

Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

What is lost upon the many, may gain a hearing with the few; what is lost to-day, may be recalled to-morrow; what is lost in fulness, may be retained in portions; what fails to convince, may excite misgivings; what fails with the heart, may create the wish.—J. H. NEWMAN.

The Peace of God.

EVERYBODY is glad that the war in South Africa is over. We all breathe more freely now that the bloody game is ended. Besides, to tell the truth, the war had become a nuisance; and then it was so infernally costly that even wealthy Christians were crying "How long, O Lord, how long?" The Boer was tired of running about, the Britisher was tired of running after him, and the two tired got together for a good rest. This was an excellent arrangement, and we hope it will lead to a solid and durable peace, not based upon parchments and signatures, but upon common interests and mutual respect.

Many people say that this is the King's peace. He wanted to see the war terminated before his Coronation. He therefore gave his Ministers a very broad hint—or, as some would say, the straight tip—and even the most bellicose of them co-operated in procuring the cessation of hostilities. Mr. Chamberlain joined with Sir Michael Hicks-Beach in singing, "Let dogs delight to bark and bite." It was a touching spectacle. And how beautiful it will be to see them carrying white flags on the twenty-sixth of June.

Many other people consider that this is Lord Kitchener's peace. They admire his fine combination of firmness and tact. They think his iron hand goes well in the velvet glove. They see in him an illustration of the old text, "out of the strong came forth sweetness." Lord Roberts himself has given Lord Kitchener the credit of doing what no other man could have done. It was generously said, but it was the simple truth. The fact is, we believe, that there is something in his taciturn, strenuous, and indomitable nature that just hits the Boer taste; and, in making peace with him, they feel like treating with one of their own, who has somehow or other got into the wrong camp.

But this is neither the King's peace nor Lord Kitchener's peace. The clergy have told us that it is God's peace. That settles it. We know the truth now.

There are sceptics, however, who will not even believe what is self-evident. They ask why God was so slow in sending peace. They wish to know why he let his children fight so long. They inquire if any human father, learning that two of his children were fighting in his house, would be two years and a half going home to restore order.

But these sceptics—persons of mere common sense, without the saving grace of faith—were always a handful. They may therefore be disregarded. They are like a fly in the ointment, like a death's-head at a feast, or anything else that is annoying and inopportune. When

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the clergy, at the head of the lay Christians, go mafficking, they do not want to be reminded of sobriety or the headache that follows a debauch. Let the sceptics, then, retire with their cold sneers and callous reasonings. Let them go home to their father the Devil, and leave the children of God to the calm enjoyment of their holy privileges.

It was in this mood that the great Thanksgiving Service was organised last Sunday at St. Paul's Cathedral. The King was there, with a large selection of the royal family. Everybody who is anybody was there. That is to say, the place was filled by a crowd of the people who call themselves Society; men who live more or less vacuous lives, and women who feel (as Emerson said) that being well-dressed gives a sense of serenity which religion is powerless to afford.

King Edward does not look a pessimist—and every Christian, as far as he is a Christian, is a pessimist with regard to the present world. His royal and imperial Highness looks as though he would rather attend a wedding than a funeral. There is a suggestion of jollity about his rotund person and liberal features. We fancy he feels more at home at Epsom than on the top of Ludgate Hill. If it were not for the look of the thing, some of us believe he would as soon have been elsewhere on Sunday morning. But the truth is he *had* to go. The altar supports the throne, and the throne must give a friendly lift to the altar. One good turn deserves another. Honor amongst-gentlemen. The clergy were bound to look in somewhere, and the proclamation of peace was their great opportunity. And it must be admitted that they made the most of it. They played the game for all it was worth. Their "turn" at St. Paul's was magnificent. The King himself was in his private box—we beg pardon, his private pew—with the Queen and other members of the royal family about him; the Army and the Aristocracy were largely represented; and there was a big mob of plebeians in the streets to shout "Hurrah!" to the ladies and gentlemen who were able to go inside and see the show. Yes, and it cost the clergy *nothing*. All the Society folk paid their own expenses; it is even to be presumed that they contributed something to the collection.

Certainly the clergy are wise in their generation. God or nature has endowed all animals, including priests, with the instinct of self-preservation. Moreover, the Church has had a long and varied experience; it has accumulated a vast store of sound rules for carrying on the ecclesiastical business; and every little curate profits by the inherited atmosphere and traditions of the Establishment.

The first lesson in the Thanksgiving Service was from the eighth chapter of the first Book of Kings (verses 55 to 63). There is not a word in it of the slightest value to anyone living now, or of the slightest relation to the duties and necessities of the present day. It introduces Solomon, the wisest fool that ever lived, the husband of seven hundred wives and the domestic companion of three hundred other ladies, standing up and blessing "all the congregation of Israel." And it ends with the monstrous statement that his peace offerings to the Lord included 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

The second lesson was the first sixteen verses of the Epistle to the Colossians. The Bible heading calls it "the Epistle of Paul," but every scholar knows that is a falsehood. Probably this lesson was chosen for the sake of the following words:—

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering ;

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any : even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Britishers, of course, are the elect of God ; and they are invited to remember a number of "tame" virtues now that the war is over. This is so like the clergy ! While the war is raging they cry "The sword of the Lord and Gideon !" When the fighting is finished they cry "Let brotherly love continue !" They have a text for everything—and it always suits the interests of their clients.

The special prayers were worthy of the lessons. Here is a sample :—

"Almighty God, by whose Providence the affairs of nations are guided to the fulfilment of Thy holy will, we approach Thy Throne of Grace to give Thee heartfelt thanks for the close of the war in which we have been so long engaged.....We thank Thee for that Thou hast now restored to our nation and to our adversaries the blessing of peace."

Now, if God restored peace, who started the war ? Was it the Devil ? If so, which side did he take ? And if God guides the affairs of nations to the fulfilment of his holy will, why do we fight parliamentary elections, and hurry up voters to the ballot-box, and strive to put our own party in power ? Whatever party is in power, it comes to the same thing in the end. Lord Rosebery would do as well as Lord Salisbury, Mr. John Morley as well as Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and anybody as well as anybody else, for the post of Prime Minister. Why pay £5,000 a year when £100 would be sufficient ? Why have a man of genius when a fool would be as serviceable ? Fools, indeed, are far *more* serviceable than men of genius in carrying out the Lord's designs. Men of genius are apt to stand in the way, but fools are nearly always pious. Did not the present Archbishop of Canterbury when he was Bishop of Exeter go to an asylum and confirm thirty-eight lunatics ? And did he not say that he had always found such persons peculiarly susceptible to religious influences ?

One sentence of the first of these special prayers was particularly amusing. "We thank Thee," it was said, "for the many occasions on which Thou hast granted success to our arms." Not a word about the success granted to the arms of the Boers. Not a word about Colenso, Spion Kop, and the other brilliant achievements of the General who is still the idol of the music-halls and the mob. What was God doing on these and similar occasions ? Was he forgetting his "elect" and helping the "ungodly" ? Is he any real assistance to either side ? Does not the very Prayer Book answer this question in the negative ? "Give peace in our time," it says, "because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O Lord." Which is as much as to say, With you as our ally our case is hopeless.

Every man of sense knows that praying for anything is a waste of time. Judges send Peculiar People to prison for leaving their sick children in the hands of the Lord. They say it is manslaughter. The children would be far safer in the hands of a doctor. If you believe otherwise, and act upon your belief, the penalty is four months' hard labor. Yet this is a Christian country, and the King goes to St. Paul's Cathedral to keep the clergy in countenance while they pretend that God regulates the affairs of this world. What ridiculous nonsense and detestable hypocrisy ! We hope the King is as sick of it as we are.

Christianity has never assisted the cause of peace. It has been a fruitful mother of discord, strife, and bloodshed. By preaching impossible ethics on Sunday it fails to discipline the passions of men on the other days of the week. Britishers and Boers were both Christians, reading the same Bible as the Word of God, and worshipping the same Christ as the Savior of the World ; yet they fought each other for two years and a-half, and only stopped fighting when they were both sick of the struggle. Is *this* the peace of God ? The clergy say it is, and in listening to them we are reminded of another saying of theirs, that the peace of God passes all understanding.

G. W. FOOTE.

"Helping" Unbelief.

THE *Christian*, an old-established and widely-circulated evangelical weekly, publishes a long special article on "How to Help Unbelievers." The contributor signs himself "A Minister of the Gospel." He seems to have a fairly good idea of the conflict that is going on. If he fails to understand all the points, he has an adequate amount of alarm, and the honesty to express it. He is apparently impelled by his observation of the trend of modern thought to do his best to wake up the present custodians of "the faith once delivered to the saints," and he professes sympathy for those who, on intellectual grounds and after examination, have rejected the Christian religion.

He might, however, be asked, in the first place, what he means by the heading he has given to his contribution to the *Christian*. "How to Help Unbelievers" looks kind and obliging, but *do* unbelievers require help—that is to say, help from Christian advocates ? One would think not. Inquirers might be supplied with the kind of "assistance" which Christian apologists have to offer, but unbelievers, if they *are* unbelievers, do not need it at all. They have tried it, and found it a rotten reed to rest upon, and have cast it aside as being quite inadequate for the purposes intended, and, indeed, an insult to the intelligence of those to whom it is offered.

The fact is, the people who really require help are Christian advocates, and it is a pity, as far as they are concerned, that their God does not provide it. We should not then have so many pitiable exhibitions of the utter failure of Christian exposition and defence.

The "Minister of the Gospel" is very fair in his recognition of the prevalence of unbelief amongst all classes of the community, and especially in circles of "light and leading." Take, for instance, the following extract from the commencement of his address :—

"Non-believers fill many positions of honor in this country. They are to be found serving as Privy Councillors, members of Parliament, county councillors, and in other capacities of influence and distinction. They are men of authority in matters relating to science and education. Their ranks include historians, novelists, journalists, poets, advocates at the Bar, Judges on the Bench, Admirals of the Fleet. We cannot estimate their influence in the Press, on the platform, in society—it is simply incalculable. We must admit that a great host are their debtors for sweetness and light and knowledge."

By "non-believers" he means, of course, unbelievers, as will be seen by his next sentence : "It is not our present purpose to show that there are wiser and better men on the side of Christianity, but to notice the strength of 'the enemy,' in order that we may enter the battle strong enough to overcome them." There is perception as well as prudence in this.

Our "Minister of the Gospel" then proceeds to trace unbelief in the Church and in the home. Assuredly he is justified in declaring that unbelief exists in the Church. One of the astounding features—to take a special personal example—of sceptical criticism at the present time is that the editor and chief contributor to the *Encyclopædia Biblica*—which has created so great a sensation by its demolition of so much which has hitherto been accepted—is a Canon of the Church of England, and holds a Professorship which it would be impossible for him to hold if he severed his connection with the Church. One admires the scholarship and keen critical acumen of Dr. Cheyne, and the fearlessness of his conclusions ; but it seems to smack of inconsistency of profession to continue a connection with a Church which has thirty-nine articles to which it is obvious Canon Cheyne can no longer subscribe. It is very well to endeavor to "leaven from within," but it is difficult to distinguish Canon Cheyne's attitude and action from absolute treason.

