

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE.

This is philosophy, to make remote things tangible, common things extensively useful, useful things extensively common, and to leave the least necessary for the last.—
LANDOR.

A Pious Dream. II.

(Continued from p. 450).

THE hero of Mr. Caine's romance is a typical new Christian, half Socialist, half Anarchist, and thorough sentimentalist; in other words, a fresh incarnation of the romancer himself, posturing in Rome instead of in London. David Rossi is John Storm with an Italian accent, and John Storm is Mr. Hall Caine (from Manxland) with a Cockney accent. Roll them all three together, and they form a most admirable and perfect Trinity, without confusion of persons or division of substance.

David Rossi is introduced to us first in that snow scene in Soho. An Italian boy, with an accordion he plays in the streets of London for a living, he is making tracks for his "home," where he has to take ninepence every night. Coming to the Italian quarter in Soho, he loses himself in what Mr. Caine seems to regard as the wilderness or labyrinth of Soho Square. He sinks down on a doorstep in the snow, and is nearly frozen to death, but is rescued (of course) in the very nick of time by an Italian refugee, Dr. Roselli, who takes him in and does for him in the most approved fashion of fairyland. The boy is adopted into the household, where the heroine of this romance is already stationed, being Dr. Roselli's little daughter Roma. The "home" the boy was going to, with that accordion and the ninepence, is heard of no more. So arbitrary and artificial is the character of this story.

Naturally these three personages—for the doctor's wife is only a lay figure—are not what they seem. It is curious that both Miss Marie Corelli and Mr. Hall Caine, ardently as they adore the poor Carpenter of Nazareth, do not care to deal with plebeian characters. John Storm was related to the nobility, and David Rossi is really the son of an extremely eminent personage. Dr. Roselli belongs to one of the best Italian families, and little Roma is really a princess in disguise. Such romantic devices are absolutely necessary to sustain the interest of the sentimental readers who patronise this class of literature. Those "pathetic exaggerations" of the Sermon on the Mount derive their piquancy from the contrast between the position of the preacher and the humility of the sermon; and the repetition of them to-day, while it would be weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable from the mouth of an actual working-man, is deeply interesting, and even quite exciting, when the speaker is "somebody" belonging to the "hupper suckles." If a real potman were to cry "Ho, everyone that thirsteth," it would be regarded as a joke; but if a well-known member of the aristocracy, thinly disguised as a potman, were to cry out the same thing, it would be acclaimed as a revelation.

David Rossi's father turns out to be the Pope! Not that His Holiness has been up to any mal-

practices. Oh dear, no! Everything is all right and proper. The Pope, in his young manhood, married a lady not approved by the noble family to which he belonged. The wife drowned herself in the Tiber, and her only child got lost in the vast population of London. His father sought him in vain, gave up the quest in despair, buried himself in the Church, and finally rose to be the wearer of the Papal tiara.

The London scene is the Prologue. Part One of the romance opens twenty years afterwards in Italy. David Rossi is then a member of the Italian parliament, and the hope of the Progressive party. It is almost unnecessary to say that he is tall, dark, handsome, clever, and eloquent. Clever, perhaps, is hardly the proper word; we might more accurately call him a genius. That is to say, he is a genius of the Hall Caine order; full of vanity and cackle, and an invincible *poseur*. A stroke of the pen is enough to make a hero tall, dark, and handsome—blonde heroes having been played out with Ouida; but it is a more difficult task to make him wise and eloquent. To do that the novelist must possess wisdom and eloquence himself. Mr. Caine possesses neither; so David Rossi talks mostly like a fool, and his eloquence is of the windiest description. Here is a sample. He is addressing an open-air crowd in Rome. His voice is "quivering" and "vibrating," and the people hang upon his lips. He says the same thing over and over, repeats a few catchwords, and exposes the poverty of his creator's resources. There is "the teachings of Christ," "the Prince of Peace," "the brotherhood of Man," "the fatherhood of God"—and all the other shibboleths of fifty years ago, which Mr. Caine may have picked up in the pages of Mazzini, without appropriating the far better things to be found there. Denunciations of the rich follow in due course. This has been a popular pastime from the days of Jesus Christ until now; but, as Ingersoll observed, no wealthy disciple was ever known to unload on account of "Woe unto you rich." David Rossi's diatribes are not calculated to make the rich shudder, for they are no improvement on the Nazarene's. His peroration runs as follows:—

"It is men and women like these who destroy their country for their own selfish ends. Very well, let them destroy her; but before they do so, let them hear what one of her children says: the government you are building up on the whitened bones of the people shall be overthrown—the King who countenances you, and the Pope who will not condemn you, shall be overthrown, and then—and not till then—will the nation be free."

"At this," Mr. Caine says, "there was a terrific clamour." Who would have thought it? Such stuff as this ought not move a cat on a garden wall. Uttered in Hyde Park, it would soon clear a fine open space around the speaker. The very Irish of the Irish have left this sort of thing fifty years behind them. Yet it is Mr. Caine's ideal of splendid thrilling oratory.

David Rossi's head is wonderfully like Jesus Christ's. The same resemblance has been pointed out, it is said, between Jesus Christ and Mr. Hall Caine—on the latter's own authority. David Rossi, however, actually sits to a sculptor for a bust of the Savior. He is certainly as unpractical as a crucified or uncrucified Redeemer could be imagined. "Your children," he says to the people of Rome, "are

starving, and I swear before God that from this day forward I will starve with them. If I have eaten two meals a day hitherto, for the future I will eat but one." This is the language of insanity. How is a man to help others unless he is strong himself? When the witty but bibulous Sheridan was reeling home one night he heard a voice from the gutter crying, "Dick! Dick!" "Is that you, Tom?" hiccupped Sheridan. "Yes," was the answer, "it's me; help us up, Dick; I'm drunk." "Sorry I can't oblige," said Sheridan; "I'm drunk, too. I can't help you up, Tom; but for friendship's sake I'll lie down with you." Most excellent fooling! But the hero of this book plays the fool seriously. If he cannot lift the people up he will lie down with them. If they have nothing to eat he will share their hunger. As though the hungry leading the hungry were not as bad as the blind leading the blind—with something worse than the proverbial ditch to engulf them.

David Rossi has a "call"—like his creator, who is called to the profitable exploitation of a great religion in its wealthy dotage. Over his bed the hero hangs a little picture frame, with some writing under the glass in English. It is his "call."

"From what am I called?"

"From the love of riches, from the love of honor, from the love of home, and from the love of woman."

"To what am I called?"

"To poverty, to purity, to obedience, to the worship of God, and to the service of humanity."

"Why am I called?"

"Because it has pleased the Almighty to make me friendless, homeless, a wanderer, an exile, without father or mother, sister or brother, kith or kin."

"Hoping my heart deceives me not, with fear and trembling I sign my unworthy name."

It is imaginable that a man, in a fit of the blues of vanity, which he mistakes for something else, could write out a thing like that. But unless his malady were chronic and incurable, he would tear it up as soon as he obtained a little mental relief. To keep it, and frame it, and hang it up, and study it, and gloat over it, is surely a sign that the man is hopelessly given over to self-adoration. Paul said once that he was the chief of sinners, and once is excusable. Had he said it twice he would have deserved a slapping. David Rossi does not call himself the chief of sinners. His speciality is renunciation. God is pleased to lay a heavy burden upon him, and he bears it with a tolerable pride. For anything is better than neglect—as the woman with a cold husband said to the other woman whose husband beat her; and if heaven afflicts you, or calls you to a life of hardship, it shows at least that the Almighty is honoring you with his special attention.

No man is ever "called" to the renunciation of three-fourths of the common life of his fellow men. He fancies and accepts that sort of "call" at his peril. If he aims at avoiding the common lot, in the interest of the common welfare, he is pretty sure to end as a lunatic or a charlatan. Wisdom is really learnt in the discipline of life. It is as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, that we get to know the stubborn facts of existence; and only as we do know them are we able to offer good counsel to others in perplexity or distress.

David Rossi dreams of a purified Church, in which the Pope is to become the leader of the democracy in the name of Christ. That dream, indeed, is realised at the end of this romance. The King of Italy abdicates, the Republic is proclaimed at Rome, it spreads into other countries, and finally England (yes, England) falls into a line with other nations. And they live together happily ever afterwards. That is to say, they do so in Mr. Hall Caine's pages; but such a picture is as cheap as the paper it is printed on.

Reforming the Papacy is the dream of a fool's paradise. It was entertained by a good many simpletons in 1849. But it was sneered at wisely enough by Carlyle. Reform the Papacy! he cried; why, it

is like reforming a rusty old kettle; better leave it alone; if you try to mend it you will only knock fresh holes in it, and perhaps knock it to bits. And the event proved that Carlyle was right.

In one of his lucid intervals Mr. Caine makes the Pope denounce the Socialists and Communists who profane Christianity by "treating the Gospel as a dream-book of democracy." That is the smartest thing in the whole of these six hundred pages. It accurately hits off David Rossi's weakness. And what is David Rossi but the mouthpiece of Mr. Hall Caine?

