

# THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

*Lo! ye believers in gods all goodness, and in man all ill; lo you! see the omniscient gods oblivious of suffering man; and man, though idiotic, and knowing not what he does, yet full of the sweet things of love and gratitude.—*  
HERMAN MELVILLE.

## God Save the King.

BELIEVERS in Special Providence—and there is no other kind of Providence either honest or really conceivable—are naturally concerned about the King's illness and the postponement of the Coronation. What does it all mean? What is God particularly angry about? What lesson does he intend to convey? Surely there is something more than meets the eye in this startling calamity. See how Providence worked up to it, like a cunning and well-practised dramatist. For a long time it was feared that the cold damp weather would be prolonged, and the Coronation be spoiled in that manner. But the weather improved just in the nick of time. The three Coronation days—Thursday, Friday, and Saturday—were simply splendid. The sun shone gloriously in a grand blue sky, yet the sudden great heat was tempered by a delicious breeze. Yes, the weather was all right, but the King was all wrong. Only a few hours (so to speak) before the great event which all his life led up to, he was cast down on a bed of sickness, the doctors were cutting him open and operating on his internals, his very existence was imperilled, and his subjects dreaded that the next bulletin would sound the sad note of preparation, not for his crowning, but for his funeral.

Fortunately the King seems likely to weather this worst storm of his life. To use an American phrase, we take no stock in kings; but as Edward the Seventh is a man, and we happen to know of his illness, we hope he will recover. We extend the same sympathy to every sick person in this metropolis. As the Queen is a wife and a mother, we respect her sorrow, and wish her a happy issue out of this affliction. Death is so great a fact that when it comes it dwarfs all surroundings into insignificance. Whether it be in a cottage or in a palace, the first cry of a widow's grief has the same tragic note, and the anguish of bereavement scorns the comforts that money can purchase. But afterwards how much harder it is for the poor widow! To the grief of the wife is added the grief of the mother as the children pine for the lack of bread, and a nameless horror broods on every day's horizon, and the dear young faces lose their gladness, and the dear little feet go wearily, as though already beginning their own walk to the grave.

But to return to the King. One would think that, as he is the principal sufferer in this visitation of Providence, he is also the principal offender. Has the Lord heard the voice of the Nonconformist Conscience protesting against King Edward's visit to Epsom racecourse? Have all the sins of his younger days made so big a heap that the Lord cannot overlook it? Has he gazed too much upon the wine when it was red? Have pretty women thrown themselves too much in his way? Has he smoked too many cigars?—for even smoking is a sin with the Salvation Army. Anyhow, this illness seems a direct challenge to his Majesty; and, indeed, the pious folk who got up the first big prayer-meeting at St. Paul's Cathedral were pretty much of that opinion,

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as they hoped the King would be spared, and that the residue of his life might be devoted to the Lord's service—which was a plain hint that so much of his life as had already expired had been devoted to the service of some other personage.

Cardinal Vaughan is too much of a courtier to point in the Lord's name at the King. Still, he sees in this calamity the finger of God. He should have said the hand of God. The finger of God is an unfortunate expression. It is associated with the most disgusting miracle in the annals of superstition. When the magicians of Egypt saw all the dust of their country turned into lice, they declined to compete any further with Moses and Aaron. They felt that one miracle of that sort was quite sufficient. "This," they said, "is the finger of God."

Many clerical opinions on the subject of the King's illness and the Lord's purpose in afflicting him will be found in the "Acid Drops" department of this week's *Freethinker*. They are professional absurdities, and we do not pretend to find them surprising. We confess, however, to a certain amazement at the following passage in *Reynolds's Newspaper*:

"It seems as if some calamitous Destiny overhung this nation since our quarrel with the Boer States. That war killed the late Queen; its anxieties, no doubt, fostered the illness of the present monarch. The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small."

Why does our Republican contemporary stoop to such nonsense? When religion comes in reason goes out. It is best to leave the "mills of God" alone. They are apt to grind away common sense. If God is angry with this nation for quarrelling with the Boer States, why did he not give them the victory? What sense is there in letting us beat them and take away their independence, and then killing members of our royal family to punish us for our sin? How did the war kill Queen Victoria? Is it the last straw that breaks the camel's back. Very old people must die of something. And why should God go for poor King Edward on account of the South African war? He had no more to do with it than any infant in arms. It is commonly reported that he played the part of a pacificator, and helped to bring about a settlement of that unhappy quarrel. Our contemporary's God is no wiser than the God of the clergy. Instead of going for King Edward he should have gone for (say) Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. What justice is there in carving the King's stomach with operating knives, while the Colonial Secretary wears a monocle in one eye and a smile in the other?

And now for a few words on the "intercession" business. When the present King was Prince of Wales he nearly lost his life by typhoid fever. The nation prayed for his recovery, and afterwards held a great thanksgiving service in St. Paul's Cathedral. God Almighty was publicly thanked for his kindness in saving the Prince's life. But the doctors were not forgotten; two of them were knighted, and all were handsomely rewarded. Now the Prince has become King, and is again in danger, the doctors are judiciously associated with the Lord in the work of his recovery. To leave his life in the hands of the Lord exclusively would be too perilous; the doctors are there to supplement his efforts, and see that nothing is neglected. They keep an eye on Providence; and everybody, including the King, feels that their vigilance is requisite. With six doctors and one God all may yet be well.

G. W. FOOTE.

## Secularism Vindicated.

HOWEVER excellent principles may be, it is necessary sometimes to vindicate them from the misrepresentations indulged in by their opponents. Although Secularism is better understood and more highly appreciated to-day than it was in former times, its philosophy is still frequently misstated and its mission misjudged by orthodox preachers. I have just been reading reports of two sermons preached a few weeks ago in Wales, in which it is stated that Secularists ought not to condemn Christianity on account of its imperfections while their own system is "very far from being perfect." Moreover, it is alleged that Secular teachings are indefinite, and their object difficult to understand. As these erroneous notions are shared by a large section of the Christian community, it may be an advantage to briefly point out their fallacies. In the first place, I am not aware that Secularists claim perfection for their philosophy. If so, improvement would be impossible; the constant object of Secularists is to improve their philosophy by the advantages obtained through the acquirement of additional knowledge and from the lessons of general experience. Secondly, Christians urge that their system is "divine," which involves the claim of perfection, while, as a matter of fact, imperfection marks it throughout. Its basis is beyond human ken, its teachings are contradictory and many of them thoroughly impracticable, and its avowed object has never been realised.

Now, as regards the elements or first principles of Secularism, no one who is at all competent to pronounce upon the matter can fairly deny that they are both sufficiently clear to enable every man, not incapacitated by mental weakness, to form a definite judgment upon their merits and authority after comparatively little study. These elements may be thus succinctly stated: First, man is sufficient to himself in all things, and is altogether free from the supposed necessity of superior guidance—in other phraseology, man is his own providence. Secondly, everything necessary to mankind, whether it be incentives, means, or objects, may be said to lie within the domain of the natural, upon which human reason is competent to decide; and thus it is that the supernatural cannot be regarded as a factor possessing any influence of its own—that is, apart from the supposititious authority conferred by credulity—upon the destiny of man. Here, then, we have the Alpha and Omega of Secularism—its philosophy consists in the affirmation of man's self-sufficiency and of his independence with regard to any imperceptible higher order of being than himself. According to Secularism, life would be of little value unless we acquired the ability of living in accordance with the principles of truth, honor, and justice. With us, as Secularists, morality is of far greater importance than theology. Theology is a mere speculation which is varied according to the individuals who speculate. Nations may rise and fall; systems of religion and theologies may change; creeds may flourish or pass away; but the well-being of society is entirely independent of them, and morality will ever be a necessity, and, as such, recognised in a properly constituted and healthy community. Secularism proclaims that science is of greater service to the world than what is termed religious faith. It is to science that we are indebted for the improvements which made the last century so superior in some respects to its predecessors.

Secularism has been condemned for its supposed selfishness. No charge could be more unfounded, for no adherents to any system have proved themselves so unselfish as Secularists. Many of them have sacrificed domestic comfort, social position, and business success for the sake of their principles. This is the very opposite of selfishness. Besides, knowledge is power, and the man who has that knowledge has an important advantage over the man who is ignorant. If, therefore, the Secularist were really selfish, he would not seek to extend to his fellow men that power which would raise them to his own level. It is because the Secularist is unselfish that he wishes to make others reach his height. Human thought and human aspiration should have no limit, if directed for the benefit of mankind. Secularists cherish and encourage this aspiration, because they know that it tends to advance the well-being of society at large.

They are not selfish, or they would not have ignored the fashionable notions of the time. Many Secularists could prove that, had they chosen to be selfish and to follow the creed of the time, they would have avoided much misrepresentation and much petty persecution. It is, however, their unfailing fidelity to that which they believe to be true, and their firm conviction that the brightest jewel of a man or woman's character is sincerity, which make them despise the fashionable opinion of the time, and, instead of considering what is popular, consider what is true and useful. This is not the conduct of selfish people; it is the conduct of truly disinterested and unselfish members of the community.

We are constantly hearing of the martyrs of the Christian faith, but Secularism has had, and still has, its martyrs, only there is a marked difference between the martyrdom of theology and that of Secularism. From a Christian standpoint this world is but a "vale of tears," wherein one has to prepare for a far better place where happiness is supreme. To be able to reach such a place should be regarded as an advantage. From a Secular standpoint, however, martyrdom brings no such advantage. The Secular martyr has no hope of a crown of glory hereafter; he suffers because he regards fidelity to principle as of greater importance than any personal reward. Besides, a martyrdom of life requires far more heroism than does a martyrdom of death. Those noble and brave men and women who have withstood the derision of bigotry and the keen assaults of persecution without forfeiting their allegiance to truth have been the real martyrs of the world.

In respect to the old allegation of our opponents that Secularism denies the existence of God and a future life, we can only repeat that to many of us there is no evidence of the reality of either. Still, it would be possible for a Secularist to believe in both if he could have any reliable evidence. Personally, I have always held that if the Theist believes that he can best serve and love and honor his God, and can best prepare his soul for the future life, by serving, loving, and honoring his fellow men, and by making the most of this life; if the Pantheist believes that the same conduct and sentiments bring him as nearly as possible into unison with the Infinite Soul, and hasten his complete re-union with it, then both Theist and Pantheist may be admirable Secularists. It is also urged that without the belief in God and immortality we can have no adequate authority. Now the case stands thus between the Christian and the Secularist: the Christian looks for his authority to a Deity in support of whose claims and attributes human reason must ultimately be appealed to by the believer; the Secularist, on the contrary, treats reason as the final court of appeal, and seeks no other "authority" in what would first require to be sanctioned by the authority of the human intellect, the reason. It may be said that the Secularist's authority is imperfect. Still it is the highest authority we have, and surely it is a safer guide than the alleged commands of a personal Divinity which betray to the student the weakness of their inventors by the many contradictions and impracticabilities contained in the said commands.

A statement in one of the sermons to which reference has already been made is to the effect that the Bible holds up a higher family ideal than Secularism does. This is mere assertion destitute of proof. The Bible is a composite book, and one wherein we should vainly seek for unity of purpose or general agreement. Surely it will not be contended that the family ideal of such patriarchs as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was a high and an elevating one, any more than was the family ideal as conceived by David and Solomon. It may be acknowledged that Jesus was superior to many of his compatriots and contemporaries so far as women were concerned. True, even he treated them as inferiors to men, but by no means as though they were only intended to be the servants and ministers of the other sex. While saying this, however, his commendation and personal practice of celibacy, his conduct towards his own mother, and his encouraging others to renounce their own obligations to their families, must be most emphatically condemned. Moreover, the Apostle Paul was a Christian, and his doctrine of the absolute submission of wives to their husbands can hardly be offered to us as an ideal of family duties and responsibilities.