Though the *Christian* contributor does not specify this or several other quite as striking instances which will readily occur to the mind, it is obvious he has them in view. Regretfully he goes on to observe : "Unbelief finds some support in Christian Churches and in homes which should be Christian. Our fathers are affected by unbelief, and our children are not intelligently grounded in the Christian faith." Then he quotes Bishop Ellicott, who said in a charge to his clergy :—

"Mothers, in what may be called the upper classes

may still, we may hope, teach their children their first prayers; but the fathers, for the most part, are silent. There may, however, be reasons for this. Fathers may be, in some cases, affected by the doubts and difficulties of the strange days in which we are living, and honestly feel themselves unable to teach a child the first principles of vital religion. In other cases, they may feel hindered and even disqualified by their own ignorance."

Bishop Ellicott, in these few pregnant sentences, placed his finger on what undoubtedly is the present peril of the Church; indeed, the conditions which will inevitably accelerate its downfall. The *Christian* contributor admits that the religious life in many homes is dying from, amongst other causes, "negative unbelief and honest doubt." There is, however, another influence at work. The Archbishop of Canterbury, presiding over a meeting for the promotion of Higher Religious Education, said: "When a young fellow goes to the University, and when Mill and Spencer are put into his hands, there bursts upon him with surprise, with intense astonishment and immense grief, the opinion that Christianity is open to all kinds of objections—social, moral, and others—which he had never imagined."

There is no doubt that these early University enlightenments have more to do than anything else with the dearth of candidates for "holy orders." Young men, many of whom are destined to occupy high positions, are disillusioned. Away from their prayerful mothers and their silent fathers, they find, as Dr. Temple says, that there are all kinds of objections to Christianity, and they find (which Dr. Temple does not say) that these objections are absolutely unanswerable.

The *Christian* contributor, realising many of these facts, asks, somewhat plaintively, "What is the remedy?" Yes; what, indeed, is the remedy? He says: "We ought, in the first place, to fortify Christians against the attacks of unbelief." Naturally; but how? "They should be made familiar with the accumulating evidences for their faith." Where are these evidences? "A course of evidential lectures should be delivered in every church every year." There have been numberless lectures of that kind without any appreciable result, such as their originators have desired. Or why the present extended and ever-enlarging unbelief?

"Christian evidences should," says the writer, as a kind of last resort, "be taught to our children." Exactly; here the writer has just hit the mark! They should be taught to children, and to children only. It is no use presenting obvious fallacies and glaring fictions—false data and absurd inferences—to adults, especially well-informed and rational adults, who are capable, and not afraid, of questioning so-called facts, and who are logical enough to perceive how much or how little may be deduced from them. The Christian Evidence Society should undoubtedly address itself to children. Little boys and girls will take it all in as a part of the curriculum, and may be relied upon not to dispute it, for the simple reason that they will not understand it or regard it with any other than vacant indifference. With children of a larger growth, blossoming youths, we are told that Christian evidences have had successful results. This is stated on the authority of the Headmaster of Marlborough College, who says: "It is true that the lectures gave rise to discussions among some of the boys, in which difficulties were freely canvassed with some freedom, and it may be thought it is dangerous to introduce immature minds to questions which stimulate much discussion. But, on the whole, so far as I can gather from careful inquiry and observation, the benefit far outweighs the danger."

If the difficulties were, as this Headmaster says, "freely canvassed with some freedom," the chances are the pupils were in a fair way to become Freethinkers, despite his consoling reflection that the danger was outweighed.

Our "Minister of the Gospel" urges that Christian Evidence classes for young people should be formed in every church. He thinks that this "novel and fascinating way" of studying Christianity would retain young men "who, in many cases, slip through our fingers between the Sunday-school and the church." Warming with his theme, he says:—

"Missions should be organised to unbelievers, especially amongst the working classes. Ferret out the unbeliever. Do not allow him to work under cover. Bring him out from the workshop, the coffee-house, the reading-room, and the club, into the open field. *When will the Churches send out evidential lecturers, as they send out other missionaries?* I watch and pray for the coming of a band of 'Defenders of the Faith' who will command the respect of intelligent and honest doubters."

Apparently he thinks we are now without them—which is perfectly true. Then he says: "It is folly for any person, half-convinced, to take arms against unbelief. The difficulties encountered are depressing, the responsibilities great. No faint-hearted Christian can enlist as a soldier in this battle. Every missionary must be willing to be shocked, bored, and insulted."

This last sentence is very fine. The missionary may be shocked, but he won't be insulted; and as for "boring," he will probably do that himself. Is it that our "Minister of the Gospel" is himself playing up for a job? If so, we hope he will get it. He is an artless and amiable gentleman. FRANCIS NEALE.

Peace and the Coronation.

WHATEVER views are held as to the justice or otherwise of the war that is just ended, we should all be delighted that peace is at last proclaimed. War, with its innumerable evils, is so terrible that no efforts should be spared to avoid it, and when once its horrors are forced upon us every legitimate means should be employed to stop its devastating force. For over two years humanity has stood aghast at the sacrifice of human life in South Africa. Homes have been made desolate, families have been broken up, husbands, fathers, and sons having been taken from their loved ones to satisfy the demands of the demon of war. It is too true that the world has been for ages devastated with sanguinary encounters, while the professed followers of Jesus have neither prevented such satires upon our boasted civilisation nor done much to mitigate their untold evil effects upon mankind. Indeed, avowed Christians on both sides of the contending forces have implored their God to aid them in killing each other. It was so in the Crimean War, the Franco-German War, and throughout the heart-rending scenes which have just closed on South African soil. In all these conflicts each side prayed to God that it might win all the battles. One would think that the disastrous consequences of those dreadful struggles between Christian nations would have been sufficient to destroy all belief in the efficacy of the prayer of supplication, for every Sunday during these events the clergy repeated the request: "Give us peace in our time, O Lord." Still, the tragic slaughters went on, and God ignored all such appeals. Surely, if anything could show the impotency of the Christian faith as a promoter of peace, it would be the loss of millions of human lives and the expenditure of millions of the people's money. To the disgrace of the Church be it said that when the Peace Conference was held at the Hague the representatives of our so-called national religion were comparatively silent as to its laudable aims. It is true a few clergymen referred to it, and a bishop in one instance took the chair at a meeting held to discuss its objects; but otherwise a dead silence prevailed within Church circles as to this organised effort on behalf of peace. More recently a Peace Manifesto was issued in London, and, according to the *Daily News*, only 5,270 ministers signed it; and the *Daily Chronicle* announced that 9,339 of the ministers of the "Prince of Peace" refused their signatures, and amongst those who thus withheld their names were the foremost men in their respective denominations. Personally, I am opposed to war except for defensive purposes. In my opinion, the schoolmaster is far more useful as a real empire-builder than the military general. I quite agree with Lord Rosebery, who said, in his address as President of the Birmingham and Midland Institute, last October: "In days to come, if they had not come, empires would be formidable not so much from the immensity of their area as from the numbers of their trained, intelligent, and educated population." Peace once more reigns amongst us, and now the

very men who did little or nothing towards trying to bring it about are thanking God for its restoration. The Archbishop of Canterbury, we are told, has drawn up a special prayer thanking God that he has granted "success to our arms," and "restored to our nation and to our adversaries the blessings of peace." He further supplicates his Deity "to forgive us whatever we have done amiss in this time of strife." This request is a "large order" when we remember the many blunders and the unpardonable mismanagement which have marked the entire campaign. What effect could such forgiveness have upon the thousands of lives which have been sacrificed to official ignorance and incapacity? To forgive those who did nothing to prevent the war, and those who neglected their duty in properly carrying on the conflict, could be no possible compensation to the widows and orphans who are left to mourn the loss of those who were near and dear to them. If any person deserves thanks, it is Lord Kitchener, to whose sagacity and ability we are indebted for the cessation of hostilities. If God had the power to stop the war, why did he not do so before? Why did he allow it to commence? What an undesirable being he must be who had the power to prevent the wholesale sacrifice of the lives of innocent creatures, and yet would not exercise that power? It is useless to say that "it was done for a wise purpose." No omnipotent God should do evil that good may come. Being all-powerful, the wise purpose should be realised without the infliction of pain, misery, and ruin. This thanksgiving craze is one of the many theological follies which belong to the Christian faith. It is like shutting the stable-door after the horse has been stolen. It is wiser to act upon the principle of "prevention is better than cure." Still, humanity can but rejoice that peace is established, and let us hope that it will be maintained by giving the brave Boers a sound system of local self-government. Their sincere allegiance should be won by giving them just laws, equality, and true liberty.

In a few days we shall have the theatrical display of the Coronation; to its allurements all else will for a time yield. As kings go, doubtless Edward VII. is as suitable for the position as anyone could be. He has many excellent qualities, and, as a man, he has several traits of character that are commendable. He is the son of a noble sire, and he possesses a mind free from many of the frailties which have been prominent in other occupants of the English throne. He is not enthusiastic over the Church, and priestcraft in him has no defender. His position renders it necessary that he should profess the Christian religion, but, apart from State requirements, it sits but lightly upon him. It is said that he is very humane; if so, no doubt the vast amount of poverty which the coming festivities will reveal will sorely grieve him. The thousands of poor people who are to be fed for one day only will afford an object-lesson to the lover of humanity. Here we shall have an instance, on the one side, of wealth with all its gorgeous display; and, on the other side, poverty with all its galling associations. Still, all honor to the King for his kind thought of, and his benevolent action towards, his poorer subjects. The Coronation itself will have no interest for me, for it is but one of the symbols of a system with which I have no sympathy. Still, while so many believe in monarchy, it is only natural that they should wish to be amused by its emotional display.

But emotional display is not the only feature of the Coronation. It will perpetuate superstition and erroneous notions. Take the Coronation Oath as prescribed by law. It is a relic of theological absurdity, ecclesiastical folly, and priestly impertinence. Here is the Oath:—

"The Archbishop: Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the people of this Kingdom of Britain and the dominions thereto belonging according to the Statutes in Parliament agreed, and the laws and customs of the same?"

"The King: I solemnly promise so to do.

"Archbishop: Will you, to the utmost of your power, cause law and justice and mercy to be executed in all your judgments?"

"The King: I will.

"Archbishop: Will you, to the utmost of your power, maintain the laws of God, the true profession of the

Gospel, and the Protestant reformed religion established by the law? And will you preserve unto the bishops and clergy of this realm, and to the churches committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges as by law do or shall appertain unto them, or any of them?"

"The King: All this I promise to do.

"After this the King, laying his hand upon the Holy Gospel, will swear: 'The things which I have here before promised, I will perform and keep. So help me God!'

"He will then kiss the Book."

Now, as a matter of fact, the King does not "govern the people"; the government emanates from the Houses of Parliament, and it is administered by the Judges; and in both cases the King is but a figure-head. He has nothing to do actually with causing "law and justice and mercy to be executed." Before the King can "maintain the laws of God, the true profession of the Gospel," it must be shown what "the laws of God" are, and what "the true profession of the Gospel" is. Apart from the Freethinker's opinion upon these questions, the professed Christians themselves are far from being agreed as to the "laws of God" and "the true profession of the Gospel." Upon these points the views of the Bible Theists are totally different from those of the "Advanced Theists," and the idea of the Trinitarian as to what is "the true profession of the Gospel" differs widely from that of the Unitarian. Indeed, the difference pertains to all the numerous Christian sects. Besides, the King is asked to maintain "the Protestant reformed religion established by the law" and administered by "the bishops and clergy of this realm." Nonconformists, therefore, are not under the parental care of His Majesty. This may be no loss to them, but it shows the inconsistency of the Oath in a country that boasts of its religious equality.