We must not take leave of this book without referring to its villain. Baron Bonelli is Prime Minister of Italy. He is a parody of the late Signor Crispi. He is "an infidel, an Antichrist." He is "like Voltaire, an infidel of hard and cynical spirit and an open enemy of the Church." What on earth does Mr. Caine mean? Does he know what he is talking about? Has he read the writings of the life of Voltaire? It is certain that the Patriarch of Ferney was "an open enemy of the Church." That is one of his great glories. But "hard and cynical" applies to him as little as to any man that ever breathed. Voltaire was tender-hearted and generous to a fault. He bubbled over with sympathy. His purse, his time, and his genius were at the service not only of his friends, but of the widow, the orphan, the helpless, the suffering, and the oppressed. Voltaire performed deeds of splendid courage that are imperishable monuments in human history. There was something indescribably magnificent in the way in which that thin, frail, fiery old man walked up to the wild beasts of tyranny and snatched the victims from their bloody jaws. If there be a God, and a day of judgment, Voltaire will only have to walk up to the tribunal hand in hand with Calas, and the whole assembly will break into one universal roar of applause. What has Mr. Caine ever done, what sacrifices for conviction has he ever made, what shuddering victim of oppression has he ever rescued and befriended, that he should claim the right to fling jibes at the memory of Voltaire? Let him write his trumpery romances, and coin money as a literary high pontiff of the religion of "blessed be ye poor," but let him keep his hands off his betters. Mr. Hall Caine on Voltaire is in evidence; but oh for one minute of Voltaire on Mr. Hall Caine! The smile, the lightning, and the lash—and then the awful yelping of corrected impudence!

G. W. FOOTE.

Peter Charron.

AMONG my ragged regiment of seventeenth century publications there is one that should appeal with special force to Freethinkers. It is an old volume, calf-bound and battered, like some old veteran resting upon his laurels, of Charron's *Wisdom*, translated by Sampson Lennard, and published in St. Paul's Churchyard in 1670 by Ranew and Robinson. At that date the work was already nearing its centenary, at any rate it was published in 1600, so that it had already travelled over seven-tenths of that period. 1670 was not, however, the date of Charron's first appearance in an English dress. An edition was issued by Blount and Apsley some twelve years earlier, but as I do not possess a copy it may be just as well to say nothing about it. Not that the possession of a book, or the reading of a book, is absolutely necessary to writing about it, as many of our newspaper reviewers prove, but it is at least a convenience, and I prefer to write with as many conveniences as possible.

Peter Charron, writer of "a book which made a great noise," as Bayle quaintly puts it, was born in 1541, a period when scientifically and religiously the world of thought was drifting away from its old moorings, and the geographical discoveries that were enlarging men's views of the physical world was being fairly paralleled by the wider intellectual vistas that were beginning to open. From his father,

a librarian, he probably inherited his literary tastes, but could hardly have inherited much else. A librarian with twenty-five children to support, must have found life anything but a light burden, and the statement that he was in "straightened circumstances" may therefore pass unchallenged. His father did nevertheless give his son as good an education as the times permitted. At an early age he was sent to the University at Paris, studied law, graduated, and practised for five or six years, and finally entered the Church. Eloquent as a preacher, he attracted the favourable notice of his Bishop, who raised him to the post of canon, but ultimately, after some difficulties with a couple of the powerful religious orders, he adopted the profession of a secular priest, a character he sustained until his death, which took place suddenly in the streets of Paris in 1603.

Not the least among the influences that moulded the intellect of Charron was that of Montaigne. There is a distinct flavour of the father of French Scepticism running through Charron's writings, a flavour that becomes more pronounced in the later writings. This is agreeably observable in the section dealing with the treatment of children, Montaigne's advice to Madame de Foix that children are to be reasoned with, not beaten, to be taught "to sift all things with discretion, and harbour nothing by mere authority or upon trust," so that they be instructed "to quit [their] weapons unto truth as soon as they shall discern the same, whether it proceed from the adversary or from himself," and to remember that "it is not a mind, it is not a body that we erect, but a man," being closely followed by Charron's teaching: "We do condemn that custom which is common in all places to beat, and to box, and with strange cries to harras children, and to keep them in fear and subjection," for "blows are for beasts that understand not reason. He that is once accustomed thereto is marred for ever.....Neither is it enough to make them give their judgment, but that they maintain it, and to be able to give a reason of their saying.....We must teach him to take nothing upon credit and by authority; this to make himself a heart, and not to suffer himself to be led by the nose like an ox; but to examine all things with reason, to propose all things, and then to give him leave to choose. And after the mind comes the body, whereof there must likewise be a care taken, at one and the same instant with the spirit, not making two works thereof. Both of them make an entire man."

In addition to the book "which made a great noise," Charron also issued some sermons—said to have been written in order to divert attention from the heresies of *Wisdom*, and also "The Three Truths," a work only less famous than the one with which his name is usually associated. "The Three Truths," however, was, if not severely, at least, orthodox. It was aimed at the Church's three opponents, Atheists, Mohammedans, and heretics. Against the first it was argued that there existed a good and a true religion. Against the second that of all religions the Christian religion was the only true one, and against the third, that of all Christian communions the Roman Catholic is the only true Church. Published in 1594, in spite of some rather heretical tendencies, the book was received with applause by the Catholic world and ran through several editions.

Six years later, 1600, Charron published his greatest work, *Of Wisdom*, in three books, which shows a marked change in opinions, and even in method, when contrasted with the earlier publication. The opening of the seventeenth century in France was not an ideal time for the putting forward of advanced opinions, and one can readily understand why the appearance of this book stirred up much opposition and abuse. Three times the sheets were seized while the work was passing through the press, and on its appearance, the task of answering the work was entrusted to one Garasse, a Jesuit, the nature of whose reply may be gauged by the following excerpt:—

"I have defined this brutish, drowsy, or melancholy Atheism, to be a certain fantastical humor, which has introduced Diogenism into the Christian religion, by

which humor a man besotted with his languishing and lazy melancholy, laughs at everything, through a dull, ridiculous, and pedantic gravity.....In our time the Devil, who is the author of Atheism, and the ape of the works of God, has raised two profane men, Christians in appearance, and Atheists in reality, to imitate Solomon in writing *A Wisdom*, the one a Milanese (? Cardan) who wrote in Latin, the other a Parisian who wrote in his mother tongue, both equally pernicious."

Garasse's reply covered something over a thousand pages of print, but it is only fair to record that at least one eminent churchman protested against its unfair tone. Yet, to a devout christian, Charron's book must have been a most exasperating production. It said much, but it suggested more, and the author's habit of *suggesting* a defence for religious beliefs in one part, and explicitly showing the weakness of such defences in other parts, must have contributed very powerfully towards building up the scepticism which became such a marked characteristic of French thought a little more than a century later.

Of Wisdom, aimed at being a species of whole duty of man, a text book for man on philosophy, morals, and religion. The influence of Montaigne is plain on almost every page, in the praise of suspense of judgment where no clear data is obtainable, in the marshalling of quotations, is the praise of scepticism, and even in the nature of the language used. In scientific knowledge he is greater than Montaigne, in ease and grace of style much inferior, and in reading him one often feels they would willingly sacrifice a little of the former for more of the latter. Over and over again he protests against that anthropocentricism which leads man to think not only that the earth, but:—

"The heaven, the stars, all this great celestial motion of the world, is only made for him; and that all the gods are in contention for him alone. And the poor miserable wretch is in the meantime ridiculous. He is here beneath, lodged in the last and worst stage of the world, most distant from the celestial vault, in the sink of the world, amongst the filth and lees thereof.....and yet he makes himself believe that he is the master and commander of all, that all creatures, yea, those great luminous incorruptible bodies, whereof he knows not the least virtue, and which he is constrained with astonishment to admire, move not but for him, and to do him service. And because he beggeth his living from the beams and light, of the sun, from the rain and other distillations of heaven, he sticks not to say, that he enjoyeth the heavens and the elements, as if all had been made and still move only for him. In this sense a gosling may say as much, and perhaps more justly and peremptorily."

With a scarcely veiled contempt for the religions around him, Charron insists that certainty in religion is a matter of impossibility. The greatest argument for truth, he says, is the general consent of the world; but, then, there is nothing in which people do agree, and, as "the number of fools doth far exceed the number of the wise, how should that general consent be agreed upon but by corruption, and an applause given without judgment and knowledge of the cause, and by the imitation of someone that first began the dance." The majority of people "do not deliberate and consult; if anything, they suffer themselves to be led like oxen, or carried according to the times, company, or occasion, and then know not how to give a reason why they are rather of this calling than another, except it be that their fathers professed the same." Nor is there any subject on which people disagree more than religion. The world is full of contending creeds, and these—

"To win them credit, that they may be received, they allege and furnish themselves, whether in deed and in verity, as the true, or by imposture and fair semblance, with revelations, apparitions, prophets, miracles, prodigies, and saints. All have their beginnings small and humble; but little by little, by the imitation and contagious acclamation of the people, with some fictions as forerunners, they have taken footing and been authorised, insomuch that all are held with affirmation and devotion—yea, even the absurdest among them. All hold and teach that God is appeased and won by prayers, presents, promises, and the like; all believe that the principal and most pleasant service of God, and the

powerfullest means to appease him and to obtain his grace, is to punish, to cut themselves—to impose upon themselves some painful and difficult labor.....all of which is founded upon the opinion that God taketh pleasure and is pleased with the ruin of his creatures, which opinion is founded upon the sacrifices that were universal throughout the world before Christianity."