The truth is, the Secular family ideal is higher than that of the Bible, inasmuch as it is on a level with the ethics of our societary development. It teaches that marriage should be the result of mutual affection, and that such a union should create the responsibility of undivided allegiance, mutual fidelity, and mutual consideration. It affirms that in the domestic circle there should be no one-sided, absolute authority; that husband and wife should be partners not only in theory, but, indeed, animated by the desire to promote one another's happiness.

Secularists look upon life as being so real and earnest that it is a problem into which no unknown factor should be permitted to find a place. The wants, woes, sorrows, and sufferings of man—these are the things with which modern thought and wisdom have to deal. Prayer, which neither lengthens the stature nor changes the color of a single hair—what can this exercise avail us? True, we are told that faith can remove mountains, but experience shows us that it is utterly ineffectual when brought to bear against the smallest hillock of disease, hunger, or wrong. Whatever theories may be propounded, Secularism is really the practical rule of modern life. If we test men's belief by their action, we cannot doubt that nearly all men now put their trust in material means alone. It is true that some people pray, but it is very evident that nothing is left to chance, or to the "favor of heaven," which can be in any way otherwise provided for. It is doing a serious wrong to humanity to encourage the notion that there is a special virtue in prayer. Does not such a notion send forth the young voyagers on life's sea as badly equipped as a ship would be furnished with a false compass and an anchor of painted wood? Truly, we think so; and hence it is, perhaps, that so many founder in the breakers of vice and crime, whose fate would have been otherwise had their teachers taken as much pains to make them self-reliant as they took to teach them the catechisms and theological creeds.

CHARLES WATTS.

## Atheism and Morals.—II.

In the preceding article I have laid stress, in answer to the propositions made concerning the influence of Atheism on morals, upon the fact that, whatever may be the particular moral theory we hold, the ultimate justification for morality must be sought in the establishment of a mobile equilibrium between man and his environment. Life, as I have put it, dominates our teaching in the long run, and not *vice versa*. It is because of this that religions have been compelled to modify their teachings as generations passed, and, while they may have begun by flouting some of the instincts of the race—as, for example, the teaching of celibacy in the early Church—in the end these instincts have conquered religion; and, further, that the social instincts generally have been the controlling force in the development of morality, and not religion. Our moral instincts may be clothed in religious forms, but they are no more dependent upon religion than the gregarious instinct is dependent upon the particular form which circumstances determine it shall assume.

In thus answering the first two propositions submitted by my correspondent I was, by implication, answering the third—namely, that a wholly secular code of morals would be inadequate to form the highest type of character; it might supply a "must," but could not furnish an "ought"—religion having the power to set into play springs of action that a secular code could not touch.

Now, the first and most obvious answer to an objection of this kind is that our working code of morals is secular already. In life, if we view it without prejudice, it is not difficult to discover that one's neighbors, friends, or social class, have far more influence in shaping conduct than any speculative theories we may hold. In its widest sense, as I have already shown, natural selection determines what actions shall be regarded as moral. That homicide is universally regarded as immoral within certain limits is but an expression of the fact that human society would be an impossibility were it otherwise. And, when we pass from the more general to

the special aspects of morality, we find the same principle operating in classes. The average burglar pursues his calling with no particular sense of its wrongness, although he may have a keen sense of its dangers. But, while burgling with an easy conscience, he does flinch at breaking the code of honor set up by his fellow burglars. And, at the other end of the scale, we see the "gentleman's" code of honor, which feels it a disgrace not to pay a gambling debt, but does not feel at all depressed at keeping a poor tradesman out of his just dues. In each of these cases the determining factor in conduct is not theory, but fact; and the fact is association with our social class or fellow countrymen, backed up, of course, by the always operative forces of evolution.

The same explanation will also cover much—or all—of what we are told concerning the "conversions" of the Salvation Army and kindred bodies. There is nothing inherently unreasonable in conceding that a rough, careless character, taken in hand by one of these organisations, may show, in his general conduct, a marked improvement—for a time, at least. But the *cause* is certainly not the religion taught, but the associations established. The man or woman is looked after by various associates, a class feeling is aroused, and, so long as the emotions awakened by his or her new surroundings continue, and so long as there is someone at hand to superintend, it is possible to induce a less harmful course of conduct than has been usual. But withdraw the man from these associations, and how long will his conversion last? Obviously, not long. Religious beliefs are certainly as strong with a man abroad as at home, and, under some circumstances, stronger; yet experience shows over and over again how conduct becomes modified under changed conditions, and how, when a man finds the restraints of civilisation removed, his conduct undergoes a change for the worse.

Morality is, in short, social or nothing. If only one person existed, then—unless we identified morality with life preservation—moral laws would be meaningless. Chastity, truthfulness, honesty, etc., are all qualities that imply a social medium, which could not exist apart from a social medium. And, when we trace the growth of morals, we can see how this social medium has been continuously shaping, modifying, and determining the growth of the moral sense. Not a conscious determination, as I have pointed out, because the social forces have been all along disguised by various forms and theories; but when we analyse the matter we are able to distinguish the essential from the non-essential, and to realise that a change in religious belief can no more destroy morality than a change of Government can destroy society.

The groundlessness of the belief I am criticising will be seen still better if we recognise that, for the greater and more important part, morality is unreasoning—not *unreasonable*, but still unreasoning. Fundamentally, it is the conditions of mere animal existence that determine the direction our morality shall take. And, in its highest development, we cannot escape this fundamental connection. We may surround the subject with a vague or attractive idealistic phraseology; but we are, in any useful analysis, driven back to this as a starting point. The love of family, with all its attendant virtues (to come back to our illustration), rests upon the plain fact of crude sexual desire—refined, of course, during the progress of generations, and giving birth to many other qualities, but dependent upon this all the same; and if we remove the unreasoning desire for sexual union the instincts that cluster round the family are inexplicable. And, of course, the *reason* for the existence of the sexual instinct is race preservation. But, while this has been the *reason* of its existence, one may say with tolerable safety that the end has been achieved in a quite unreasoning manner. In the animal world at large there is certainly no conscious desire to perpetuate the species, nor is there among even human beings, except in an exceedingly small degree. There is the desire to gratify an impulse, and little or nothing more; the desire itself being strengthened by the operation of natural selection. But for the strengthening of an instinct there need be, and is not, any consciousness of its social value. All that is necessary is that it shall be useful, and then natural selection operates by a

weeding out of undesirable and a preservation of desirable variations.

What has been said of one group of virtues applies with equal force to others. And it is in this manner that the seat of morality becomes located in the nervous system, and is, therefore, not the expression of reason or reflection. What consciousness does in this matter is to indicate the reason for our action, but it does not create these reasons. Indeed, a morality that should be the outcome of reflection alone is not only non-existent, but almost unthinkable. Our moral development is unconscious, although we may awaken to a consciousness of the development having taken place. Of course, these instincts may be either weakened or strengthened by conscious reflection or tuition, but they do not owe their existence to consciousness, and the operation of natural selection sets a pretty sharp limit to the extent of their modification.

This will also, I think, supply an answer to the contention that secular ethics may supply a "must," but not an "ought"; that is, it may show that an individual should act in accordance with his inclinations, but, in cases where these clash with the social well-being, it can supply no reason why the former should give way to the latter. The contention seems to me to rest upon a dual confusion. First, the moral "ought" is really nothing else than an organised form of "must," and not something distinct from it. To say that a man feels he ought to do a certain thing is only saying that his nervous system calls for the performance of that action. It will not, of course, be questioned by any competent student that the seat of *all* our impulses, good, bad, and indifferent, is the nervous system. Man is, morally, what his nervous system makes him, and this, in turn, is what it is because of the organised impressions that go to make up what we mean by character. And this "ought," about which so much is said and written, is only the primitive "must" organised and operating below the level of consciousness. One may easily test the truth of this by trying to justify any case in which the moral "ought" occurs. Let us take a single example. A man says I ought to so work as to promote the welfare of society; and, if we seek for the grounds of this feeling, we are at once driven to the conclusion that this prompting is but an expression of the simple fact that tribal solidarity is one of the means by which certain societies survive in the struggle for existence. And this feeling of tribal solidarity is essentially a case of "must"—not the conscious compulsion resulting from the threat of imprisonment or chastisement, but the unconscious compulsion secured by natural selection. There is no need to suppose that people must be conscious of the underlying reasons for their conduct; evolution, as I have pointed out, works along the lines of developing and perpetuating instincts, and, so long as these instincts are operative, whether we are conscious of their utility or not is a quite secondary matter. But the fact remains that the moral "ought" is only an idealised form of the evolutionary "must," just as one who is at first driven to do certain things may ultimately perform them in response to the requirements of a modified nerve structure. If any reader doubts this, let him or her try and think of an exception; I can think of none.

There is a similar confusion in the argument based upon the opposition between individual inclinations and an ideal conception of duty. That the two often are opposed no one doubts, and from the simple cause that our inclinations are legacies of the past, while our ideal code is a projection into the future. But the contention is obviously based not upon their temporary, but upon their perpetual, conflict. And this, when analysed, is tantamount to a negation of one of the plainest teachings of evolution. No one will deny that individual inclinations and social welfare do not always run on all fours, but it is equally futile to deny that the whole course of moral instruction, both conscious and unconscious, is to bring about their identification. More and more as the race develops is it recognised that there is no real individual life apart from social life, and that all that makes the individual life worth the having is derived from the social life of which it is the expression. The antagonism that exists is the inevitable conflict between an organism and its adaptation to a changing environment. This form of the conflict may be unending,

but the conflict between a given inclination and a given ideal is so far from being perpetual that one need only go back but a very brief period in human history to get proof of the contrary. As I have pointed out in previous writings upon this point, evolution does not work by the creation of new faculties or new instincts, but by their development and extension. The primitive egoism of the individual or of the family is extended to the tribe, later to the nation, and later to humanity as a whole. The man who works for the welfare of a nation, or for the welfare of the race, is gratifying his inclinations quite as much as the one who pursues a course opposed to their well-being. What takes place in the case of a so-called unselfish character is that his inclinations and interests are expanded so as to embrace others beside himself. It is not a destruction or a denial of self in these instances, but a development and a gratification, and, so long as humanity is what it is, it is impossible to even conceive of the contrary being the case.

And, finally, if a secular code—that is, if the influence of the family or of society—cannot bring about this higher type of character, it is certain that religion cannot. It is sheer rhetoric to say that religion can bring into play "ennobling springs of character which a purely secular code would not touch. Anyone who reflects must see that the feelings to which even Christianity in its highest forms appeals are essentially secular in character. On the admission of Christian advocates, the most powerful appeal they can make is that of the Deity as standing in the relation of a father to the human family. And what is this but an appeal to a purely secular feeling? The truth is that religion among a civilised people only exerts power in so far as it becomes secularised, and appeals to precisely those feelings upon which the Atheist bases his hopes for the future welfare of the race. It may be granted that Atheism, in appealing to the higher instincts of man, often fails to secure an adequate response; but in this particular religion is in exactly similar straits. There is no more certainty that people will respond to the religious appeal for a higher life than that they will respond to the Atheistic appeal in a similar direction. And there is, in addition, the historic fact that religion has never yet risen above mere sectarianism in morals as in theology. Instead of appealing to the higher instincts, it has, in general, appealed to the lower. Morality, in short, has strengthened not as people have become more religious, but as they have been more socialised. The higher instincts, which remained in abeyance while religious beliefs were all-powerful, have asserted themselves during a period of religious disintegration; and the student of morals may safely look for continued development concurrent with the decline and final disappearance of all forms of supernaturalism.

