at random, of what European "civilisation" did for China:—

"Never have I seen anything so desolate as the Chinese quarter of the town [Tientsin] through which we passed. The miles of windowless one-storied houses looked like rows of skulls in some vast mausoleum. The inhabitants had vanished.....Every house had its walls charred, and inside each was a heap of ashes or charred timbers, with here and there household utensils and fragments of pottery showing."

"On the other bank the scene in the streets was just the same. No sign of life except the dogs, and here and there carrion pigs with their litters batten on the slain."

And for a picture of the looting which went on the reader must be referred to chapter xiv. almost in its entirety. There were regular loot-auctions:—

"Here are two rolls of mandarin silk, about twenty yards. How much shall I say for the mandarin silk?"

"Three dollars."

"Four."

"Any advance on four dollars? Going for four dollars! Going! Gone for four dollars to Captain Phillips."

And Mr. Lynch tells us that this sort of thing—absolutely in breach of the Hague Convention, to which all the Powers had agreed—was open and recognised. He says:—

"Every afternoon, except Sundays, these auctions occurred under the colonnade in front of the British Legation. Sir Claude Macdonald was frequently among the crowd, and General Gaselee and General Barrow, and the officers of the staff, together with colonels, majors, captains, subalterns, warrant-officers, non-coms. and men, Sikhs and Royal Marines, Royal Engineers and Welsh Fusiliers.....The sale was open, and free to everyone who chose to come. The Russians and the French did not choose to come. That was loot systematised. This China expedition affair has been the biggest looting excursion since the days of Pizarro. There are different ways of looting, and other nationalities have not pursued the English way; but all were agreed that loot was the correct card."

By the way, it may be remarked incidentally that descriptions like these cast a curious light on the plea that is being constantly urged as to the "humanity" of the British soldier. It is, of course, grossly unjust for any politician to hold the soldier responsible for the sins of the administrator, though it is not infrequently done on the jingo side. But from exculpating the soldier from political blame, to holding him up as a paragon of virtue, is a long step, and of course the latter position is grotesque. War is a brutal thing at best, and brutalises and degrades the men who take part in it; and the soldier essentially is a man who sells himself for so much a day to shoot whomsoever he is told without asking the reason why. He will carry out orders, howsoever brutal these may be, since the alternative is death. In face of the facts—and anyone will find a bewildering abundance of very ugly ones in Mr. Lynch's book—the talk about the "humanity" of the soldier may be very well allowed to die. Many men, it is true, have worn the soldier's uniform without any moral degradation, but certainly a man does not become a saint when he puts on a red coat. Though it is right to say that, where all the troops behaved with brutality towards the Chinese, Mr. Lynch intimates that the British soldiers were less brutal than the rest. Of course, he is writing for the English market; but, in view of his out-spokenness in general, this testimony it is only fair to put on record.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of all this barbarism for readers of the *Freethinker* is its effect on Christian missions in China. Mr. Lynch discusses the question at the end of his book in Appendix XI., and, though the quotation is rather lengthy, it is worth making:—

"Out of this vast scene of war and terrible rapine it would be an agreeable recollection if one could think that some of the missionaries raised their voices in merciful protest against the outrages committed by the Allied soldiery. But no such voice was heard. They stood by, silent spectators of this crucifixion of Christianity."

"Looking back on the entire prospect of this campaign, there is no question that the cause of Christianity has thereby received a severe set-back. The hatred which the Chinese felt for foreigners is now immensely intensified, and, slow as was any real progress of Christianity in China before, it will undoubtedly be slower still in the years immediately to come."

"Within the radius of an eighteenpenny cab-fare from where I write [the Preface is dated from London], I think there is plenty of spiritually-productive work for all the missionaries in China. And within the radius I speak of they would not first have the task of weaning the people away from the doctrines of Confucius or Buddha him all-wisest, best, most pitiful, whose lips comfort the world; the very breathing—the life—of their social as well as spiritual being. When the

Chinese see the German Emperor using missionaries as live-bait to catch a province, and the French insisting upon being given another as the price of a few members of one of those religious orders they have expelled from France, it is no wonder that from that stricken, bullied, cheated people the cry goes up to the empty heavens:

To my own gods I go;
It may be they shall give me greater ease
Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities."