There is not much sympathy with Christianity evidenced in this and many similar passages that might be quoted, and still less in a passage in which he asserts that religion is based more or less upon human imbecility. Nothing discovers human weakness more than religion, he says; "yea, the very intention thereof is to make man feel his own evil, his infirmity, his nothing.....First it preacheth it unto him, it beats it into our memory, it reproacheth man, calling him dust, ashes, flesh, blood, grass." He follows Montaigne, repeating almost the same words, in asserting that our religion is a sheer geographical accident. "The nation, country, place, gives the religion; a man professeth that which is in force in that place and among those persons where he is born, and where he liveth. He is circumcised, baptised, a Jew, a Christian, before he knows that he is a man, for religion is not of our choice or election; but man, without his choice, is made a Jew or a Christian because he is born in Judaism or Christianity; and if he had been born elsewhere, among Gentiles or Mohammedans, he had been likewise a Gentile or a Mohammedan." The result is a hollow profession of faith, leading to intolerance and misery, but meaning nothing honest. "They say they believe it, they make themselves believe they believe it, and they will make others believe it too; but it is nothing."

The fifth chapter of the second book, from which these expressions are taken, contains also a remarkable view of the evolutionary nature of religion—remarkable for being propounded at so early a date. After pointing out how much all religions hold in common the same virtues and the same vices, he goes on to argue that religions grow naturally out of one another. "The younger doth always build upon the more ancient and next precedent, which from top to bottom it doth not wholly condemn and disprove, but only accuseth it of imperfection; and that, therefore, it cometh to succeed it and perfect it, and so by little and little overthroweth it, and enriches itself with the spoils thereof, as the Judaical, which hath retained many things of the Gentile Egyptian religion, the elder, the Christian built upon the verities and promises of the Judaical—the Turkish upon them both.....But yet the elder and more ancient do wholly condemn the younger, and hold them for enemies."

His view of the relation of religion and morals was no less remarkable. He declared, as Coleridge did long after him, that "Atheism cannot lodge but in a very strong and bold soul," and that "it requires more strength and stiffness of soul to reject and lay aside the belief in a God than constantly to adhere to him." And of those who base morality upon religion, he says:—

"They pervert all order, and trouble all, confounding honesty, religion, the grace of God, whereby it comes to pass that they have neither true honesty nor true religion.They think that religion is a generality of all goods and of all virtues.....whereby they acknowledge no other virtue and honesty but that which is opened with the key of religion. Now, it is quite contrary, for religion is a special or particular virtue, distinguished from all other virtues, which may be without them, and without probity, as hath been said of the Pharisees, religious and wicked, and, as in many philosophers, good and virtuous, but yet irreligious.....They desire that a man be religious before he be honest.....this is an inverted order. These men assert that a man be an honest man because there is a paradise and a hell, so that, if they did not fear God or fear to be damned, they would make a goodly piece of work. Oh, miserable honesty! What thanks deservest thou for what thou dost? Oh, cowardly and idle innocency! Thou keepest thyself from wickedness because thou darest not be wicked, and thou fearest to be beaten; and even therein thou art wicked. Now, I desire that thou dare, but yet

that thou wilt not. I desire that thou be an honest man, not because thou wouldst go to paradise, but because nature, reason—because the general policy of the world, whereof thou art a part—requireth it.....He that is an honest man by scruple and a religious bridle, take heed of him, and account of him as he is. And he that hath religion without honesty, I will not say he is more wicked, but far more dangerous, than he that hath neither the one nor the other."

One can well realise that sentiments such as those expressed above, must to orthodox Christians of that date have sounded like inventions of Satan himself. Like Montaigne, Charron founded no school, and left no avowed disciples. But a book like the one we have been examining could not exist without exerting a growing influence upon thoughtful minds, and even an unconscious influence upon thoughtless ones. Every work of this kind plays its part in the development of thought, and in the creation of a spirit of critical liberalism, before which superstition and credulity has to give way. Buckle says that Montaigne and Charron were the two writers who first taught Frenchmen to *think*; and even though this may be deemed over-praise, yet there is no doubt that it was these men who helped considerably to give French thought that tendency which expressed itself so fearlessly and so usefully in the later portion of the eighteenth century. C. COHEN.

Concerning the Clergy.

WHEN, some years ago, it was my melancholy task to attend periodically the Houses of Convocation at Westminster—in the hope, which was often vain, that something might be said or done which would be of interest to the general public—I had opportunities of observing at close quarters what might be considered the *élite* of the clergy, at any rate, of the Southern Province. They had thus a Freethought "chief" amongst them taking some few notes with the object of "prenting" them, but also taking many mental notes which were not exactly suited to the columns of the daily press.

In blissful ignorance of the proximity of the ungodly, the Bishops in the Church House and the lesser lights, such as Deans, Canons, Archdeacons, and so on, who then met in the Jerusalem Chamber, went on with their business serenely enough, in spite of the heretical aroma in the air, and were undisturbed by any unpleasant suspicion of brimstone. On the contrary, they might be detected now and then, in a flitting and engaging smile at the representatives of the press when speeches had been made which they hoped to see reproduced on the morrow. After all, it was more than a mere passing fancy that some, at least, of the sceptical opinions held by the Freethinking journalist were shared by certain of the wearers of lawn sleeves and ecclesiastic robes. There were points of agreement in disbelief which the prelates and other dignitaries would not in that connection have willingly admitted, but which existed all the same.

The proceedings then were of the dreariest and dullest description, and I do not hear that in these later days any improvement has been made. Clerics are proverbially the most unbusiness-like of men, and the highest in office amongst them are no exception to the rule. The only relief afforded through long hours of wearisome talk was the amusing spectacle of confusion and entanglement in which the Houses often involved themselves with amendment upon amendment, until at length nobody knew—not even the Archbishop or the Prolocutor—exactly where he was. For they have at Convocation a hopelessly archaic mode of procedure which, one would think, had been specially designed to create chaos. It has, however, the one merit of being indicative of the normal state of the clerical mind, from which in the course of time it has been painfully evolved.

I am reminded of these features of the Church Parliament by an article in the *Church Times* of the

25th ult., in which the writer ventures upon some not altogether unfriendly criticism of Convocation. He says that in the Lower as well as the Upper House there have been eloquent speakers who have brought to bear on their respective subjects a good deal of learning, conscientiously employed. But, in the Lower House, the bulk of the members have been mere "dummies," who, for all the use they have been, might as well be the headles of their respective parishes. "Of immediate practical work there has been absolutely none. They have not unfrequently attempted legislation, and have come egregiously to grief. I don't enter into the reasons, but merely record the facts." The writer adds that, though Convocation still produces its brilliant men, the rank-and-file continue to make speeches "which gratify the speakers themselves, and the next day are clean forgotten, and nobody ever thinks of reading them a second time. And, further, it goes on producing reports which in eight-and-forty hours are as dead as the prophecies of Joanna Southcote."

If Convocation is vexation, Church Congresses are quite as bad. The official clerics have no sooner got over one Congress than they begin to prepare for another. Yet after nearly twelve months of preparation, the event itself, when it comes off, is very often a fizzle. Occasionally there has been a Congress which seemed to suggest that there is still some life and spirit in the Church. But a great deal has depended upon the place of meeting which has been selected. Clericus, with his wife, sisters, cousins, and aunts, likes to make the Congress an excuse for a pleasant outing. He therefore prefers a great city, with all its animation and urban attractions, or a fashionable seaside resort. He is not alone in his taste; other bodies, Dissenting or lay, are similarly affected. But it might be thought that, with all his pretensions of self-sacrifice and holy zeal, he would be above such worldly allurements. But he isn't.

The real fact is that in many things the average clerics are pretty much the same as other men; certainly they are not so vastly superior as they, or some of their blind adulators, would have us believe. There is, however, one essential difference—they are of necessity more circumspect, though they have always the consolation that it is the most difficult thing in the world to inhibit a lazy, incapable, or even a criminous "clerk in Holy Orders."

But returning to the Church Congress, if one reads the extended reports of these annual assemblies, what is the impression they leave? Not that the Church is progressing, but simply that it is trimming and tacking and holding back. It does not lead the mind of the nation—many of its lay members have travelled far ahead of the Establishment itself. It is occupied mainly by considering how long it can remain in its present position, and how little advance it can consent to make. Meantime it has lost its hold on the intellectual classes, and has no sort of influence on the ordinary working people who constitute the bulk of the community. In its present form and condition it is little less than a pretentious piece of mockery, one of the hollowest of hollow shams.