The grotesque feature of the Coronation is seen in what is termed "The Anointing of the King":—

"After the Oath has been taken, the King removes to the St. Edward's or Coronation Chair, and then follows the ceremony of anointing.

"The Dean of Westminster takes from the altar the Ampulla. This is a vessel in the form of an eagle made of gold and containing the consecrated oil, which is poured from the beak. Some of the oil is poured into the Anointing Spoon, and the Archbishop then anoints the King. He does so first on the palms of his hands, saying: 'Be these hands anointed with Holy Oil!' Then on the breast, saying: 'Be this breast anointed,' etc. Then on both shoulders and between the shoulders, on the bowings of both arms, and, lastly, on the head, saying: 'Be this head anointed with Holy Oil as kings and prophets were anointed, and as Solomon was anointed King.'

"While the anointing is being done, a pall of cloth-of-gold is held over the King's head by four Knights of the Garter.

"The places which have been anointed are then dried by the Archbishop with cotton wool, except the head and the hands.

"The Lord Great Chamberlain then approaches, fastens on the King's heels a pair of Great Golden Spurs, as the emblem of chivalry, and buckles on the Sword of State. The King is also invested with the Imperial Mantle, or Dalmatic Robe of cloth-of-gold. The Archbishop delivers the Orb into his right hand, and puts a Ruby Ring upon his finger—the fourth finger of the right hand. The various articles of the Regalia, with the exception of the Ring, are handed back by the King to the noblemen who bear them, after they have been handed him and have signified their office.

"The Duke of Norfolk, as Lord of the Manor of Workop, then presents to His Majesty a glove for his right hand, embroidered with the Arms of Howard, which His Majesty puts on. The Archbishop will deliver the Sceptre with the Cross into the King's right hand, and the Sceptre with the Dove into his left.

"Then follows the Coronation."

Such are some of the absurdities of Christian theology and the glories of Christian monarchy! Truly, Freethought has yet much to do in destroying the influence of traditional theological folly. It is time that one and all ceased being influenced by such false and foolish notions engendered in times of ignorance and ecclesiastical superstition.

CHARLES WATTS.

Peace—and War.

PEACE—at last! And with peace, let us hope, reflection. The war that has been waging between two civilised peoples for more than two years and a-half is over, and distracted South Africa, with its clashing commercial interests and race antipathies, is to have one more chance of rest. The soldier's task is at an end, or almost at an end, and the pacification of the country must now rest in the hands of civil administrators—a task that will require all the tact and consideration that human nature is capable of, if it is to be successfully accomplished. Here at home the feeling of relief and thankfulness with which the news of peace was received was unmistakable. The tidings that came flashing over the wires, telling that the fateful document had been signed, meant so much—the reunion of husband and wife, parent and child; the lifting from the country of an almost intolerable strain—that it would have been strange, indeed, had the general feeling been otherwise. Only one dark spot on the picture remained—the memory of the thousands of men, women, and children who had lost their lives during this hideous struggle, and the still other thousands of maimed and crippled men who are cast upon the country, physical wrecks.

It is not my purpose now, nor is this the place, to enter into a discussion of the political bearings and consequences of the South African war. These are far-reaching and important, and the task of pacifying the country and substituting civil government for that of military rule is likely to tax the not too plentiful tact and discretion of our rulers to the utmost. My purpose is of a different nature, and one which, I think, is of far greater consequence than any discussion as to the relative rights or wrongs of Boer or Briton.

For over two years the country has been in the throes of a war-fever; and during a large part of this time, and for a large number of the people, reason has almost abdicated its throne, and passion and prejudice have usurped its place. In a country shrieking about liberty, a difference of opinion concerning the war has been treated as a crime, freedom of discussion has been in many places suppressed, and in nearly all cases curtailed, by popular clamor, and the *immoral* teaching that it was a citizen's plain duty to support his country, whether he believed it to be engaged in a righteous or unrighteous cause, emphasised, with very rare exceptions, by press, platform, and pulpit. To many, this state of things came as a revelation. Those who were unskilled in social psychology, and little aware of the contagious enthusiasm of a crowd, imagined that, in England at least, free speech was absolutely secure. Events showed how misplaced was this confidence; and, although the lesson has been a costly one, thoughtful students have learned that people are civilised but slowly, and that all our recently-acquired culture and refinements can easily disappear before an outburst of primitive feeling.

It may be said that disturbances such as those I have mentioned are common during war periods, and must be looked for in the normal course of things. This I admit; but the normality of savagery under given conditions does not make it less repulsive, nor does it make the necessity for fighting against it less imperative. It is, indeed, just the fact that these disturbances do occur, and are bound to occur, during war periods that provides the opponents of militarism with their principal arguments; for war *is* savagery, even when conducted under the best conditions. As the Scotchman said that there was only good whiskey and better whiskey, but no such thing as bad whiskey, so we may say that, while there is bad warfare and worse warfare, there is no such thing as civilised warfare—there is only different degrees of savagery.

And, as war is savagery, so the feelings encouraged by warfare are savage also, and far inferior in social value to those developed by a state of peace. One of the wildest doctrines preached during this last three years is the doctrine that war is the greatest of civilising agencies, and the chief means by which a nation's manhood is developed. Not content with arguing that a particular war is justifiable, it has been argued over and over again that war, as war, is a good school of

discipline for men, and that two people never respect each other so highly as when they have just faced each other on the field of battle. Individual cases there may be, and doubtless are, where men have been able to go through a war without any considerable degradation; but, in the main, I have no hesitation in saying that the military life is one of the worst possible training-grounds for people, individually and collectively. It is one of the most commonplace of psychological truths that the constant infliction of pain deadens one's sensibilities to suffering; and yet we are asked to believe that men can spend months or years stalking each other down like so many wild animals, witnessing all the horrors of battle-fields, recognising no rule of right but the command of their superior officers, and yet not suffer in character as a result of their experience! It is a simple impossibility that such should be the case. War may be necessary, the soldier may be essential; but let us at least try and be sane over the matter, and not occupy the suicidal position of contending that it is a good school in which to train character.

Lord Wolseley has asserted that in the army a man learns all the qualities that will fit him to play the part of a good citizen when he has left the service. I venture to assert that the qualities requisite to a good soldier and the qualities requisite to a good citizen are, in the main, diametrically opposed. The first essential of a good soldier is obedience—not the obedience of the intelligent citizen, obeying because he recognises the justice of the command, but the obedience of the animal or of the automaton—of the animal who obeys from fear of punishment, or of the automaton that obeys without reflection or judgment. The free play of intellectual criticism, the ready recognition of the rights of others, the championship of justice at all costs, are qualities that are out of place in a military life; and an army that tolerated and acted upon such principles would not be worth its weight in salt. And the complete answer to Lord Wolseley is that, while here again there are exceptions, military men who are placed in positions of power in civil life are usually deplorable and disastrous failures.

Perhaps the best commentary on Lord Wolseley's words are his own remarks on military ethics as given in his *Soldier's Pocket-Book* :—

“As a nation we are brought up to feel it a disgrace to succeed by falsehood; the word ‘spy’ conveys in it something as repulsive as slave. We will keep hammering away, with the conviction that honesty is the best policy, and that truth always wins in the long run. These pretty little sentences do well for a child's copy-book, but the man who acts upon them in war had better sheathe his sword for ever.”

And this is the school in which, in the writer's opinion, man's nature is best educated for the requirements of social life!

The effect of warfare upon the intellectual and moral life of a nation has been seen during the past three years. Few honest men and women can to-day look back with anything but shame upon the pictures of the Boers that were served up for the delectation of the people by the war press of this country. A nation of absolute savages could hardly have been painted in worse colors, and would certainly not have called forth the same denunciations. Compare the things now said by the same papers of the same people, and the difference will mark the extent of the influence of war upon the feelings of a civilised people.

The effects of war upon remedial and progressive legislation are no less pronounced. Hardly any careful student of social matters will deny that the prospect of any measure of reform being carried to-day is more remote than it was three years ago, and still more remote than it was ten or fifteen years ago. The enthusiasm carefully worked up during the Jubilee period, and which will be further intensified at the coming Coronation, has resulted in a stupid craving for territorial expansion, the habit of measuring a nation's greatness in terms of extent of territory, rather than in quality of men, and in a semi-religious belief that this country has been selected by Providence to play the part of leader and civiliser to the world. Meanwhile, it is conveniently forgotten—conveniently that is, to a class—that the questions pressing for immediate answer are not abroad, but at home. The

heart of the Empire, as has been often said, is here in England, and while we have people living and developing under conditions such as exist in so many cases, we can scarcely be said to be going the right way to train men and women for carrying on the work of civilisation. One-twentieth of the energy and enthusiasm squandered on the South African war would have gone a long way, if not the whole distance, towards removing some of the crying evils of intemperance, overcrowding, or of unmerited suffering from our midst. But the people unfortunately do not make their own enthusiasm; it is manufactured for them by those who know the surest and quickest way of diverting attention from pressing and troublesome home questions. After all, the *people* of one country have little quarrel with the people of other countries. It is the interested wire-pullers on either side who have the quarrel, and it is their ill-balanced or misdirected ambition, their schemes of territorial or commercial aggrandisement, that create wars, and for which the people pay so heavy a price.

So far as Freethinkers are concerned, it may be well for them to bear in mind, now that peace is proclaimed, and the pulpits will once more be busy singing songs in praise of peace, that during the last three years the most energetic propagandists of the war-spirit have been the clergy and the religious press. Such leading and representative religious papers as the *British Weekly*, the *Church Times*, and the *Methodist Times* have devoted columns to the glorification of war, outdoing even the secular press in this respect. A single specimen will suffice for the present. It is taken from the first-named paper:—

"Wrath was God's. The war was God's lightning flash and thunder clap among the affairs of men; the flash of God's eye was there, and the voice of God's words. It was God saying and putting emphasis into the words, 'Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' It was the divine warrant given of old to the unique King-priest who in every age 'in righteousness maketh war,' and it is meant to put iron into that blood, and grit into the grip, of the Church in all ages. And there is not another Psalm more closely fitted and attracted to Jesus Christ in the New Testament than this is."

Of course, in fanning the war spirit at a time when it was already active, the Churches were true to their traditions of conservatism and opportunism. Ever ready to echo the popular passion and prejudice of the moment, there has been no more active agent in the perpetuation of the military spirit than the Christian Churches. For several centuries the principal wars of the world were directly based upon religious grounds, and sprang out of religious quarrels. The bitterest and bloodiest of all wars have been religious wars. And now that the Churches have no longer the power to bring about war by their direct influence, and upon plainly religious issues, they are as ready as ever to ally themselves with any interest that promises them some immediate advantage.