This extract, interesting in itself, is a fair sample of Mr. Lynch's writing, and of the feeling with which his book is infused. Whatever may be the political effect of the Chinese raid—and, as in the case of Wei-hai-Wei, much of it promises to be both expensive and worthless—the religious effects are not likely to be satisfying to Exeter Hall. In Japan the natural intelligence of the people, combined with the open squabbling of the Christian sects, has brought Christian proselytism to a standstill; and in Japan it would seem that the educated classes are more openly Rationalistic than in many countries of Western Europe. In China Christian proselytism appears to be coming to a standstill through the detection of the essential barbarism which it covers. People who have seen hordes of armed ruffians overrunning their country and pillaging their towns, outraging their women, destroying their museums, looting their palaces, slaughtering their kindred wholesale—such people are not likely to be impressed by the moral beauties of the religion which the ruffians profess. But, of course, the defeat of Christianity is a comparatively small thing beside the political catastrophe for Europe. For this State-managed burglary, East and West, is hurting and degrading Europe even more than those nations which are its victims. In China the damage is largely material; in Europe it is largely moral damage—the distraction of the people's minds, the lowering of the national ideal, the setting-up of false standards of honor, of a mistaken idea of true wealth, and a stoppage of domestic reform. Truly the conquered nations generally take a bitter revenge—all the more bitter because it is indirect and unconscious.

FREDERICK RYAN.

Jonathan Swift.

"This mystery of vending spiritual gifts is nothing but a trade."
—SWIFT.

"Swift est Rabelais dans son bon sens, et vivant en bonne compagnie."
—VOLTAIRE.

"Is not religion a cloak?"—SWIFT, *Tale of a Tub*.

"Not a fantastical fool of them all shall flout me out of my calling."
—SHAKESPEARE.

THE Great Lying Christian Church has contained in its fold some great men. Some of these were sincere believers in the doctrines they preached. Others were Christians from force of circumstances, or held to the doctrines for the material gain which has ever been no inconsiderable bait with which to catch men. To which class did Jonathan Swift belong? Was this tremendous genius a sincere Christian, or was he merely a professing believer for the sake of the position he hoped to gain? Would he have remained a Christian had actual deaneries and possible bishoprics with their emoluments had no existence? Should we have found him among the Scotch Covenanters on the field of battle, or in the arena with the lions at Rome, had his birth placed him in different circumstances?

His biographers, Sir Walter Scott, Dr. Johnson, and Thackeray, all describe Swift as sincerely religious, and the general consensus of opinion agrees with them in their description. One hesitates to enter the lists against such eminent authorities, but a candid opinion compels us to say that we believe that Swift was a Christian only in name; that he remained in the Church for the same reason that prompted Judas, in the legendary story, to sell his Master. In fact, Swift was not merely not a Christian. He was devoid of all religious feeling. He was one of the most irreligious men. Compared with him Voltaire was a saint, for the French sceptic had at heart that religion of humanity, that love of his kind, which was entirely absent in Swift. The author of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Tale of a Tub* was intellectually incapable of being a Christian, and

emotionally incapable of loving his fellow-men. *The Tale of a Tub* is one of the most tremendous indictments of Christianity, from the intellectual side, that has ever been given to the world. *Gulliver's Travels* expresses such a scorn of the human race, with its Lilliputian littleness and its Brobdignagian coarseness, that its writer was physically and constitutionally incapable of sympathising with a religion which claims to be a Gospel of Love.

But let us turn to the evidence for our assertion. *The Tale of a Tub* is an allegory, in which a father bequeaths to his three sons, by whom are meant the Roman, Lutheran, and Calvinistic Churches, a coat each, signifying the doctrines and faith of Christianity. He also leaves them a will—the New Testament—which will instruct them in the wearing of the coats.