Thanks to its political friends, who have their own purposes to serve, it has been enabled to introduce, and will no doubt practically carry, a reactionary measure in Parliament which violates all principles of equitable State education. But this is no credit to the clerics themselves, and would have been impossible of achievement but for lay astuteness in its inception and party political support. They may credit themselves with a Church victory, and rejoice in the spoils of the conquest; but the triumph is one that will inevitably bring with it a just retribution, and in the course of time the last state of the Church will be worse than the first. Perhaps, after all, a temporary success of sectarian domination and greed is the best thing that could occur. The swing of the pendulum back will be stronger and reach further than has happened heretofore.

The Church is fond of pomp and parade and circumstance—the Ritualistic section naturally; the

Evangelical and Broad sections on occasion. What a fuss the clerics made for months previously anent the Coronation, which didn't come off! They were in ecstasies at the unique opportunity of displaying themselves. They never thought of the pious platitude which they are so fond of trotting out *after* disappointment in worldly plans—"Man proposes, but God disposes." They proposed all sorts of elaborate arrangements, including the simultaneous rising of their flocks in the churches as near as possible to the exact time when the Archbishop placed the crown on King Edward's head. No prophet amongst them appears to have risen up and given timely warning of the postponement which was to take place. They profess, when it suits them and is safe, to be on quite intimate terms with God. If they did not, what good are they? But God, if existent and observant, must have serenely smiled at their fatuity. The great Aristophanes of the Universe might really have planned all this expectation and subsequent chagrin for the sake of a grim joke to relieve the tedium of his eternal government. That, on Theistic lines, is the most feasible explanation that offers.

Recovering from their disappointment, the clergy saw an opportunity of turning the King's illness to account. And here we must credit them with some 'cuteness. In the mysterious dispensation of Providence—it is always a "mystery" with them when anything occurs that runs counter to their theories and calculations and solemn assurances—the King is stricken with illness. Here was a chance for exploiting the power of prayer. They prayed, and are now pointing to the King's recovery as an answer to their intercession. Had he died—well, that would have been another "mysterious dispensation of Providence"; but, of course, it would not have invalidated the theory of the efficacy of prayer. These priests—for that is the generic term for them all, whether Romanist, Anglican, or Dissenting—are a shifty lot. They wriggle about like eels, and are just as difficult to lay hold of. But their elusiveness, if successful for a time, is not likely to last for ever.

The latest complaint of the Church is the difficulty of finding university-trained candidates for ordination. At the same time, the Church complains of the open religious scepticism which prevails in the universities. Well, the latter lament explains the former. Why should young men who are ambitious enough to achieve distinction, and who are honest enough to retain and proclaim their personal convictions, who prefer intellectual integrity to mere pelf—why should they pledge themselves to the service of a Church which is the embodiment of traditions that are so absurdly false and so mischievously misleading? The wide world is open to them in the springtime of their lives, and they choose other paths where mental reservation and self-abasement and pious hypocrisy are not the necessary sacrifices for a mere livelihood. And this is the curious kind of state this so-called Church of England has got into—it wants young men, university-men; it approaches and appeals to them to enlist in the Establishment. At the same time it is parading the poverty of the clergy—those who have already enlisted and can hardly find their way out—and it does so in the most piteous terms. "Pity the poor clergy" is the cry *ad nauseam*. Well, we *do* pity them, for in truth, if we may accept their own representations, they are either poor fools or worse.

FRANCIS NEALE.

HOPED IT MEANT DIVORCE, PERHAPS.

Mrs. RICHMOND.—I never was so disappointed in all my life!

Mrs. PUTNEY.—What is the matter?

Mrs. RICHMOND.—I heard there was an awful scandal in our church, and now I find it is only that the churchwarden has been misappropriating the Sunday school funds,

"This is tough luck," said Ham, mournfully, as he leaned out over the side of the ark. "What's wrong now?" queried Shem. "Why, all this water to fish in," replied Ham, "and only two fishin' worms on board."—*Ohio State Journal*.

National Secular Society.

SPECIAL meeting held on Wednesday, July 23. There were present: The President (Mr. G. W. Foote) in the chair, Messrs. E. Bate, J. Cooper, W. Heaford, T. How, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, J. Neate, E. Parker, C. Quinton, E. W. Quay, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, T. Thurlow, T. Wilnot; also the Secretary. Mr. Cohen sent a telegram regretting he was too ill to attend.

The meeting was called in pursuance of the resolution passed at the last ordinary meeting on July 3, asking Mr. Watts to attend and give his colleagues an explanation of paragraph five of his letter to the *Freethinker* of June 22, in which they thought he reflected upon them by describing the N.S.S. as a one-man movement. The Secretary reported that she had written Mr. Watts twice, asking him to fix a date convenient to him; he having failed to do so, she had consulted the President, who said he meant that the Executive's resolution should be respected. A date was then fixed officially for the special meeting, and a notice was posted to Mr. Watts in common with other members of the Executive. The notices were posted early on the 15th inst. A letter from Mr. Watts was received on the 17th inst., being dated on the 16th inst. She had sent a reply to two points raised in it. Mr. Watts had referred to letters written him by Mr. Foote, which he said the latter was afraid to see published, and she had written to tell him that the President was quite willing to let him produce such letters before the Executive. Mr. Watts had also referred to the accounts of the Twentieth Century Fund, and said people had not been informed how it was expended, and she had told him that she had herself kept account of the expenditure, and she had found on referring to the books that by far the largest amount had been paid to him. Mr. Watts had not replied to her last communication. She then read his long letter of the 16th inst. He declined to attend the special meeting, and tendered his resignation on the ground that he could not work with the President. By the expression "one-man movement" he meant that "no other man was proposed to fill the office of President, hence year after year Mr. Foote was the only person nominated for that post." Against the Executive personally he had nothing to say. A long discussion followed. It was unanimously allowed that Mr. Watts had taken a wrong course. His non-attendance was placed to his discredit. One Branch delegate observed that his reasons for resigning were insufficient and insincere, a statement which was generally applauded. The only real point of difference was how the Executive should express its censure. The following resolution was moved by Mr. Quinton and seconded by Mr. Leat:—

"That the Executive is of opinion that Mr. Charles Watts's declining to attend the special meeting to which he was invited is an act of cowardice; that the reasons he alleges for resigning are after-thoughts, which it would have been more honorable if he had ventilated before he was called upon for explanations of his own conduct; that his references to the President's arbitrariness are discounted by the fact that he has always on the Executive been the President's obsequious supporter; that it would be a farce to accept his resignation in the present circumstances, and that his name be removed from the Society's register."

The following amendment was moved by Mr. Wilnot and seconded by Mr. Thurlow:—

"That this Executive regrets that Mr. Watts had not the courage to attend the special meeting; that it considers that any comments he has to make on the policy of the President and on the work of the Society should have been made before, and within the Society itself; and that while accepting his resignation, it feels that this only anticipates what might have taken a more unpleasant form."

On a show of hands 5 voted for the amendment and 9 against it. It was therefore lost. The resolution was then put, 9 voting for it and 4 against. All present thus voted for either the resolution or the amendment—excepting the President and the Secretary, who took no part in the voting.

The meeting then closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

A great part of the life of a philosopher must necessarily be devoted, not so much to acquiring new knowledge as to unlearning the errors to which he has been taught to give an implicit assent before the dawn of reason and reflection.—*Dougald Stewart.*

The race of preachers inveigh against little vices, and pass over great ones in silence. They never sermonise against war.—*Voltaire.*

Acid Drops.

THE Wesleyans have bought the Royal Aquarium at Westminster for something like a third of a million. It is a big investment, but it brings them close to Westminster Abbey and Church House, and the new Catholic Cathedral. They will lord it there with the other great Christian denominations. Perhaps it will console them for the way in which they have been dished over the Education Bill.

What a change will come over the Aquarium when it is converted to Wesleyan uses. No more performances in the theatre, no more side shows, no more quiet luncheons for two or four, no more "mashing." Everything will be holy and humdrum. Of course the change will be for the better; far be it from us to deny it; who, indeed, in his right senses would not prefer the nasal tones of men of God to the laughter of ladies? But for all that there will be people who will regret that one of the finest sites in London swarms with soldiers of the Black Army and their dowdy women-kind.

The Wesleyan Conference did not deal very valiantly with the Dr. Beet case. It neither approved nor disapproved the action of the Committee in not re-nominating him for election as a professor at Richmond College. What it did was to mix Dr. Beet up with two other candidates, and give the Committee freedom to nominate any one of them. No doubt this will mean Dr. Beet's exclusion. He will lose his professorship for his uncertainty as to "everlasting burnings."

After this display on the part of the official representatives of the Wesleyan Church it is idle to pretend that orthodoxy is played out, and that there is no further need to attack it. It may be played out intellectually, but it is not played out practically. It still holds the field. Hell may be laughed at in the streets, but it must be treated with every respect in Wesleyan churches, colleges, schools, and other establishments. To diminish its temperature or its duration is an offence for which the culprit may be expelled or sent to Coventry.