The war, I have said, is over; but, unfortunately, it leaves behind it as a legacy the burden of larger armaments, increased taxation, intensified international hatred, and the prevalence of a type of mind that is anything but favorable to real orderly social development. To all real lovers of social welfare the war that has just closed should mark the beginning of a new warfare—one that should have for its principal object the checking and, if possible, the destruction of that spirit of militarism which seems on the increase all over Europe. Let the lesson be kept constantly before people that militarism spells brutalisation, individual and social. It means the reign of brute force instead of that of reason and justice. The countries of the Continent are already groaning beneath this curse, and we seem to be well on the way towards acquiring it. The cessation of the present war has arrested the danger for the time, but it is still there, and the energies of reformers will needs be taxed to their utmost limits before it can be said to have passed beyond the region of the probable.

C. COHEN.

Blessed are the peacemakers.—*Jesus*.
I came not to send peace but a sword.—*Jesus*.

Sacred Shrouds and Holy Nonsense.

THE present outbreak of fervid fanaticism evoked in France by the latest Catholic mystification, the Sacred Shroud of Jesus, bearing a "photographic impression" of his form, is suggestive and discouraging. We may regard, with a certain equanimity, the ordinary manifestations of ignorance or imbecility provoked by the monkish exploitation of sacred relics. It is a commonplace matter of fact that, if one class of people ardently desires a thing, there is always another class quite willing to supply it. And, while thousands of otherwise perfectly rational persons find a supreme delight in believing the impossible, there will be Christs and Schlatters, pilgrimages to Trèves and to Lourdes, anatomical specimens of deceased holiness that are always absurd and often obscene, pious *bric-à-brac*, and *histoires à dormir debout*. We are accustomed, in these matters, to dishonest acquiescence on the part of people who certainly know better. But it is more than surprising to find prominent members of the *Académie des Sciences* giving their support to a wretched imposition like that of Turin.

St. Gregory thought it unbecoming and sacrilegious to make an exhibition of reliquaries; but for the past thousand years Holy Mother Church has found it an extremely profitable source of revenue. Why, indeed, should Pope Pecci be "choused out of his share"? The Mussulman has his Mecca; why not the Christian his Lourdes? Is not the Cathedral at Turin as good as the Temple of Siva? Is not the anatomy of Christ as venerable as that of Theseus? One man or ghost or relic is as good as another, and miraculous powers are not confined by geography or creed.

The demand for relics is certainly not diminishing. The Sacred Shroud may be seen at other places than Turin.* The desirability of such multiplication is obvious—it saves the pilgrims so much trouble. The Neapolitan would be very foolish to journey as far as Turin while he has quite as genuine and potent a talisman at his door; just as a native of England has no need to go abroad to find a Savior while ready-made Redeemers are so cheap at home.

It is difficult to treat such a subject with any approach to seriousness; but there is a moral in it, after all. The follies of the crowd will always be exploited by the cunning few, whether they be evinced in gross superstitions or in lesser ones; whether in prostrations before gods and relics or before kings and flags. We have reason to know that an outbreak of militarism may be worse even than a disaster like that of Martinique. And now, in the trail of that stupendous folly, come busy preparations for the crowning of a king. The multitude may acclaim, but a few will think. It will be recognised by some that the cult of monarchy is strictly analogous with the worship of the gods—that both are alike productive of a spirit of hypocrisy in social life. The criticism that is so necessary in all other matters is here "blasphemy" and "treason."

*Kommst du in des Königs Haus,
Geh blind hinein und stumm heraus!*

The devotee and the courtier must be blind and dumb, where the demerits of their idols are concerned. The peculiarity of the Freethinker is not that he sees the truth, but that he has sufficient honesty and courage to proclaim it. His eyes penetrate to the bottom of the well, through the surface-slime of convention and the black mud of human stupidity. Holding the keys of all the temples, he knows the stuff that gods are made of; and he realises that social injustice finds its basis and its justification in a universal lie. Upon the power of the priest rest the despotism of monarchy and the curse of militarism; and from these proceed the elements of social discord—the ignorance and misery and crime that afflict humanity.

But ignorance and misery and crime look there for enlightenment and happiness and virtue—there (the pity of it!), in the very fountains of their misfortunes!

E. R. WOODWARD.

* *Il Sudario, avanzo del lenzuolo nel quale fu avvolto Gesù quando fu posto nel sepolcro, è a Besançon, a Compiègne, e un pezzo a Napoli nella chiesa di San Patrizio ("Almanacco dell'Asino," 1902).*

Acid Drops.

"PEACE Sunday" was taken at Exeter Hall by the Rev. John McNeill. This is the Evangelist, we believe, who is subventioned by a great Scotch capitalist who is reputed not to stand too well with his own workpeople, although he is very anxious about the salvation of outsiders. Mr. McNeill expressed a hope that Britons and Boers would be soon reconciled. "It ought not," he said, "to be hard for them to do so, those who believed in the same Bible, and named the one Name, and sang the same hymns." All very pretty, Mr. McNeill, but it would have been very much more to the purpose if these "holy" influences had kept them from flying at each other's throats. What is the use of a religion that does not prevent wars, but only talks the cant of peace over their consummations?

Rev. C. F. Aked, of Liverpool, who is a curiously "mixed" man, preached on the peace in South Africa, and said that now the war was over it was necessary to engage in another struggle. "We must seek peace at home," he said, "and set ourselves to the work of saving our country from drink and lust and gambling and the debasing materialism which, failing us, and men and women like us, will bring us to ruin, overwhelming and complete." This "failing us" is characteristically modest. The "us" means, of course, Mr. Aked and his congregation. They are to save England; at least, England cannot be saved without them. Evidently there is no need for the minister and worshippers at Pembroke Chapel to pray the Lord to give them a good conceit of themselves. They want a little medicine from a very different bottle.

Mr. Aked is fond of flinging about the word "materialism." It is one of his ways of being offensive to his superiors in brains and sincerity. Properly speaking, the word "materialism" means the theory that all the phenomena of the universe rest upon a material basis. This theory has no sort of connection with drink, lust, or gambling. As a matter of fact, the overwhelming majority of drunkards, fornicators, adulterers, and gamblers would repudiate "materialism" with all the energy left them. "No, no," they would say, "we may be bad enough, but we are not as bad as that."

The great Chatham would sometimes read the Dictionary before delivering one of his masterly orations. In his smaller way, Mr. Aked might usefully read the Dictionary now and then before preaching. It might make him more accurate in the use of language.

An American advocate, after speaking for several hours, said "I'm afraid I'm taking up a great deal of time." "Oh, never mind the time," replied the judge, "but don't trench on eternity." Some such admonition, if less sarcastic, must have been conveyed from King Edward to the Bishops. When they preach before him they have to be brief. Last Sunday at St. Paul's Cathedral the Bishop of London had (we hear) about a quarter of an hour. It is said that the Coronation sermon at Westminster Abbey is to last only five minutes.

Lord Halsbury said last week: "I see no harm in playing cricket or golf on Sunday—I have played golf on Sunday." Has he, indeed? Well, then, let him look out. Meanwhile, we are shocked at such a confession from the pious Lord Chancellor. But golf is a fashionable pastime, and that makes all the difference.

Archdeacon Hodgson, of Stafford, referring in his charge to the burning of Wednesfield Church, urged all churchwardens to give the matter of fire insurance serious consideration. But is not this a distinct reflection on the One Above, who might surely be trusted to take care of his own conventicles?

Canon Henson says in a recent book: "It cannot be questioned that the influence of the pulpit has fallen to a very low ebb. Publishers, with one voice, assure us that there is no market for sermons. This fact is a fair index of unpopularity. When men crowded to hear sermons, they were eager to purchase them. Now they are zealous neither to hear nor to possess. Sermons were once events; they are now hardly episodes. After some consideration, I cannot recall the name of a single preacher now living—and I do not forget that we have among us, on and off the Episcopal Bench, many respectable orators—whose sermons make the slightest ripple on the surface of our public life. Probably at no time in our history were sermons more numerous; certainly never were they so ineffective. The sermon, in fact, has ceased to be the popular instrument for religious discussion, and the spiritual popes of the hour are not fashionable preachers, but sentimental and speculative novelists."

Speaking at a meeting of the Churchmen's Union at Ipswich, the Rev. W. E. Fletcher said the reason why men do not go more to church nowadays is not for the lack of intellectual sermons, but because the generality of men

thought they had no time to think nowadays. But, on the other hand, Mr. Samuel Burton asserted, with much more truth, that it was because they *did* think and read that men felt unable to receive the kind of teaching that came from the pulpit.

Rev. Hubert Handley, vicar of St. Thomas's, Camden Town, N.W., and author of *The Fatal Opulence of Bishops*, is not to be deceived by the recent protestations of the Bishop of London in regard to his income. He says: "The 'opulence of bishops' does not signify personal profits or personal luxury. It signifies rich, pretentious circumstances—income, habitation, etc. 'I find,' said the Bishop of his expenses, 'various items such as these: £620 a year income-tax; £800 a year rates and taxes.....£700 a year to keep up the gardens..... Then there is a large staff of servants required.' Precisely. That is 'opulence.' These are big figures. They disclose or beget, to the minds of the people, an aspect of profusion which the people sometimes regard as socially rather impressive, as lordly and palatial, but which is not found in practice to facilitate among the people spiritual conquest and relief."

The truth occasionally comes out by accident. For instance, the *Church Review* recently offered some caustic comments on the welcome given by Dr. Perowne to his High Church successor in the see of Worcester, Dr. Gore. "It is not easy at first sight," said the *Church Review*, "to appreciate the grounds of sympathy between two men who differ, surely, so fundamentally; but perhaps they are able to unite upon the common basis of a disbelief in the authenticity of the Pentateuch."

Owing to the action of the Free Church Council, the police have prohibited the Sunday dog fair, which for many years has been held annually in Lincoln. This is a great Sabbatarian achievement. But we don't suppose there will be any increase in the attendance at the Free Churches of Lincoln in consequence.

How inexpressibly kind! The Archbishop of York, having been asked by clergymen what they should do in the matter of the usual weekly fast on the Friday following Coronation Day, has replied that he is "willing, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, to sanction for this particular Friday the non-observance of the fast on the part of all who may desire this relaxation of the Church's rule."

Rev. T. J. Raybould fell out of a train when returning to Northwood from a service at Watford. There is no moral.

Archdeacon Sinclair, presiding at the annual meeting of the Curates' Augmentation Fund, referred to the lack of candidates for ordination. This, he said, could be ascribed to the poverty of the clergy as well as the decay of faith at Oxford, where young men were taught to regard the New Testament largely as a collection of myths. The "poverty of the clergy" is pure humbug. The second reason given may have something in it. The young men, however, are not so much "taught" as undeceived by their own investigations.

Apropos of a little anecdote by the American Bishop Whipple, the *Christian* says: "Charles Dickens once commented severely upon a preacher who was in the habit of setting up in the pulpit imaginary Atheistical working-men for the purpose of knocking them down again. Unhappily the class is not yet extinct, and it not infrequently happens that the result is simply to disseminate the seeds of doubt." This is not so bad for the *Christian*.