The three brothers interpret their father's will in order to change their coats with the varying fashion. Shoulder-knots have become the rage. The brothers consult the Testament, or "will" of their father, but there is no word of authority for wearing a shoulder-knot. One of the brothers suggests that they may compound the word from several syllables in various parts of the will, and, this plan failing, he makes the word by adding various letters together. The brothers thereupon swagger with as large and flaunting shoulder-knots as the rest. The fashion again changes. No person can appear in society without silver fringe on his coat. The brothers consult their father's will again, but to their astonishment find that silver fringe is expressly forbidden under heavy penalties.

"After some pause, the brother so often mentioned for his erudition, who was well skilled in criticisms, had found in a certain author, which he said *should be nameless*, that the same word which in the will is called fringe does also signify a broomstick, and doubtless ought to have the same interpretation in this paragraph. This another of the brothers disliked, because of that epithet silver, which could not, he humbly conceived, be applied to a broomstick; but it was objected to him that this epithet was understood in a *mythological* and *allegorical* sense. However, he objected again, why their father should forbid them to wear a broomstick on their coats—a caution that seemed unnatural and impertinent; upon which he was taken up short, as one that spoke irreverently of a mystery, which doubtless was very useful and significant, but ought not to be over-curiously pried into, or nicely reasoned upon. And, in short, *their father's authority being now considerably sunk*, this expedient was allowed to serve as a lawful dispensation for wearing their full proportion of silver fringe."

Small wonder that Voltaire regarded *The Tale of a Tub* as casting ridicule upon all forms of the Christian faith. The man who wrote that book was perfectly aware of the logical inferences of his propositions. The bishops who advised Queen Anne when they counselled her not to appoint the author of *The Tale of a Tub* to a bishopric were not without sagacity. There can be no doubt that Queen Anne and Voltaire were both right when, from their very different points of view, they regarded this work of Swift's as anti-Christian.

Swift was irreligious and a life-long dissembler. He could be coarser than Rabelais and profaner than Heine. Men have been convicted and imprisoned in this country for treating sacred subjects less offensively than Swift treats the Holy Communion. Consider the facts of his life. He was brought up in the household of the epicurean Sir William Temple, and educated in the library of an avowed Freethinker. Why Swift took holy orders, except for the loaves and fishes, it is difficult to say. He put the cassock on for a living; but he was choked by its bands. Swift was the boon companion of Pope, and a friend of the freethinking Bolingbroke. He deliberately chose these sceptics as the closest friends of his life, and the recipients of his confidence and affection. It is not difficult to imagine him joining in many a profane argument and blasphemous joke over Pope's port or St. John's Burgundy. It is significant, nay, almost conclusive as to the insincerity of Swift's religion, that he advised John Gay, the author of *The Beggar's Opera* and the wildest of the wits about town, to turn parson and look out for a seat on the bench.

The paper left behind him, called *Thoughts on Religion*, is merely a set of excuses for not professing disbelief.

He says of his sermons that he preached pamphlets. They have no special Christian characteristic. They might be preached from the steps of a mosque as well as from the pulpit of a Christian church. There is little or no cant. Swift was too great and too proud for that. Tried even by the low standard of the eighteenth century, his sermons are singularly secular. The following passage from Swift's sermon on the fate of Eutychus, who fell out of a window whilst listening to St. Paul preaching, will illustrate our meaning:—

"The accident which happened to this young man in the text hath not been sufficient to discourage his successors; but because the preachers now in the world, however they may exceed St. Paul in the art of setting men to sleep, do extremely fall short of him in the working of miracles; therefore men are become so cautious as to choose more safe and convenient stations and postures for taking their repose without hazard of their persons, and, upon the whole matter, choose rather to entrust their destruction to a miracle than their safety."