Mr. St. John Brodrick, Secretary for War, unveiling a memorial in Holy Trinity Church, Guildford, to the men of the district who fell in the war in South Africa, preached a sort of lay sermon, in which he expressed a good deal of rank heresy. For instance, he said that "our duty and our good deeds will be our advocates with the Great Judge when he calls upon us for the tenor of our lives." To a certain extent, but only to a certain extent, this is true according to the teaching of Roman Catholicism; but it is entirely false according to nearly all the teaching of Protestantism. From the Church of England downwards the Protestant denominations teach that our "good deeds" have absolutely nothing to do with our salvation. They are indeed but "filthy rags" without faith in Christ. And this should have been remembered by Mr. Brodrick when he was speaking in one of our State churches—which are all governed by the Thirty-Nine Articles.

"The Way to Heaven Made Plain" was the title of a tract put into the present writer's hands at a seaside place on "dismal Sunday" when the soul-savers had the sands entirely to themselves. This tract takes for granted that the reader wants "to be sure" that he will go to heaven when he dies. Such an assumption may be true of most people, but it is not true of all. There are some who do not want to go to heaven; certainly not the Christian heaven, with its golden floors and jewelled walls, and its menagerie of elderly beasts and beastly elders, and its everlasting Salvation Army concert. They would rather be annihilated, or go below, than spend eternity in such an establishment. That is to say, if there be any choice in the matter. And fortunately there does seem to be this amount of choice—namely, that heaven is a place which is easily avoided; the difficulty being, not how to miss it, but how to reach it.

This tract goes on to tell the reader how to get to heaven if he wants to get there. Several recipes are given, but they all amount to one, and that is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the infallible passport to glory. The liar, the thief, the adulterer, and the murderer will (of course) all go safely through the golden gates with that ticket in their hands. St. Peter will have no choice but to let them in. Anyone, however, who is without that ticket will be excluded. No matter how truthful, honest, and generous, for him there is no admission. "The only unpardonable sin," as this tract says, "is unbelief." Again it says: "If you die persisting in this unbelief, heaven is not for you."

The writer of this tract must be pretty sure of heaven. He hasn't brains enough to be an unbeliever.

Mr. Brooker T. Washington, who is a negro and a Professor at Hampton Institute, was entertained some time ago at the White House, Washington, by President Roosevelt. That act of hospitality aroused great indignation in the breasts of the "mean whites" in America. Some of them appeared to think that the President deserved crucifixion, or burning at the stake, or some other very uncomfortable death, for sitting at the same table with a black man. Such is the religion of "love" and "brotherhood" after nearly two thousand years' practice.

Dr. Washington has written his *Autobiography*. It is a very interesting book, and has the merit of impartiality. It even hits off some of the foibles of the colored folk. There is a story, for instance, of a negro who stopped work in a cotton-field, and looking upward said: "O Lawd, de cotton am so grassy, de work am so hard, and de sun am so hot dat I b'lieve dis darky am called to preach."

"What about twins?" asks a correspondent in the *Referee* with reference to astrology and the horoscope. They are born at the same time and under the same planetary influences, yet "we know quite well that their lives are most likely to turn out quite different in character and history." This objection to reading the future by the stars was raised nearly fifteen hundred years ago by the great St. Augustine in his *City of God*. He adduced from the Bible the case of Jacob and Esau. They were twins, yet they were as different as possible, and their fates were extremely diverse. God loved Jacob and hated Esau. The former became, after Abraham and Isaac, the progenitor of the Chosen People; and the latter the progenitor of some heathen wastrels. What is more, Jacob went presumably to heaven, while Esau went just as presumably to hell.

According to Canon Allen Edwards, one South London living has shrunk from £900 a year to £94 a year. The Bishop of Rochester mentions another shrinkage from £600 to a little over £100. We congratulate the incumbents in question. They are all that nearer the kingdom of heaven.

We have been favored with a batch of London City Mission tracts. One of them tries to prove the existence of God. Here is a sample sentence: "Just as a capacity to comprehend a thing bespeaks the existence of the thing, so the sense of God which characterises the human being bespeaks a God." This argument proves the existence of the Devil as well as of God. It also proves the existence of dragons, centaurs, winged bulls, and all the fantastic beings of oriental mythology. The other City Mission tracts are just on a level with this one.

From time to time we hear of squabbles at Boards of Guardians in regard to the appointment of paid chaplains for workhouses. The subject seems to be a remarkably fine bone of contention for Church and Dissent to snarl over. Curiously enough, the people who appear to be least interested in the matter are the paupers for whom these chaplains are proposed to be provided. It must be said that the Church rarely emerges from these disputes without ruffled feathers and a considerable loss of prestige. In many small Unions it is obviously unnecessary to pay a chaplain for such services as he may render. To do so would be a waste of the ratepayers' money. Roman Catholics and the Free Churches are usually willing enough to supply all that is required, and to do it gratuitously. But the Church, wherever it can, insists upon its representative being paid a salary. If this is refused the local clergy, who, in many rural districts, have very little to do, obstinately refuse to visit the workhouses. What they say practically amounts to this: "The paupers may go to hell for all we care, unless we are paid from the rates for helping to keep them out of it. Or they may fall into the hands of schismatics, which is pretty much the same as allowing them to go to perdition."

A case of this kind has recently occurred at Hailsham, in Sussex. The clergy have steadfastly kept aloof because the Guardians would not appoint a salaried chaplain. Meanwhile a Baptist minister, a Wesleyan minister, and other Free Churchmen have been constant in their gratuitous ministrations at the workhouses. We haven't the slightest doubt that they have done the paupers quite as much good, if any at all, as the local clergy could have done. The Chairman of the Board condemned the ill-advised and offensive action of the clergy, and commended the disinterestedness of the Free Churchmen. The Board decided

that the present arrangements were sufficient. While this edifying dispute has been going on it may be safely assumed that not one in ten of the inmates, who, after all, are chiefly concerned, cares a farthing who it is that comes and preaches and prays over them. If consulted, they would probably prefer that, instead of having a paid chaplain, the amount represented by his salary should be expended in finding them tobacco, new-laid eggs, cream in their tea, or other "extras," which, after all, they would probably regard as more comforting than any amount of pious goody-goody talk.

"Keep to the right"—which is not a Gospel text—was nevertheless the text of a sermon to cyclists by the Rev. E. Husband, of St. Michael's, Folkestone. The preacher was quite willing to tolerate wheelers if they only gave "God" a look in. If they went to church first on the Sabbath they might ride all the rest of the day without fear and trembling, for the Lord would be with them. The reverend gentleman did not say whether the Lord's company was a guarantee against accidents. What he really meant, we suppose, was that the poor dear parson ought not to be neglected, and that cyclists who went wheeling past the House of God ought to remember the maxim, "Live and let live."

Even Church people are beginning to doubt the efficacy of immense outlay on cathedrals in poor districts like Southwark. The *Times*, in a leader, says: "At present St. Saviour's is mainly engaged in discoursing admirable music to a moderate congregation of people who obviously do not in many cases live in the neighborhood." The most striking instance, however, of sheer waste of money is the projected Bishopric of Southwark, for which already large sums of money have been subscribed. A considerable proportion of the population of Southwark do not want a Bishop—they want bread, or, if not exactly deficient of bread, they want something to eat with it, and certainly they need to be decently housed.

In the City of London there are no fewer than 25 benefices "within the one square mile," nearly all of which are richly endowed, and 27 of the incumbents are non-resident. They live miles away, and so apparently do the Church parishioners, for the churches themselves are practically empty on Sundays. The week-day services are equally deserted. There are three churches in Lombard-street, one of which—All Hallows—with a stipend of more than £2,000 a year, is held, together with a Cathedral stall, by a nonogenarian who resides at a place so near to his parishioners as—Canterbury. These are nice fat little sinecures, and afford a striking commentary on the appeals made by the Church on behalf of its "poor and starving clergy."

A charming piece of inconsistency is afforded by the way in which the State Church claims and enjoys State support, but altogether objects to State patronage and control. Thus the *Record*, referring to the new Ministry, says: "It will be observed that under the new arrangement we have a Presbyterian Prime Minister who will be the King's adviser in the choice of bishops for the Established Church. If Mr. Chamberlain had succeeded, we should have found a Unitarian exercising this delicate office." No doubt, but where is the cause of complaint? The Church must take the bitters with the sweets, or adopt the honest and independent course of severing its connection with the State.

The folly of Roman Catholic superstition in Venice could scarcely be exceeded. We are told that the people believe that "the golden angel" from the summit of the Campanile tower which fell in the porch of the Church "flew home," and when by order of the Patriarch it was being reverently deposited in St. Mark's, the people believe "a light shone from its wings." There is another story which is being more extensively believed. There is in St. Mark's a figure of the Madonna, which stands on the left as you enter from the Piazza. This figure has long been held to possess miraculous power. When the Campanile fell "the angel is said to have flown to warn the Madonna, who straightway prevented the destruction of the Church."

A good story is related of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Canadian Premier, who came here to take part in the Coronation. We give it because it shows how smartly yet quietly Sir Wilfrid administered a snub to some fussy religious cranks. During the recent elections in Ontario and Quebec, he conducted an extensive speech-making tour. A Quebec Liberal whose acquaintance with the Premier was only political, sent this telegram to his leader: "Report in circulation in this county that your children have not been baptised. Telegraph denial." To which dispatch the Premier sent this reply: "Sorry to say report is correct. I have no children."