The following story, says the *South Wales Daily News*, will be appreciated now that the subject of American D.D.'s is creating so much interest in Wales:—In the old days, when the University of St. Andrews sold its degrees, a certain minister went to purchase honor at a price. Fifteen pounds was the price, and that he paid cheerfully, and was formally admitted to the estate of "Doctor." His man Saunders was there, and very much impressed. On the return journey the "Doctor" said to him: "Noo, Saunders, ye'll aye be sure to ca' me 'the Doctor,' and, gin anybody spiers at you about me, ye'll be aye sure to say, 'The Doctor's in his study,' or 'The Doctor's engaged,' or 'The Doctor will see you in a crack.'" "That a' depends," answered Saunders, "whether ye ca' me Doctor, too!" The reverend gentleman started. "Aye, it's just so," continued Saunders; "for when I found that it cost so little, I e'en got a diploma myself! Sae ye'll be just good eno' to say, 'Doctor, put on some coal,' or 'Doctor, bring the whiskey and hot water.' And, gin anybody spiers at you about me, ye'll be aye sure to say, 'The Doctor's in the stable,' or 'The Doctor's in the pantry,' or 'The Doctor's digging potatoes,' as the case may be."

Austral Light, which is the principal Roman Catholic magazine in Australia, has been defending gambling. The writer of the article, a Jesuit father, affirms that gambling in itself is right even when gain (not entertainment) is the direct aim of the gambler; and that it is wrong only when carried to excess. One of the prominent supporters of the

Romish Church in New South Wales is a leading book-maker, another is a horse-racing and gambling Minister of the Crown. In the fairs and bazaars for church purposes gambling runs riot.

An American Methodist Episcopal Conference having proposed a day of prayer and fasting, the *New York Independent* has been led to observe: "There are occasions when prayer and fasting is a sort of sentimental way of chasing the poor devil around the stump while somebody gains time to canvass the situation. We recall sturdy Dr. Leonard Bacon's protest, 'This is no time for prayer,' in that famous meeting of the American Board, when it was proposed to have a season of prayer over a proposition to have no lot or part with slavery in Georgia." Two of the bishops favor returning the nearly £60,000 received from the Government, on the ground that it was fraudulently obtained by the Church's agents.

A missionary with the name of S. Cantwell addressed a meeting of the London Branch of the Paris City Mission in the Memorial Hall. Mr. Cantwell works amongst the French in our own metropolis. He told a story about a representative of a Jesuit college in France coming to London to prepare to settle in Madagascar to take up work "in opposition to Christians there." After much persuasion, said Mr. Cantwell, he accepted a copy of the New Testament from the city missionary, and this led to the conversion of the man's soul. As if such a man had never seen the New Testament before! Mr. Cantwell evidently does not belie his name.

The decision of the United Free Church General Assembly not to proceed with the heresy charge against Professor Adam Smith has given rise to various comments. Dr. Howie thinks the doubt and anxiety created in many minds by the modern critical movement would soon be dispelled if there were a revival of religion. The true preparation for it, he adds, is a deep sense of need and helplessness. Yes, "helplessness" is right. A Dundee minister, the Rev. A. Osborne, said that his own sympathies all lay with Professor Smith, and he agreed with Principal Rainy when he said that it was impossible for their Church to stand aside from the great tide of criticism that was flowing on. It was not Professor Smith who had raised the question; it was there. They could not prevent scholars from inquiring into the historical parts of the Bible, and into the literature of the Book. Such inquiries would go on in spite of them.

Rev. Dr. John Smith has written a book on *The Integrity of Scripture*. Dr. Marcus Dods, reviewing it in the *British Weekly*, inquires whether the author really "believes that the world was made in six days, that the serpent spoke to Eve, that Methuselah lived for several centuries, that the angels were attracted by the beauty of women and had children by them? Possibly Dr. Smith would say that some of the startlingly improbable accounts given us in Genesis are open to another interpretation. If he does so, and resorts to methods of interpretation which seem to save the credit of the writer, he is introducing a device of playing fast and loose with Scripture, which, to say the least, is as dangerous as anything the Higher Criticism has proposed. If, on the other hand, he accepts plain words in their obvious sense, then his criticism of the fundamental canon is futile."

La Raison gives some curious passages from an account by a French volunteer in the late expedition to China. "The columns," he says, "did not pass by the deserted villages, but visited them in small groups, and then, far from the officers, they acted without restraint.....When the roofs of the houses came in sight we fixed bayonets and entered the villages to pick up small souvenirs. It was during the course of these excursions that I remarked the courage, or rather the indifference, of the Chinese in face of death.....Since leaving Tien-Tsin we had captured fowls, ducks, eggs, and sheep wholesale, but we had good rations, and so we preferred money, for we all thought our steps would be directed to Peking, and we said that, in a city which had the reputation of being large and beautiful, we should need plenty of money to enjoy ourselves.....On entering a house we made it plain to the proprietor that we must have piastres. The peasant replied that he had none. Then we threatened him with our bayonets. He would make a gesture of contempt, saying with signs, No, No; then impassable and very softly he signed that he preferred us to load our rifles, take aim, and fire.....You wish to die, my good man? We must oblige you. A shot, and the individual, still smiling, falls in a corner of his hut. We upset everything, and search everywhere, and find nothing; if these people have money they have hidden it well."

Now for another feature of this French volunteer's story. "In these scenes of pillage and incendiarism," he says, "I have remarked another trait of courage worthy of being recorded, which regards the women. We had set fire to a village from which bullets and even arrows had been directed against us. A portion of the houses only were in flames.

We rifled the others. My comrades and I had been fortunate enough to discover a beautiful young girl; the mother tore her from our brutal assaults, dragged her to the burning part of the village, and then cast her daughter and herself into the flames." This tallies with all the reports that have reached Europe from China. Well may the Chinese pray to be saved from the tender mercies of these Christian beasts.

Rev. F. A. Crosse, vicar of St. Luke's, Barrow-in-Furness, is apparently a militant Christian, not exactly of the type of the Sermon on the Mount. In his Parish Magazine for June he positively incites his parishioners to take the law into their own hands with regard to "bad language" in the streets. "Any man," he says, "who thrashes a blackguard for using blasphemy or obscene language would probably have to be fined if the matter were brought before the magistrates, but in this parish a man fined for punching the head of anyone doing either of these things will always have his fine paid for him." "You punch their heads," the vicar virtually says, "and I'll settle with the magistrates."

Parson Crosse has a "Mary Ann" message for the poor women who fetch beer. He doesn't think there is much harm in their doing so, and he begs them not to pop the jug under their aprons when they meet him. They can't deceive him that way. He has an eye for jugs even under aprons—and a nose for beer anywhere.

Father Vaughan has succeeded in his libel action against the *Rock*. The jury gave him £300 damages, and of course he gets his costs. It does not appear that the *Rock* said anything against him personally. He was attacked as a Jesuit. Consequently this verdict places the Jesuits beyond the pale of criticism. Their unincorporated corporation thus becomes the chartered libertine of public life in England. Surely this is a very pretty state of things in a "free" country! We may yet see an injunction obtained against an English translation of Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales*.

The *Rock* referred to the Jesuits as "Men who own no nationality, no law, except the will of their own General." Father Vaughan argued that this made him out to be "a seditious and disloyal person." But is not every Catholic, whether a Jesuit or not, bound to obey the Catholic Church first? We know that this is so, and it is humbug for a jury to pretend otherwise. Look at Italy, where the Catholic Church is steadily fighting the King's government. Look at France, where the Catholic Church is just as steadily fighting the Republic. When the Pope and any secular government are at variance, it is a Catholic's duty to obey the Pope. If he does not do so he ceases to be a Catholic.

Father Vaughan said that he only read the *Rock* when he wanted "a little fun." Perhaps the editor of the *Rock* doesn't read Father Vaughan even for that purpose. Certainly it is still true that these Christians love one another! Mr. Justice Wills, in summing up, observed that "unfortunately when the subject of discussion was religious, generally speaking, the spirit of religion went, and all the elements of human passion, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, seemed to be let loose." But are not these the "spirit of religion"—or at least of religious controversy? Mr. Justice Wills does not seem to remember Swift's aphorism that "most men have just enough religion to make them hate each other."

The Maharajah of Jaipur has arrived in London for the Coronation festivities. He is a wealthy Indian potentate, with an imposing figure, and a vast retinue of servants. His personal luggage, which the English porters at Victoria Station were not allowed to handle, included a number of caskets containing cash, jewels, and presents. One casket was handled with the greatest care. "It was supposed," the *Daily Telegraph* says, "to contain the god, without which the Maharajah, who is a strict upholder of his religion, would not have travelled so far from home." Really our Fleet-street contemporary ought to know better. Maharajahs do not worship gods in boxes. The common people in India are superstitious enough, just like the common people in Catholic Europe or Catholic South America. Saints and gods swarm amongst both sets of devotees. But the leading men in India are practically Theists. No doubt the Maharajah of Jaipur would smile at the *Daily Telegraph's* idea of the contents of that casket.

The Rev. W. J. Townsend, D.D., President of the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, has written a leaflet for that body on "The Education Bill: How to Defeat It." He says that the crisis is an alarming one, that the future existence of English Nonconformity is threatened by this Bill, and Nonconformists must therefore "fight in the name of God, as becomes the children of the Puritans and Nonconformists of old." Dr. Townsend disdains the idea that they could be "recreant." But are they not "recreant" already? What principle do they stand upon? We fail to perceive it. The only principle they could stand upon is the principle that the State should have absolutely nothing to do with Religion. But that means Secular Education. Hence these tears,

The business of the Freethought Publishing Company, including the publication of the FREE-THINKER, is now carried on at No. 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

Mr. G. W. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, June 15, Athenæum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court-road, London, W.: 7.30, "Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and God."

To Correspondents.

CHARLES WATTS'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 15, Hampstead Ethical Society.—Address, 24 Carminia-road, Balham, London, S.W.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 15, a. and e., Victoria Park.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

LIVERPOOL.—You are quite right. Mr. George Anderson did try to get hold of Mr. Foote's 1,000 Deferred Shares in the Freethought Publishing Company. Those Shares are not (as things go yet) of much commercial value, for all the Ordinary Shares must earn at least five per cent. before the Deferred Shares can stand in for a dividend. But they carry voting power all the same, and when Mr. Anderson tried to get hold of them it was not difficult to see what the object was. His solicitors very blandly asked that the 1,000 Deferred Shares might be deposited with them, together with a blank transfer, as "security." This was in an early stage of the game, before the commencement of actual litigation. Had Mr. Foote walked into the trap, Mr. Anderson might have "realised" on those Shares in a week; have offered them for sale and bought them himself—perhaps for the price of an old song. That would have given him 1,000 votes; and then, by taking up the 500 Shares he had promised, he would have had 1,500 votes; which would have enabled him practically to control the Company and work it in the interest of his protégés.

A. C. BOOTH.—Thanks. We are always glad to receive useful cuttings. No doubt, as you say, the anecdote would have been indignantly denied if it had first appeared in the *Freethinker*.

A. J. M'EDDY.—(1) The best answer to the reverend gentleman's query "whether you suppose the stars made themselves?" is to obtain a book on elementary astronomy (say Lockyer's or Ball's) and show him from it that the stars are not "made" at all—not even by God. For the rest, we advise you to read Büchner's *Force and Matter*, which can be obtained from our publishing office for 3s. 6d., or post free for 3s. 10d. You will find enough in that volume to enable you to deal with all the priests on earth. Meanwhile you might remind the reverend gentleman that "self-creation" is a perfectly meaningless expression. You might also ask him whether he or anybody else understands the term "creation." If it means bringing something into existence out of nothing, it is not realisable in any mind but a lunatic's. If it means bringing something into existence out of pre-existing material, then the reverend gentleman has a God who is co-eternal with matter, and in that case there are two Infinities—which, as Euclid says, is absurd.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always very welcome.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We wish the Birmingham Branch all success in its gallant fight against terrible odds. It is certainly a pity that financial help is not more readily forthcoming. The burden is allowed to fall too heavily upon a few poor men.