C. COHEN.

## Ethics and Personal Identity.

(Concluded from p. 413.)

Now, an individual has two classes of things to contend against—internal disease and external sources of injury. So it is with society. Its internal evils are so many diseases; with its external sources of danger we are not here concerned. The diseases of an animal must be in its cells or its circulation; those of society in the individual men, women, and children of which it is composed. Often has the individual to remove diseased cells and fluids for the good of the whole organism; and society has to remove some of its units for the sake of the body politic. While the strong and healthy cells are cherished, the diseased ones are purged away; and while the good citizens are countenanced and encouraged by their neighbors and rulers, the bad ones are disposed of for the benefit of society. Does judicial punishment extend beyond this? Ought it to extend further? Whatever is necessary to prevent further mischief society should certainly do; whatever society can do to reclaim the erring citizens, and lead the vicious to actions and habits of virtue, ought, for its own sake, to be done. But need society to go beyond that? Is it necessary to proceed to vengeance, or to assume that actions have any such quality as moral

guilt, except the relative quality of doing harm to society?

Actions have no more *guilt* in them than diseases, storms, and hurricanes; nor has anyone ever yet succeeded in defining that supposed *guiltiness* held by theologians to be inherent in a bad deed. I am not denying the moral quality of actions; I affirm that the whole of that which renders them good or bad, of that which distinguishes them one from the other, consists in their natural effect upon society, and in nothing else. And where there is no guilt beyond this there ought to be no revenge, and punishment ought never to proceed beyond that point which is necessary to prevent further mischief. When we take this into account, it will at once be seen that punishment or reward is just as rationally inflicted and bestowed upon a man whether Personal Identity be truth or fiction; for it is not the individual that is the real subject of the one or the other, but his deeds. Society, to encourage good actions—that is, actions which benefit itself—deals gently with those who perform them. It cannot help doing so, nor can it help frowning upon or discouraging the authors of evil actions, or those which work it harm. Society can no more love and encourage him who does what public opinion declares to be wrong than the man can love and encourage the disease which threatens his life. But the man, unless densely superstitious, never attributes moral *guilt* to that disease, however destructive; nor will society, when freed from superstition, suppose that bad actions have any such spiritual qualities. Indeed, does not the bad man act from precisely the same motives that govern the conduct of the best man, or the best regulated State? What does the State aim at? Happiness. What do bad and good men alike aim at? Happiness. But the one seeks his happiness in actions which, performed by all mankind, would result in universal advancement; the other seeks happiness in acts which, if generally practised, would destroy society, and lead to widespread calamity and misery. I can see nothing else in moral good and evil. And this is sufficient for all honest purposes.

Whether rewards and punishments should be distributed or not is a question that cannot here be discussed. But it seems to me that the sooner society learns the truth about Personal Identity, and the real nature of ethics, the better it will be. What we want is to train up the young to regard society as the highest living unit to which they will ever have relation; that in society lie all their own possibilities, their chances for life, their good or evil fortune, their happiness or misery; that that complex thing, society, can bestow the highest blessings or inflict the most terrific misery; and that society, as a rule, must reward or punish according to their own conduct. Train them to understand that society bestows upon them all the good that will ever fall to their lot, and that it is their duty to make some returns for benefits received. Teach them, above all, to be honorable, to be ashamed of meanness and unmanly deeds; teach them to strive to stand well before their own private conscience, and to learn to be their own guides and masters. We shall never realise the highest good of society till every boy and girl is apprenticed to morality and social virtues as to a trade, instead of being reared in superstition and crammed with falsehoods, as at present. Life is too unreal in our schools, colleges, and homes, and in the churches it is all unreal. Theology is the very worst of falsehoods, for it has no true side or aspect; it is false from centre to circumference. This must be dispelled by the spread of truth. And, when fictions have given place to realities, then rewards and punishments will be distributed for the good of all, and the criminal will be utilised, instead of being pursued with superstitious vengeance as he is now.

J. SYMES.

How is it that we still refuse to be comforted for those who nevertheless maintain are dwelling in unspeakable bliss; why all the living so strive to hush all the dead; wherefore but the rumor of a knocking in a tomb will terrify a whole city; all these things are not without their meanings. But Faith, like a jackal, feeds among the tombs, and even from these dead doubts she gathers her most vital hope.—*Herman Melville.*

## The United States Go to Canossa.

GOVERNOR TAFT, of the Philippines, has got as far as Rome, Italy. "The Pope received the mission with the honors paid to ambassadors." Governor Taft presented the Pope with a set of extra-bound volumes of Teddy's writings, including *The Life of Gouverneur Morris*, in which Mr. Roosevelt calls Thomas Paine a "filthy little Atheist," and then gave him some taffy about his liberal administration of the pontificate. After these preliminaries, he approached "the questions raised in the Philippines in consequence of the change in sovereignty, which, he said, it would be wise to settle in a conference between the Church and State. The separation of Church and State, Mr. Taft added, was absolutely necessary under the Constitution of the United States, but this did not indicate any hostility towards the Church. The founders of the United States had considered religion to be the foundation of the morality of its citizens. The Government had ever encouraged and protected all churches, *even more than in other countries*, where the separation of Church and State did not exist. Governor Taft then pointed out the success of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States as proof that she had nothing to fear from the annexation of the Philippines. The Pope, in replying, thanked President Roosevelt for his letter and books, which were much appreciated. His Holiness expressed great interest in the United States, and his satisfaction with the progress there of the Roman Catholic Church. He had, he said, a fervid desire to aid the American Government in every possible way in the successful administration of the Philippines. He assured the commission that the questions brought forward would be considered in a spirit of conciliation, with the full intention of arriving at a satisfactory result. For the moment he was unable to reply in detail to the question which would naturally be submitted by the commission to the cardinals, and which would be fully considered with due deliberation. He assured Governor Taft that he might be perfectly confident that the questions would be considered with the keenest desire to arrive at a definite arrangement."

Note the subserviency of Governor Taft, and the air of arrogance in the cool reply of the Pope. He has at last brought the United States to his feet, and is happy thereat, but he did not unbend. He accepted the homage as became the sovereign he asserts himself to be.

What a pity it is for the politicians that our Constitution stands in the way of their uniting Church and State legally as they have done practically! Of course, Governor Taft had to apologise for the existence of that obsolete document, and the Pope graciously accepted his implied regret that it stood in the way of continuing the policy of Spain in the Philippines. But it will be news to the citizens of this country, who are not in the act of kissing the Pope's toe, that the settled policy of the Government of the United States is, even more than in other countries, to encourage the Churches.

When the politicians at Washington heard the people express their opinion of the policy which sent this commission to Rome, they tried to belittle its significance by saying that it was only a friendly call on the superintendent of the religious orders in the islands. What will they say now to this statement: "The commission visited Cardinal Rampolla, papal secretary of State, and handed to him the questions and instructions they had received from their own Government. The conference will begin next [this] week"? The Church of Rome has for many years endeavored to get the United States to send ambassadors to the Pope in recognition of his sovereignty. It looks as though he had won.

The question for Mr. Roosevelt now to consider is whether he will get enough Catholic votes in the next presidential election to offset the Methodist votes he will lose. The best point in Methodism that we ever found is its bitter hatred of Roman Catholicism.

—*Truthseeker* (New York).

## Ingersoll on Charity.

I THINK every hospital, every asylum, every home for waifs and orphans, should be supported by taxation, not by charity; should be under the care and control of the State absolutely.

I do not believe in these institutions being managed by any individual or by any society, religious or secular, but by the State. I would no more have hospitals and asylums depend on charity than I would have the public school depend on voluntary contributions.

I want the schools supported by taxation and to be controlled by the State, and I want the hospitals and asylums and charitable institutions founded and controlled and carried on in the same way. Let the property of the State do it.

Let those pay the taxes who are able. And let us do away for ever with the idea that to take care of the sick, of the helpless, is a charity. It is not a charity. It is a duty. It is something to be done for our own sakes. It is no more a charity than it is to pave or light the streets, no more a charity than it is to have a system of sewers. It is all for the purpose of protecting society and civilising ourselves.

## Three Voices.\*

"I will not answer to the name of optimist, but if you like to invent Meliorist, I will not say you call me out of my name."—  
GEORGE ELIOT.

## I.—OPTIMISM.

ALL'S for the best! The shadows do but witness  
Darkly the very glory of the light;  
Each wail of anguish hath its age-old fitness,  
Each moan proclaims "Whatever is, is right."  
Your suffering is the backstroke of your sinning—  
Yours or your fathers'—bow, and kiss the rod!  
Plague, war, and famine are from the beginning  
The handmaids of the righteousness of God.  
And if his justice, in its very splendor,  
Cause, for a time, our weakling sense to quail,  
We droop our eyelids in devout surrender,  
And hope for stronger sight behind the veil.

A baby, at its mother's shrivelled breast,  
Starves, fever-shuddering.....All is for the best!

## II.—PESSIMISM.

All's for the worst! Our torture-cell is shrinking  
As aspiration, thought, and will expand;  
Love's a delusion-chain, for ever linking  
Prometheus to the vulture-haunted strand;  
Progress is but the painful evolution  
Of keener sensibility to pain,  
And pleasure brings relentless retribution  
In dull satiety of heart and brain.  
We're Nature's fools! Her end-all and her be-all  
Is Life, crude Life. Our noblest strain and stress,  
Our loveliest dreams, subserve her grim ideal—  
A serpent-heap of writhing wretchedness.

Still squadrons, crying "Save the women first!"  
Sink with the troopship.....All is for the worst!

## III.—MELIORISM.

All may be well! The day is breaking slowly,  
But surely o'er the world its splendors spread;  
Man knows that living Man alone is holy,  
Not gods that never lived or men long dead.  
Nature's blind will in Reason wakes from blindness,  
Conscience, that seems to thwart, fulfils her plan;  
In woman's heart sits throned Lovingkindness,  
And god-like Justice in the mind of man.  
Give life the chance denied it through the ages:  
Let health of body grow with health of mind,  
Secure to righteous work its righteous wages—  
Then sum the weal or woe of humankind.

Hope-germs, like seeds of heaven in very hell,  
Are quickening round us.....All may yet be well!

## Superstition in Montreal.

HUNDREDS upon hundreds of men, women, and children, among them the halt, the lame, and the blind, and scores of others suffering with varied human ills, struggled with mad fury to gain access to a little three-room flat in one of the poorest districts in Montreal; half a score of stalwart policemen, driven hither and thither in the frenzied crowd, trying to maintain order and to prevent the thronging masses from forcing a passage through a little wicket in a big gate that led through a blind alley to the flat referred to; the praying and hysterical crying of women; the cries and scoffing of irreverent curiosity seekers—and this in the face of a fierce blizzard and snowstorm—were the distinguishing features in a scene in the east end of the city that has been kept up from an early hour this morning until the present writing, the like of which has never been seen or equalled in the city of Montreal before.