A leaf from what appears to be a Roman Catholic monthly magazine, called *St. Peter's Net*, has been sent to us. One of the pages is devoted to "A Peep into our Letter Bag," and contains several interesting paragraphs. Apparently this *net* is a very capacious one, and the Editor who casts it does not affect over-scrupulosity as to its contents. Seemingly all is fish that comes to *St. Peter's Net*. He takes what is sent with an easy-going indiscrimination and a becoming thankfulness. A devotee of the softer sex forwards him a box neatly packed with threepenny pieces. With a sort of feminine giggle she suggests that this may show "softening of the brain." The Editor, with gallantry, immediately comes to her relief. He takes the threepenny-bits, and says: "We should diagnose this complaint as softening of the heart, and we hope it is catching, and will become epidemic." Another lady says she is "haunted by the thought" of the Editor's appeals. Some unexpected birthday presents enable her to make a contribution to *St. Peter's Net*. The Editor appends a note: "We trust that all our readers will, like this lady, be 'haunted,' if it will produce the same effect. May you all have abundance of birthday presents, unexpected or otherwise." What could nicer than this?

But it is the concluding paragraph of the page which specially strikes our attention. "One of our Liverpool subscribers of sporting tendency sends us a portion of his winnings with the following words: 'I enclose P.O., portion of a sweep won. Will you kindly acknowledge same, as I wish to show how the winnings were disposed of.'" The Editor looks this gift horse in the mouth, but it is only for a moment. The result is the same. He says: "We do not intend to discuss betting from a moral standpoint, but, if it will take this form, from a utilitarian point of view we must confess it does not seem to be such a bad habit as one might be led to suppose. We have our doubts, however, upon this point, which will require careful and prolonged thought. In the meantime while we are mentally wrestling with this knotty problem, we shall give ourselves the benefit of the doubt, and be willing to receive a share (the lion's by preference) of any winnings of which our sporting friends may wish to relieve themselves."

Now isn't this charmingly frank, with just a touch of Jesuitic casuistry? The editor will not discuss betting from a moral standpoint, but whether immoral or not, he'll take the proceeds. And further, he'll take the lion's share while he cogitates the "knotty problem," which by the way, he may have heard has engaged the attention of a Royal Commission who have made an elaborate report. His concluding words are a direct incitement to his friends to "go in and win," while he stands by with *St. Peter's Net*. He is going to take prolonged thought on the subject—the italics are his. Thought will probably be prolonged till the winnings cease to roll in. Still, there is an openness about this expressed determination to rope in the shekels from even a doubtful source, which is rather refreshing. It is, in a sense, an agreeable variation to Protestant cant and hypocrisy.

Cardinal Vaughan seems desirous of emulating the Dean of St. Paul's, who declared that the money spent upon Board schools was "rather given for the promotion of vice than for the interests of the country." The Cardinal has written a letter, in which he describes the outbursts of Hooliganism as "simple illustrations of the widespread state of feeling that has grown up under the Cowper-Temple system." He might just as well have said it had grown up under anything else, for the Cowper-Temple clause has got as much to do with Hooliganism as the man in the moon has to do with Cardinal Vaughan. A correspondent of the *Times* points out that, as the Cowper-Temple clause only affects Board schools, the Cardinal's statement is tantamount to saying that Board schools manufacture Hooligans. Yet, according to education returns issued in respect of Manchester—which Cardinal Vaughan knows best, having been twenty years Bishop of Salford—the proportion of young Catholics committed by the magistrates was largely in excess of Protestant children.

Rhyl Town Council is to hold a special meeting to reconsider its decision prohibiting Sunday music. This is probably in consequence of an after-thought as to visitors, out of whom so many of the inhabitants make their money. Observing the Sabbath is very well; but lodging-house keepers must live.

Rev. E. P. Lowry, Wesleyan chaplain, has been interviewed on his return from the war. He is "dead nuts" on the acceptance by Wesleyan ministers of the commissions which the War Office offers them in conjunction with the Church of England chaplains. He thinks he could do better with the rank of colonel. Wonderful, how these servants of the "Prince of Peace" like to strut about in war paint and feathers, and with military titles and rank.

The *Rock* refers to the "marvellous recovery" of the King, which, it says, is Providential, and "a gracious answer to the nation's prayers." But is there anything so very marvellous about the recovery that we must look beyond medical skill and attention and the natural facts of the case in order to find an explanation? There have been many much more marvellous recoveries without doctors' aid or a nation's prayers. The *Rock* expresses its "thankfulness to God" for sparing the King. There are degrees of thankfulness, and we can conceive it possible that vast numbers of people would have been more thankful to God if he had kept King Edward on his legs until the Coronation had been got through as originally arranged.

Very grudgingly, a leading Church weekly "supposes" it must "accept with submission" the further curtailment of the Coronation ceremony. By the elision of the already mutilated Litany, the Sermon and one or two small details, a saving of half an hour will be effected. It admits that this will be a gain when the state of the King's health is considered, but it adds there will be a "loss of dignity involved in reducing to the barest possible dimensions a function rarely performed and full of such historic and religious significance." We really do not see where the "loss of dignity" comes in. On the contrary, many people will think that the proceedings would gain in dignity by the elimination of a great deal more of the ceremony, including the farcical performance of anointing.

The National Blind Relief Society recently held its annual meeting. The Bishop of Kensington, who was one of the speakers, said there were between 3,000 and 4,000 blind people in London alone, living in darkness and with the dread of the workhouse before them. Other speakers dilated on the terrible calamity which the loss of sight meant to such as were already threatened with poverty. But it was left to the Rev. Nevison Loraine to obscure the beneficent objects of the society with a cloud of religious nonsense. For instance, he said:—"Christ had peculiar pity for the blind; we never read that he sent a blind person away; his ear was always open to their cry. Surely he who is the creator of this wonderful universe would have a special care and compassion for those deprived of the power to see him in creation." But what does this wonderful "care and compassion" amount to? According to Christian Theists, God voluntarily created the universe with the foreknowledge that a number of his creatures would have to endure this most terrible of privations. What matters his "care and compassion" now for the victims of the mischief which he himself has wrought or permitted?

The French Government are pursuing a determined attitude towards the Ultramontane priests in France. They are resolved to take the education of the children out of their hands. M. Combes has ordered the closing of 2,500 of their schools which 150,000 children attend. A strike of priests has been suggested, but as the *Echo* says:—"If the priests refuse to perform the offices of religion, they will gradually accustom the people to do without the offices of religion." We agree with the *Rock*, in this instance, that the stories of popular reaction against the anti-clerical crusade of the Government should be received with caution.

We learn from a religious weekly that a Mr. Millard of Eastbourne thinks it "time that champions of the inspiration of the Bible everywhere should answer those, whether Christian or infidel, who belittle the Bible," and he offers his own services in public debate. Yes, the hour has come, but is he the man?

Mr. Henry Broadhurst, who is a devout Dissenter, unintentionally contributed to the gaiety of the House of Commons the other evening. In a speech on the Education Bill, he said he had in his pocket a Church organ. Loud cries of "Play it!" were immediately raised, and the merriment did not subside till he had explained that it was a parish magazine—an organ of opinion—that he carried.

Providence—probably rather tired after its exertions on behalf of the King—allowed the monastery of the Trappist monks at Oka, forty miles from Montreal, to be destroyed by fire. The Silent Brothers worked hard to save their monastery, but the high wind rendered their efforts futile.

A church verger has been sentenced at Warwick to a month's imprisonment for embezzling £91 which he had collected as pew rents for the vicar. He should have tried the effect on the vicar of the text: "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matthew v. 42). Perhaps the vicar would have given him the £91—perhaps not.

There seems to be a regular campaign carried on against the FREETHINKER. We do not know exactly in what quarter to look for our enemies, though they are probably bigoted Christians. What we do know is that a movement of some kind is going on in "the trade." Several newsagents, some of them important wholesale agents, have lately refused to supply the FREETHINKER to their customers. During the past week we have received a dozen letters from persons in Edinburgh asking where they can obtain this journal there, now that Messrs. Menzies have struck it off their list. May we ask our friends to do all they can to counteract this insidious persecution? Small newsagents, whose wholesale agents will not supply them with this journal, are requested to communicate with the Manager at our publishing office, who will in every case make some arrangement whereby the FREETHINKER will reach them.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

August 17, Failsworth Sunday School Anniversary Services.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—August 3, 10, and 16, Victoria Park. Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

J. N.—Thanks for a copy of the gentleman's third circular. Of course he did not send us one. Two months ago, in his first letter to the *Freethinker*, he trusted we should soon recover our health and continue our valuable work as President of the National Secular Society, in which he hoped to co-operate. Now he would not co-operate at any price, and the President is a bold, bad man, almost too wicked for even this very wicked world. The explanation of this sudden change is extremely simple. He has no longer any interest inclining him in our direction, and he is only attempting to make a virtue of necessity. We have no present intention of "answering" his lucubrations. Why should we "answer" a man who, while it was his interest to do so, supported all our "designs"? The worse he makes us appear the baser he proves his own conviction. With regard to our letters, we did instruct our solicitor to restrain him from publishing them. Decency and law alike forbid the publication of a man's letters without his permission—especially when one side of a correspondence is fortified by notes and explanations, which the other side has no opportunity of reviewing. Besides, it would be impossible to carry on social intercourse if people, the moment they quarrelled, were free to publish each other's letters written in friendly confidence. It was only *such* letters that we had any feeling about. Other letters, written since June of last year, when we renounced his personal friendship, belong to a different category. But even the publication of these was not a thing to be encouraged. However, as he characteristically reports that we are afraid of their publication—probably judging our own courage by his own—we give him full leave to publish what he pleases. Let him play the gentleman according to his own taste and intelligence. We have instructed our solicitor to advise him accordingly. It is perhaps the best policy to give him rope enough.

