

Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

Rhodes's Religion.

VERY few documents of recent years have created so much stir as the will of the late Mr. Cecil Rhodes. It came as a revelation to nearly all; and, whatever one's opinions of the man's general career may be, it is safe to assert that its publication will have raised him in the estimation of all. The provisions of the will were catholic in their range, and, if faithfully interpreted in the spirit in which the testament was drawn up, are well calculated to produce much that is good in the future. And its omissions are no less remarkable than its provisions. Churches and chapels were ignored, and charitable institutions—which, as things go, are too often controlled by religious influences and made subservient to them—were likewise unprovided for. The will was a sober, business-like document, and clearly intended to be put to a business-like use. And now, on top of the will itself, we have the remarkable article of Mr. W. T. Stead in the *Review of Reviews*, which throws a still stronger and more curious light upon the great and striking personality that has passed away.

Taking the two together, one may safely say that they lift Mr. Rhodes altogether out of the ranks of the vulgar money-spinners and tricky speculators with which people were so apt to confound him. They show him to have been a man of large ideas and gigantic ideals, none the less large and gigantic because many, of whom the present writer is one, may believe them to be utterly unrealisable, and even dangerous. His idea of a secret society of millionaires dominating the world and securing the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race in the interests of the whole world, or of coercing America into line by the agency of a hundred years' commercial war, is fantastic enough in all reason, and, if attempted, could only end in disaster. But the idea, as sketched out by him in a letter to Mr. Stead, is one that could not have occurred to a little man. It could only have been grappled with by one of more than ordinary stature; and this ideal, quarrel with it as we may, shows him to have been a man who, while using money as a means to an end, was far above using either that or mere political power as an end in itself.

It is not, however, with this aspect of Mr. Rhodes's career that we are now concerned. Along with the letter published, and which now sees the light of publicity for the first time, Mr. Stead also reprints a portion of an article written in 1899 which professes to give Mr. Rhodes's religious opinions. How much of the opinions expressed in this reprint belong to one, and how much to the other, it is difficult to say. Socrates is said to have observed that Plato made him say a great deal more than he ever thought of, and it is extremely probable that Mr. Rhodes might say the same of Mr. Stead. However, we cannot now question Mr. Rhodes upon the subject, and it is quite probable that, if we could, he would think the matter hardly worth bothering about; so we must perforce take Mr. Stead's presentment of the matter; and, for the matter of that, so far as the purpose of this criticism is concerned, it matters little whether the Theistic views criticised belong to one or the other. The views expressed are common enough in essence, and that is the important thing.

But what was Mr. Rhodes's religion, according to Mr. Stead? He did not believe in any of the established religious creeds—that is acknowledged. He was

the son of a clergyman, but, apparently, thought little of his father's beliefs. This is not unusual. Lucian manufactured gods for the temples before he set himself the task of ridiculing them out of existence, and since his time many well-known Freethinkers have sprung from professional supporters of the Christian Church. This may be because they are behind the scenes, so to speak, and readily recognise how little reality there is in the whole performance. Mr. Stead says he was "not, in the ordinary sense of the word, a religious man"—which is one way of saying he was not religious at all. "Upon many questions relating to the other world his one word is 'Agnostic'—'I do not know.' But on the question of hell he is quite sure he knows, and he knows that it is not true."

Well, that is at least something to his credit, as is also the further statement that none of the Churches—not even the great Roman Catholic Church—was wide enough or comprehensive enough for him. It is something, after all, for one to rise above the petty quarrellings of the various creeds, to be above being imposed upon by their loud-sounding claims and verbal shibboleths, and to realise that our rule of life must be drawn from the living present, not from the dead past. The fundamental questions of the creeds did not interest him. "Life is too short," he said, "to worry about previous lives. From the cradle to the grave—what is it? Three days at the seaside. Just that, and nothing more. But, although it is only three days, we must be doing something. I cannot spend my time throwing stones in the water. But what is worth while doing?"

Most readers will take with a grain of salt Mr. Stead's further assertion that Mr. Rhodes was led to realise that the universal belief of man in a God must be solidly based on fact; and there is, indeed, something suspiciously like satire in what follows. He worked it out, we are told, to the result that there is an even chance that there might be a God, and next set himself to work out the question:—

"If there be a God, of which there is an even chance, what does He want me to do?.....I think I shall not be far wrong in concluding that He would like me to do pretty much as He is doing. Therefore the first thing for me to do is to try to find out what God—if there be a God—is doing in this world.....And, as He is manifestly fashioning the English-speaking race as the chosen instrument by which He will bring in a state of society based upon Justice, Liberty, and Peace, He must obviously wish me to do what I can to give as much scope and power to that race as possible. Hence, if there be a God, I think that what He would like me to do is to paint as much of the map of Africa British red as possible, and to do what I can elsewhere to promote the unity and extend the influence of the English-speaking race."

Such, according to Mr. Stead, was the religion of Mr. Rhodes—a belief in a fifty per cent. chance of there being a God, and in his having selected the English-speaking people as his chosen instruments for civilising the world, and that he personally ought to do all he could to assist God Almighty in his difficult task. And I for one beg to express very strong doubts whether Cecil Rhodes ever believed any such string of rubbish. That he believed that if the Anglo-Saxon race used its opportunities wisely and well it might rule the world, and that he had set himself the task of doing what he could to further this end, is possible and probable; but it is almost incredible that the author of the two wills—the legal one and the one published in the *Review of Reviews* concerning the domination of the world by the English-speaking peoples—ever believed such a string

of banalities and puerilities as those now put into his mouth. There is too strong a flavor of prophet Stead, and of the average parson, about it for credence. It is, of course, probable that Rhodes may have used such language when talking to religious men of the type of Mr. Stead, for the purpose of utilising them as he appears to have utilised others of the money-grabbing kind; but further than that it seems folly to believe. Such language may do for a religious meeting where an appeal is being made for funds to send out more missionaries, or for any enthusiastic religious gathering half drunk with the gospel of race supremacy; but it is rather too much to ask us to accept this view of the matter of representing Cecil Rhodes's real opinions.

But, of course, the absurdity of the position is the same whether he believed it or not; and this gospel has been preached from thousands of pulpits during the past few years. Does any Theist ever think of all that such a belief implies? Probably not; it is enough for him that he has got hold of a formula that flatters at once his national vanity and his religious egotism. Yet what it involves is this:—An almighty and all-wise being creates in the first place various races of men. He plants them down on various parts of the earth's surface, endows them with feelings and capacities that must sooner or later bring them into deadly conflict—a conflict that must extend over hundreds of thousands of generations, and must be accompanied by every species of cruelty, duplicity, and barbarity, and passively waits for a certain body of his creatures to come out on top. Imagine a human being acting in a similar manner. Conceive a man with the ability to create sentient organisms by the thousands, and then imprisoning them in a vast cockpit to fight with and destroy each other, and who, when appealed to for a reason for his conduct, replies: "Oh, it is all right; there is one particular kind that I have created just a little stronger than any of the others, and if you only let them alone that kind is bound to come out on top." This is virtually what our Theistic preacher of race supremacy says concerning it. He does not say it in so many words; if he did, the callous brutality of the whole process would be plain enough to destroy his belief in the goodness of his deity; but it is *virtually* what he says, and we only need to put the process into plain language to make its brutality clear.

If God wanted only the superior race to inhabit the earth, why create the inferior one? Is it not ridiculous—nay, worse than ridiculous; is it not criminal—to create whole races of beings, and then subject them to the assaults of another race, before which they are bound to disappear? The reply that this *is* what takes place is a mere evasion of the point at issue. No one questions the *fact* of race struggle, or the fact that certain races or species of animals do get crushed out in the evolutionary process. We no more question this fact than we do that of people being swallowed up by an earthquake; but neither do we justify it. It is the Theist who seeks to do this by the miserable apology that the higher race triumphs. And to this the unanswerable reply is, Then why create the lower ones?

Scientifically, the whole theory of race supremacy shelters many absurdities and gives rise to many absurdities. A race is what its traditions, customs, institutions, and general habitat make it. Change these and you effect a corresponding modification in racial qualities. Racial qualities are not fixed but fluid, and it is passing strange that many who base their view of life upon the modifiability of animal forms should at the same time insist upon the fixity of race characteristics.

Of course, as I have said, there is no real and unanswerable reason for supposing that Mr. Rhodes ever indulged in this form of theism, whatever he may have believed concerning the future of the English-speaking races. From all that we can see he had thrown religion overboard altogether. His will does not mention religion, except to say that no one shall be prevented from benefiting by its provisions on account of his religious opinions; and he was not a patron of religion during his life. True, there was a religious service over his dead body, but that had to do with those who wished to make capital out of him, and not by any wish of his own. *His* wish was to sleep the sleep that knows no awakening in the midst of the giant and lonely hills

that he seems to have really loved. The selected grave is symbolical of the man. In an earlier generation he might have become the founder of a new empire; as it is, he strove by methods more or less legitimate for the undue extension of an old one. And the bitterest satire of all is for him now to serve as the occasion for the religious banalities of press and pulpit.

C. COHEN.

Christianity and Evolution.

IT appears evident to us that a believer in the Bible account of creation cannot consistently accept the theory of Evolution, for the reason that the teachings of the latter are in direct opposition to those of the former. Evolution may be defined as an unfolding, opening out, or unwinding; a disclosure of something which was not previously known, although it existed before in a more condensed or in a hidden form. There is no new existence called into being, but that which was previously concealed is made clear to our eyes. Evolution teaches that the universe and man did not always exist in their present form; neither are they the product of a sudden creative act, but rather the result of innumerable changes from the lower to the higher, each step in advance being an evolution from a pre-existing condition. On the other hand, the Bible doctrine of special creation teaches that during a limited period God created the universe and man, and that the various phenomena are not the result of natural law, but the outcome of supernatural design. According to Mr. Herbert Spencer, the whole theory of evolution is based upon three principles—namely, that matter is indestructible, motion continuous, and force persistent. Spencer regards evolution as the concentration or transition of matter from a diffused to a more condensed and perceptible form. This change he traces in the systems of the stars; in the geological history of the earth; in the growth and development of plants and animals; in the history of language and the fine arts, and in the condition of civilised States. Briefly, the theory is that the matter of which the universe is composed has progressed from a vague, incoherent, and, perhaps, all but homogeneous nebula of tremendous extent, to complete systems of suns, worlds, comets, sea, and land, and to countless varieties of living things, each composed of many very different parts, and of complex organisations. It is true that a few professed Christians avow their belief in evolution, maintaining that it is what they call God's mode of working. But the number of these is comparatively small.