The cause of this extraordinary excitement which has set Catholic Montreal wild is also unprecedented, it being the miraculous phenomenon of an ordinary picture of Christ, known to the faithful as the Holy Face, being imbued with a living reality, the ordinarily closed eyes in the picture opening and looking with piteous gaze on a suffering woman in an humble home, and subsequently on hundreds of prostrate devotees, who, during the past twenty-four hours, have gained access to the scene of this extraordinary happening, and so was the story of the miraculous or living picture spread throughout the east end of the city to-day.

—*Lexington Democrat.*

\* These verses appeared in *Progress* in 1884. They are so good that they ought to be resuscitated. The writer, who took the pen-name of Norman Britton, is now a distinguished man of letters. He was one of a very able band of writers who gathered round Mr. Foote when he raised the standard of *Progress* in 1883—only a little while before his imprisonment. *Progress* was a monthly magazine.

## Acid Drops.

THE Archbishops of Canterbury and York, owing to the suddenness of the King's illness, were not able to get up a special form of prayer for his recovery. They recommended a special service instead; each clergyman to select his own psalms, lessons, and hymns. This seems to us a good idea. There is variety in it. It means getting at the Lord in various ways; approaching him, as it were, from many different directions. In this manner it should be possible to arouse his attention.

Cardinal Vaughan has his own idea of the meaning of King Edward's illness. "The finger of God," he said to his clergy, "has appeared in the midst of national rejoicing, and on the eve of what promised to be one of the most splendid pageants in English history. This is in order to call the thoughts of all men to Himself." King Edward, therefore, is a sort of vicarious sacrifice. He is laid low and tortured in order that careless people might be made to think of the Lord.

Danton said in the French National Assembly, "The coalesced kings threaten us, and as our gage of battle we fling before them the head of a king." And poor, stupid Louis the Sixteenth's head was cut off by the guillotine. Cardinal Vaughan makes the Lord throw the hacked and bleeding body of a King before the British people as his (the Lord's) challenge to their attention.

But, after all, Cardinal Vaughan seemed to think that Providence had gone a little too far. The King's life was actually in danger! It was therefore necessary to have "immediate recourse" to prayer for His Majesty's recovery. By this means the Lord might be stopped in time, and prevented from turning a warning into a tragedy. To stimulate the zeal of the faithful in this direction, it was remarked that "the Holy Father desires the preservation of the King's life." But that ought to have been enough in itself. If the Holy Father is really God's vicegerent on earth, as the Papists assert, his intercession for King Edward should procure his restoration to health. Certainly the prayers of the Pope's subjects (for such the Catholics are) ought not to be necessary as well as his own.

Naturally the Salvation Army was not to be behindhand in the matter of supplication. Commissioner Combs sent round word to all the officers of the different corps in the British Isles, asking that "special prayers should be offered to Almighty God at all their meetings, outdoor and in, for the King's speedy recovery." "Recovery" alone was not sufficient; the Lord was to be told that the Salvation Army expected him to grant the King a "speedy" recovery. Pull him round, and hurry up! This is the way in which the familiar pietists of Corybantic Christianity approach the Omniscient!

The Bishop of London tells a very "touching" story of some native soldiers from India whom he informed, at his palace, of King Edward's serious illness. They raised their hands in the air and said, "We go to pray." A few minutes afterwards they were kneeling down in a field with their carpets in front of them, and for an hour and a-half they continued praying for the King's recovery. Very "touching," no doubt! We give them all credit for their good intention, but it was "touching" folly to suppose they could affect the King's condition by talking to the universe on their marrow-bones. Still, they were not more foolish than the common run of Englishmen in the streets of this metropolis—or even the Bishop of London himself. Moreover, their folly is disinterested, while the Bishop's is professional.

The Jewish official prayer for King Edward's recovery contained the following sentence: "Vouchsafe wisdom unto his physicians, that they may cure his wound." But if the Lord has any wisdom to vouchsafe to physicians, why does he not vouchsafe it to all of them, so that all their patients may profit? Why extend this favor to one man out of millions? In many families the bread winner's life is threatened, and it only wants the divine assistance—such as is besought for King Edward—to shed the light of happiness where there is nothing now but settled gloom. Why should God be a respecter of persons? All human beings are supposed to be his children, and to the eye of the Infinite what is the difference between a king and a peasant—or even a prince and a pauper?

"May it not be?" all the men of God were asking on Sunday. Every one of them had his "tip" with respect to the Lord's meaning in the King's illness. The Bishop of Winchester came up to London to let out his secret. "May it not be," he said, "that just because as a people we were too light-hearted, too superficial, too formal about it all, God solemnly laid his hand upon us and bade us stop?" Of course it may have been, and of course it may have been otherwise. The Bishop of Winchester is only guessing. But he is in the

guessing business. He guesses for a living—and a jolly good living too. It pays a lot better than honest hard work.

The Bishop of Stepney gave his "tip" at St. Paul's Cathedral. His idea was that we were too much excited by outward show to discern the deeper lessons; so the Lord tripped up the King's heels and set us all thinking. Still more professional was the view of that burning and shining Nonconformist light, the Rev. F. B. Meyer. "God wanted the British nation to know," he said, "that when next he gives it victory over its enemies, and grants peace from a war that tried its resources, it should not celebrate it by the blowing of fog-horns, and whistles, but by thronging the temples of God and singing his praises." Dr. Meyer keeps one of these "temples"—and it keeps him. No wonder he wants the "temples" to be thronged.

Pastor Spurgeon, of the famous Tabernacle, said the nation had passed through a wonderful week, an awful week. God's hand had been stretched out—"He had made the nation to understand that he was supreme." It does not seem to have occurred to the preacher that this method of proving the Lord is boss was rather rough on poor King Edward.

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain was once a Radical. So was Mr. George R. Sims. The former gentleman now does "loyalty and imperialism" in the House of Commons; the latter plays the same part in the *Referee*. We expected to find Mr. Sims in fine form over the Coronation postponement, and we were not disappointed. "We are suddenly hurled," he said, "from the highest pinnacle of joy to the deepest abyss of gloom." How the great "Dagonet" must have thrust his tongue in his cheek as he penned that sentence! The London crowd has been enjoying itself as well as looked civil in the circumstances; "Dagonet" also has been doing the same thing, judging from the later parts of "Mustard and Cress." "Let us all look unhappy," he seems to say when the royal bulletin is stuck up. As soon as he is round the corner he dances a jig and makes all the bells ring in his jester's cap.

"Perhaps God put it off because the seats were so damp." So said a little girl who heard some grown-up people discussing what Providence meant by arresting the Coronation. Mr. Sims, who tells the story, does not appear to think that Providence had anything to do with the matter. "Yet it is quite within the bounds of reasonable argument," he says, "that the postponement of the Coronation has saved thousands of people from the evils that would have resulted from sitting for many hours on saturated wood." Probably there is truth in this. It is as good a justification of the ways of God to men as we have seen lately. King Edward had to undergo an operation for appendicitis in order to save crowds of his subjects from stricture. We understand it now.

Sarah Bernhardt is a great actress and an impulsive woman. She "feels" that King Edward will recover. The reason she gives is that "God is just." To a mere man the connection is not very obvious. But it appears that King Edward gave "the divine Sarah" a ticket of admission for herself and her son Maurice at Westminster Abbey, signing it with his own royal hand. God couldn't let him die after that. It would be *too* bad.

The Court of Common Council of the City of London did a very original thing the day after the operation on King Edward. After passing a resolution of condolence with Queen Alexandra, the Prince of Wales, and the other members of the Royal Family, the members stood up and recited the Lord's Prayer! There is not a word in that formulary that has the slightest reference to such an event as the King's illness. It is to be presumed, therefore, that the Council wanted to do something pious, and that saying the Lord's Prayer was the easiest thing that occurred to them. The incident is suggestive of the case of the shipwrecked sailors in the story. Finding that not one of them could sing a hymn or offer up a prayer, they decided to pass round a hat and take up a collection. It was necessary to do something religious.

The Coronation celebrations at Watford were to have included a dinner to the old people, and the distribution of shillings and sixpences to the children; and the postponement of these events, in consequence of the King's illness, caused great dissatisfaction in the town. To many poor old people a dinner is quite an event, and some of them would never live to participate in the function if it were postponed. Moreover, the putting off of such a function at all showed that it was less a real charity than a social decoration. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Watford people cut up rough. They ought not to have rioted in the streets and tried to sack the shops of the Committee, but their indignation was perfectly natural.

Charles Bradlaugh was taken to task for saying—though we do not remember *where* he said it—that every human being was born an Atheist. By this he did not mean that a baby

understands and rejects the evidences of Theism. What he meant was that a baby knows nothing of God though it really knows just as much on that subject as an adult; and, further, that if children were not trained to be what is called religious—at least to the extent of believing, or professing to believe, religious doctrines—very few of them would ever be anything but Atheists when they grew up to be men and women.

John Wesley was of pretty much the same opinion on this point as Charles Bradlaugh. In his hundredth sermon on "The Education of Children" he says: "After all that has been so plausibly written concerning 'the innate idea of God,' after all that has been said of its being common to all men, in all ages and nations, it does not appear that man has naturally any more idea of God than any of the beasts of the field: he has no knowledge of God at all; neither is God in all his thoughts. Whatever change may afterwards be wrought (whether by the grace of God, or by his own reflection, or by education), he is by nature a mere Atheist."

Charles Bradlaugh and John Wesley were both great men. One was a Christian, and the other an Atheist; they were therefore as opposite to each other in belief as it is possible to conceive; but both of them had clear eyesight for the plain facts of life, and they saw that there was no such thing as "natural religion."

Lest we should be accused of putting the case too strongly, as far as it concerns Wesley, we will give his own words, from his twentieth sermon on "Original Sin." After telling the story of an ancient king, who wanted to know what was the *natural language* of men, and who took two infants and had them brought up without hearing the sound of a human voice, and found when they were brought out of their confinement that they spoke no language at all, but uttered inarticulate sounds like other animals—Wesley goes on to say: "Were two infants in like manner to be brought up from the womb, without being instructed in any religion, there is little room to doubt but (unless the grace of God interposed) the event would be just the same. They would have no religion at all: they would have no more knowledge of God than the beasts of the field, than the wild ass's colt. Such is *natural religion!* abstracted from traditional, and from the influence of God's Spirit."

Wesley hammered this idea into the heads of his hearers. "No man," he said, "loves God by nature any more than he does a stone, or the earth he treads upon." "We have by nature," he added, "not only no love, but no fear of God." Then, with a final plainness, he said, "*God is not at all in our thoughts.*" "Thus," he concluded, "are all men *Atheists in the world.*" Surely this conclusion would play havoc with nine-tenths of all the religious apologetics of the present day—including the Gifford Lectures.

A protest has been raised at Ottawa against the recent census returns. It appears that "atheists, agnostics, and infidels" have been "almost entirely classified" as "members of the English Church." This was expressly in violation of the official instructions, and the enumerator is having a bad quarter of an hour. The Churchmen object to the present he has made them, and the "atheists, agnostics, and infidels" object to being presented. Such a census trick would be more intelligible in England, where there is a State Church, which is supposed to include everybody who does not publicly put himself outside it. But we have not come to a religious census in this country yet, and probably we never shall. The Nonconformists object to it, ostensibly on grounds of principle, but more substantially (we believe) on account of that peculiar *inclusiveness* of the Church of England.