But perhaps the surest indication of his real irreligion is given in the striking verses on the Day of Judgment, which were not published till after his death. They were privately sent by Chesterfield in a letter to Voltaire; but everybody now knows the vigorous lines:—

Ye who in divers sects were sham'd,
And came to see each other damn'd
(For so folks told you; but they knew
No more of Jove's designs than you),
The world's mad business now is o'er,
And Jove resents such pranks no more.
I to such blockheads set my wit!
I damn such fools! Go, go; you're bit.

The microscopic eye which can perceive sincere religion in these caustic lines would regard Montaigne as a Methodist and Rabelais as a Roman Catholic.

It is said that the Dean performed his family devotions with such secrecy that the guests in the house were never in the least aware of the ceremony. There was small need why a pillar of the Church should assemble his family privily, as if he were a Christian in the time of Nero. We may, therefore, be pardoned for concluding that there was no family worship.

It is, of course, true that in ecclesiastical and theological controversy Swift always took the orthodox side. For outwardly he was loyal enough to his employers. For the Deists of his time, such as Toland, Asgill, and Collins, he had a profound contempt. He refers to "that quality of their voluminous writings which the poverty of the English language compels me to call their style."

In his famous and most sinister argument upon the inconveniences which would result from the abolition of Christianity he drenches them with vitriol. But it is all purely dialectic fencing, prompted more by the scorn in which he held his opponents than by any real concern for the subject of his argument. Swift's polemic was aimed at guarding the material prosperity of the Church of which he was an official, just as a counsel will argue for whichever side pays him his retaining fee.

His real feeling is perfectly apparent in such a sardonic climax as the following:—

"To conclude: whatever some may think of the great advantage to trade by this favorite scheme, I do very much apprehend that in six months after the Act is passed for the extirpation of the Gospel the Bank and East India stock may fall at least one per cent. And, since that is fifty times more than ever the wisdom of our age thought fit to venture for the preservation of Christianity, there is no reason why we should be at so great a loss merely for the sake of destroying it."

If that is religion, then Swift was religious.

When he wrote his own epitaph he disdained any religious allusion. A pillar of the Church, he refused to permit any pietistic platitudes upon his tombstone. A dignified Secularism, an appeal to the memories of his fellow-men, but not a word about God or Christ. When face to face with death he let the mask slip from his features, and we see for a brief moment the real man:—

"Here lies the body of Jonathan Swift, Doctor of Divinity, Dean of this Cathedral Church, *where fierce rage can tear the heart no more*. Go, traveller, and imitate, if you can, an earnest, manly champion of freedom. He died on the 19th of October, 1745, in the seventy-eighth year of his age."

The original is in Latin. The dates are the only additions. No alteration was made in the epitaph.

Rabelais and Renan, both great sceptics, left the Church, and chose the road to mental freedom. Swift stayed in the Church, and failed in his ambition. In spite of his lifelong hypocrisy, Swift was a disappointed man. He had to be content with a paltry deanery when his ambition was at least a bishopric. But this was not all. If his youth was miserable, eating the bitter bread of dependence, his age was awful, for he became mad.

The fierce rage (*saeva indignatio*) of which he spoke as lacerating his heart, and which he inscribed on his tomb, was doubtless intensified by his having lost his chance of preferment. He had prostituted his great genius for what? After all his dissembling he died, to quote his own painful words, "like a poisoned rat in a hole."

MIMNERMUS.

Correspondence.

THE PUZZLE OF THE INFINITE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—“Gorgias” has neatly put the *space* aspect of the Achilles-tortoise race so as to show that, like the *time* conditions which I gave a fortnight ago, they do not give Achilles the possibility of overtaking the tortoise. The race is stopped *before* Achilles can catch up. But I fail to see what “Gorgias” means in his third statement, “that by making each heat twenty times *longer* than the preceding heat it will be seen at once that it is utterly impossible for Achilles to overtake the tortoise.” Would “Gorgias” oblige with a concrete example of this his third statement, and also one of his fourth statement? Not being a “London” mathematician, I cannot follow him.