The Rev. Father Charles Coupe, S.J., M.A., late Professor of Philosophy, has recently delivered two lectures in Bournemouth upon "Christianity and Evolution." He stated that his object was not "to attack, but to criticise, evolution." Most of the intelligent Christians to-day cannot ignore the facts of science, and, not liking to openly give up their belief in traditional teachings, they seek to depreciate the result of scientific investigation by confusing the real question at issue. For instance, Father Coupe tries to make much of the difference of opinion which obtains amongst men of science, ignoring that such difference does not pertain to scientific *facts*, but only to *theories*, which may or may not be verified in the future. As to the facts upon which the theory of evolution is based, there is no divergence of opinion amongst scientists, and it is these very facts that demonstrate the fallacy of the Christian claims. It is, however, a gratification to find such an able exponent of Roman Catholicism as Father Coupe drawing the attention of the pious folk to the question of modern science. Hitherto the clergy of all denominations have avoided, as much as possible, the lessons of the physical sciences. It will probably be interesting to our readers to learn what the Father has to say upon this subject. We therefore subjoin the principal points of his criticism as reported in the *Bournemouth Daily Echo*:—

"His first postulate was that this universe, the nebula, whatever its state at the beginning, was finite, being an effect, and its cause was infinite, an efficient one—viz., God. A German scientist had made the astonishing contention that the universe created itself, but he (the lecturer) argued that, as mind must always come first and matter second, it was for them, as Christians, to

insist that the mind of God created the matter—created the world out of nothing. The Father asked whether anyone really and sincerely believed that this universe was an intelligent automaton of fortuitous atoms, evolving and unfolding itself? Herbert Spencer had spoken of it as an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity, but he (Father Coupe) argued that the theory most acceptable was that there was an intrinsic potentiality, an agent, a first cause, acting upon 'the intrinsic potentiality lying in cosmic vapor.' Modern physical science had proved that the living comes only from the living, and not from the dead. Besides not being able to account for the beginning of the universe, the origin of species, and the origin of life (vegetable, sensitive, and intellectual), evolution could not account for the end of the world. According to evolution, the world was being gradually evolved to something better and better; but he argued that things pointed to extinction, and not to expansion; the clock had been wound up, and the weights were running down; the candle had been lit, and would burn out, and the sun (the great steam-engine driving the solar system) was cooling, and would one day be frozen, cold, and blank as the moon. The Materialist would have one believe solely in matter, and the forces of matter; but he (the lecturer) argued that, as there could not be a law without a law-giver, a design without a designer, so there was a Great Mind, which projected this vast universe—a Being extrinsic to the matter, and therefore spiritual and infinite."

We have quoted this rather lengthy extract from the report of the Father's lectures because we desire not to misrepresent him in any way, and wish to afford the reader the best opportunity of judging the value or otherwise of what an eminent champion of the "Mother Church" has to say in defence of the Bible against science. For our part we regard Father Coupe's effort to be on a par with most theological effusions. It is the usual Christian method of mere assertion, of using words without stating in what sense they are employed, and of misconceiving the nature and scope of the subject criticised. The Father's first position is that the nebula at the beginning was a finite effect of an infinite cause—God. Now, the nebula forms part of an infinite (unlimited) universe, and never was, so far as knowledge obtains, non-existent, but only changeable in its aspects. It does not appear that the Father realised the fact that cause and effect are related, and that one cannot be affirmed without implying the other. The idea of infinite causes of infinite effects and finite causes of finite effects he does not develop, but makes the nebula finite, and its causes infinite, without offering the slightest justification for such an absurdity. It would be interesting to learn who the German scientist is who contended "that the universe created itself." The prevailing view is, not that it was ever created, but that it is eternal and illimitable. He speaks of Herbert Spencer. But in Part I. of *First Principles* it is shown that a belief in an external or a self-creator is a fallacy. If, as the Father alleges, God created matter out of nothing, there must have been a time when there was no matter, and no God as "creator of matter." We are not informed where God was, and what he was, before the alleged creation. The Father asserts that mind must always come before matter; but no foundation is given for this statement. So far as we know, mind is the result of a certain material organisation. The same may be said of life. We have no knowledge of either life or mind apart from organised matter. The Father is under a delusion in supposing that Evolutionists have any theory as to the supposed origin of the universe. As Spencer has said, every attempt we make to explain that origin only brings us back to the inconceivable idea of self-existence.

Evolution, the Father says, cannot account for the end of the world; but he does not state what he means by that phrase. He argues that things point to extinctions, not to expansions, without explaining what is meant by "things" and "extinctions." Of course, evolution cannot account for the end, or extinction, of the universe, for the reason that it has no idea of the destructibility of matter. The Father tells us that "the candle had been lit, and would burn out; and the sun would one day be frozen cold, and blank as the moon." Well, what does this prove? Not that the universe will "end and become extinct," for this applies only to the phenomena referred to. Professor Ernst Haeckel, in his *Riddle of the Universe*, says:—

"We are, moreover, justified in concluding, if we are

not logically compelled to conclude, that the persistence of matter and force has held good throughout all time as it does to-day. Through all eternity the infinite universe has been, and is, subject to the law of substance..... Even our mother earth, which was formed of part of the gyrating solar system millions of ages ago, will grow cold and lifeless after the lapse of further millions, and gradually its orbit will fall eventually into the sun" (pp. 247-9).

It may be remarked that orthodox writers are, as a rule, most illogical when they contend for the old theological notions. Here we have a Professor stating that the fact of the nebula being capable of evolving itself (which capability he has already denied) was a far greater proof of God's power than if it had been first evolved (which he has said it was not) as we see it to-day. The truth is, to speak of evolution in connection with creation shows the disposition of the pious mind to adopt the new child of the nineteenth century, and to find it an infinite Father who has no relation whatever to what we call time.

The Father avows himself a lover of physical science, which he admits teaches only truth, and yet he speaks of "law" as though it were an Act of Parliament. A scientist would never use the term "law of nature" in such a sense. As a believer in science, the Father should accept the scientific teaching of the indestructibility of matter and the persistence of force. These constitute our idea of all that is, and of the causes of all that happens. With the usual orthodox lack of consistency, he speaks of life as "coming only from antecedent life," and yet he asserts there was a "time when there was no life." If this be true, where was the "antecedent"? In his first lecture he declares that everything came from nothing, but in his second he leads his hearers to suppose that all things emanated from an infinite Being. Such is a specimen of theological "science."

Finally, it is asked who imparted motion to matter? We answer that there is no proof that it ever was imparted. Matter and motion, in our opinion, always existed. To talk of the beginning of matter and motion in a universe of infinite extent in space and time is paradoxical and inconceivable. And, even if we call our earth a finite effect, that leaves the "infinite beyond" unaccounted for. Haeckel's opinion about motion is, to say the least, as valuable as that of Father Coupe. The German scientist writes: "In our opinion this second 'world-enigma' is solved by the recognition that movement is as innate and originally a property of substance as is sensation. The proof of this monistic assumption is found, first in the law of substance, and secondly in the discoveries which astronomy and physics have made in the latter half of the [nineteenth] century" (*The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 246).

CHARLES WATTS.

The Nature of Conscience.

CONSCIENCE is a thing of which we hear a great deal. It is represented as being an unflinching monitor, an impartial critic, an incontestable guide, and an inerrant judge; and, if these representations be true, then the principle or faculty, or whatever it is, demands careful consideration. The word itself comes from the Latin *conscientia*, which is a compound formed from *con* = "with," and *scientia* = "knowledge." Thus *conscientia* is, primarily, "knowledge with," or "joint knowledge," or "self-knowledge," or "consciousness." In fact, the word "conscience" is often a synonym for "consciousness." Thus 1 Cor. viii. 7: "Some with *conscience* of the idol, unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol." As also Shakspeare:—

Canst thou the *conscience* lack, to think I shall lack friends?
—*Timon of Athens*, II., ii., 184.

And Milton:—

The *conscience* of her worth,
That would be wooed, and not unsought be won.
—*Paradise Lost*, bk. viii.

But the word "conscience" is more often used to denote a consciousness that indicates the rectitude or erroneousness of any action, and it is this sense of the word that concerns us now. In his *Essays on the Native Powers of the Mind*, Thomas Reid maintains

"That by an original power of the mind, which we call 'conscience,' or 'the moral faculty,' we have the conceptions of right and wrong in human conduct, of merit and demerit, of duty and moral obligation, and our other moral conceptions; and that by the same faculty we perceive some things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong; that the first principles of morals are the dictates of this faculty, and that we have the same reason to rely upon those dictates as upon the determinations of our senses, or of our other natural faculties."

If this be true, and if conscience be an original power of the mind, and the source of all moral obligation, it is very remarkable that all the sages of antiquity missed it; for it is not until we come to the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon* (xvii. 11) that we find it recognised.

"For wickedness, condemned by a witness within, is a coward thing; and, being pressed hard by conscience, always forecasteth the worst."

The Gospels know nothing of conscience, for the word in John viii. 9 is omitted by all the best MSS., and is accordingly struck out of the Revised Version; and, although the word frequently occurs in the Epistles, yet there it seems to have the sense of "consciousness" rather than that defined by Reid. The idea of conscience, therefore, as "a witness within," is derived from the apocryphal *Wisdom*, not from Paul.

Now, it is held that conscience is a kind of sixth sense. As the eye tells us instantaneously whether the day is dark or light, as the hand tells us at once whether an object is light or heavy, so the conscience tells us immediately whether a given action is right or wrong. And it gives us this information intuitively. At the earliest stage of human consciousness the faculty of conscience reveals itself. The child, which is only just able to talk, will betray its sense of the rectitude of things; and, if it sees a cat worried by a dog, it will exclaim "Poor pussy! Naughty dog!" in the full consciousness that the dog has performed a wrong action. As, therefore, this principle of conscience is innate, every man carries within his breast the criterion of morality, and there need never be any doubt as to the correct course of human conduct. As Bishop Butler (Sermon III.) says: "Let any plain, honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself, Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt but that this question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue by almost any fair man in almost any circumstance." The worthy Bishop is so persuaded of the supremacy of conscience that he adds: "Had it strength as it has right, had it power as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world."

Yet conscience never has governed the world, for the simple reason that its dictates are not as uniform as Bishop Butler fondly imagined. The "plain honest man" in different parts of the world, in different stages of culture, and in different classes of society, answers the same question quite differently. Every vice and every crime has been committed with the full approval of the moral sense of some community or other. Thus, it is not so long since the chieftains of the highlands thought they were doing a gallant thing in robbing and murdering their lowland neighbors. The vikings held piracy an occupation that added lustre to a noble name. In ancient Sardinia and savage Fiji the murder of aged parents was a kind and filial action. In New Zealand cannibalism was a religious duty. In ancient Sparta infanticide was part of the customary law of the State; and in modern China the crime is looked upon as a matter of indifference. The Stoic philosophers considered suicide a dignified method of avoiding disgrace. And so we might extend the catalogue indefinitely. Even the moral sense of modern European nations has not always been the same. At one time it was thought wrong to take interest for money lent, and usury and pledging were left to aliens; nowadays, however, the payment of interest on loans is considered the mainstay of States and the foundation of national prosperity. Not so long ago negro slavery was considered the means of fulfilling the prophecies; it is now looked upon with abhorrence. Duelling is honorable with some classes of foreign society, although condemned by the majority; and so on. So that the "dictates of conscience" fluctuate everywhere. In the individual

these dictates are not always the same. Each one of us must be conscious that there is something or another that we once regarded as opposed to the fitness of things, but which we now recognise as indifferent; and *vice versa*. So that our consciences are in very much the same condition as the Frankish king, who adored what he once had burned, and burned what he had once adored.