E. A. PHIPSON.—Your queries were referred to in this column soon after you sent up your letter to Mr. Foote at the Athenaeum Hall. Our editor is away from London at present, taking a much-needed holiday.

W. SCRIVENER.—Thanks for the missionary tracts. See "Acid Drops."

P. BRIDGE.—Thanks for the trouble you have taken with your newsagent. With regard to the "profit," there is as much got by newsagents on the *Freethinker* as on most other periodicals, and more than on some. It is a real boycott from which we are suffering. Several wholesale agents have always refused to supply this journal on religious grounds, and others seem now to be following their example. There is a general spirit of reaction abroad, and we should not be astonished to see a revival of active persecution. Should it occur, there are some who talk very loud now who would run away from the enemy, as they have done before. We know of others, though, whom we could trust to stand firm.

W. A. H.—Please send all orders for books, pamphlets, and periodicals direct to the Freethought Publishing Company. Sending to Mr. Foote only causes trouble and delay.

ESS JAY BEE.—(1) We know absolutely nothing of the F. C. Vernon-Harcourt who, according to the *Sunday Magazine*, was once an "infidel lecturer" and is now a "prominent evangelist," and who was converted after a lecture he delivered in Scotland, by an old lady who spoke to him about his mother, who had died a Christian. As the gentleman is "not yet sixty years of age" he could hardly have escaped our notice if he were a real personage, as we have been in the field over thirty years ourselves. (2) Pleased to have your congratulations on the appearance of the *Freethinker* in its new garb. (3) The boycott we complain of is really serious. You say you had to walk two miles to get our last issue, through your newsagent not having received his supply. The paper is always published regularly enough at our office.

JOHN POTTER.—We have asked the Freethought Publishing Company's manager to send you a list of the writings and speeches of the late Charles Bradlaugh that are still in print. He was, as you say, a very remarkable man; one of the most remarkable of the nineteenth century.

OLD SECULARIST.—Your suggestion is well meant, but it overlooks the truth that "Facts are chieftains that winna ding." Peace is impossible without a certain measure of sincerity. Remember what Carlyle says with regard to Cromwell's problem in dealing with the false and treacherous Charles Stuart: "A man whose word will not inform you at all what he means or will do, is not a man you can bargain with. You must get out of that man's way, or put him out of yours!"

H. LEES SUMNER.—Thanks for enclosures. In our next.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for cuttings.

PAPERS RECEIVED.—*Liberator* (Melbourne)—*Review of Religions*—*Secular Thought*—*Torch of Reason*—*Two Worlds*—*The New Century*—*Truthseeker* (N.Y.)—*Progressive Thinker*—*Public Opinion* (N.Y.)—*Friedenker*—*Free Society* (Chicago)—*Blue Grass Blade*—*Islamic World*—*Aberdeen Evening Press*—*Protestant Standard*—*Newtownards Chronicle*—*Financial News*—*Co-operative News*—*Sydney Bulletin*.

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.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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., and not to the Editor.

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.

THE editor of the *Freethinker* is away from London holidaying. He cannot escape from work altogether, but he is doing as little as possible, and his leisure is being spent amidst healthy surroundings. There will be no break in the continuity of his weekly articles, and his pen will be represented in "Acid Drops" and "Sugar Plums" to an extent that will depend on circumstances. Mr. Foote hopes to put himself in first-rate condition for the hard winter's work that awaits him. During his absence from London the *Freethinker* will be seen through the press by Mr. Francis Neale.

The *Newtownards Chronicle* reproduces from the *Freethinker* of the 6th ult. an "Acid Drop" on the Bangor Coronation fêtes. The advertisement of these fêtes ended with "God Save the King! By Order of the Committee!" and we observed that it must be rather humiliating to the poor old Deity to be thus ordered about by the Bangor Committee.

The Newcastle Branch intends holding its Annual Excursion on Bank Holiday Monday (August 4), at Rowland's Gill, and it is hoped a good muster of members and friends will leave the Newcastle Central by the 11 a.m. train. Tea has been arranged for at Mr. Penny's Rose Cottage (near the Station) at 5 o'clock. Rowland's Gill is a charming little place, and, with fine weather, the Newcastle friends should have a very enjoyable day.

Mr. Percy Ward appears to be having an active time of it at Bradford. His lectures there have been largely attended, but have been disturbed by a gang of Christian hoodlums. At last Thursday's lecture, he says, several stones were thrown at him, and he was pushed off the platform at least four times and mobbed. He therefore delivered an extra address on the following night. Another

rush was made, and again he was swept off the platform and the meeting broken up. Mr. Ward then asked the Chief Constable for protection, with the result that, at a subsequent meeting about a dozen police officers were present. The name and address of one Christian who was caught in the act of throwing a stone at Mr. Ward has been taken.

Mr. Ward adds that the Rev. J. Wilson, B.A., B.D., a leading Wesleyan Minister in the City, is a constant opponent at the lectures. The local press has lately made several references to the meetings, and Mr. Ward has now great hope that a strong secular organisation will be built up in Bradford.

At length, after much delay, the consignment of Ingersoll's works has reached this office from the States. We should be obliged if those who have already sent in their names as subscribers will forward the preliminary payment so that their set may be dispatched at once. There are but a few remaining sets unsubscribed of this batch, which we hope to see speedily taken up. An illustrated prospectus of the twelve volumes will be sent free on application.

Mr. A. G. Stephens contributed a timely article to Monday's *Morning Leader* on the success of secularism in Australasia. "In all the Australasian colonies," says Mr. Stephens, "the scheme of education is national and secular. The theory asserts that a State cannot afford to let its children grow up in ignorance, nor can it afford to leave the business of education to parents or to churchmen. If all parents were well-to-do and enlightened, say the theorists, then the State might be content to remain an onlooker and assistant. But many parents neglect their duty or are incapable of performing it. Further, it is not the business of the State to teach religion. The State desires to make good citizens; but whether or not religion be essential to good citizenship the State, owing equal justice to all, is unfitted to decide between the claims of warring sects. In giving secular education, the State goes as far as it can safely and profitably go. Religious education, for those who desire it, can be superadded by parents and the clergy."

It is, or should be, instructive that these states—New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, West Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand—began by giving State aid to religious instruction, but were driven to adopting secular education as the only sane escape from an impossible situation.

Needless to say, the clergy did not submit to this new arrangement without a struggle. Agitations were promoted, and worked for all they were worth. The noise made by the clergy so far imposed upon the Government in South Australia that popular opinion was tested by the referendum. The result was that such an overwhelming majority pronounced in favor of secular education that the agitation came to an untimely end.

It is sad to relate that no demoralising effects are yet observable as the result of excluding religion from State schools. Says Mr. Stephens: "Australasia has not suffered from the withdrawal of theological dogmas from the schools' curriculum. She has not become more immoral or more criminal than other countries. And the diffusion of knowledge implied in the fact that nearly one million children, in a total population of less than four millions, are now receiving systematic instruction, is naturally followed by a heightening of the standard of popular intelligence." One day, perhaps, the Mother Country may see fit to follow the example of her younger offshoots.

The Review of Religions, a monthly publication, reaches us from Lahore, where it is issued by the Albion Press. It seems to be conducted in the interest of Mohammedanism—a religion which is far less superstitious than Christianity, being without miracles and having only one God. "Unity versus Trinity" is the heading of a thorough-going criticism of the alleged divinity of Jesus Christ.

The Reformer's Year Book for 1902 is a marvellous shilling's-worth. Mr. Joseph Edwards, the editor, has evidently taken great pains with it; and all he has done, we fancy, must have been a labor of love. Here are facts and figures about every sort of "advanced" cause, lists of books, lists of annuals, lists of journals, lists of societies, addresses of leading men and women of all "advanced" denominations, and portraits of some of them produced in the very best style. Then there are bright editorials, selected thoughts from eminent men, including Ingersoll, and—well, we shall get tired of reciting the interesting features of this admirable publication, which should really be in the hands of all—yes, all—the

friends of progress. Copies can be obtained at our publishing office. The price is net, or post free for 1s. 2d.