"Providence" sometimes gives us very sudden turns in the weather. Only a short time before the date of the postponed Coronation we were wondering if the sun would look out at all from the cold, cloudy sky. At the end of what was to have been Coronation week the weather was tropical—85 degrees in the shade and 129 in the sun. People who, about ten days before, were shivering in overcoats, were wishing they could walk about in their nightshirts. Needless to say, the sudden heat was the cause of several deaths and many cases of illness.

More "Providence." A church was struck by lightning at Pineiro, in Spain. A funeral service was going on at the time, and twenty-five persons were killed and thirty-five injured. "He doeth all things well."

Joseph Cooper was engaged in fixing a flag-pole to the tower of St. Savior's Church, Battersea, when he fell through a skylight into the choir stalls, a distance of nearly sixty feet. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Accidental death." The poor fellow couldn't have met with a worse fate if he had been fixing something offensive on the top of a Secular Hall.

Mr. Edward Clark, head schoolmaster of Northallerton

National School, was singing in All Saints' Church choir when he staggered at the "Amen" of the last hymn, and fell into the arms of a brother chorister. He died without recovering consciousness. There is no moral. There would have been one if the sad incident had occurred in a Secular Hall.

What is the matter with the Marylebone police? Is it a bad attack of "loyalty"? Do they feel that they must be up and doing against all "the King's enemies"? If this is their state of mind, we suggest that they should begin with the criminal classes, who flourish pretty vigorously in that district of London. Certainly they should not begin by worrying harmless Socialists at street-corners—especially when the religious street-corner meetings are in full blast. The Social Democratic Federation have held meetings for years at the corner of Foley-street and Great Titchfield-street, but on Sunday morning they were ordered by the police to desist on the good old chestnut ground that they were causing an "obstruction." Practically, at any rate, they were causing nothing of the kind. Still, two of their members were run in and charged at the Marlborough-street Police-court.

Jack Cooke, the Boy Preacher, is getting an oldish sort of a boy now, but he does not seem to improve very much in the matters of sense and composition. Somebody has done him an ill turn by reproducing in a religious periodical his address on "The Folly of Scepticism." We never saw a more jejune performance. The diction is poor and the ideas are hackneyed. It is a blasphemy to suppose that God inspired such stuff. Here is a sample: "I tell you plainly that there is a God, and, going a little further, I say this God is here to-night; and, going still further, I say he is come to save anyone who wants to be saved, and the man is going to be damned who is not saved. That stops every man's mouth." Well, if Jack Cooke cannot talk better than that, it is high time somebody stopped *his* mouth.

The editor of the *Sunday Companion* is to be congratulated on his discretion. A correspondent asked him with regard to Lazarus, "Where was his soul while his body lay in the grave?" After referring to Browning and Tennyson, who were both inspired as poets but not as possessors of supernatural information; and then referring to Dr. Marcus Dods, who thinks that Lazarus learnt nothing of the spirit world, or it must have oozed out; the judicious editor delivers himself as follows. "I conclude," he says, "that for wise and merciful reasons he could not recollect where he had been, and that it is impossible to solve your problem." Had the editor been less judicious, and more candid, he might have said that people were raised from the dead so frequently in the ages of superstition that their reappearance excited no curiosity. The thing happens so seldom now that any man who left his grave for a ramble would have half the interviewers in the kingdom on his heels in less than twenty-four hours.

The *Islington Gazette* airs its piety and inhumanity by quoting the Bible and advocating flogging. Our contemporary thinks that Solomon was the author of the words "Spare the rod and spoil the child." Such is the knowledge of "Holy Writ" to be found in religious circles!

Mr. Reader Harris, K.C., is a romantic sort of gentleman. He combines the practice of the law with the preaching of the Gospel. He also boasts of having been converted to Christianity from Agnosticism. He does not state when, where, or how; but it was sometime, somewhere, and somehow. Preaching at Norwood the other day, he said that a young man called at his chambers and asked what was the first step to success in the legal profession. Mr. Harris (not Mrs. Harris, mind) replied that it was "to be born again." "What is the second step?" the young man asked. "When you have taken the first step," Mr. Harris answered, "come to me, and I will tell you." It does not appear that the young man came back. Perhaps he consulted his maternal parent, and found that being born again was a process that presented insuperable difficulties. Anyhow, Mr. Harris seems resolved to keep the legal profession from overcrowding.

A Swiss man of God, the Abbé Bural, has been doing good business by selling tickets for heaven. The credulous Christians bought them in large quantities. Unfortunately the matter has been brought to the attention of the Federal Council, and the man of God's business is under a heavy cloud.

The late Sir Andrew Clark, President of the Royal College of Physicians, was a professed Christian. On one occasion he delivered an address to the Christian Evidence Society. It was at the Annual Meeting in 1890. That address is now published as a Tract, with an Introduction by Sir Dyce Duckworth, physician to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Apparently it is for gratuitous distribution.

Sir Dyce Duckworth's "Preface" is not of much account. Certainly he is not an accurate thinker. He refers, for

instance, to Sir Andrew Clark's recognition of "the value of honest doubt." This "honest doubt" is borrowed from Tennyson. It is taken from a well-meaning but confused passage of *In Memoriam* :—

There lives more faith in honest doubt,  
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

This sort of thing may pass in a poet, especially in a poet like Tennyson. Lines like these are not what he will be judged by. He has far more valuable things to boast of. Nevertheless, he is responsible, however unintentionally, for coining a ridiculous expression which has been extensively used by two kinds of Christian advocates: first, the sheer sentimentalists, who want to fall upon everybody's neck—not excepting the "infidels"; secondly, the orthodox bounders who want to insult every poor "infidel," and to be rather more considerate to the "infidels" who have the advantage of wealth or station.

We repeat that "honest doubt" is a ridiculous expression. Doubt, like belief or disbelief, is an intellectual process or attitude. It may be well or ill founded, but it cannot be honest or dishonest. One man believes a thing, another doubts it, and another disbelieves it. Each man's mind forms an opinion upon the evidence. The mental process in each case is a necessary one. There is no room for choice. Men do not think as they would, but as they must. Choice only comes in when a man has to state his opinion. He may then tell the truth or otherwise—that is, he may give his real opinion or a feigned one; and in so doing he is either honest or dishonest.

Honesty and dishonesty are characteristics of actions—including speaking and writing. They are not characteristics of thought. Whoever does not see this fails to grasp one of the most elementary principles of mental philosophy. And to this category of persons belongs Sir Dyce Duckworth. He may be a great physician, but he is a very poor psychologist.

Sir Andrew Clark's address is also a very superficial performance. He says that he had "come through seas of doubt to the quiet haven of belief." Probably he thought so, but we cannot share his opinion. He does not show that he ever understood the "doubter's" position. Take what he says about *Conscience*. What is the meaning of it? "I have asked myself over and over again," he says, "and I have come to the conclusion that the only possible explanation I can give is, that it is a revelation of the Power which lies behind the universe, and that it is in some way *Divine*." Fancy a man pretending "in some way" to be a thinker and asking himself the meaning of "Conscience"! What was the use of asking *himself*? He might as well have asked his boots or his hat. He should have consulted *the facts*. And the facts lay chiefly outside himself, in the history of the evolution of morals and the present-day study of sociology.

Appeal is made to Mr. Herbert Spencer, who is described as "one of the most lucid and profound thinkers of the present day"—and, by the way, not a Christian. Mr. Herbert Spencer, according to Sir Andrew Clark, declares that "there does exist behind the universe a Power which permeates the universe." Now we beg to ask the Christian Evidence Society, since Sir Andrew Clark is dead, to tell us where Mr. Herbert Spencer says anything of the kind? Where in his writings shall we find reference to a "Power behind the universe"? It would be more honest to answer this question than to go on circulating this Tract?

Sir Andrew Clark's talk about Jesus Christ as a revelation of God, as the Redeemer, as having thought as God, spoken as God, acted as God, died as God, risen from the grave as God, and thus proved he *was* God—all this, we say, is the common talk of Christian platforms, and has no special significance in the mouth of a physician. What the Christian Evidence Society is doing is simply attaching a distinguished name to platitudes of apology which are ceasing to command general respect. The idea is that people may think more of such arguments if they are told that "Sir Andrew Clark says so." But this is not an appeal to reason. It is trying to stun reason with the weight of a name. We have no hesitation in saying that there is not a sentence in this Tract which would command the slightest respect if it were not for the name on the title-page.

Bangor Coronation Fetes (they didn't come off) were boldly advertised in the *Belfast News-Letter*. The advertisement ended in this way—"God Save the King! By Order of the Committee." It is very smart of the Committee to order the poor old Deity about in this manner, but it must be rather humiliating to *him*. His decadence ought not to be emphasised so satirically. Some day or other he may play the part of Samson, and pull the house down over the ears of those who run the show. Let the Bangor Coronation Committee beware!



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To Correspondents.

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C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—July 6, m. and a., Victoria Park. 13, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. 20, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. 27, m., Kingsland; a., Victoria Park. August 3, m. and a., Victoria Park. Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

BATTERSEA and CAMBERWELL.—Your lecture notices arrived last week too late for insertion. You overlooked our announcement that last week's *Freethinker* would have to go to press a day earlier than usual on account of the Coronation holidays.

RAMESES.—The passage you quote from Charles Lamb is quite grammatical. The nominative of "has" is not "myself," but "one." Transpose the words thus: "To one who, like myself, has been," and you will see this. But even if Lamb had been guilty of a grammatical blunder, how would that affect his claim to be considered "a great stylist"? Grammar and style are two very different things; one is formal, the other is vital. If you want to get any good out of Lamb, or any other great writer, don't read him in the light of Murray's rules; read him in the light of your own intellect, kindled by your own emotions. Shakespeare's grammar is not always perfect. But what does that matter? There are spots on the sun. But who minds that on a splendid summer day?

J. B. CARROLL.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your useful batches of cuttings.

WEAVER.—The question is rather out of our line. You had better consult the advertiser.

A. E. RANDALL.—(1) There is no way of deciding the precise meaning of the words. Still, if the highest hills were covered with water, and the Ark finally rested on Mount Ararat, the writer of the Flood story must have known that fifteen cubits of water would not have done the trick. (2) Your friend should not crow. The bigger the Flood the more improbable the story. The smaller the Flood the more likely the story is true. The tendency now is to tone it down. By-and-bye we shall be told it was a local calamity—a village flood, that swept away some chicken and a blind puppy.

PERPLEXED.—Mr. Swinburne was writing ironically. You must read the words—"The most absolute agnostic, who is not unnaturally devoid of all reverence for the past, all sympathy with human aspiration, all tenderness or compassion for human perversity in error"—the other way about. Mr. Swinburne is really sneering at Father Thurston for knowing less, and caring less, about the Madonna than is known and cared by unbelievers, of whom Mr. Swinburne himself is one. "It should not be necessary for such an one to instruct a Catholic priest in Catholic mythology"—this sentence shows we are correct in our classification.

W. L. (Cromer).—The German Emperor's speech on religion has already been criticised in our columns. Are you right (by the way) in describing Frederick the Great as an Atheist? Was he not a Deist, of the school of Voltaire?

JAMES STEVENS.—The postponement of the Coronation has spoiled the appropriateness of your verses.

W. H. FISHER.—Pleased to hear you "greatly enjoyed" our article on the King's Dinner. Economic causes are certainly very important, but intellectual ideas have to be dealt with first. People must be persuaded before they will act.