J. G. BARTRAM.—See paragraph. We hope the weather will be all you desire for the Town Moor meetings.

H. C. SHACKLETON.—Mr. Foote's *Royal Paupers* was published in Queen Victoria's time. He has not leisure to bring all the figures up to date just at present. A new edition will be prepared before very long. Meanwhile there are only a limited number of copies left in stock.

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.

Sugar Plums.

MR. FOOTE had an improved audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and his lecture was very warmly applauded. This evening (June 15) he occupies the Athenæum Hall platform again, taking for his subject "Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and God."

Mr. Foote will deliver two special Coronation lectures at the Athenæum Hall on Sundays, June 22 and 29. Special handbills are being printed to advertise these lectures. Will our London friends help to distribute them? They can obtain as many as they require at the Athenæum Hall this evening (June 15) or by applying at our publishing office, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

We have just received a very welcome and interesting letter from Mr. Harry Snell, who is still studying at Heidelberg, with a view to mastering not only the language, but the philosophical literature of Germany. Mr. Snell hopes to be able to do more work for the Freethought movement when he returns to England, and nothing would give us more pleasure than to see him engaged in that way. Mr. Snell's many friends in England will be glad to hear that his health has much improved. Having suffered a very bad breakdown himself, from which he has been long in recovering, he is naturally anxious to prevent Mr. Foote from presuming too much upon his strength after his recent illness. "I hope," Mr. Snell says, "that you will steadily refuse to do all unnecessary work. I believe that you will be just as well off, and the cause too, at the end of the year, if you put a very strict limit to your activities."

The Birmingham Branch holds a meeting in the Bull Ring this morning (June 15) to protest against the action of the School Board, which was fully explained in last week's *Freethinker*. Mr. H. P. Ward and other speakers will take part in the proceedings. Mr. Ward will also lecture in the evening in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms. No doubt there will be a strong muster of the "saints" on both occasions.

We understand that our suggestion has been taken, and that Mr. Francis Neale, who is still at Birmingham, is kindly preparing a statement of the Branch's case against the School Board. This will be printed and (we hope) widely circulated.

"Race Sunday" is always utilised by the Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch for propagandist purposes. Meetings, and generally big ones, are held on the Town Moor. The speaker this year is Mr. C. Cohen. "Race Sunday" being next "Lord's Day," June 22, he will lecture at the Quayside in the morning at 11 o'clock, and on the Town Moor in the evening at 7. Of course, this is "weather permitting," and it really ought to *permit* by that time. Mr. Cohen is booked for two similar meetings on June 29. We hope the Tyneside "saints" will do their best to secure large attendances. Those of them who can afford it should also help financially, for such efforts, however cheaply organised, cannot be carried on precisely for nothing.

We see from a circular letter, which has been forwarded to us by one of our readers who received it, that *Ethics*, the principal organ of the Ethical movement in this country, is in danger of collapsing from the lack of financial support. This is not exactly a "Sugar Plum," but it is better here than in "Acid Drops." We hope *Ethics* will not collapse. The army of progress is made up of many divisions, and a man who cannot fight in one of them may be able to fight in another. *Ethics*, at any rate, is non-theological; and that is the essential point of Secularism too.

Some hundreds of pounds will have to be raised to keep our Ethical contemporary going. We hope the money will be raised promptly. There are well-to-do Freethinkers who do not help the Secular movement, but they might help *something*. We also hope it will be borne in mind that no advanced journal can possibly be "in clover." This may throw a little light on our own struggles to maintain the *Freethinker*. We have kept this journal going for more than twenty years without an annual subvention. Indeed, one wealthy Freethinker, who had advanced £200, wanted it back again so badly, in spite of his wealth, that at the end of the twenty years he pursued us into the Bankruptcy Court.

A. Narayana Rao, sub-editor of the *Kistna Patrika*, Masulipatam, South India, contemplates publishing a series of volumes in Teluga, being translations of Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, and other Freethinkers. The first volume of fifty pages will contain three of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances*—The Creation Story, Noah's Flood, and the Tower of Babel. The translator hopes we have no objection to his issuing the volume, which is ready for publication. Of course we have not, and we have written to tell him so. We shall be only

too delighted to assist in counteracting the work of the Christian missionaries in that part of the world.

They are "catching us up"—to use the heading of our last week's article—right and left. Mr. John Morley, for instance, in his great Edinburgh speech, said: "One of the most striking and moving incidents of the last few days has been the visit of Lord Kitchener to the Boer delegates at Vereeniging, and he said to them this, that if he had been one of them himself he would have been proud to do as they had done. Only the day before yesterday my parliamentary friends and I voted £50,000 to Lord Kitchener. I would vote him £50,000 to-morrow for saying that, and nothing else." This was greeted with loud cheers.

Mr. Watts Again.

In the *Freethinker* dated June 1 I frankly stated that I had returned a letter I had received from Mr. Watts. Several reasons were given, but the first was quite sufficient; namely, that I had one letter of his already in hand, and a second letter was out of order until the first had been printed and dealt with.

In returning that letter I wrote to Mr. Watts personally, pointing out that if he waited to read what I had to say in reply to his first letter, and then claimed another hearing in the name of justice and fair play, that would introduce a new factor into the case. This was equivalent to telling him that I did not wish to silence him peremptorily; or, in other words, that while I could not help being the editor of the *Freethinker*, I had no desire to take an unfair advantage of my position.

Mr. Watts acted on my suggestion. He sent me what he called "A Preliminary Note." The substance of it was printed under the head of "To Correspondents" in the *Freethinker* dated June 8. It was merely an announcement that he was preparing another letter for insertion, and I did not see why it should be accompanied by adjectives and adverbs.

The announcement in the *Freethinker* was couched in terms that would lead the readers to expect the letter in the next issue, if it were received in proper time.

Mr. Watts's "Preliminary Note" reached me on Saturday, May 31. The date is of some importance.

On that very day, May 31, Mr. Watts dated a circular letter which he sent out by post, virtually stating that he was gagged.

I understand now why he preferred his promised letter to appear in the *Freethinker* dated June 15 rather than in the number dated June 8.

Mr. Watts did not send me a copy of that circular letter. It did not occur to him that it should have been a point of honor on his part to do so. The result was that I learnt of the letter by the veriest accident. One recipient forwarded it to me as likely to be "interesting." Without that one copy, reaching me thus indirectly, I should still be ignorant of what Mr. Watts had done.

The circular letter which I learnt of so accidentally is a curious document, but it shall be printed in full, so that all may judge of it for themselves:—

May 31, '02.

DEAR SIR,—You have no doubt seen in this week's *Freethinker* the unjust attack Mr. Foote has made upon me, after returning my letter and declining to insert it in the paper. This may be editorial smartness, but it is the essence of unfairness. To grossly misrepresent a person when he is not allowed to correct the misrepresentation is not my idea of Secular fair play. This attack upon me is one tissue of falsehoods and misstatements. He alleges that I was in league with Mr. Anderson against him; that I aspired to the pastorate of an Anderson Institute; that I went with the proprietor and inspected the Athenæum Hall; and that I was at a meeting when the project of a Freethought Hall, with which Mr. Foote was not to be connected, was "talked over." Now I here state most emphatically that there is *not a word of truth in either of these charges*. And be it observed, Mr. Foote does not produce the slightest evidence (he cannot) in support of his wicked accusations. All he says is based upon suspicion and jealousy.

I enclose you a copy of my letter which has been refused insertion in the *Freethinker*, from which you may draw your own conclusions as to its non-appearance.—Yours sincerely,
CHARLES WATTS.

Mr. Watts thought it right to send out scores,

perhaps hundreds, of copies of this circular letter by post, without sending one to me. He thought it fair to combine publicity with secrecy in this remarkable way. He did it deliberately. I put it point blank to him in a room where I happened to meet him, in the presence of another person, and he admitted (1) that he had sent out a *great many* copies, and (2) that he did not see the necessity of posting me one.

My comment on this point is that I do not envy Mr. Watts his code of honor. Still less (if possible) do I envy him his code of honor in relation to what follows.

Mr. Watts carefully conceals the fact that I had written to him in returning his manuscript, pointing out that he would have another opportunity in due course. He represents himself as simply gagged. No other meaning could be put upon his language. He withholds the knowledge of his circular letter from me, and he withholds the knowledge of my letter from his own readers. And this is his "idea of Secular fair play."

I conceive that the posting of Mr. Watts's circular letter was not confined to readers of the *Freethinker*; it could hardly have been so from the very nature of the case; and the effect upon persons in ignorance of the whole matter is easy to imagine. Probably this was part of the calculation.

It would have been justifiable if I had declined any further controversy or correspondence with Mr. Watts, in the *Freethinker* or elsewhere. My first impulse was to close the chapter and say "The rest is silence." Mr. Watts had no right to expect that he could carry on the discussion partly before my face and partly behind my back.

I have decided, however, that his promised letter shall appear. He wanted the best part of a fortnight to "prepare" it, and I may be allowed a little time to answer it. It reached me on Saturday, when I was preparing my Sunday's lecture; and I am busy enough on Monday and Tuesday in the ordinary course of affairs. It shall be printed in next week's *Freethinker*, with my answer; and that will close the matter finally, unless there is a grave reason for reopening it.

Meanwhile, I may safely leave Mr. Watts's affirmations and denials (in his circular letter) to the judgment of those who have read what previously appeared. He repeats them in his promised letter, and I will deal with them there.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Parsons' Thanksgiving Prayer.

ALMIGHTY GOD, whose only Son
Was dead against all "scrapping,"

We very nearly had begun

To think that Thou wast napping.

We now approach Thy Throne of Grace,

Not far from Ludgate Circus,

To "kid" the foolish British race,

And—keep us from the "work'us."

O Lord, we're thankful 'tis Thy will

To set the nations squabbling;

We're glad Thou art a Briton still;

We thought Thou had'st been "wabbling."

We thought that Thou had'st been and gone

And joined the Dutch rapsallions,

Forgetting that Thou'rt always on

The side of big battalions.

Almighty God, we're glad that we

Have brought them to submission,

Those horrid Dutchmen, thanks to Thee

And—lack of ammunition.

Here's thanks for answering our prayers

And blessing our invasion,

Regretting Thou hast answered theirs

On more than one occasion.

Thanks, Lord, for giving us the war,

The field to slay the Boer on;

"Thanksgiving Day" would be no more

If nations had no war on.

O pardon what we've done amiss

To make our vict'ry tardy;

O Lord, we'd quite forgotten this:

De Wet is not the Mahdi.

There's one thing more we ask of Thee,

And trust that Thou wilt heed it:

Fill us with generosity;

Thou knowest that we need it!

ESS JAY BEE.

Early Christian Frauds.—I.