In addition to being the source of moral obligation, in addition to pointing out the path of duty, it is claimed that conscience is also the guardian and avenger of virtue, in that it gives rise to the feeling of remorse felt by the individual when he has been guilty of some infraction of the moral law. But the remorse is just as acute at the unwitting neglect of some trivial social custom. In fact, remorse is sometimes felt at the omission to commit some crime. A Turkish woman who has accidentally exposed her face is as conscience-stricken as if she had murdered her babe. The Corsican who has neglected to avail himself of the opportunity to exercise the vendetta upon his family enemy feels he has incurred the deepest possible disgrace. Then there is the instance of the Hindu custom of *sati*. Hindu widows, prevented from burning themselves upon their husbands' funeral pyres, have felt all the pangs of remorse, and have lived in a state of misery and self-humiliation, or have endeavored to atone for their neglect of duty by suicide. "Pangs of conscience," therefore, are no criterion of morality.

Some moralists admit all these difficulties, but say that conscience, like other natural faculties, requires cultivation. A natural, intuitive, judicative faculty that requires cultivation before it can be relied upon, however, is somewhat useless to us. And if the same thing by varying cultivation can yield varying results, it is useless as a standard.

If I see a gold watch lying about, what prevents my putting it in my own pocket? First, there is the feeling of *prudence*; for it is distinctly to my interest to have the reputation of being an honest man, who can be trusted with anything. Secondly, there is the feeling of *sympathy*. Someone has lost a watch, and I feel sorry for him. Thirdly, there is the passion of *fear*. I may be seen by a policeman, and arrested for unlawful possession. Therefore the blended influence of *prudence*, *sympathy*, and *fear* impels me to take the gold watch to the Lost Property Office. Bishop Butler would say that "conscience" impelled; so that, after all, conscience is not an entity—it is merely a collective name for several sensations or passions when acting together. But it may be objected that the conscience of the honest man does not stop to weigh the considerations of *prudence*, *sympathy*, or *fear*, but decides at once that the proper course is to endeavor to restore the watch to its owner. The instantaneousness of the decision, however, does not prove that these three sentiments have not operated; for the human judgment is just as immediate with other things. A skilled workman sees at once if a job is rightly or wrongly done. An orator is every moment performing a series of judgments as to the suitability of his words, his rules of grammar, and the probable effect of his sentences upon his audience. And so an honest man, who is in the habit of restoring things to their owners, will act upon this habit as a kind of instinct, without clearly recognising the various sentiments that are simultaneously appealing to him. In common, ordinary affairs the "conscience" acts at once, without conscious deliberation; but in complicated problems the mind has to consider and reflect and review various courses before it can come to a satisfactory decision; and it is in these new, or complicated, problems that we are conscious of the co-operation of the various sentiments, emotions, and passions which are involved in our ultimate judgment.

Conscience, therefore, cannot be "an original power of the mind"; nor can it be the *source* of our moral ideas. To employ such language is to confuse a cause with a result, and a result with a cause. When properly examined, conscience is seen to be a persuasion of the mind—that is to say, an opinion. And an opinion is not an *original* faculty, but the result of various influences that have been brought to bear, consciously or unconsciously, upon the individual. Like other forms of opinion, the conscience is found upon

analysis to have resulted from the interaction of various passions, emotions, and sentiments, such as fear, gratitude, superstition, prejudice, experience, anticipation, and imitation. As soon as we realise that conscience is an opinion it is at once clear why it differs so widely among various people and various individuals; why its dictates are so often wrong; and why it stands in need of cultivation. These are the characteristics of all opinion. When we recognise the true nature of conscience it becomes apparent that it cannot be taken as having any inherent authority. Only a narrow-minded, ignorant, and intolerant man would claim that his own opinion was the legitimate judge of any problem in hand; and the man who appeals to his conscience is appealing to his own opinion. The appeal to the "general conscience" of the community is equally fallacious, for it is merely a variation of the old argument that "what everybody says must be true."

Conscience, then, is the opinion of right and wrong held by the individual. The moral man must, of course, shape his actions by his conscience—that is, by his moral opinion. But, if he clearly recognises that his conscience is, after all, only an opinion, he will be saved from obstinacy and bigotry. For his opinions on morality, like his opinions on other subjects, must be regulated by his knowledge, his observation, and his experience. His reason, not his emotion, must be his guide.

CHILPERIC.

Should Happiness be Our Aim?—VII.

VI.—UTILITY AND INTUITION (*conclusion*).

MAN and his environment are alike so complicated that the satisfaction of all our conflicting desires is impossible. We continually have to accept pain—to choose the least of two or more evils so as to avoid the greater. We carry out the most unwelcome of duties because, independently of other motives, the painful duty is less painful to us than social condemnation, or the humiliating feeling of shame or self-contempt, or, in extreme cases, the scourgings and gnawings of remorse, like haunting furies driving us back shuddering from terribly unexpected gulfs of lifelong horror and dismay to the relatively pleasant or peaceful path of honor and duty. People often fail to understand that this acceptance of pain is the pursuit of happiness, or the avoidance of the greater misery.

There are crises in life when only absolute devotion to principle will conquer passion and temptation. Mere belief in a policy of pleasure will never carry a man through the storms and troubles of life. We need much more than a mere standard or test of rules which we can only obey by the indispensable help of innate predispositions and cultivated habits and fixed ideals as powerful as those which impel the soldier to die at his post, or those which inspired the Indian brave of bygone days to sing defiance during his death-tortures. And all such devotion to duty or honor or lofty ideals the ordinary mind regards and represents as contempt for pleasure and pain. We fail to understand that in all such cases we are merely obeying higher pleasures and pains. We think that we "sacrifice our happiness" when we find truer happiness in loftier regions of feeling and thought. We imagine we are "disinterested" when we sacrifice an egoistic interest in order to gratify a stronger altruistic interest. We believe that a man is absolutely "unselfish" when he gives himself pleasure by gratifying a benevolent impulse. We consider that we exercise "self-denial" when we indulge in higher pleasures at the expense of lower and less-valued pleasures; but we should not think of using such terms as "self-denial" or "self-sacrifice" or "unselfishness" if we denied ourselves higher pleasures for the sake of lower pleasures, such as physical indulgences, which might mean the sacrifice of a lifetime's happiness or of life itself. We cannot easily alter the customary, though mistaken, methods of expressing the facts in such cases. Nay, with Hedonism, as with free-will also, we may often catch ourselves slipping back into old grooves from which we had rescued ourselves for a time. We almost inevitably

find ourselves speaking and thinking in popular phrases, which treat the higher, and often stronger, pleasures as if they were not pleasures at all, but were opposites or contrasts to pleasure. If we are wise we shall bow to this tendency so far, at least, as to be cautious, that in our moral teaching we put virtue or right conduct first, and not happiness—the *means* of happiness needing our attention and effort more especially and persistently than the happiness itself. We should not issue instructions in a form which will convey a meaning perniciously opposed to that which we intend or desire.

Many disputed questions remind one of the old story of the quarrel over the shield which was gold on one side and silver on the other. If a Stoical or Puritanical kind of man follows virtue as a sort of antipodes to pleasure—forgetting the while that his own deep satisfaction in doing this is to him the stronger pleasure—and if another man finds virtue pleasant, and recommends it on this as well as on other grounds, the fact that they agree in preferring virtue is the vital point. The rest is a matter of temperament or of training or modes of viewing things. Broad-minded mortals may sympathise with both views, it seems to me, and may see the truth on both sides of the shield. Instead of fighting to the death like the unfortunate knights in the story, the disputants had better shake hands and do their best to promote virtue, whether "for its own sake" or for its intrinsic pleasantness or beauty or loveableness, or as a means of general happiness, or for all reasons combined.

In conclusion, I may say that I think we should beware of talking too much about either happiness or virtue. As incessant talking about virtue is more fruitful of cant and hypocrisy than of genuine good feeling and action, so continual dwelling on the idea of happiness does not produce happiness, but may easily cause disappointment. To a certain extent, I would say, therefore, concerning personal happiness, Forget and, if necessary, forego (or imagine you forego). Occupy yourself directly with the interests and duties of life, and leave your own happiness to take care of itself; but you need not similarly forget the happiness of other people. Only in rare cases is there danger of excess in this latter direction.

W. P. BALL.

The National Secular Society.

REPORT of Executive meeting held at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C., on Thursday, April 10. There were present: Messrs. C. Cohen, E. Bater, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, C. Quinton, V. Roger, S. Samuels, T. Thurlow, F. Wood, C. Watts, and T. Wilmot.

The Secretary informed the meeting that the President, Mr. G. W. Foote, was unfortunately unable to be present, having had a relapse since the meeting was summoned. Mr. C. Cohen acted as chairman in his absence.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Cash statement received and adopted.

The matter of the International Federation of Freethinkers was again adjourned.

New members were admitted.

The invitations for the Conference were considered, and it was unanimously resolved: "That, owing to the general position of affairs and the President's precarious health, which might render it impossible for him to travel, it is advisable to hold the 1902 Conference in London." And the Secretary was instructed to make the necessary arrangements.

Mr. Cohen was elected on the Agenda Committee.

The Outdoor Propaganda was discussed, and it was resolved to ask the Editor of the *Freethinker* to make an appeal in the paper for funds to help carry on the season's work.

The Secretary read a letter from the President, enclosing a letter from Mr. Holyoake *re* a testimonial to Mr. Charles Watts. "It is meant," the President wrote, "for insertion in the *Freethinker*. But, as I understand from Mr. Watts that it was sent to me chiefly because I am President of the N.S.S., I have determined to submit it to the Executive, with a view to eliciting their opinion and intention, before printing or passing any comment upon it myself. And perhaps my absence this evening will, at least, secure that I shall receive from the Executive a view unbiassed and uncolored by my own ideas."

Mr. Moss moved: "That the Executive ask the Editor to insert Mr. Holyoake's letter in the *Freethinker*."

This was not seconded, as it was pointed out that the Editor could do that without consulting the Executive.

Mr. Thurlow moved, and Mr. Moss seconded: "That, in the opinion of this Executive, the testimonial circular contains the truth, and, considering Mr. Watts's lifelong service to the cause, asks the Editor to insert the letter in the *Freethinker*."

Messrs. Gorniot, Samuels, Schaller, Roger, Bater, and Quinton opposed the resolution; Mr. Heaford supported it, and suggested that it should run: "The Executive endorses the appeal, and asks the Editor to insert," etc.

This suggestion was adopted, and the resolution thus amended was put to the vote, with the result that it was lost by a majority of eight to three. The meeting then closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

Acid Drops.

THE Rev. Dr. Talmage, whose decease is just reported from America, appears to have died of inflammation of the brain. His end, therefore, was somewhat characteristic. His method of preaching was inflammatory. He was always like a man cutting capers or standing on his head. To say nothing simply and naturally was his constant practice. If he had to inform the world that twice two make four, he would have said: "I tell you it is indubitable, I challenge anybody to contradict it, I believe no one will have the intellectual audacity to dispute it, that if two and two are put together the result is four. That fact is as unshakable as the hills, it is as eternal as the stars. If it could change in any way the great Almighty God himself would be falling from his heavenly throne." With flashy rhetoric like this Talmage went through the world, persuading millions that he was a great orator, and raking in many thousands of pounds a year.