OUR attention has been drawn to a paragraph in a contemporary replying (twelve months too late) to the statement made in our columns that the National Secular Society was studiously ignored by the promoters of the Freethought Institute project, who were acting on a commission from Mr. George Anderson. No sort of communication, we said, had been sent to the officials of the Society. "As a matter of fact," the reply runs, "the first copy of the circular in reference to the Institute was sent to Mr. G. W. Foote, with a request that he would deal with the matter in the ensuing issue of his journal." Now the only thing ever sent to Mr. Foote was the copy of the advertisement for the *Freethinker* with a few words written on the top margin asking for an editorial notice. The advertisement was intended, of course, for the readers of the *Freethinker*. To call it a circular sent specifically to Mr. Foote, or to represent it as a communication to the National Secular Society, is a proceeding which need not be characterised, as it may safely be left to every reader's judgment. As a matter of fact—to use our contemporary's language—the project was discussed for two months before the advertisement was sent to the *Freethinker*, and for some months afterwards; but during the whole of both periods no communication of any kind (except that business advertisement) was made to Mr. Foote or to any official of the National Secular Society. Careful precautions were taken, indeed, against the leaking out of any but published information on the matter.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Sorry to hear of the losses the Newcastle Branch has sustained lately by the death of members.

J. JONES.—We have handed your remittance to Miss Vance, who will see that your paper is forwarded as usual. We are glad to know that you so appreciate the *Freethinker*. Mr. Foote's health is improved, but it is not what it should be. His late illness gave him a frightful shaking, and the dregs of it still linger about him in the shape of a sensitive throat and occasional insomnia. A slight trouble that came on in the right eye during that illness has grown worse, and even threatens to become serious. Mr. Foote hopes, however, to pull himself right round again before the winter.

J. G.—You are wrong in supposing that our correspondence passes first through the hands of assistants. We have no such assistants to save us superfluous labor. All we do has to be done with our own hands. We have written, for instance, in the present number of the *Freethinker*, all but one of the paragraphs in "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums," and everything else purely editorial, besides the articles bearing our signature.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—Progressive Thinker—Boston Investigator—Two Worlds—Freidenker—Truthseeker—Torch of Reason—Sydney Bulletin—Public Opinion.

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.

IN spite of the warm weather there was a good audience at the Athenæum Hall on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Coronation and the Hand of God" was highly appreciated. Amongst the audience were two Freethinkers from Australia; one bearing a letter of introduction from Mr. Joseph Symes, the other connected with the *Sydney Bulletin*.

The Athenæum Hall is now closed for Sunday evening lectures, and will remain so during July and August. Mr. Foote hopes to reopen the Hall himself on the first Sunday in September.

Mr. Cohen is back in London from his visit to the Tyneside. He had bad luck at Newcastle on "Race Sunday" (June 22), the meeting on the Town Moor being partly spoiled by the rain. There was a fair crowd, but not what there would have been in happier conditions. The two meetings on the following Sunday were extremely well attended.

Mr. Leslie Stephen has now a handle to his name. The King has made him a Knight Commander of the Bath. Sir Leslie Stephen is a Freethinker, and the author of *An Agnostic's Apology*. His brother, the late Mr. Justice Stephen, was also a Freethinker. Their father, too, had leanings in that direction.

Mr. John Morley is not knighted, but is included in the new "Order of Merit" with Mr. Lecky, who is, we suppose, a Rationalist of some description. Evidently there is room for Freethinkers to get on—if they cease to be aggressive. Even the late Professor Huxley became a member of the Privy Council in the end.

There are greater writers than Mr. Morley and Mr. Lecky; for instance, Mr. George Meredith and Mr. Thomas Hardy. Both are Freethinkers, and we hope they will avoid "barren honors."

*Secular Thought* (Toronto) reproduces from our pages Mr. Francis Neale's article on "John Baskerville."

We regret to see that *Secular Thought* is obliged to print the following appeal to its subscribers: "We are sorry to be compelled to announce that the support accorded to the paper so far this year has been so limited that we shall be obliged to restrict the issues for the future very considerably unless

some of our old friends extend some assistance to the Sustaining Fund. We are often gratified to receive many kind words of approval, but something more substantial is needed if the paper is to be kept going and up to the mark." We hope our Canadian contemporary's appeal will elicit a prompt and generous response. It is always a difficult thing to maintain a Freethought journal. We have had more than twenty years' experience in connection with the *Freethinker* and know what we are talking about.

The new French Government is energetically putting in force the laws against Religious Orders. A decree ordering the closing of 125 religious establishments, which have been founded in forty-five different departments since the promulgation of the law of July 1, 1901, without the permission of the Government having been previously solicited, has been gazetted in the *Journal Officiel*. It is high time that the insolence of these bodies was checked. They are a menace to the very life of the Republic, against which they are always plotting.

We are pleased to be able to announce that enough orders have been received for the Dresden Edition of Ingersoll's works to warrant the Freethought Publishing Company placing the volumes on the market on the terms named in our advertisement. Those who have sent in their names as subscribers will receive early notice as to the date of delivery of the works. Those who have not done so, but who purpose purchasing, will do well to order as early as possible, otherwise the sets available may be sold. The twelve volumes form a library that any Freethinker may justly be proud of, in addition to being a handsome monument to America's greatest unbeliever.

### Didn't Seem to Care.

THE Rev. Dr. Twichell, of Hartford, known familiarly to the clerical fraternity and Yale men as "Joe" Twichell, and a friend, while travelling over the New Haven road one day became much absorbed in the discussion of some doctrinal question. The seat directly in front of them was occupied by an individual who displayed unmistakable symptoms of recent excessive conviviality. He also evinced a marked interest in the debate in progress in the seat behind him. After listening to the conversation for some time with an attention which was altogether undisguised, he turned half-way round and ventured to suggest a few ideas himself. The man was a stranger to both disputants, but, as it afterwards appeared, he knew Dr. Twichell by sight. His interpolations, which were not of a nature to throw much light on the subject, were quietly listened to several times without response. But at last they became annoying, and Dr. Twichell said to him:—

"Now, see here, my friend, you just turn right around there and let us talk this matter over by ourselves. We don't need any of your assistance, and should prefer not to hear further from you."

The inebriated one looked pained and shocked. He faced forward, however, and sat there silent for some moments, his very back expressing his deep grief. Finally, he turned half round once more, and, in a most pathetically-mournful tone, said:—

"See here, Twichell; you don't seem to care a damn about my soul."

—*Times*.

### The Army Chaplain.

DURING the past three years we have heard a good deal about Army chaplains, and Mr. Horace Wyndham, in the *Sunday Strand*, gives some particulars concerning their status and pay which are not generally known. A clergyman desirous of becoming an Army chaplain has first to be nominated for such an appointment. He must then have been three years in Orders, and be between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-five. He is sent to a garrison on a year's probation. During this period he is placed under the charge of a chaplain, who trains him in the duties he will afterwards be called upon to fulfil. He is then enrolled as a "fourth class chaplain." While serving in this capacity he ranks as captain, and draws a salary of £182 10s. per annum, with fuel, light, and quarters in addition. After ten years' service in this grade he is advanced to the "third class," and enjoys the status and pay of a major. On promotion to the "first class" his stipend is raised to £410 12s. 6d. per annum, and his rank is that of a colonel. After twenty years' service a chaplain may claim to retire on a pension of 12s. 6d. per diem, and is compelled to do so on attaining the age of sixty.

—*Westminster Gazette*.

### Early Christian Frauds.—IV.

WE have now to see whether there be any evidence of the existence of the so-called apocryphal Gospels in the New Testament books themselves.

In Luke ii. 41-52 we have an account of the boy Jesus, when twelve years of age, "sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions," and carrying on the discussion with such ability that "all that heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers." Now, where did Luke find this story? None of the other Evangelists mention the circumstance. Luke, we know, from the Preface to his Gospel, did not live in apostolic times, his only plea for compiling a Gospel history being that he professed to have "traced the course of all things accurately from the first"—an investigation which it was simply impossible he could make in his days. Moreover, the major portion of his Gospel is found, upon examination, to have been derived from the same source as the part common to Matthew and Mark; and, this being the case, there can be no doubt that he took the story from some pre-existing document.

In the Gospel of Thomas—the veracious history in which the child Jesus, at the age of five, is related to have made sparrows out of clay, and then brought them to life, and to have made muddy water clear by the simple word of command—the account of the boy Jesus in the temple, at the age of twelve, is given (par. 19) almost verbatim with that in the Third Gospel. This undoubtedly was the source of Luke's inspiration. The story, too, is in its proper place amongst the narratives in the apocryphal Thomas, and it is, moreover, the least ridiculous of the stories in that Gospel—which latter fact possibly accounts for Luke inserting it in his own compilation.

In the First Epistle of Peter, a document which is considered authentic by many who reject the Second Epistle, we read:—

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once.....being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.....For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (ii. 19; iv. 6).

There is no record in any of the canonical Gospels of "the spirit" of Christ preaching to "the dead" or to "spirits in prison." The writer of the Epistle drew his information from the apocryphal "Acts of Pilate." This work, as it has come down to us, is in two parts—the *Acts of Pilate*, properly so called, and the *Descent of Christ into Hades*. It was the first part to which Justin appealed in proof of the reality of the miracles ascribed to Christ; the author of the Epistle of Peter refers to matters narrated in the second part. In the latter we have a somewhat confused account of Jesus, in "the spirit" going down into Hades, where he finds the spirit-forms of Adam, David, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and others. Having bound Satan, and plunged him into an abyss, Christ invites all the faithful in Hades to follow him. "For behold," he says, "I again raise you all up through the tree of the cross." This descent into the abode of departed spirits is supposed to have taken place between the time of Christ's entombment on Friday evening and his resurrection on the Sunday morning following. Reference is made to this event in the Apostles' Creed—"He descended into hell, the third day he rose again from the dead."

We will now see the earliest period to which the apocryphal Acts of Pilate can be traced. Eusebius tells us that in the writings of Papias and Polycarp (who were contemporaries of Justin) quotations were made from the First Epistle of Peter. This statement we can verify in the case of Polycarp, whose Letter to the Philippians contains ten undoubted quotations from that Epistle. The case, then, stands thus: Papias and Polycarp, writing about A.D. 140, quote from the First Epistle of Peter; the author of the Epistle of Peter, writing (say) twenty or thirty years earlier, refers to matters in the apocryphal Acts of Pilate as genuine history. The latter work must, therefore, have been in existence at the end of the first century. This is farther back than the most primitive form of any of the canonical

Gospels can be traced. Of course, if the Epistle of Peter be authentic, and of the first century, the Acts of Pilate will have to be placed two or three decades earlier than that Epistle.

In the Second Epistle to Timothy (iii. 8) occurs the following passage:—

“And like as *Jannes and Jambres* withstood Moses, so do these also withstand the truth.”

There is no mention of *Jannes and Jambres* in the Old Testament; the magicians who “withstood Moses” are not named, neither is their number stated. The writer of the Epistle to Timothy must, therefore, have drawn his information from some apocryphal source. There are many reasons which tend to show that this Epistle is a Christian forgery, written in Paul’s name, after that apostle’s death. The names of these two mythical magicians are mentioned in the first part of the Acts of Pilate. “In chap. v. of that fraudulent history we read:—

“For assuredly Moses, being sent by God into Egypt, did many miracles, which the Lord commanded him to do before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And there were there *Jannes and Jambres*, servants of Pharaoh, and they also did not a few of the miracles which Moses did.”

This, most probably, was the source of the author of Timothy’s information, though it is possible that the two Egyptian magicians may have been named in the fictitious history mentioned in the “Shepherd” of Hermas, as composed in the time of Moses by “Eldad and Modat,” who are stated to have “prophesied in the wilderness.” The latter work was a Jewish forgery, suggested by Num. xi. 26, 27, but is not now extant.