It is a fact worthy of notice that Christian advocates who are loudest in denouncing the wickedness of "infidels" who impugn the credibility of the Gospel narratives are most careful to ignore the large number of Christian falsehoods and forgeries which preceded and followed those narratives. The position usually assumed by these irrational apologists is that adopted by Dean Farrar, who, in his *Witness of History to Christ*, says: "Now into the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels we need not enter, because for our present purpose it has been sufficiently admitted by the most strenuous opponents of the truths which they reveal." The "most strenuous opponents" in this case are Strauss and Renan, neither of whom admits either the genuineness or authenticity of the Gospels, though the last-named critic, as is well known, makes many admissions for which he had no sort of authority whatever.

As a matter of fact, we know that in very early times—before we hear of the existence of the four canonical Gospels—a considerable number of spurious histories of Christ, fraudulently concocted by pious Christians, came into circulation, and were received by the early Church as authentic and historical documents. Many of these are still extant, though not, of course, in their most primitive form. In some instances we have two or three versions of the same narratives, which, when compared, show clearly how the same alleged facts and events had been altered and recast at different times. In such cases the shortest and simplest form most nearly represents the original narrative. Altogether, as many as twenty-two of these "apocryphal" histories have come down to us, ten being written in Greek and twelve in Latin. These writings may be classed under the following three heads:—(1) Those relating to the history of Joseph and Mary before the birth of Christ; (2) those narrating events during the childhood of Jesus; (3) those having reference to the trial and crucifixion under Pilate. The *origines* of these three classes of writings are: the Protevangelium of James, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospel of Nicodemus or Acts of Pilate. Nearly all the other histories contain matter in common with these three, and appear to be modifications or amplifications of one or other of them, just as the three Synoptical Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are recastings of an earlier Gospel which, later on, being considered out of date, ceased to be copied, and so passed away to be seen no more.

Besides the three above-named forgeries, the following are the most notable of the other "histories" fabricated by the early Christians:—The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, the History of Joseph the Carpenter, the Narrative of Joseph of Arimathea, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Acts of Barnabas, the Acts of Philip, the Acts of Peter and Andrew, the Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas, the Acts of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Thaddæus, the Acts of the Holy Apostle and Martyr John, the Acts and Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Andrew, the Acts and Martyrdom of Matthew the Apostle, the Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew.

These fictitious "histories" were forged in the names of apostles in order that the wonders and absurdities therein narrated might receive more ready credence. At the end of the Protevangelium the mendacious author of that work says: "And I, James, that wrote this history in Jerusalem.....withdrew myself into the wilderness.....glorifying the Lord God who had given me the gift and the wisdom to write this history." The James here named is implied to be the great apostle of that name.

Again, the unprincipled forger of the Gospel of Thomas, in commencing his fabulous history, says: "I, Thomas, an Israelite, write you this account that all brethren from among the heathen may know the miracles of our Lord Jesus Christ in his infancy, which he did in our country." Similarly, the concoction of falsehoods called the "Acts of Pilate" is stated to have been written by a disciple named Nicodemus, who claims to have been witness of the events recorded.

The most ridiculous forgery of all is, perhaps, the

"Revelation of Paul," which commences: "The Revelation of the Holy Apostle Paul: the things which were revealed to him when he went up even to the third heaven, and was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words." The fabrication of this narrative was, of course, suggested by the statement in 2 Cor. xii. 2-4. It must be borne in mind that no written Gospel of any kind came into existence until after the time of Paul.

All these spurious histories were the work of Christians, and not only so, but of the most learned and pious members of the sect. The forgers were not of the grossly ignorant and illiterate class that formed the vast majority of the early Church; they belonged to the exceedingly small minority who had acquired a knowledge of Greek letters and composition. The great mass of the Christian believers, being unable to read anything for themselves, naturally relied on the few scholars among them for information respecting Jesus; and these scholars—who, there can be little doubt, held the position of elders and teachers in the Church—occupied some of their spare time in writing accounts of all the fresh marvels they had heard related of Christ or his apostles. Evidence of the actual occurrence of the wonders narrated was a matter never thought of. "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John xx. 29).

The fictitious character of these writings is admitted by all present-day scholars without exception. Modern Christian defenders of the faith, however, appear to think they disarm hostile criticism by calling the narratives "apocryphal"—that is to say, hidden, of doubtful authorship, or uncanonical. It is, moreover, stated in extenuation of such frauds that fictions of this class were not by any means peculiar to Christianity, but were common at this period among both Jews and Gentiles. The concoction of lying histories was, we are told, simply a feature in the literary habits of the time. Whether this be so or not, one thing is certain: it is to this period that we are indebted for the composition and publication of the canonical Gospels, which can be proved to be full of contradictions, absurdities, and impossibilities, and therefore quite as much works of fiction as those termed "apocryphal."

Astute Christian apologists, confronted with this damning fact, endeavor to save the canonical books by contending that the present Four Gospels were written in the first century, and by apostles or companions of apostles, who were morally incapable of having imagined or invented the facts recorded; while the apocryphal narratives were composed towards the end of the second century, and were the work of heretics and Gnostics. The Rev. W. Sanday, who is, perhaps, the greatest living authority on the early Christian Gospels, says of the fraudulent histories: "The great majority of them are Gnostic, Ebionite, or Manichaean compositions, for which we, as Christians, need not feel ourselves responsible." He then goes on to say: "So soon as there is any considerable Christian literature at all, we find the process of sifting going on. An individual writer here and there makes use of an apocryphal book, but they never effected a real lodgment in the Church.....The canon, as we have it, is simply the usage of the leading Churches carried on for more than three centuries before it was reduced to set rule" (Oxford House Papers, No. ix.).

The last statement is perfectly correct. The Canonical Gospels came into general use in the churches not because they were known to be historical, authentic, or the inspired word of God, but because several churches in various parts of the Roman Empire had already received them as such. But another circumstance which greatly assisted in securing them admission was the presence amongst their contents of a number of maxims, precepts, and moral sayings which were not found in the so-called apocryphal books. Moral precepts were not so easily manufactured as stories of the supernatural. As to the process of sifting and selecting, described by Dr. Sanday, it would have been more correct to have stated that this process did not begin until near the end of the second century. Up to the middle of that century there was no canon at all.

As regards the authorship and the alleged priority of the four Canonical Gospels, if it could be shown that

these books were composed by the men to whom they are ascribed, and were in use long before any of the apocryphal histories came into existence, and that the latter were all concocted by heretics and Gnostics, it might then be conceded that the fabrication of the last-named class of fictions would not seriously affect the authenticity of the canonical books. But can these alleged facts be established? Certainly not. There is no evidence that the Canonical Gospels were written by apostles or their colleagues; there is no evidence that they were in circulation in the first century, or prior to those called apocryphal; nor is there a scrap of evidence to prove that the last-mentioned fictions were composed by Ebionites or Gnostics. The Ebionites and Nazarenes had, it is true, a Gospel of their own; but this was a primitive version of the canonical Matthew.

With regard to the authorship of the apocryphal Gospels, we have no information whatever, save in the one case mentioned by Tertullian. This worthy "Father" tells us that the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* was written by a presbyter of one of the churches in Asia, and that this pious presbyter concocted the story "from love of Paul" (On Baptism, xvii.). The Christian forger, in this the only known case, was neither an Ebionite nor a Gnostic. Moreover, we know from the contents of many of the apocryphal writings that the authors belonged to neither of these sects, and must, therefore, have been orthodox Christians.

ABRACADABRA.

A Godless Hour.

"Everything is happy now,
Everything is upward striving;
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green and skies to be blue—
'Tis the natural way of living."

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

A MORNING that no Paradise beyond the skies can boast, smoking in the sun's first fire, draped in gauzy garments, breathing a thousand scents as it speeds eastward. The earth, dressed in glorious brocade of richest green, shot with gold, silver, and crimson, welcomes the light with no raucous harps, but with the liquid melody of its feathered angels. As I open my window, the perfumed air greets me with a gentle kiss. Each blade of grass flaunts its diadems, each rose fondles a shimmering pearl. Already the pigeons are cooing in the green wilderness across the brook. The rasping landrail is not yet asleep. His quivering jar-jar-r-r-r still rattles above the riotous notes of the lark and the loud laugh of the woodpecker. And it is the Sabbath.

As I breathe the holy incense of the morning, a magpie wings lazily through the beeches. At once I hear a hoarse clatter, for in his domed nest of sticks are the four rascally hostages he has given to fortune. Somehow his livery of black and white brings another thought, for it is like, indeed, unto the livery of those who are the flamens of Javeh. And, for an instant, I forget the holy incense of the teeming, clean-washed earth and the silver chants of earth's angels, to imagine the reek of his gore-smirched altars and the agonised death-shrieks of his countless victims. And it is his Sabbath.

A hare lopes boldly across the lawn, and slides away like a ghost through the long grass of the paddock. It has a lease of life until the yellow grain falls under the machine, unless it blunders into some wire noose. Was ever such a morning as this born in the parched Syrian land? Did the Man of Sorrows dream of such greens as these, or see nature's coinage of radiant gold and glittering silver flung everywhere with spendthrift hand? Did ever such sweet-tongued choirs glad his ears, or were his ears deaf and his eyes blind? If he saw joy in them, then why was he dumb? True, he spoke of the lilies of the field and of the grass, but only to teach the maddest, wildest doctrine that ever framed itself in human brain. From him at least, as an article of diet, my friend the hare was secure. I can imagine the way puss would cock his long ears and frisk if some acquaintance visited him in his villa among the bracken, and conned over to him the sixth verse of the eleventh chapter of Leviticus concerning himself and his cud.

It is the Sabbath, but not the Sabbath of Javeh. The cows rise, and turn expectant eyes towards the patch of red and grey farmhouse that is like a smear of color among the hazy green of the distant trees. My colt gives me a whinny of welcome, and his comrade, the ancient plough-horse, sprawls up with the mire of yesterday's wallow hanging in hand-long flakes from his shaggy coat.

In the water-meadow the grass stands thigh-deep, blotched here and there a deeper shade where vigorous rushes have defied the scythe. There is a snipe's nest in the grass, with four smeary, pointed eggs. The mother does not flush until I am peering at her. Then a plover rises with a whirr, and utters plaintive notes of entreaty and alarm. I know that three little downy atoms of young life are creeping and snuggling through the grass, for I have watched the nest since the first egg was laid. I cannot see them, and pass on.

Low in the hedgerow lies an ancient boot with a past history as dim to me as the authorship of the Book of Genesis. A few weeks ago a pugnacious robin chartered it, and took unto himself a wife. There were born unto them Robins primus, secundus, tertius, quartus, and quintus. I use the masculine throughout, although the quartus and quintus, or any of the rest, may require a feminine. This morning I do not pay them a visit. A hungry weasel was before me, as I found to my grief when I called on an earlier occasion, with my camera, to photograph the junior members of this interesting family in a shoe.

It is time to tread softly when nearing the rushes whose swaying fingers caress the brook. The keen-eared, bright-eyed moorhen is too quick. There is one glimpse of a mass of floating black balls as the youngsters slide over the edge of the nest and vanish at the maternal call.

Boom! A gun sounds in the distance, and perhaps it sounds the death-knell of a rabbit. Down on the edge of the wood the young conies are fat and lusty, though a feeble fold. In a few hours, no doubt, the farmer who burned that cartridge will be yawning in his pew, and listening to the vapid snivels of the local man of God. But he will say nothing of the rabbit hanging in his larder, or of his desecration of the Sabbath.