Talmage was always very keen after the dollars. Major Pond tells how he contracted to deliver a hundred addresses in England for a hundred dollars a night—not bad pay for an apostle of the gospel of "Blessed be ye poor." But when he found he was making a hit with the religious people he demanded 200 dollars a night, then 250, and finally 350. He got it. But would he have taken less than the hundred dollars if his first tour in England had been a frost? Not he. Talmage was never known to do that sort of thing.

Man makes God after his own image. He has always done so and always will do so as long as the manufacture continues. Nor was the late Cecil Rhodes an exception to the rule. According to Mr. Stead he was an Agnostic. He did not know whether there was a God or not. But so many people said there was that the odds for and against might be reckoned equal. It was "a fifty per cent. chance." Well, then, if there was a God, what did he want Mr. Rhodes to do? Why, to paint the map of Africa red—British red. That was what God wanted. Really, it was what Mr. Rhodes wanted. God is always of the same opinion as his worshippers.

Mr. Stead is a pious gentleman himself, and would be unlikely to make Cecil Rhodes out more sceptical than he actually was. He would rather minimise his friend's scepticism. We may take it, therefore, as very probable that Cecil Rhodes was a pretty thorough-going unbeliever. He had a big head and brains in it, and men built that way are seldom superstitious. Moreover, he was a practical man, and such men are apt to see the want of actuality in most religious beliefs. With regard to reincarnation, for instance, Cecil Rhodes said that life was too short to worry about previous lives. From the cradle to the grave was just like three days at the seaside. A true man wouldn't spend his time throwing stones in the water, but find something worth doing—and do it.

Dr. Parker noted the fact of Cecil Rhodes's scepticism. "Mr. Rhodes," he said, "made no profession of religion. In his will churches were not even mentioned. He admired the honesty of the man; he would rather have a man an honest non-professor than one who was a hypocritical pretender." Whereat the City Temple congregation burst into applause.

At the memorial service in St. Paul's Cathedral the Christian God was thanked because it had pleased him to call Cecil John Rhodes out of the miseries of this sinful life. The same day Mr. Justice Grantham sent two "Peculiar People" to prison for allowing the Christian God to call their child out of the miseries of this sinful life. They ought to have called in a doctor to prevent the Christian God from doing it. Such, at least, is what we take Mr. Justice Grantham's judgment to come to. When the Lord "calls" fetch in a doctor to frustrate him; otherwise you are liable to imprisonment as a felon. Such is the law of England to-day.

Cecil Rhodes, on one occasion, visited a soldier who lay sick in hospital. He sat awkwardly by the patient's bed for a long time, and at last, as he rose to go, blushing like a schoolboy, he pulled out a bottle of milk—and think what an almost unheard-of luxury a bottle of milk was in South Africa in those first days of the war!—and he shyly pushed it into the man's hands, and, muttering "More where that comes from," he hurried away.

Upon this story—very creditable to Cecil Rhodes—a religious weekly makes the following pious and silly comment: "We could wish that Mr. Rhodes, like Queen Victoria, General Gordon, and others, had pulled out a Testament and read a chapter, and offered prayer also." Now, suppose it had been narrowed to the choice—the bottle of milk or the Testament chapter?—which would the soldier have preferred, and which would have done him the more good? He might not have objected to the chapter and the prayer as an *addition*, or as a conditional infliction; but undoubtedly—the milk first!

General Booth's attempt to "hook" Cecil Rhodes is described in a recent issue of the *War Cry*, and is rather amusing reading. Of course, it would have been an immense thing for the Army if the General could have roped in the great millionaire, if not for all he was worth, at any rate for a considerable portion. But there is a tone of gentle melancholy eloquent of failure about the story as told by the General himself. Also a tender and most becoming consideration for the views of a man possessed of great wealth.

The General acted with due circumspection. He says he regarded Cecil Rhodes as "a man of the world," and he felt that he must "go wisely." "To offend him would, I felt, destroy every opening for future usefulness with him." We know what the "future usefulness" meant. "I forget what I said, but it was something straight, personal, and it was understood by him at once. While he did not assent to my remarks by any passing pensions to religion, he did not resent them, neither did he pass them off with anything like levity or indifference."

The General very kindly informed Rhodes that he would pray for him, to which Rhodes responded: "Yes, that is good." Prayer, in Rhodes's estimation (interpreted by Booth), was "useful, acting as a sort of time-table, bringing before the mind the duties of the day and pulling one up to face the obligations for their discharge." If that was really Rhodes's view of prayer, it amounted to very little from a theological standpoint. At the most, if it recognised a Deity at all, it was but as a stalking-horse. Prayer meant no more in the way of inspiration and help than could be derived by a self-reliant man from a glance at the diary of his engagements. The Deity might reasonably be expected to resent such a want of proper recognition and such nonchalant treatment.

But, then, we know that Rhodes thought it "was but an even chance that God existed." Of a future life Stead reports him as saying: "Agnosco: I don't know."

Dr. Parker, in his gushing style, represents himself as "bewildered" by the gigantic personality of Rhodes. The calculations of the man "left his (Dr. Parker's) poor mind dazed and helpless." What seems to have impressed Dr. Parker was that in Rhodes's will "Churches are *not even mentioned*." Think of that! Still, Dr. Parker would "rather have a man an honest non-professor than one who was a hypocritical pretender."

While with Cecil Rhodes it was but an even chance that God exists, with the writers of the religious press there is not only absolute certainty, but means of unerringly tracing the finger or voice of God in everything. For instance, the *Christian* thus improves the Glasgow catastrophe: "Recreation in itself must not be discouraged, but there is unhealthy development when 80,000 people gather as they did on Saturday. The voice of God has spoken with no uncertain sound to that great company as well as to the far wider circle who would have been there if they could."

If the "voice of God" had spoken to the builders of the stand when they were engaged in its erection, it would have been much more to the purpose.

A son of "Ian MacLaren," the preacher and novelist (the Rev. Dr. John Watson), has gone to the front as an officer, with his father's full approval. At a meeting which he attended the other day Dr. Watson defended himself from reproaches that had been levelled at him by some people for this action. He could not (he said) understand the position of people who ran down the army, and yet were citizens of the Empire. What would they do if this country were attacked? None of his critics ventured to answer the question. What would they do if they found a man in their house at night, ill-treating one of their children? Would they read the Beatitudes to him? Personally, he declared

frankly that he would take the poker, and use it vigorously. The principle was identical in national defence.

This may be good enough from a common-sense point of view, only it sounds suspiciously like saying that in any matter of practical urgency the Gospel teaching is all my eye.

Alfred and Sarah Clark, the two members of the Peculiar People sect who were committed for trial for relying upon New Testament teaching to cure their sick child, were last week sentenced to four months' and two months' imprisonment respectively for trying to carry out Christian teachings in a Christian country.

The judge, in summing up, we see from the newspaper report, commented severely upon the "absurdity and inconsistency of the creed of the 'Peculiar People.'" Of course, it is easy for a judge upon the bench to talk about absurdity and inconsistency in such cases; but we venture to think that, while the absurdity of Christian teachings is patent to all who look at them impartially, the inconsistency lies more with those who administer the sentence than with those who receive it. Mr. and Mrs. Clark can, at least, console themselves in their prison cells that they were *honest* in their belief; and that, we fancy, is rather more than those who accept Christianity in theory, but disown it in practice, can pride themselves on.

"A Street Atheist Defeated" is the heading under which the *Christian Herald* prints, in its issue of the 10th inst., the following story:—"A very unusual scene was witnessed the other night by a large crowd at the corner of the street opposite the Waverley Hotel, Sauchiehall-street, Glasgow. An Atheist orator was denouncing Christianity with all the powers he possessed, and challenged anyone standing near to refute his statements. Thereupon a stranger stepped into the circle, and with eloquent language repelled the attack, and forced the Atheist to act on the defensive, and to acknowledge before all the audience that the teachings of Christ were perfect, and that he believed in them, and that the New Testament ought to be spread all over the land, and that the necessary result would be the uplifting of humanity. Having obtained this confession publicly, the stranger shook hands and said good-bye, while the whole crowd was greatly affected. It was a victory not often to be obtained at a street corner."

The *Christian Herald* is so given to romancing about Atheists and "Infidels" that it would be hardly worth while noticing this latest piece of fiction were it not for the fact that it appears also in the *Christian Budget*, and may be reproduced elsewhere. The story is a palpable invention. How could an Atheist orator commence by denouncing Christianity, and, after some necessarily short opposition by a stranger, become at once converted, not only to Theism, but to a belief in Christ and the New Testament? The story is too utterly absurd for credence by any but gullible readers of the *Christian Herald* and suchlike prints.

That old watch story is to the front again. Mr. Foote has been appealed to as a sort of authority upon it by Mr. A. Bircher, of Birmingham, who writes as follows: "I heard a gentleman to-day assert that he distinctly heard the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh (holding his watch in his hand) challenge God to strike him dead within five minutes. Will you kindly do me the favor of replying to this note as to the correctness of the story? This gentleman heard it at the Theatre, Longton, Staffs." A stamped and directed envelope was enclosed for a reply by post. Mr. Foote does not feel bound to answer every correspondent in this way. If he did so, he would have no time left for other business. However, he did send a reply by post in this instance, and the following is a copy of his letter: "Dear Sir,—You ask me to speak as to the 'correctness of the story' that Charles Bradlaugh, with his watch in his hand, gave 'God' five minutes to strike him dead. What I have to say is that this story is a 'chestnut' of great antiquity. It was told of Freethinkers before Charles Bradlaugh was born, and has been told of other Freethinkers since his death. It is one of the silliest of yarns, without a shadow of foundation in truth and sense. The 'gentleman' who told you that he himself heard Charles Bradlaugh challenge 'God' in Longton Theatre ought to be in the wooden nutmeg business, unless he suffers badly from hallucinations. I wish to be charitable to him, so I will presume that he is not a deliberate liar, but only one of the fools of faith.—Yours truly, G. W. Foote."

The Rev. Mr. Welch was holding forth at Drummond-street Chapel, Cardiff, and defending the faith against the attacks of the infidels. "And where," he asked, "do they get their notions? Why, from Bob Ingersoll or some other street-corner preacher," he replied. Mr. Welch may be a good authority on street-corner preachers, but he is either an ignoramus or an impudent jackass with regard to "Bob Ingersoll." Colonel Ingersoll drew vast audiences in the

finest halls in the United States, with a decent price on every seat in the house. No other orator had such a hold upon the lecture-hearing public of that country. We don't mean to say that his message would have been any the worse if it had been delivered at street corners, but as a matter of fact it wasn't. Even if it had been, however, "Bob" Ingersoll would not have dropped any lower than Jesus Christ. The Prophet of Nazareth was a street-corner preacher. He even mounted kopjes, and held forth in boats amidst the flavor of tarred nets and ancient fishscales. Really, Mr. Welch, you should think of these things beforehand, and not give the enemy cause to blaspheme.

According to the Rev. Dr. Davison, who has been speaking at Bristol on "Preaching in Relation to Unbelief," the unsettlement of belief in the community at large is considerable, and especially so concerning central questions such as the Providence of God.

As we expected, the outspoken article in the *Church Times* deprecating the "pitiful cry of clerical poverty" has called forth a storm of clerical censure. The parsons cannot bear to be told the plain truth, especially in regard to anything affecting their pockets. They resent it as a sort of outrage, even when it comes from their own pet Church paper.