In the Gospel of the canonical Luke Jesus is represented as saying to the Jews:—

“.....that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of *Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary*; yea, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation” (xi. 50, 51).

The gross injustice of holding the Jews of the time of Christ responsible for all the righteous blood shed “from the foundation of the world” need not be discussed. We are here concerned only with the plain and simple meaning of the words in italics. Now, it is quite clear from the whole passage that the murder of this Zachariah is cited as a recent instance of the martyrdom of a righteous man. In the parallel passage in Matthew (xxiii. 35) the martyr is called “Zachariah, the son of Barachiah,” though it is obvious both accounts were copied from the same pre-existing document. Many commentators assert that the allusion is to Zachariah, the son of Jehoida, in the reign of Joash (2 Chron. xxiv. 20, 21). But this martyrdom (if historical) took place 900 years before the time of Christ, and could not be cited as a recent example. Yet it is perfectly clear that it was a recent, if not the very latest, martyrdom to which reference was made. The passage speaks of “all the righteous blood shed on the earth” up to that time (A. D. 30), or, at least, all of which there was any record, from the first to the last notable instance; from Abel to Zachariah. The martyred Zachariah, then, must have lived somewhere near the time of Christ. There is no record of such a martyr in the canonical books of the Bible; we have, consequently, to look for him in the apocryphal writings, where, of course, we find him.

In the Protevangelium (par. 23) it is related that King Herod, after vainly searching for the child John (afterwards the Baptist), caused the child’s father, the high priest Zachariah, to be put to death. This priest was slain, according to one reading, “at the vestibule of the temple of the Lord”; according to another, “in the midst of the altar.” Luke renders it “between the altar and the sanctuary,” which combines the two readings. This undoubtedly is the Zachariah to whom Christ is represented as referring. The martyrdom, according to the Protevangelium, took place soon after the birth of Jesus, and was (with the exception of that of the Baptist) the last notable example of righteous blood shed, which could have been known to the early Christians who concocted the primitive Gospel from which Matthew, Mark, and Luke derived the major portion of their narratives. Christ is thus fraudulently represented as referring to the martyrdom of this

imaginary Zachariah as to a well-known historical fact.

The story of the martyrdom in the Protevangelium was suggested probably by the murder of Zachariah the son of Baruch, which took place in the court of the temple during the siege of Jerusalem (Josephus: *War. iv., v. 4*). We have no evidence that any Gospel—apocryphal or canonical—was in existence prior to this memorable event. Matthew, in his account, has simply turned Baruch into Barachiah.

To the foregoing examples it may be added that Luke represents Jesus as quoting from the Apocryphal 2 Esdras, which he calls “the wisdom of God,” and that the author of the Epistle of Jude makes a direct quotation from the lying book of Enoch, which he places on a level with the Old Testament scriptures. But the fabrication of these two books cannot be placed at the door of the early Christians, though they could not resist the temptation of interpolating the following words in Esdras: “For *my son Jesus* shall be revealed with those that be with him.....And after these years shall *my son Christ* die” (vii. 28, 29).

The result of our examination, then, so far, is that we have indisputable evidence of the existence of fictitious histories of Christ prior to the appearance of the canonical Gospels, and also that these writings were the work, not of Ebionites and Gnostics, but of orthodox Christians. There cannot be the slightest doubt that the age which witnessed the advent of the Gospels was one of great literary frauds, joined to the grossest ignorance and the most amazing credulity. Neither can there be the smallest doubt that, as Mosheim says, “a pernicious maxim which was current in the schools, not only of the Egyptians, the Platonists, and the Pythagoreans, but also of the Jews, was very early recognised by the Christians, and soon found among them numerous patrons—namely, that those who made it their business to deceive, with a view of promoting [what they believed to be] the cause of truth, were deserving rather of commendation than censure.”

As already remarked, the authors of these lying histories were the most learned among the early Christians, and, to take the most favorable view, if they did not themselves deliberately concoct the marvels they relate, they committed to writing, as matters of historical fact, all the stories reported of Jesus in their days, without ever troubling their heads about evidence. Investigation of any kind was foreign to the spirit of the age, and none was ever made. And this applies to all the histories relating to Christ—canonical as well as uncanonical. All originated in the same fraudulent age, and long after the deaths of the so-called apostles. The three Synoptics were compiled (mainly) from an earlier and more primitive Gospel whose authors are unknown, though selections were also made from other pre-existing narratives. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were simply second-century editors, who had no personal knowledge of any of the matters they record. The fourth evangelist, John—who was probably the presbyter of that name who was known to Papias—took very little from the common source; he forged the greater part of his Gospel himself, and, curiously enough, he is the only one of the four who declares that his history was written by an apostle who had heard the sayings and witnessed the events therein recorded (xx. 31; xxi. 24). It is scarcely necessary to say that no such authentic gospel history is in existence. ABRACADABRA.

### Tertullian on Future Punishment.

How gingerly the subject of Hell is dealt with nowadays is shown by a certain passage of Dr. Agar Beet’s book on *The Immortality of the Soul*, which we criticised in a general way last week. Referring to two treatises by Tertullian, a hot-blooded African “father” who wrote in the third century, Dr. Beet observes that no one could read them without feeling that the writer had introduced, or given greater prevalence to, the doctrines of the natural immortality of the soul and the endless torment of the lost. “In the sufferings of these last,” Dr. Beet says, “he exults with fiendish delight: *On Public Exhibitions*, ch. 30. But I forbear to quote his awful lines.” This

"forbearance" would be commendable if it were really in the interest of humanity, but we believe its object is rather to hide what might be detrimental to Christianity. Still, it is something to see a Professor of Theology ashamed of the cruel bigotry of one of the literary pillars of the Early Christian Church.

Gibbon's elegant and forcible paraphrase of this "awful" passage in Tertullian will be found in the great and famous fifteenth chapter of the *Decline and Fall*. Dr. James Martineau's translation is as follows:—

"What a city is the new Jerusalem! For it will not be without its games; it will have the final and eternal day of judgment, which the Gentiles now treat with unbelief and scorn, when so vast a series of ages, with all their productions, will be hurled into one absorbing fire. How magnificent the scale of *that game*! With what admiration, what laughter, what glee, what triumph, shall I perceive so many mighty monarchs, who had been given out as received into the skies, even Jove himself and his votaries, moaning in unfathomable gloom. The governors too, persecutors of the Christian name, cast into fiercer torments than they had devised against the faithful, and liquefying amid shooting spires of flame! And those sage philosophers, who had deprived the Deity of his offices, and questioned the existence of a soul, or denied its future union with the body, meeting again with their disciples only to blush before them in those ruddy fires! Not to forget the poets, trembling not before the tribunal of Rhadamanthus or Minos, but at the unexpected bar of Christ! Then is the time to hear tragedians, doubly pathetic now that they bewail their own agonies; to observe the actors, released by the fiery elements from all restraint upon their gestures; to admire the charioteer, glowing all over on the car of torture; to watch the wrestlers, thrust into the struggles, not of the gymnasium, but of the flames."

Tertullian looked forward to enjoying that awful spectacle in the world to come. He positively rubbed his hands over the anticipation. He flattered himself that such scenes would be "more grateful than the circus, the stadium, or the stage-box itself." We dare say his glee is shocking to Dr. Beet. But was it foreign to the character of the Bible God? "I also," that holy being said, "will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." Did the savage Tertullian say anything worse than this? It was reserved for some of the Puritan preachers of the seventeenth century to improve even upon him. These amiable gentlemen taught that a large part of the pleasure of the saved in heaven would consist in witnessing the tortures of the damned in hell; and so far they went hand in hand with Tertullian; but they took a step in advance of him in arguing that the blessed elect were *entitled* to this satisfaction, seeing that the relish of every pleasure is heightened by a sense of the opposite misery, and that the very joy of heaven would pall without this perpetual contrast. They maintained that if the inhabitants of heaven were deprived of this satisfaction, it would betray a very grave defect in the divine justice.

The majority of Christians are now ashamed of such savagery. Nevertheless they cling to some sort of a hell, and to some kind of future punishment. Dr. Beet argues in favor of retribution beyond the grave. "God has decreed," he says, "that, whatever a man sows, this he shall also reap. And, because for this reaping there is not space in the present life, He has decreed that after death comes judgment." But is this reaping business quite so simple? What a man sows has very often to be reaped *by others*. When that has occurred, how will punishing *him* set matters straight? In our earthly jurisprudence we inflict penalties to deter from crime and to protect society; to do more than that would be criminal revenge. But the heavenly jurisprudence should be different. Penalties cease to be rational, and therefore to be just, when crime can no longer be committed and there is no society left to protect. The idea of future punishment is an offshoot from the instinct of retaliation. Why should God retaliate? What right has he, morally speaking, to punish his children at all? They are what he chose to make them, and to punish them for this is to be angry with his own failures.

G. W. FOOTE.

Every opinion reacts on him who utters it. It is a thread-ball thrown at a mark, but the other end remains in the thrower's bag.—*Emerson*.

## Dimes and Dollars.

DIMES and dollars, dollars and dimes,  
An empty pocket's the worst of crimes!  
If a man's poor, give him a thrust—  
Trample the beggar down in the dust;  
Presumptuous poverty's quite appalling—  
Knock him over, kick him for falling!  
If a man's up, ah! raise him up higher;  
Your soul's for sale—and he's the buyer.  
Dimes and dollars, dollars and dimes,  
An empty pocket's the worst of crimes!

I know a poor but worthy youth,  
Whose hopes are placed on a maiden's truth,  
But the maiden will break her vow with ease,  
For a suitor comes whose claims are these:—  
A hollow heart and an empty head,  
A face well stained with the brandy's red,  
A soul well trained in villainy's school.  
But cash, dear cash, he knows the rule—  
Dimes and dollars, dollars and dimes,  
An empty pocket's the worst of crimes!

I know a bold and honest man,  
Who strives to live on a human plan—  
But poor he is, and poor he will be,  
A scorned and hated thing is he;  
At home he meeteth a starving wife,  
Abroad he leadeth a leper's life.  
They struggle against most fearful odds  
Who will not bow to the people's Gods—  
Dimes and dollars, dollars and dimes,  
An empty pocket's the worst of crimes.

Then get your wealth, no matter how;  
No questions asked of the rich, I trow;  
Steal by night and steal by day  
(Doing it all in a legal way!),  
Join the church and never forsake her,  
Learn the cant like a prayer-maker;  
Be liar, hypocrite, knave, or fool;  
But don't be poor; remember the rule—  
Dimes and dollars, dollars and dimes,  
An empty pocket's the worst of crimes!

## The Household of Faith.

THE temple sheltering the birthplace of Christ is turned into a bazaar to-day by the Greek priests. The Roman Catholic priests are not guilty of this sacrilege, but the Greeks not only peddle all sorts of religious souvenirs before the very altar, and importune pilgrims to buy them, but practise impositions and frauds upon the devout and trustful peasants, which would send them all to the penitentiary if they could be tried in any common law-court. Some of these impositions are extraordinary, and even absurd. For example:—

According to tradition, the Holy Mother went into a cave near the village of Bethlehem at some time or another to nurse the baby Jesus. A few drops of milk from her overflowing breasts fell upon the floor, and were absorbed by the dry, porous, chalky soil. The priests say that it permeated the entire hill, just as the attar of roses will permeate semi-solid substances with the force of its virility. For centuries there has been a superstition among the women of Bethlehem that chalk from the floor of this cave dissolved in milk or water, if taken by a mother, will not only promote fertility, but abolish the profession of wet nurses. Women who are not mothers and young maidens use it to develop their busts, and for this it is claimed to be very efficacious. Hence tablets or cakes, like little pats of butter, made of this chalk are much sought after by pilgrims, and the demand is supplied by the Greek priests.