Three quick flashes of silver dart upward through the shining water where the gudgeon are gliding and winnowing on the yellow gravel. They flit away as my shadow darkens the stream. White clouds troop westward on mysterious voyages over a sky-sea of dazzling blue. A cheery chaffinch, red-breasted, green-helmeted, his pinions flecked with white, gives me a "Pink-pink!" I take it for a welcome, though it may be an insult, and search in vain in the snowy thorn for the nest which no human hand could weave with such craftsmanship and beauty.

It is a godless hour. The cows are trooping down the road as I climb the fence. A vole drops affrighted into the brook. Who knows that my sudden coming did not give his little heart as fierce a pang as ours would feel if, all at once and unexpectedly, we stood face to face with some grim monster whose cry was "Kill, and spare not"? Bees are garnering rich harvests, and yellow heaps of moist earth tell me that busy and voracious miner, the mole, has toiled lustily through the night.

Here it is that the horses pause to drink between the two white rails at the corner of the lane. A few sparrows are taking a bath, and a chaos of noise accompanies the matutinal ablutions. Further on three of them are settling some argument or dispute in a dusty tilting-ground. There are legions of black, bullet-headed tadpoles in this vast ocean (from their point of view) of stagnant water. They wriggle about the bottom grotesquely, or rise in an inebriated, wobbly fashion to the dust of duckweed that plentifully besprinkles their Atlantic. A vagabond cuckoo, having farmed out his offspring on the ignorant and guileless, without money and without price, and battered on all and sundry in his roosting, freebooting way, sounds his clarion, and is answered by another of his priest-like kind. Swallows hawk for flies, or, clinging to a decayed branch or poised on a shed-ridge, chatter out an amazing and utterly ungraspable medley of notes.

It is a godless hour, but a golden hour. All these

things are born but to die in Nature's fierce, awful, hideous lust to create and destroy. They prey on each other, murder each other, everlastingly. But surely the lark pouring out melody, the rabbit frisking in the twilight, the droning bee, the cow with her calf at her side, the dancing butterfly, and the darting fish know a pleasure richer and purer than we can tell! It is, perhaps, the wild, pure joy of innocence and ignorance—the sparking joy of a child; such joy as the grovelling devotee of superstition or the Sabbath-faced hypocrite, mumbling away responses beneath a dome that is but a legacy of past ages of savage altars raised to obscenity, can never win or hope for. It is the joy of life alone.

I have spent an hour of idleness, a godless hour—and it is the Sabbath. Soon the church bells will be warning away the demons from the tabernacles of Javeh and his melancholy, joyless, sad-faced Son. Tuneless voices will bellow verses weak in grammar, halting in rhythm, and inane in thought. Alas for God's poets of latter days! Alas for Javeh's minstrels and his mouthing, mumming priests!

I have seen more of God in one godless hour than Sinai, with its thunders, and Calvary, with its upreared Cross, ever knew. I have drunk one sweet, manhood-inspiring draught from Nature's fountain, and for me your bells shall clang, Javeh, and your mountebank flamens shall mime and prank in vain. E. J. M.

Creation: According to the Dusuns of Borneo.

In the Beginning there was nothing, only darkness and the emptiness of the void, but there was a long, thin stone; and out of the long, thin stone came creeping from one end the god Kinohringan, and from the other end came the goddess Sinemundu, crawling. And together they seated themselves upon the long, thin stone, and around them was nothing, only the darkness and the emptiness of the void. Then Kinohringan spoke to Sinemundu, telling her of the Perfect World which he had it in his mind to make, the world without flaw, in which there should be happiness, and ease, and health, and peace, and abundance, and in which no evil should find foothold; and Sinemundu listened to his words, professing admiration, and, after the manner of women, saying soft words of praise to pleasure him. But before he set about his task of creation Kinohringan rose up from his seat upon the long, thin stone, and, bidding Sinemundu await his return, wandered off into the void in order to explore its capabilities, and when he had departed evil entered into the heart of Sinemundu, his wife.

First, she was offended in that Kinohringan had spoken of his schemes only, and of the great things which he would do; and then she began to ask herself in what was she inferior, seeing that both had emerged from the long, thin stone? Resenting his airs of superiority, she sought some means of vindicating her own claims to consideration and respect, and at once the idea came to her that she would create the Perfect World of which he had spoken, so that on his return he would find that he had been forestalled, and would admit that her godhead was equal to his own. Thereupon she began hurriedly to fashion the world, working with feverish haste lest all should not be completed before her lord rejoined her; and since she was a woman she lacked continuity of purpose, and was ever busy over another piece of work before she had fairly completed that which she had in hand. Therefore, all that she wrought was flawed and blemished, for the hills were too high, so that they robbed men of their breath, and the valleys were too low, so that they became swamps for which no man has any use, and where the waters were not too abundant they were scarce and difficult to find. Moreover, the sun was too hot, the moon could only shine fitfully, the rains were too heavy, the droughts too long, the jungles too dense, the game and forest produce too rare and hard to come by. But, worse than all this, pain and sickness and death, the bad dreams which cause the Dusuns to destroy so many of their unborn children, and the cruel curse of labor, without which man may not support life, were suffered to win a place in the world which Sinemundu fashioned. But when Kinohringan returned and beheld the sorry, misshapen thing which she had made, he was filled with horror, and cried aloud with an exceeding bitter cry; but he would have naught to do with it, and bade Sinemundu manage it in accordance with the measure of the folly which had brought it into existence. Wherefore among the Dusuns women hold all sacerdotal offices even to this day, and, though the people pray to the great god Kinohringan, they know that all evil has its source in the goddess whose pride and untimely interference alone prevented the creation of the Perfect World.

—Spectator.

Herbert Spencer and "English."

ONE chapter of Herbert Spencer's new book is on "A Few Americanisms," and treats of some misapplications of words that are common in America and, much to Mr. Spencer's regret, making their appearance in English journals of repute. One of these is the use of the word "claim" instead of "say" or "assert" or "affirm" or "allege." He says: "A thing claimed is a thing which may be possessed." Another linguistic outrage is the use of the word "operate" instead of "work"; as, to operate a railroad-line. Again, a corruption no less reprehensible, Mr. Spencer affirms, is the use of the word "on" in the place of "in." We must not say we met a friend "on" Broadway, or on any other street, but "in" the said thoroughfare.

Having named these Americanisms, Mr. Spencer suggests that Americans expose the deterioration of language as spoken in England. I will mention a few Britishisms. There is, first, the use of "however" at the beginning of a question, as, "However did you do it?" Also, "Wherever can he be?" Why add "ever"? A second misapplication involves the use of "who" for "as": "Such boys and girls should be admitted *who* can pass a favorable examination." Say "*as* can pass." Third *beispiel*: "He never ailed anything" for "He never was ailing." Fourth: "Try and," meaning "try to."

These criminal cases I have met with in the works of English writers, and I must add to them two suspicious actions by Mr. Spencer himself. He speaks of a contingency in which "an officer is expelled the army," and he writes "in respect of." Now, in the first instance, it is obvious that the omission of "from" after "expelled" is deterioration of the language; a part of the clause has fallen away. The author will see, upon taking thought, that officers are admitted into and expelled *from* the army. The English have a way of dropping their prepositions. They are guilty of sentences like this: "Directly (or immediately) they were married they set out for the Continent." Assuredly the word "after" should follow the word "directly." As for "in respect of," it is meaningless and illogical—the hybrid progeny of "in behalf of" and "with respect to."

In the course of its evolution a language passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and the original meaning of its terms is liable to be lost in the shuffle.

—G. P. Macdonald, in the "Truthseeker" (New York).

To Suicidal Christians.

(SEE DAILIES.)

YE believers (in numbers so frightfully ample)
Who breathe your last after a sanctified sample,
O! Christians who pant for a Bible example—
If you can't all ascend to Heaven in a chariot,
At least shed your lights like Judas Iscariot;
And work yourselves off with a halter orariat;
Or—like Adam or Christos—live a bit fast—
Let yourselves into it—get nailed at last—
Then blame other people for blighting your past.
Of course you can't all (with God's help) do your worst
In miraculous ways, like Samson the First
(Though you perish blind (drunk) when you go on the
burst);
What you really want is to bring down the house
In a tragical way—to kick up a rouse,
As you snivel to heaven your last dying grouse!
If your life is a bore, things keep going askewer;
Don't fall, like Saul, on your swords (to be fewer).
Your disease after all 's not so bad as your cure.
Not to add to your vice, my advice to you all
Is: *Keep out of the papers.* Your attention I'd call
To the fact that your capers cause others to fall.

G. GUARDIABOSCO.

Why They Laughed.

A ludicrous incident occurred at Killarney Cathedral in the presence of Lord Kenmare and all the local magnates. Father Burke was preaching for the Presentation Brothers Schools, and his sermon reached an unusual length. The Brothers, anxious for a good collection, began rattling the tin plates as a hint to the preacher to stop; the Bishop, Dr. Moriarty, frowned from his throne, and the noise ceased. The portly Prior advanced from his stall and took up his position in front of the pulpit, in the full view of all present except the preacher, who was just then expatiating on the zeal of the Brothers. He pictured forth the pale, ascetic monk, his emaciated frame bearing evidence of his fastings and his vigils. He was surprised to find the audience smiling. He tried to be more impressive, and again reverted to the mortified and over-worked monk. The audience could hardly contain their merriment. There in front of them was the rotund figure, the broad, jolly face of the Prior, beaming like a

full moon, visible to all but the preacher, and fully enjoying the beautiful description of the ascetic monk. Greatly disconcerted, the preacher concluded as quickly as he could, and it is but right to mention that the collection did not disappoint the fraternity.—*"The Catholic Fireside" (February, 1902).*

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, G. W. Foote, "Earthquakes, Volcanoes, and God."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, ante-room, first floor): 11.15, W. M. Salter, "The Real Emancipation of Woman."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Surrey Masonic Hall): 7, W. M. Salter, "Whom Shall we Follow?"

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture.

STATION ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, W. J. Ramey.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, W. J. Ramsey; 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

KINGSLAND (Ridley-road): 11.30, A lecture.

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, A lecture.

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY (West London Branch N.S.S.): 7.30, F. A. Davies.

HYDE PARK, near Marble Arch (West London Branch N. S. S.). Freethought literature on sale at all meetings. 11.30, F. A. Davies.

HYDE PARK FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY (near Marble Arch): 3, Addresses by Messrs. J. Rowney, Ivan Paperno, and F. Howard; 7, W. Heaford, "The Old, Old Story." Thursday, June 19, at 7.30, A. J. Marriott, "What the World Owes to Secularism." Saturday, June 21, at 7.15, Freethought Addresses by Messrs. Rowney, Paperno, and Howard.

VICTORIA PARK (Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.): 3.15, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Medicine"; 6.15, C. Cohen, "Evolution and Morals."

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

COUNTRY.

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

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: 11, in the Bull Ring, meeting to protest against the action of the School Board towards the Branch—H. P. Ward and others; 7, in the Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street, H. P. Ward, "The Curse of Priestcraft."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): No lectures during June, July, and August.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): 7, Musical and other recitals, etc.; 8.15, Particulars given as to grand excursion to Tuxford Hall on the 22nd inst.

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