One expostulating correspondent of the *Church Times* says he has been a reader of that paper for twenty-eight years, and never before has he read such an "amazing article." Another cleric writes to the editor that the article "must have filled your readers—even your most friendly readers—with amazement." Two other clerics, one a Rural Dean, express dissent. But none make any effective reply to the article. The editor sticks to his guns, and points out to his critics what, with the usual stupidity of parsons when they are arguing about their incomes, they overlook—namely, that the official income of a beneficed priest is his *net* income left after deducting rates and cost of repairs. On this net income he pays no more taxes or rates than other men.

In the course of this correspondence the Chaplain of Shore-ditch Workhouse says: "The writer of your article did not mean it to do so, but certainly his article will have the effect of still further reducing the number of candidates for Holy Orders." This means that the young men who contemplate laboring in the Lord's vineyard as ordained priests are quite prepared to give up the idea unless they are assured of a satisfactory income. The promise of a hundred-fold reward hereafter is not sufficient—they want a good recompense in hard cash now.

The language of the vicar of Honeybourne, near Evesham, appears to be anything but honied. At the Easter Vestry meeting he called a parishioner "a scoundrel and a liar." Some lively scenes ensued, and then the vicar produced a watch and said that, if something were not done in five minutes, he would clear the church. Afterwards he went to the porch and informed three policemen in attendance of his decision.

Now look at this picture. At Hasely, near Warwick, the vicar and churchwardens, after the vestry meeting, adjourned to the parish public-house. Here, after tea, the churchwardens treated all the parishioners to whatever they liked to drink, and then the vicar, the Rev. Edward Muckleston, did the same. This was in accordance with a custom of sixty years' standing.

An edifying incident occurred at Ulverston Parish Church the other Sunday morning during service. It arose out of a dispute for the occupancy of two seats in a pew between Mr. and Mrs. Aslett, General Manager of the Furness Railway, and Countess Leiningen, who each claimed the seats. Mr. Aslett had been in the practice of sending two railway employees to occupy the seats till he arrived, and this was done on the Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Aslett had taken their seats when the Countess and her sister came in, and, pushing by, sat next them when the psalms were about to be chanted. A sidesman, also a railway employee, went and sat between Mrs. Aslett and the Countess. The Countess strongly protested, and at the conclusion of the service, while a large portion of the congregation were waiting the Communion, went to the vestry and lodged a complaint.

There does not appear to be a superfluity of Christian love between these parties, nor an excess of Christian humility; and, as for Christ's injunction about surrendering one's coat to him that would have it, and throwing another garment after it, that does not seem to be the spirit either of the Countess Leiningen or of Mr. and Mrs. Aslett.

The wife of Mr. Cooper, people's warden at Shelton Church, Hanley, went home in tears. She had been to Holy Communion, and they offered her not bread but a wafer. She "felt herself insulted," and went home and poured her tearful complaint into the sympathetic ears of her

husband. He, in righteous wrath, has kicked up a disturbance about it at the Easter vestry meeting. Feminine tears are readily evoked, but how the lady could feel "insulted" by the wafer is somewhat of a mystery. If they had offered her not bread but a stone, one might have understood her indignation; but the incident shows what wretched trifles religionists will squabble over, as if they were of the greatest importance.

Sabbath desecration prevails at Llandudno, and the Bishop of Bangor is heading a crusade against it. Dr. Watkins Williams called a meeting of Church clergymen and Non-conformist ministers to discuss the terrible evil. "In England," he said, "attendance at places of worship was becoming less and less frequent, and the whole day was given up to secular pursuits, so that England was rapidly becoming a heathen country." Things were not so bad in Wales, but they might soon be so if the friends of religion did not bestir themselves. This gave rise to a general discussion, in which Sunday concerts, coach and motor-car touring, steamboat trips, and Sunday golf were denounced by various gospel-shop keepers. Finally, a resolution was arrived at to do something; and what a mouse it was after all that mountain of complaint! It was decided to issue an appeal to residents and visitors. No doubt this appeal will hang upon the walls of lodging-house bedrooms, and will produce the usual effect of literature in such places.

The Bishop of Norwich is not a bigoted Sabbatarian. He is ready to make concessions to Sunday enjoyment if the gospel-shop is not overlooked. He is in favor of recreation in the hours between service. "As soon as the church bell began to ring," however, "the recreation—football in the winter and cricket in summer—should be stopped." In other words, we may all be as jolly as we like on the Lord's Day provided we give the clergy a look in. What they want is an opportunity of doing business and getting a living. And as most of them have wives and children to support, it is a hard heart that does not feel a certain sympathy for them. We feel lots.

More complaints about Sunday "desecration." Sunday golf is declared to be on the increase at Southport. The Free Church Council there have passed a resolution expressing its "profound regret at the growing indifference to Sabbath observance on the part of many who spend their Sundays on the golf links and in other forms of recreation."

Rev. Granville Sharp, speaking at a meeting of the Hands-worth Free Church Council, lamented the disappearance of landmarks in the Christian religion. The attitude towards the Sabbath, for instance, he said, was entirely different to what it was formerly. It was not the slightest use pleading in modern society the authority of the Sabbath. There was no responsiveness to the old arguments for keeping the day apart for religious worship.

General Pole-Carew is reported to have said: "Give me an army of psalm-singing Britishers, and we would carry everything before us. Nothing could resist it." Does he mean that such a hideous din could be created by the howling of psalms and hymns that the enemy would take refuge in flight? Evidently we have made a mistake in regard to South Africa. The Salvation Army should have been sent out to cope with the Boers. Auxiliary forces should have been drafted from church and chapel choirs. The days of the Roundheads and the Covenanters are over, and perhaps, after all, what we have really needed has not been psalm-singing soldiers, but officers with greater tact in the field, and a War Department at home with some semblance of common sense and resourcefulness.

By the way, what does Tommy Atkins say to this reflection on his piety? Why—*why* didn't he learn a few psalms—the imprecatory ones for choice—to relieve his feelings in his manifold discomforts, and to intensify his antagonism to the Boers?

The Bishop of Worcester, speaking at a recent Bible Society meeting, said there was a widespread belief that critical studies of the Bible had tended to disparage its value and to create difficulties; but it was only ignorance and unacquaintance with criticism that led to the notion. The "ignorance" must be pretty largely shared by the clergy of Dr. Gore's own church if we may judge by the apprehensions they express. It is not given to every one to pursue critical studies of the Bible as Dr. Gore has done without discovering that they tended to disparage its value and to create difficulties. Some of the results of Dr. Gore's critical studies of the Bible created difficulties—at any rate, in his way to the Worcester bishopric.

A retired colonel, writing from the Junior Athenæum Club to the *Daily News*, claims for Jack Cooke, the boy preacher, more than human powers. He says "there is an element of the supernatural involved." But Jack Cooke is not the only

infant prodigy who has appeared in public. It is only because he displays his precocious talent on religious platforms instead of on the stage that the credulous are led to hint at the supernatural.

The *Christian World* enters its protest against "the nauseous preliminary 'booming' of the play, *Ben Hur*, which laid stress on its interest to religious people in a way provoking resentment. From the promoters of what, after all, is a purely commercial undertaking, there is something incongruous, not to say offensive, in the statement that 'the presentation of incidents intimately connected with the greatest Name in all history makes the play most fascinating to all followers of Him.'"

The *Christian* says "the introduction of our adorable Redeemer into a modern playhouse, with all its light pantomimic associations, is an outrage of the worst kind."

The evangelical weekly, *The News*, publishes the following paragraph: "The most outrageous way of observing Passion Week we have ever heard of finds painful illustration in a full-page picture in one of our leading pictorials this week, in which the painters and sculptors of the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome are represented engaged in the study of a model—a living man—stretched on the Cross, as if the Savior of the world. The model, we are told, 'poses in the attitude of the Crucifixion.' Could anything more utterly at variance with the least feeling of reverence be imagined?"

Nothing except the pictures, sculpture, etc., which are thus produced, or are evolved from imagination, and are imposed in deadly weight like a nightmare on Christendom.

"Claudius Clear," in the *British Weekly*, relates that Charles Gavan Duffy once told Carlyle a story "about somebody who confused him with the infidel publisher Carlisle who had a shop in Fleet-street, and insisted on the identification. Poor Carlyle said that the bagman was better informed than his class." "Claudius Clear" is not very clear in the telling of this story. Does the "bagman" mean Carlile? And why does "Claudius Clear" mis-spell the name of Carlile, who is surely well enough known in history?

A headline in a provincial paper about Huxley putting the fire out attracted our attention. We were relieved to find that it did not refer to the deceased scientist, but to a mere policeman.

The biography of Dr. Martineau is to be published in the autumn. He was probably the ablest theologian of his time. His rivals piously stole his ideas, and as religiously forgot to mention where they obtained them.

"Merlin," of the *Referee*, writes this week on "Immortality." He thinks that one factor which goes to prove its truth is the "dual mind." To adopt sporting phraseology, we think it is a hundred to one against it.

A wealthy negro, of Philadelphia, has left two million dollars to the Great Lying Catholic Church. If this sort of thing becomes fashionable, we shall find theologians proving that Jesus Christ was a colored person.

The Pope forbids Italian Catholics to vote at political elections. He is in a perpetual "tot" with the Government because it will not give him back the old Papal power over Rome, and also because it will not quietly let him do just what he likes in the secular as well as in the religious sphere. So he cries out, "I shan't play with you any more," and all good Catholics have to abstain from voting for members of parliament.

The Bishop of Norwich, addressing his Diocesan Conference, said a bishop must be "as wise as a serpent, as sharp-eyed as a lynx, and as patient as an ass." We haven't noticed that bishops are specially wise or specially sharp-eyed, but are quite willing to admit the patience, or any other asinine qualities that are claimed.

The great struggle between the opponent and the sustainer of the freedom of the will has ended to-day, after more than 2,000 years, completely in favor of the opponent of the doctrine. The human will has no more freedom than that of the higher animals, from which it differs only in degree, not in kind. We now know that each act of the will is as fatally determined by the organisation of the individual, and as dependent on the momentary condition of his environment, as every other psychic activity. The character of the inclination was determined long ago by heredity from parents and ancestors; the determination to each particular act is an instance of adaptation to the circumstances of the moment wherein the strongest motive prevails, according to the laws which govern the statics of motion.—*Haeckel*.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

The business of the Freethought Publishing Company, including the publication of the *FREETHINKER*, is now carried on at No. 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C., situated between Ludgate Circus and Holborn Viaduct, and rather nearer the latter. The new premises are in every way more suitable and commodious, and will furnish the opportunity for much-needed developments on the literary side of our propaganda.

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 20, Glasgow; 27, morning, Stanley Hall, London, N.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—April 20, Birmingham Labor Church; 27, afternoon, Victoria Park; evening, Stepney.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

J. PARTRIDGE, secretary, N. S. S. Birmingham Branch, writes: "I am directed by resolution unanimously passed at members' meeting last night to tender you sincerest sympathy from all in your present illness. You have the best wishes of all for a speedy recovery."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. HOPKINS.—Letter shall be inserted. Thanks for your good wishes. All over the world people wish each other "health." There is more good sense in the popular mind than philosophers are apt to allow; we mean when it concerns the elementary facts of human life.