They find no embarrassment or difficulty in the fact that the cave belongs to the Franciscan Brothers, and is closely guarded. It is surrounded by a high wall, and is entered through a chapel of the monastery. No Greek, Moslem, or Jew can come near it, yet every day during the pilgrim season the Greek monks sell from two to five bushels of chalky tablets alleged to have been made from the clay of the cave that was saturated with the milk from the breast of the Mother of Christ.

Everybody in Bethlehem knows that the material is taken from another part of the hill, where anyone who takes the trouble can see a large excavation. Several car loads of the soil are carted to the Greek monastery every season, and if the priests are questioned by persons who know the facts they cross themselves and explain that it is the same chalk that is found in the cave, from the same hill, and is equally efficacious. But they make the pilgrims believe that the chalk comes from the cave itself.

The Church of the Nativity is also profaned daily by Mohammedan soldiers, whose presence, we are told, is absolutely necessary to prevent the orthodox Greeks and Roman Catholic priests from tearing each other to pieces.

Their animosity is just as fierce as in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and although they are not crowded into such close quarters and are not so numerous here, and their chapels are separated by double walls and corridors, the authorities claim to believe that military interference is necessary. Each denomination has its hours of service, and is required to observe them. Nor are the priests of one sect allowed to enter the precincts of another. It is a sad commentary upon the Christian Church that the birthplace of its founder must be policed in this way, but I believe all whom it may concern are satisfied that the precaution is necessary to prevent violence or at least scandal.

As an illustration of the bitter jealousy prevailing among the priests, a story is told of a Catholic who had driven a nail into the wall upon which to hang a picture or a lamp or something that had been presented. The Greek priests objected, and appealed to the Turkish authorities. The latter intervened and placed a sentinel at the spot to see that the Catholic priest did not attempt to carry out his designs, and that the Greek priest did not use violence to prevent him. Nor was the Catholic priest allowed to pull the useless nail from the wall. When the Turkish authorities were questioned about this incident, they remarked contemptuously that "the Christian dogs are always snarling at each other."

—Chicago Times-Herald.

## Correspondence.

### CANT ABOUT DISARMAMENT.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I hope I shall not be accused of unduly raising political issues in the *Freethinker* in putting on record my strong dissent from the tone of some remarks under the heading "Acid Drops" in a recent issue. I refer now to the first paragraphs. Of course I know, from the beginning to the end of the Transvaal War, the *Freethinker* has, editorially, made much of the fact that Mr. Kruger and the Boers were constantly quoting the Bible and appealing to God; though, as the British nation officially endowed much the same religion, and as the British people only twenty years ago, in Mr. Bradlaugh's case and in the matter of your own imprisonment, under the influence of the same dogmas, committed acts of gross iniquity, and commits them still; and as British poets like Mr. Austin, and British generals like Lord Roberts, were just as officiously pious as Mr. Kruger, I could never see how Freethinkers could be rationally asked to withhold sympathy from the Boer nation fighting for its independence against enormous odds, on such a ground. The question of justice remained over and above the religious beliefs of the combatants, and it is surely no part of Freethought philosophy or ethics to deny a man or nation justice because they are not Freethinkers.

What mainly urges me to write, however, is the third paragraph. In the first place, I must say that I cannot regard war, and all that war means—the death and the devastation, the breaking of hearts and the ruin of homes—as matters to be treated of so lightly, or in such a spirit of levity as seems often to be adopted in these notes. It might be "nice" to see Joe Chamberlain and Paul Kruger tossing coins, and all the rest; but it is anything but nice to see such vital issues dealt with in such a way. At the end of this note you speak of the "canting talk about disarmament, which nobody, except the sublimely fatuous Mr. Stead, ever thought of taking seriously." Mr. Stead, no doubt, is inconsistent and explosive enough in his writing, though there are worse than he. But why, may I ask, should proposals for disarmament be spoken of as "cant"? Are you in favor of the cause of peace at all? If you are not, what is the meaning of making it a charge against Christianity that it promotes war? And, if you are in favor of peace, how is it ever, in your judgment, to be furthered if, when the Boers propose arbitration, they are to be sneered at, and when someone else proposes disarmament it is described as cant? Will peace ever be promoted by the Price Hughes type of mind, which is for peace—in the abstract—in times of peace, and for war every time war becomes a political possibility?

To say that disarmament is absurd, that the nations must go on spending their substance in this race to ruin, is, if I may say so, more fatuous than anything Mr. Stead has ever written. There is nothing stands in the way of disarmament save the ignorance of the peoples. If they were educated, they would disarm. But they will never be educated by telling them that any step in advance is absurd or impossible. There is a curious form of moral paralysis which seems to be spreading at the present time. We embark on wars costing £230,000,000 and thousands of lives, with an unlimited liability of further loss; we spend year after year a larger and larger portion of the national revenues on engines of destruction, and, whilst we thus madly rush to the precipice, we keep one another's courage up by saying it is all "inevitable," we must do it, and anyone who urges us to stop is talking cant. There is no "must" about it, and the "cant"

is really on the side of those who seek to throw the gloss of a sham fatalism over perfectly preventable human folly.

FREDERICK RYAN.

[Mr. Ryan should make allowance for the satirical vein which runs through "Acid Drops" on all occasions. He might also recollect that we have poked fun enough at the British, as well as the Boer, trust in God. Both sides deliberately appealed to the God of Battles, and it is hardly a moral offence to smile at whichever side finds there is some mistake in the arbitrament. We have never suggested that the Boers deserved no sympathy because they were earnest Christians. Mr. Ryan must, if he can, pardon us for saying that he has not read what we have written with quite the same attention that we bestow upon his own valued contributions. He appears to have overlooked the condemnation of war in the very paragraph he criticises. We hate war as much as any man does, but we are not therefore bound to believe in Mr. Stead and the Czar. The latter "friend of peace" calls the civilised world to a Conference, and then proceeds to wipe out the liberties of Finland with a stroke of his pen; pouring Cossacks into the doomed country, armed with the well-known instruments of Russian persuasion. Our view of the Czar's Peace Conference has always been that it was very much like a Conference of Burglars called to consider the best means of reducing the risks and expenses of the profession. Mr. Ryan may believe in Disarmament. We do not. What we believe in is Arbitration. That is beginning at the other end—the feasible end. And if progress at that end is slow, it is better than the no progress at all at the end affected by Mr. Stead and the Czar. Finally, it is not a fact that we have ever sneered at the Boers for proposing arbitration. The National Secular Society, with the President in the chair, unanimously deplored that the British Government had not chosen arbitration instead of war.—EDITOR.]

### DR. BEET AND HELL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—One little difficulty presented by the gentle idea of an eternal hell and eternal damnation I do not remember seeing alluded to by any writer, and I gather from last week's number of the *Freethinker* that it is left unnoticed by Dr. Beet. The difficulty is this: That we modern heretics have a most decidedly unfair advantage of the great heretics of the past. For instance, on the eternal frying-pan notion poor old Socrates will get at least 2,000 more years of eternal sizzling than your humble servant the writer hereof. Now, who am I that I should get 2,000 years less "eternal" roasting than the friend of Aspasia and the boon companion of Alcibiades? As for the heretics of 250,000 years ago, just consider what a pull we moderns have over them. They have done 250,000 years of eternal torture already, and we haven't even begun! Pretty sense of injustice Dr. Beet's inventor of hell and damnation must have to allot his punishments in such a fashion.

I feel ashamed to have such a "pull" over Zoroaster, Confucius, Mohammed, Bruno, Vanini, and even over Jonathan Swift. I am afraid hell was an afterthought of Jahveh's, and that he never properly "got the hang of it," as the miners say; for as the world grows older the heretics become bolder, and yet the older it becomes and the bolder they become, the less eternal hell they get as compared with their forerunners, whose world was younger and whose heresy was milder.

We shall all owe apologies to the great heretics, when we join them, for not being able to do as much time in hell as they will have to do; and to inflict a few thousand years less of the torments of the damned on Byron and Shelley and "B.V." than on Sophocles or Euripides or poor old Job seems to stamp Jahveh as but an amateur in hells, and quite unfit for the post of even a county game-preserving J.P.

But a God in the likeness of a jasper and a sardine—or whatever it is the Apocalyptic Vision depicts him as resembling, for I really don't exactly remember—is *capable de tout*, except the equalisation of sentences to eternal torture.

VAN DAM.

### Obituary.

TYNESIDE friends will regret to learn of the death of William Bennett, of Blydon, who for the past sixteen years was one of the most steadfast members of the Newcastle Branch of the N. S. S. Mr. Bennett was a true veteran, whose genial and inspiring countenance was for many years a conspicuous figure in the front seats at all our lectures and meetings, setting an example in attendance and attention to business worthy of emulation by those more fortunate in youthful vigor. He died at Blydon on the 24th ult. in his ninety-fifth year. His death was characteristic of his life and himself, being peaceful and painless. He was by request borne to the grave by four members of the Branch. The Secular Burial Ceremony (by Austin Holyoake) was read by Mr. Reid, after which Mr. C. Cohen gave a short address, both of which were most attentively listened to by a large

number of friends. I also regret to record the death of Mr. Warner's daughter, of Gateshead, aged ten years. Interment took place at Gateshead on the 25th ult. A Secular burial service (by Colonel Ingersoll) was read by Mr. Spedding in an impressive manner.—J. G. BARTRAM.

I HAVE to record the death of one of our former members, after a very long illness—Mr. Jos. Hy. Moore. For many years he worked hard and energetically for the Freethought cause, and, especially during the late Charles Bradlaugh's Parliamentary struggles, he labored with zeal for mental freedom. The undersigned, along with Messrs. Tabrum and Moorhouse—past colleagues of his in the Secular movement—attended as bearers at his funeral, which took place on Monday at the Huddersfield cemetery.—W. H. SPIVEY.

## 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.): Closed during July and August.

WEST LONDON BRANCH ("The Victory," Newnham-street, Edgware-road): July 10, at 9, Members' Monthly Meeting.

HYDE PARK, near Marble Arch (West London Branch N. S. S.): Freethought literature on sale at all meetings. 11.30, R. P. Edwards.

MILE END WASTE: 11.30, A lecture.

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

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

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

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7, A. Davies.

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY (West London Branch N.S.S.): 7.30, George Parsons, "Christianity and Social Problems."

VICTORIA PARK (Bethnal Green Branch N. S. S.): 3.15, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Civilisation"; 6.15, C. Cohen, A lecture.

BATTERSEA PARK GATES: 11.30, F. A. Davies.]

### COUNTRY.

BRADFORD (opposite Bradlaugh Institute): H. Percy Ward—3, "The Fallacies of Spiritualism"; 7, "Genesis and Science." July 7, at 8, "God and Women." July 10, at 8, "Socialism."

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

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

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members and friends meet near General Post Office corner, at 2.30, to go by next car for Hunter's Bar, thence walk through Endcliffe to Whitely Wood, for tea, and return home by Fulwood Road Car.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7, "The History of Christianity."

### Lecturer's Engagements.

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