Mr. Ball says that I, along with “Head Master,” “occupy an untenable position in denying that ‘9 equals 1.” Well now, ‘9 is a form of saying $\frac{1}{10} + \frac{1}{100} + \frac{1}{1000}$ *ad infinitum*. And how can an *infinite* series be summed? What I say is this, that ‘9 is for *practical* purposes equal to 1; but *theoretically* it can never equal 1.

A moment’s thought on the example I gave of the boy’s pocket money will prove *both* of my contentions. The boy gets £1, then 10s., then 5s., 2s. 6d., 1s. 3d., etc.

Now the boy never can get £2; yet the father might put £2 into the bank to cover his liabilities as per promise. The £2 would stand for the *limit* to which the lad’s borrowings would ever approach, yet never reach.

This will show that my use of “limit” is not that so kindly assigned me by Mr. Ball, and his illustration of a line of cliffs not being the limit of an ocean which never reaches them is not to the point. And Mr. Ball has cleverly used another fallacy in thinking he has found that ‘9 equals 1.

He says, let Achilles run ten yards per second, the tortoise one yard per second, and let the tortoise have nine yards start. Then at the end of one second Achilles has overtaken the tortoise. Then he goes on to say that while Achilles runs nine yards the tortoise goes $\frac{1}{10}$ of a yard. While Achilles goes $\frac{1}{10}$ of a yard the tortoise goes $\frac{1}{100}$ of a yard, and while Achilles goes $\frac{1}{100}$ of a yard the tortoise goes $\frac{1}{1000}$ of a yard.

Then he sums up $\frac{9}{10} + \frac{9}{100} + \frac{9}{1000}$ + etc., and says they must be = to ten yards: $\frac{9}{10} + \frac{9}{100} + \frac{9}{1000}$ + etc., and says this must be equal to one yard. And in the same way he says (implicitly) that $\frac{1}{10} + \frac{1}{100} + \frac{1}{1000}$ + etc. of a second equals *one second*.

That is, he assumes the summation of the series, and then after uses this summation to prove that the summation can be exactly made. In other words, he begs the question (see carefully his second paragraph in his last letter). I should like to take “Head Master” to task for saying that when the tortoise covers one yard it has not gone through all the fractional distances represented by ‘9 of a yard. This is what it has done, and *more*. But I have already trespassed enough on your space.

MATHEMATICUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reply to “Mathematicus” of February 9, I took for granted that the fallacy was seen through by all of us, and the precise cause of the fallacious conclusion also. Mr. Ball and I have been disputing about ‘9, and not about Zeno’s blunder.

In reply to “Gorgias,” February 16, I do not think “on Zeno’s conditions” is the correct way of stating the matter.

I am not aware that “Zeno” insisted upon these particular conditions in the running of the race, but he set himself to work to argue the question out upon those lines, and of course reached an absurd conclusion.

I first saw the problem twenty-five years ago in an Arithmetic by Dr. Wormell, published by Murray and Co., and, if I remember rightly, Dr. Wormell put his answer in this form: “Zeno made the mistake of concluding that, because he could conceive of a space being divided into an infinite number of parts, the space was infinite also.” Coleridge and De Quincey were not skilled in mathematics. In fact, whilst at Cambridge, Coleridge, as we know, never touched the subject at all.

Judging Quincey from his works, he lacked mathematical training. His conclusions were often in opposition to those formed by other people. He wrote splendid prose, but the *Quod erat demonstrandum* was missing from the majority of his judgments.

A *finite* series can be constructed to represent the race. In this series the last term would be cypher, but an *infinite* series is entirely out of place.

By “infinite space” I meant infinitely divisible space, but there is no such thing except in our mathematical imaginations. If we could have a certain space in practice “infinitely divisible,” then the reasoning of “Gorgias” and “Zeno” would at once come into force.

Some years ago it was suggested that Zeno knew the reasoning to be wrong, but he put the problem forth simply as an exercise for his fellow philosophers or students in the art of detecting fallacy.