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 various expenses caused by his illness. The following (sixth list) have been received:—W. Chesman (per G. Alward) £5; C. J. Pottage, £2; W. Baker, 1s.; W. H. Spivey, 2s. 6d.; E. Moorhouse, 2s. 6d.; R. Tatum, 2s. 6d.; E. Self, 2s. 6d.; Paul Rowland, 5s.; V. Page, 1s. 6d.; W. Lancaster, 2s.; C. A. Wildlake, 2s.

A. JOHNSON.—(1) Your difficulty seems to hinge upon the ambiguous use of the terms "material" and "immaterial." (2) It is not, we should say, strictly accurate to talk of matter giving rise to motion, or of motion giving rise to matter. Either is unthinkable without the other. The tendency of modern science, we should also say, is to explain "matter" in terms of force, or even to explain both force and matter in terms of an unknown x. (3) The essence of Materialism and of Atheism is not that it is committed to some definite theory of "matter" or "energy," but that it is possible to explain the known universe in terms of mechanical causation, and that without reference to a creative or controlling intelligence.

H. HUDSON.—We note your appreciation of Mr. Cohen's article on "The Education Muddle," and your suggestion that it might be reprinted as a leaflet. Want of funds is the chief obstacle in the way of the realisation of this and many other valuable suggestions. We appreciate the wish all the same.

V. PAGE.—We note your change of address to 44 Leeds-road, Nelson. Thanks for your sympathetic letter.

C. A. WILDLAKE.—Transferred as requested. Yes, it is a trying time of the year, as you say, for a convalescent.

F. WHATCOTT.—We do not recollect it, and can find no trace of it.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, 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 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, 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.

Editorial.

I HAVE just received a characteristically brave letter from Mr. Francis Neale. After referring with much sympathy to my own trouble, he tells me that, while not absolutely well himself, he thinks he has got over the worst of his physical troubles. He is getting stronger every day in the open air, and hopes soon to be able to do more in the way of copy for the *Freethinker*. "I really shall be glad," he says, "when I see your own articles once more on the front page."

My own health would be pretty good if it were not for the insomnia, which is troubling me rather severely again now that I have returned to London. As it lowers one, it has naturally brought back my cough. I shall have to go away again to the seaside for a while. I had no cough there, and I was getting my sleep back. No doubt I returned to London too soon. I see by this morning's newspaper that my old adversary, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, has just returned to London from Bournemouth, after a stay of six months. Prior to that period he had enjoyed a long holiday in the East to recover his health. I do not envy his good fortune. I only observe that the lot of a Secular advocate is less happy.

My friends, and indeed all the readers of the *Freethinker*, are invited to note that they can write to me now without restraint. I am not only able to read their letters, but glad to read them; and, whether in London or elsewhere, I shall keep abreast of my correspondence, and do a reasonable amount of work for the *Freethinker*. Mr. Cohen is at hand to see the paper through the press, and to relieve me (as he is kindly doing) of the drudgery of the editorship.

Unfortunately I must say a few words on a rather perplexing subject. I referred last week to a circular letter I had received from Mr. G. J. Holyoake. It referred to a proposed Testimonial to Mr. Charles Watts. I have had it printed in this week's *Freethinker*. But before giving it publicity I referred it, as I promised, to the Executive of the National Secular Society. When the Executive meeting took place I was still confined to the house. I was not able, therefore, to hear the discussion. What I have to regret is that the Executive has given a purely negative response to my invitation. Practically its resolution refers the matter back to me, leaving me to act as I please. I have therefore inserted Mr. Holyoake's letter, which was all he asked of me. More than this I cannot do until I hear from Mr. Watts with regard to the matter of the following paragraph.

During the severer part of my illness I could not so much as glance at my exchanges. Had I done so I should have noticed two lines in *Secular Thought* (Toronto) which have since been brought to my attention. Under the heading of "Correspondence" in the issue of February 2 I find these words:—

CHARLES WATTS.—Paper to hand. Why send us the Anderson pamphlet?

Now I daresay Mr. Watts has an explanation to offer, but I prefer that it should be a public explanation rather than a private assurance, which hardly meets the case of such a pointed rebuke or challenge (call it what you will) in a Freethought journal. I have given Mr. Watts the opportunity I could to offer an explanation in this week's *Freethinker*. That opportunity, however, is not deemed sufficient. I will wait, therefore, until next week; only observing meanwhile that I do not see any reason for seven days' gratuitous silence on my part.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

THERE is a letter in another part of this week's *Freethinker* from the Rev. Dr. John Clifford in reply to a passage in Mr. Cohen's article in our last issue. Mr. Cohen will doubtless write a rejoinder next week. Meanwhile we may at least congratulate Dr. Clifford on his rising above the silly affectation so common amongst the ministers of religion. They pretend that the *Freethinker* is a vulgar, illiterate journal quite beneath the notice of educated and thinking people. By this means they avoid the task of answering its arguments. Dr. Clifford is at least superior to that ostrich policy. The present is not the first letter we have published from his pen. A few years ago he had a correspondence in our columns with Mr. Foote on the question of the Bible in Board schools.

The Athenæum Hall platform will be occupied this evening (April 20) by Mr. Chilperic Edwards—"Chilperic" of the *Freethinker* and other advanced organs. His subject will be "The Epistles of St. John." This is not a particularly inviting title, but it cannot very well be altered, and the reader should not be prejudiced in consequence. We invite our London friends to go and hear Mr. Edwards's lecture. He is a ripe scholar, a wide and careful reader, and a sober thinker. But he doesn't carry sobriety to the pitch of dullness; indeed, he has a very pretty wit of his own, unlike most of the orthodox exponents of the "Higher Criticism," who are generally as solemn as undertakers at a funeral. It will be the reader's loss if he does not hear Mr. Edwards on this occasion.

At the invitation of the Birmingham Labor Church Mr. Cohen lectures this evening (April 20) at the Bristol-road School Rooms on "Rationalism and Reform." As there exist many misconceptions concerning the relation of Secularism to social reform, this lecture should prove both interesting and instructive. Doubtless there will be a good muster of Birmingham friends present. The lecture commences at 6.30.

We regret to hear that the East London Branch has been subject to systematic annoyance from gangs of Christian rowdies in the carrying on of the lecture-stations on Saturdays at Walthamstow, and also at Limehouse on Sunday mornings. Further annoyances are threatened at ensuing meetings. As this is a species of warfare that all decent people will deprecate, we trust that there will be a sufficient muster of friends at these stations to prevent such occurrences in the future. The precise time and place of these meetings will be found amongst our notices of meetings.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference will take place as usual on Whit-Sunday. The Executive has decided that it shall be held in London. This is largely in consequence of the President's health. It may be inadvisable for him to travel so soon. Conference Sunday is always a heavy day for him without any additional burden—or risk. Anyhow, the provincial friends will have another opportunity of foregathering with the friends in London, who will try to make their visit as enjoyable as it was two years ago.

Notices of motion for the Conference Agenda must be forwarded to the Secretary by April 28 at the latest. Members' subscriptions in arrear should be remitted forthwith.

The N.S.S. Executive spent about £100 on the open-air propaganda in London last summer. There were twelve lecture-stations maintained, and 282 lectures were delivered during the season. This was supplemented by a number of special Freethought Demonstrations, which were addressed by Messrs. Foote, Watts, and Cohen. Myriads of people were reached in this way. Unfortunately, the Executive is not in a position to undertake the financial responsibility of the work this summer. But it desires to render a liberal assistance. With this view a Summer Propaganda Fund is opened. Contributions should be sent to the N.S.S. Secretary, at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C. And the sooner the better, as the work is already at the point of beginning.

Mr. Charles Watts delivered two lectures at Bradford on Sunday. He had good audiences and a cordial reception. Mr. Watts delivers three lectures to-day (April 20) at Glasgow.

Workers in advanced movements of all descriptions should find Mr. Edwards's *Reformers' Year Book* almost indispensable. There is an admirably compiled list of all classes of Societies, portraits of various well-known people, and a list of names and addresses of the writers and speakers in all kinds of advanced work. Along with the portraits of workers are given short, pithy biographical sketches, while not the least interesting feature of the annual is the descriptions given of the objects of many of the Societies whose work the *Year*

Book is designed to aid. The price is one shilling nett paper, two shillings art linen.

Mr. R. W. Forder, the son of the late Mr. Robert Forder, who was secretary for so many years of the National Secular Society, has a quantity of his father's books for disposal, which may be of special value to Freethinkers. The books may be inspected by intending purchasers at 22 Grand Parade, Harringay, N., on any evening—Saturdays excepted—after 8 o'clock. Those who are unable to visit the house, but who would prefer a list of the books for sale, may have one by applying to Miss E. M. Vance at the offices of this journal.

Ernest Renan.

"A league of fools weighs down upon the world with a pall of lead."—RENAN.

"Crush the Infamous."—VOLTAIRE.

IN Renan's delightful book, *Recollections of My Youth*, he has told us, with incomparable art, the story of his pilgrimage from the Roman Church to the Land of Liberty. We are enabled to see the poetic Breton boy at Treguier, "town of priests," and "enveloped in an atmosphere of mythology as dense as Benares or Juggernaut." In his charming pictures we may perceive the young Catholic set apart by family tradition and religious temperament for the priesthood. Renan tells us what a Catholic home is, what Christian belief is, and he enables us to realise the romance and to recover the outlines of days long since past. His childhood was surrounded by legends of the saints and of the sea. His father, the master of a small coasting boat, was drowned when little Renan was three years old. This misfortune, doubtless, served to deepen the piety of the Renan household, especially of Ernest and his sister Henriette. The boy, educated by the priests, grew up with the determination to follow in their footsteps. "I should have made a very good priest," he has told us; "indulgent, blameless in my life and conversation."

There are sad, and even bitter, experiences which he records. At several points, as one reads Renan, the pale, frightened face of little Rabelais rises before the mind's eye. Rabelais was trapped in the Great Lying Church so young that he wore the ecclesiastical habit over the child's frock. However, Renan has told us little as was possible of what was painful in his experiences. "One should never write except upon that which one loves," he said.

Even as a boy he was an idealist, being more at ease among the fifteenth-century tombs in the cathedral than among his playmates. He says that "the long hours which I spent there are responsible for my utter lack of practical knowledge." As a man he was still a slave to his imagination. To him Marcus Aurelius, Buddha, and Spinoza became "forms more real than living man." He never cared for the applause of the world. The most accomplished author and scholar of his time, he never united himself with any party. He had positively no interest in politics, although France seethed like a cauldron. Renan early showed a taste for philology, and studied Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac. From the time when he gained the Volney prize he attracted wide attention by his studies of Oriental languages. In 1863 he published his world-renowned *Life of Jesus*, in which he attempted to write "the life of the young god" whom he had served in his childhood. In the midst of the storm aroused by his book Renan was dismissed from his professorship. What a tempest the *Life of Jesus* provoked! For years it positively rained pamphlets. Fifteen hundred replies were published within a few months of its appearance. Whether men applauded or anathematised, none could deny its power. Savants might gibe and priests might rail, but they have had to reckon with it. Not even the most orthodox of commentators on the Gospels have written as they would have written had it never been published. Renan's method is as fatal to religion as Strauss's laborious thoroughness. Renan daintily explains away the wonder and the glamor of the Christian fables. He is as deadly as the German, although he does with a smile what Strauss does decorously. Under the velvet glove is the gauntlet of steel.

Remember, Renan had travelled over the ground he wrote about. He had mastered the Eastern languages and literatures. It is a liberal education to completely master his works. So far as knowledge went, he was saturated with it. But his innate idealism makes him a sentimentalist in spite of himself. He was too sympathetic to be a fanatic. Like Heine, he could not help "loving both ways." Convinced as he was that real Christianity was dead, Renan's heart could not help occasionally "playing providence" to the believers in this superstition. To him Christian beliefs were the latest tombstones in the cemetery of religions. They were no longer to be hated, feared, or fought, but only to be kindly decorated with a few flowers until, with the passage of the years, they faded from the memory of mankind. As for Renan's attitude towards theology, much of it was purely temperamental. The prince of the cynics had a twofold nature. His scientific bent on the one side, and his clerical training on the other, accentuated these traits. More than once the capricious luxuriance of his later genius offended the delicate standard of his inmost taste. The Gascon in him wept then for the loss of the Breton, to adapt his own inimitable phrase. In spite of his sentimentalism he was at heart Voltairean. Everywhere in his writings he has displayed his love of irony. He has shown the sarcastic power of the French language in hands that can evoke its subtleties and wield its trenchant blade. He is quite as effective as Gibbon, although many tracts in his thousand years of history seem as if they had been made to suit the greatest of all historians, who wrote amid the acacias of Lausanne.

Renan has told us that since 1846 he never shifted his immovable anchor from the scientific aspect of the universe. And, expressing his hope for a calm and sudden death, he says:—

"I should be very grieved to have to go through one of those periods of enfeeblement during which the man once endowed with strength and virtue is but the shadow and ruin of his former self; and often, to the delight of the ignorant, sets himself to demolish the life which he had so laboriously constructed. If such a fate be in store for me, I hasten to protest beforehand against the weaknesses which a softened brain might lead me to say or sign. It is the Renan sound in body and mind, as I am now—not the Renan half destroyed by death and no longer himself, as I shall be if my decomposition is gradual—whom I wish to be believed and listened to."

A personality of most rare quality. Intellectually among the rarest of the human race, striking music from language in some regards superior to that of any other master of French prose, it yet was neither the depth of his scholarship nor the power of his pen that most impressed his friends. It was the beauty of his character. He was faithful to the best he knew. His lifelong loyalty to truth helped more than anything else to constitute perhaps the mightiest single intellectual influence of his time. He worthily carried on that illuminating and penetrating tradition immortally associated with the splendid and puissant personality of Voltaire.

MIMNERMUS.

Let Us—Pray!

"Thomas," said the host at a swell dinner party, to a belated waiter, "how dare you bring this most excellent soup to table cold?" Thomas proceeded to remove the despised article of diet. He was a sensitive man, and his professional reputation had been tarnished. Departing from the scene of his humiliation with more haste than discretion, he slipped, and the contents of the tray poured itself upon the holy pate of the Bishop of ——. The soup gutted down the face of the divine, solidifying his whiskers and enamelling his locks, and hastened on, covering his garments, and converting them into a mass of shining grease. All remained spellbound, whilst the bishop quivered with emotion. His lordship cast beseeching eyes from one to another of his ministerial brethren, in mute appeal. At last he spake from out the casket of fat: "Will some dear brother please say something suitable to the occasion?"

"Spare the rod and spoil the child." To a royal sensualist is attributed this proverb. It has been the cause of more cruelty to children, wrong to human nature, and bad training—it has made more cowardly, deceitful, sneaking men and women—than any other sentiment ever uttered.—
Moncure D. Conway.

INDEPENDENT DEPARTMENT.

Spencer's Political Ethics—V.

(Concluded.)

IN the earlier articles of this series I have pointed out at some length that the great flaw in Mr. Spencer's political ethics is his practical ignoring of the psychological factor in the later stages of human evolution. The neglect of this factor leads to the resting of the whole of his political ethics upon a purely biologic basis; to an undue glorification of the struggle for existence; the non-recognition of the important fact that, as superiority in brain force was originally acquired by pure competition, the superior brain does not differ fundamentally from teeth and claws; and, finally, the assumption that a society conscious of its own evolution, and of the forces determining that evolution, must pursue its development along precisely similar lines, and by exactly similar means, as a society that is unconscious of its own nature or growth.

These spots upon the sun are serious enough, and are sufficiently remarkable when it is borne in mind that we are dealing with the great law-giver of evolution; but one or two further considerations in connection with Mr. Spencer's application of the principle of Natural Selection to human society need emphasising before this criticism is even approximately complete.

The first of these is that the ignoring of the intellect as a controlling and modifying force in social evolution naturally leads to an imperfect recognition of the consideration that, as we rise in the scale of evolution, purely physical qualities become of relatively less importance, while mental and moral qualities become of relatively greater importance. Competition, as it exists in the animal world at large, may, and does, secure a certain degree of physical fitness; but it is important to remember that what is needed in human society is not this only, but the development of such feelings and ideas as will raise it to the highest possible or attainable level. It is only a truism to say that every social state will develop those mental characteristics that best harmonise with it; and, with that in mind, it is hard to see how a society in which each individual is permitted to push every natural advantage of brain or muscle to its utmost extent in crushing others is to develop those feelings upon which the real humanisation of society depends. Competition *per se* and co-operation *per se* are mutually destructive, and the set of feelings belonging to each are antagonistic likewise. There is, of course, the mixed form in which we have partial co-operation for the purpose of competition; but this in no way proves that the two processes are not essentially antagonistic. What it does prove historically is that man has always felt more or less keenly the absolute necessity of checking to some extent the competitive economics of the animal world, and substituting in its stead the co-operative economics of human society. And thus, so far from Mr. Spencer's formula that government arose in aggression, and by aggression, being accurate, government may be taken to historically represent—however roughly and crudely—man's sense of the need for exercising some control over the normal processes of human evolution.

An illustration of what is here meant may be drawn from the sphere of militarism. It is part of the normal natural process that the lower races (*i.e.*, those least fitted to live in a given environment) shall disappear before the advance of a higher race (*i.e.*, a race better fitted to live in the same environment), and upon this ground many base their justification for the wholesale spreading of civilised races over uncivilised territories. Looked at broadly, one may admit that the peopling of the globe by a higher instead of by a lower race is a gain to humanity at large, and that no one can be said to suffer by the disappearance of a race, any more than there is suffering by the disappearance of an individual—provided, that is, that the disappearance is not artificially stimulated by ill-treatment or massacre. But, nevertheless, the maintenance of an army and the development of the military spirit, while this also secures the survival of the fittest, unduly and harmfully specialises the kind of fitness necessary to survival. In the very act of crushing out we develop feelings and deaden

sensibilities that are antagonistic to the highest form of civilisation. A nation that develops the military spirit may survive; but it means survival by an increase of insensibility to suffering, to rational considerations, and the cultivation of the spirit of unreasoning obedience, pseudo-patriotism, and an altogether narrower and poorer view of life.

And the same criticism has to be brought to bear upon our existing industrial and commercial system. Does *that* develop the higher and finer qualities, or the reverse? There is no need to be unduly pessimistic, or to let loose any of those cheap shibboleths, which are the sure signs of an unscientific mind, about society being rotten to the core, or similar expressions; it is enough to say that the forced hypocrisy, subserviency, and trickiness of our commercial system carries with it its own condemnation. A shop assistant who habitually spoke the truth about the goods he handled would be discharged in a week, and a merchant who did the same would be in the Bankruptcy Court in a year. The motto on the one side is, "Sell for as much as you can get," and on the other, "Buy for as little as you can," neither side showing the slightest concern for any fair or equitable principle of transaction.

The demoralising effect of this upon character is not difficult to trace. "Smartness" in buying and selling being the chief thing aimed at, real honesty of transaction is seldom or never considered. In the workshop and on the market it is taken as almost an axiom that someone is bound to be the loser by a bargain; or, if not a loser, at least that one of the parties shall benefit much more than the other. And clearly people that are nurtured amid such surroundings must grow up with a general sense of mistrust in their fellows, in place of a feeling of confidence and respect. In the labor world, too, the same kind of phenomenon greets us. Putting on one side all other aspects of the question, it may well be maintained that machinery, which ought to have had, and will, I believe, yet have, the effect of giving the laborer increased leisure for self-development and an added sense of personal dignity, has only too often had the effect of degrading him to the level of a piece of machinery itself. The workman artist has almost disappeared, and we have in his place the "hand" tending the same machine day after day and year after year, without any interest in his labor, and with but little care for refinement during the hours he is released from toil.

It must not be supposed for a moment that Mr. Spencer would support the above-enumerated evils. He would be the first to denounce them, and indeed has denounced them on more than one occasion. The only curious thing is that he has not perceived that the waste and degradation and moral obliquity attaching to our existing commercial system was due to the fact that the power of mind has largely supplanted the power of muscle, but mind wielded in the interests of the individual, instead of in the interests of the community at large. This displacement of muscle by brain began with the fashioning of the first flint hammer or arrow head, and its latest expression is the financial adventurer, who, from the recesses of a city office, decrees the condition under which millions of his fellow creatures shall live. But it exhibits the same characteristic right through, and the truth cannot be too often enforced that personal aggrandisement by superior brain force is the simple analogue of personal aggrandisement by superior muscle, and that society cannot wisely or profitably allow either superior muscle or brain to operate uncontrolled.

Non-recognition, or inadequate recognition, of this and kindred facts has led Mr. Spencer to an undue glorification of the Survival of the Fittest, and to threaten society with direful results if its operation is in any way interfered with. On the other hand, I venture to assert that man's chief hope for the future lies in his controlling the action of the Survival of the Fittest, and to maintain that, while its operation may during the course of long generations produce a somewhat higher type of life, Natural Selection alone does not and cannot produce the highest possible kind of life. The whole effect of biologic competition (and the same will be found true in the main of economic competition) is to keep the kind of life that survives down to a comparatively low level. The tendency of

domesticated plants and animals to revert to a "natural state" when released from man's controlling influence is proof of this. It is simply an expression of the plant's or animal's inability to retain the high level gained when it is subjected to the unrestricted operation of Natural Selection. Of course, it may be urged that these higher levels are only such when judged from the human point of view; but this, when admitted, does not alter the fact that much may be done by intelligence which cannot be effected by the uncontrolled operation of natural forces.

Agreeing with the human standard of high and low types of life, it is evident that a much higher and a much more rapid rate of development is secured when Natural Selection is controlled by human intelligence than when it is left unchecked. Natural Selection either could not have produced the finer varieties of rose from the wild rose, the finer varieties of dog from the wild dog, or the finer varieties of horse from the wild horse; Natural Selection either could not have produced these changes, as it would have taken incalculably longer than man has to do so. And, in effecting these changes, man has done precisely what Mr. Spencer says he has no right to do—interfere with the "beneficent" action of the survival of the fittest. What man has done in these instances is to select favorable variations, and, by *eliminating the action of the survival of the fittest* and surrounding the desired variation with everything necessary to its growth and well-being, has succeeded with comparative rapidity in producing a much finer variety of plant or animal than would otherwise be in existence.