The whole case may be summed up in these words:—We cannot have a space on any racecourse divided infinitely to correspond with any infinite series on paper; hence infinite series must be barred as inapplicable. Measure *finite distances* by *finite series* if you like, and then we shall have no erroneous conclusions.

Better still for simple problems. Keep to simple figures, and then we get simple, correct results. True on paper, and true in the world of fact. I am aware of what is in Colenso, and a score more text-books; but Colenso, and all other mathematical professors, knew perfectly well ‘9 approximates to 1, but never will reach it, just as “Mathematicus” knows it.

HEAD MASTER.

[Another letter from “Head Master,” in reply to Mr. Ball’s communication in our last issue, and a further letter from Mr. Ball, are carried forward through pressure on our space.—ED.]

MURDEROUS MILLINERY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It will be remembered that the editor of the *Millinery Record* had the effrontery to assert, a few months back, that the aigrettes which adorn English ladies’ hats are not genuine “osprey,” but “clever imitations.” A representative of the Humanitarian League has lately made inquiries at some representative millinery establishments for real “osprey” plumes, and was shown—without any hesitation or qualification—a large number of the genuine article, at prices varying according to size and quality, from ninepence to fourteen shillings. It is true that there are imitations in the market. It is also a fact that, owing to a temporary change of fashion, the sales of “osprey” plumes have not been so large during the past autumn as in the two previous seasons, when the trade reached its zenith. But, nevertheless, *pace* the *Millinery Record*, it is beyond doubt that the genuine feathers—obtained by the most horrible and revolting cruelty—have still an immense sale in this country, and, unless public opinion asserts itself more strongly, will continue to have a sale—until a beautiful species is exterminated.

JOSEPH COLLINSON.

Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery-lane, W.C.

Obituary.

ON Saturday, March 1, the late beloved wife of Joseph E. Schofield, one of Oldham’s veteran Freethinkers, was borne to her last resting-place, witnessed by a large concourse of people. J. E. Broadbent officiated as reader, and in a pathetic and impressive manner read passages from Austin Holyoake’s, Mrs. Besant’s, and the N. S. S.’s Funeral Services, which were listened to with almost breathless attention by a numerous body of friends and many of the general public, including at least one Nonconformist minister.—V. B.

A new light on the universality of Shakespeare as a poet has been thrown by a correspondent who has been attentively reading the Psalms of David, and a discovery he has made leads him to the belief, à la Mrs. Gallup, that they were really written by the Bard of Avon. In Psalm 46 he found that by counting forty-six words from the beginning you arrive at the word “shake,” and by counting forty-six from the end (omitting, of course, the exclamation “Selah”) you come to the word “spear.” These, conjoined, make up the name of the poet, and he asks whether they do not form a secret cryptogram?—*Daily Telegraph*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

LONDON.

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

THE ATHENÆUM HALL (73 Tottenham Court-road, W.): 7.30, Charles Watts, "Behind the Veil."

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church-road): 7, Conversazione.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney, E.): 7, R. P. Edwards, "Natural History versus Christianity."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road): 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Christ's Claim to be the Messiah."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, Harold Johnson, B.A., "The Religious Problem."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, William Sanders, "Hall Caine's Political Novel."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. ("The Victory," Newnham-street, Edgware-road): March 13, at 8.30, members' meeting.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, W. J. Ramsey.

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (Bradlaugh Club and Institute, 17 Little Horton-lane): H. Percy Ward—3, "Ghosts"; 7, "The Jokes of Jehovah."

BELFAST ETHICAL SOCIETY (York-street Lecture Hall, 69 York-street): J. M. Robertson—3.45, "The Claims of Christian Ethics"; 8.15, "Internationalism versus Imperialism."

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): 12, Discussion Class; 6.30, J. F. Turnbull, "Secular Salvation."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, L. Bergmann, B.Sc., "Organic Evolution."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, J. M. Stuart Young, "Heaven: Where and What is It?"

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Lecture or Reading by a Local Gentleman.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Capt. Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7, a Reading.

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