Now, in what respect does human life differ in this connection from animal life at large? Mr. Spencer would be the first to challenge the statement that there was *any* difference, and to assert the fundamental likeness of the laws governing both. And, if that is so, why may not human intelligence do for the human species what it has already done, and is still doing, for animal life as a whole? One would imagine the statement that, so long as man is exposed to the stress of the struggle for a bare existence, any permanent or rapid development of the higher parts of his nature is impossible, is one that rests upon a sound scientific basis, and that there is certainly no *a priori* reason why man should not hasten his own development by an intelligent control of natural forces, as he has already hastened or modified the development of other kinds of life.

In effect he has, as a matter of fact, been doing this right through the history of civilisation. All human institutions, all science, and all art are, as I have already pointed out, due to man's "interference" with, and his control of, natural forces. These are all so many methods devised for checking the operation of the unrestricted competition of the animal world, and substituting the co-operation of a civilised humanity. The whole of labor is an artificial transformation of the environment, and all customs and laws are the limitations set by society to man's primitive competitive egoism. The operations of the State, rightly viewed, differ in no essential respect from man's attempts to control other evolutionary forces. He *may* blunder more in this direction because here the forces are vastly more complex and more difficult to master. But this is reason only for renewed endeavor. Mr. Spencer would admit this to be true in every other direction but that of government; for governmental action alone he reserves his denunciations, and, ignoring the all-important consideration that even on his own showing the social structure *can* be modified by human action, sternly warns us against further efforts in this direction.

On the whole, it is sincerely to be regretted that the greatest thinker of the nineteenth century, the promulgator of the philosophy of evolution, should have so far misunderstood the application of his own teachings as to virtually cast a wet blanket on the efforts of social reformers. Fortunately, the truer reading of evolution is indicated by Mr. Spencer in his other and larger writings, and this indicates, as I have endeavored to point out, that social forces, any more than physical forces, are not beyond the control of a developed human intelligence, but that man's conquests in the domain of physics are but a prelude to his conquests in the domain of human life itself.

C. COMEN.

Correspondence.

FREE CHURCHMEN AND EDUCATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I gladly welcome all the contents of your last issue which make for State education on really democratic principles; but I should be grateful to Mr. Cohen if he would be good enough to tell me of *one* advantage the Free Churches obtain from the State which any citizen may not have on the same terms. I said: "Free Churches seek nothing from the State for their opinions, beliefs, or churches; they ask for the justice in which all may share, and refuse to accept anything from the State which any citizen may not have on the same terms."

Mr. Cohen refers to the "matter of education" as though that contained an instance to the contrary. But does it? If it does I do not know of it. I am on this point, as on many others, an "Agnostic."

What are the facts? Of course, I need only consider the action of Parliament in the matter of Board schools. That action is as follows: Parliament does not compel the teaching of any "sectarian beliefs" whatever in the Board schools. It does not compel the use of the Bible. It leaves the Boards absolutely free to use the Bible or to refuse to use it; but it enacts that, in case the representatives chosen by the ratepayers to carry out their wishes determine to use the Bible, then two limitations must be observed. First, only those parts of the Bible are permitted to be used which are judged by the Board suitable to the age and capacity of the children to be taught; and, secondly, nothing must be used from the Bible or from anywhere else that is of a sectarian character.

That is the situation so far as Parliament is concerned. As a matter of fact, some of the Boards refused to use the Bible; the majority, however, followed the lead of the London Board, which, from the first, elected to use carefully selected portions, and still continues that practice. Now the Boards have been elected by the people to carry out their wishes of the people. All ratepayers are free to express their will through their representatives. I do not say the system is perfect, for I should prefer a suffrage based on personality, on manhood and womanhood, and not on the power to pay rates; but at least it is a method which gives no advantage to a Free Church ratepayer over any other citizen.

But it should not be forgotten that in 1870 Free Churches were, in the main, against the introduction of the Bible into State education under any limitations, and it is only the evidence from experience that the Bible can be used in the education of children for literary and ethical purposes, and without the intrusion of ecclesiastical and dogmatic beliefs, that has reconciled them to the nearly universal adoption of the Bible in Board schools. Nor should it be forgotten that men like Professor Huxley and Mr. Frederic Harrison were in favor of that position, and that others, outside the Christian circle, hold that some instruction in the contents of a book that has found its way so largely into our literature, into Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Burns, is necessary for a full "secular education."

I can quite understand that some of your readers have difficulty in believing that Free Churches put the interests of the nation before those of any and all their Churches; but, so far as I know, it is the fact, and they will fight this new Education Bill with might and main—first, because of the damage it threatens to the nation through its children; and, secondly, through its destruction of liberty of conscience, the liberty which is the guardian of all our other liberties.

If Mr. Cohen will permit it, I take up and adopt his concluding words as my own: "Let us have a genuine system of national education by making our School Boards really universal. We should then get rid of the absurdity of maintaining two sets of schools, one at open rivalry with the other. And let us also make the schools national in the higher sense by eliminating sectarian beliefs and concentrating attention upon those common elements and opinions that are believed in by all and are equally important to all. By this means we shall eliminate all non-essential and extraneous interests, and have cleared the way for a concentration of attention upon really vital educational questions."

JOHN CLIFFORD.

25 Sunderland-terrace, Westbourne Park, W.
April 12, 1902.

PROPOSED TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CHARLES WATTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A testimonial means an acknowledgment of unrequited services. The friends of Mr. Charles Watts believe he has rendered important services—more at his own cost than they ought to have been—and that some recognition of them would be very timely and useful to him now. He has entered his sixty-seventh year—forty-three of which have been spent in the advocacy of Secular and liberal principles, which is known to be a personally unprofitable pursuit. In lecturing and writing (including several years in Canada and

the United States) he has always adhered to the precept that Reason is the true method of progress. When engaged in arguments destructive of error he has invariably borne in mind that constructive truth must replace it. Knowing this, I have acceded to the request of many of his friends to make the proposal of a testimonial on his behalf. It is hoped and believed that £500 would be a substantial assistance to him. His past income has been mainly earned by lectures; but since the South African War has diverted popular interest from intellectual and social progress his engagements have greatly fallen off. At no time has his income been sufficient to enable him to make provision for the evening of his life. But such a sum as that named would place him in a position to enter into a business congenial to him, and which he believes would afford him security for the future.

I have known Mr. Watts to make sacrifices for the integrity of his conscience and for the honor and credit of the principles he represented, and he has also suffered ostracism and loss in consequence. He has, therefore, undoubted claims upon the friends of the Rationalist and Secular movement.

No doubt, if Mr. Watts had cared more for himself and done more for himself when his years were fewer and his strength was greater, it had been better for him now. But he had an unprofitable passion for diffusing necessary principles, which, albeit good for the community, was bad for himself. And now generous minds in all classes of society will be disposed, according to their means, to acknowledge his self-denying and public-spirited work. Mr. Alfred Sumner, Bryngwyn, Muswell-road, Muswell-hill, London, N., has kindly consented to act as treasurer, and Mr. Theodore Wright, 17 Clifford's-inn, Fleet-street, London, E.C., as secretary, to either of whom cheques or postal orders (crossed) may be sent. All subscriptions will be acknowledged by post, and the testimonial will probably be presented at a function to which subscribers will be invited.

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

Eastern Lodge, Brighton.

THE REV. W. T. LEE AND ATHEISTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I notice in a few of your preceding issues an instructive series of articles dealing with Utilitarianism. This has brought to my mind a lecture I once heard in an English Baptist vestry, delivered by Mr. W. T. Lee, of Cardiff, entitled "Atheism a Creed of Despair." The lecturer, in the course of the lecture, touched upon the question of Utilitarianism; and, as near as possible, these are the words he used: "These Atheists think they have all the knowledge, and that we Christians are very ignorant. Now, I have noticed that the most ignorant are very fond of using big words. The Atheist is very fond of doing this, and one of the words he uses is Utilitarianism. U-ti-l-i-tar-ian-ism—there's a word for you." Then he began telling what it meant, and tried to give the Atheists a poser. He mentioned the Utilitarian phrase, "The greatest happiness for the greatest number," etc., and then asked us what the Utilitarians would do in the following instance. A certain house is on fire, and on the roof of the house is a thief imploring to be saved. If he was saved, he would very likely go on with his thieving, therefore causing unhappiness to the greatest number. On the other hand, if they wished to carry out the principle of Utilitarianism, they must let him die; as, if they saved him and he continued stealing, he would cause a great deal of unhappiness.

I would like to see an answer to this given by Mr. W. P. Ball, the writer of the articles in the *Freethinker* on "Should Happiness be Our Aim?" Mr. Lee made many more absurd statements in a small vestry which would not hold at its utmost more than a hundred people, and in a lecture that was barely advertised. I should like to mention some of the statements made there that evening—statements which, I hold, he would not have dared to utter in a public debate with an intelligent opponent. One statement was that he could almost pick an Atheist out of any audience, as he had the word "Atheist" written on his face. Another, that he had never seen a happy Atheist. He also made the statement that Charles Bradlaugh had denied the existence of God, that Ludwig Büchner had done the same, and he proceeded to demolish the two of them with the old argument. He also used Bishop Paley's watch argument as if it had never been refuted or answered. Another statement, which I doubt the truth of, was that at the close of the French Revolution the people, mostly Atheists, placed a prostitute on a throne and hailed her as the Goddess of Liberty. At the end of the lecture we were allowed to send up a question on a piece of paper; this, as a matter of course, stopped all opposition, as it is, you will allow, impossible to offer effective opposition by handing up a question to the lecturer, which, of course, he could answer as he pleased, as he knew that whatever he said would be applauded by his deluded Christian audience.

Hoping you will insert this in your valuable columns, and thanking you in anticipation, I am, sir, yours,

THOMAS BENNETT.

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, "Chilperic," "The Epistles of St. John."

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

EAST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Stanley Temperance Bar, 7 High-street, Stepney): 7, R. P. Edwards, "Present Relation of Science and Religion."

MILE END WASTE : 11.30, F. A. Davies, "An Hour with the Devil."

LIMEHOUSE (junction of East India Dock and Commercial-road): 11.30, R. P. Edwards, "The Way to Salvation."

WALTHAMSTOW (Mission Grove, High-street): April 19, at 6.30, E. Pack, "Atheism."

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, G. Parson, "What Christians Believe."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "The Pride of Race."

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

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, J. McCabe, "The Ritualistic Controversy."

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

SUNDAY SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY (34 Red Lion-square): 6.30, Play to be read, *The Merchant of Venice*, with a paper by Monsieur Johannes Skiros.

COUNTRY.

CHATHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 2.45, Sunday-school; 7, A. J. Marriott, "Liberalism and its Leaders."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL: Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner—2.45, "Freethought in the Old Century and the New"; 6.30, "The Prosperity of India." Hymns, etc., by the Choir.

GLASGOW (110 Brunswick-street): Charles Watts—11.30, 2.30, and 6.30.

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Hammond, "Socialism and Science."

MANCHESTER (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, W. Simpson, "The Blessings of Government and the Evils of Anarchism."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Ernest Evans—3, "Alcohol: its Production and Action on the Body"; 7, "The Germ Theory of Disease and its Bearing on the Prevention of Infectious Diseases." Tea at 5.

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

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