A great Freethought demonstration is being arranged for Sunday, August 17, at Shipley Glen. The speakers will include Mr. Percy Ward, Mr. John Grange, Mr. Greevz Fisher, and Mr. Hy. Smith. It is hoped that all energetic Yorkshire Secularists will rally round the Secular standard on that occasion and help to make the demonstration a huge success.

The Melbourne *Liberator* reproduces from our columns the article by "Mimnermus" on Spurgeon.

The Freethought Publishing Company, Limited.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

THE Annual General Meeting of this Company was held at the Company's office on Thursday evening, June 5. The Chairman, Mr. G. W. Foote, presided.

The Secretary read the notice convening the meeting. The Chairman presented the Report and Balance-sheet already printed and posted to the Company's members. Both were unanimously adopted. The Chairman informed the meeting that the gentleman mentioned in the Report as willing to join the Board had, on second thoughts, begged to be excused on grounds of age and a desire to lessen, rather than increase, his duties. By far the largest holder of Shares, this gentleman felt that the Company's affairs were in good hands.

Mr. C. Cohen and Mr. J. Neate were re-elected on the Board. Opposition was offered to the re-election of Mr. Charles Watts. Several members spoke against his continuing on the Board of Directors. The Chairman stated that he had expressed the same view to Mr. Watts. After a reply by Mr. Watts to his critics, the vote was taken, and the motion that he be re-elected was defeated by a large majority. A poll was not demanded, and proxies were not used. The Directors were authorised to add two further members to the Board at their discretion. The Auditor was re-elected, and the meeting ended.

EDITH M. VANCE, Secretary.

Ingersoll According to Himself.

ACCORDING to some people who consider themselves Ingersoll's only friends, Ingersoll was simply a casual agitator who came into the world, made a big noise and left an immortal echo behind him. But Ingersoll made no noise. It was his enemies who made the noise. And Ingersoll will live in his deep seas, not in his fussy shallows. What may not Ingersoll's great soul suffer if reduced by the parings of those who have assumed to construe him in the candlelight of an anti-theological crusade? Ingersoll was not biggest in any specified thing but in something that could not be mathematically indicated. For years he gave out in interviews, letters and minor addresses a sort of running comment on his time, marvellous in its range of illustration, and no less significant for its gravity and weight. His collateral literature was more wonderful than the formal addresses into which it was elaborated. An artist's off-hand work, his sketches caught on the fly, the quick memoranda hot from the impact of life, after all, most of all, reflect his spirit. Ingersoll was ripe for all event. Nothing seemed to happen and find him unprepared. He lived in the midst of things, and yet was capable of separating wheat from chaff by some species of immediate divination. This is a rare gift; for, as a rule, authentic history is not written by one who is hustled about in its hurly-burly. It requires distance and time. Ingersoll, in this wayside philosophy, expressed all sides of his varifold nature, which realised the quick of our civilisation. I am, of course, only repeating myself. I have said all these things before. But to me the chief value of this Dresden edition of Ingersoll's works is in its confirmation of my view. It exhibits the profounder reasons for his persistence. It rescues him from the robber tutelage of those who harry him into the bond service of a Materialistic propaganda, which, however significant, would not alone or mainly account for his tremendous contemporary influence, or for the lasting quality of his printed words. Ingersoll was no backyard astronomer embargoed from intercontinental observation. If Ingersoll were only a fight, little of him would have lasted the fight out, and nothing of him would have survived into an after peace. But he was only incidentally fight. He was intrinsically love. Even his fight was love. And that love did not engross itself with the wreckage of a departed devil-lore. It took him on into the channels of a more illustrious resolution. It left its impress like sunlight in all crannies of private joy and sorrow and on the broad plains of social struggle.

—Horace Trumbel, in the "Conservator."

Early Christian Frauds.—VIII.

WE come now to the well-known paragraph in the *Antiquities* of Josephus, a work written in the year 93. This paragraph, as nearly everyone knows, commences as follows:—

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works," etc. (xviii., iii., 3).

Much has been written for and against the authenticity of this passage; but the question is not a very difficult one to decide. In the first place, if the paragraph had been written by Josephus, then, beyond a doubt, that historian must have believed the accounts now recorded of Jesus in the Gospels to have been true, and he must, to some extent at least, have been a believer in Christ—assumptions which are disproved by every page of his writings. Moreover, the Gospel narratives of Christ are unsupported by evidence of any kind, and, when compared, are found to contradict themselves, as well as some known facts of history. Wherever it is possible to test them, they are found to be unhistorical. It is very unlikely indeed, then, that any of the miraculous events described in the Gospels ever really occurred, and, assuming this to have been the case, Josephus could not have been the author of the paragraph; for it may safely be said that, in the absence of historical records, that historian would certainly not have taken his account of Jesus from a Christian Gospel—supposing one of these "histories" to have been in existence in his days.

But the paragraph itself bears evidence of its Christian origin; for in it the historian is made to say that Jesus "appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold this and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him." Now, Josephus, having composed a careful synopsis of the contents of the Old Testament books, knew perfectly well—better, perhaps, than any other orthodox Jew of his time—that no such predictions were contained in the Hebrew Scriptures. We are thus able to say with complete assurance that he was not the writer of the words quoted. These were composed by a Christian of the type of Justin or Clement of Alexandria—that is to say, by one of those who followed the practice, common among the early Christians, of twisting every conceivable passage in the Old Testament into a prophecy relative to Christ. There were, it is true, some Jews of the first century—Philo, for instance—who made use of a system of allegorical interpretation; but Josephus, as is proved incontestably by his writings, was not one of these.

As an illustration of this Christian method of manufacturing prophecies I will take a few extracts from the *Dialogue* of Justin. That Christian writer (ch. lxxxvi.) represents all the rods, sticks, and pieces of wood mentioned in the Old Testament as types of Christ and the cross. Amongst those which he specially names are: the tree of life in the Garden of Eden, Moses' rod, Aaron's rod that budded, Jacob's staff, Abraham's oak at Mamre, Judah's staff left as a pledge with Tamar, the tree cast by Elisha into the Jordan to recover an axe, the rod from the root of Jesse, the rod and staff by which one of the Psalm-writers says he was comforted, etc.

To take another example, the same writer interprets Psalm xxii. 11-13 (in the Septuagint version) as predictions referring to the arrest and trial of Jesus. Addressing the Jew Trypho, he says (ch. ciii.) :—

"And the expression 'Fat bulls beset me round' was spoken beforehand of those who acted similarly to the calves, when Jesus was led before your teachers. And the Scripture describes them as bulls."

"And the expression 'For there is none to help' is also indicative of what took place. For there was not a single man to assist him [Jesus] as an innocent person."

"And the expression 'They opened their mouth upon me like a roaring lion' designated him who was then king of the Jews, and was called Herod."

"And that it was foreknown that these infamous things should be uttered against those who confessed Christ, and that those who slandered him.....should be miserable, hear what was briefly said by Isaiah. It is this: 'Woe unto them that call sweet bitter, and bitter sweet.'"

The last prediction is a gem. Clement of Alexandria, who practised the same system of distortion, was almost as good an expounder as Justin. Thus, referring to the command in Deut. xiv. 12, etc., he states (*Instr.*, iii., 11) :—

"Further, the prophet says: 'Thou art not to eat a kite or swift-winged ravenous bird, or an eagle'; meaning: 'Thou shalt not come near men who gain their living by rapine.'"

Again, referring to Genesis xlix. 11, he says (*Instr.*, i., 6) :—

"Let no one, then, think it strange when we say that the Lord's blood is figuratively represented as milk. For is it not figuratively represented as wine? 'Who washes,' it is said, 'his garment in wine, his robe in the blood of the grape.'"

There were, of course, many Christian teachers who did not employ this system of misrepresentation. It was probably to remind these matter-of-fact people that he had apostolic authority for the practice that Clement quoted the following passage from an early Christian romance, the *Preaching of Peter*, a work which he evidently believed to be historical. He says (*Strom.*, vi., 15) :—

"Whence also Peter, in his *Preaching*, speaking of the apostles, says: 'But we, unrolling the books of the Prophets which we possess, who name Jesus Christ, partly in parables, partly in enigmas, partly expressly and in so many words, find his coming and death and cross, and all the rest of the tortures which the Jews inflicted on him, and his resurrection and assumption to heaven, previous to the capture of Jerusalem.....Recognising these, therefore, we have believed in God in consequence of what is written of him.....For we know that God enjoined these things, and we say nothing apart from the Scriptures.'"

After reading this tissue of falsehoods, one cannot help noticing what a thoroughly dishonest set of religionists these early Christians were. It must be borne in mind, too, that the primitive Gospel-makers followed the same system. They say that Jesus did this, that, and the other "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying"—after which they quote a passage having no more reference to Christ than to the man in the moon.

Viewed in the light of this dishonest system of interpretation, we can have no difficulty in deciding as to the authorship of the lying statement quoted—"he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold this and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him." The author of these words was certainly not Josephus, for that historian everywhere throughout his writings assumes the Old Testament to be an inspired record of fact. The writer of the interpolated passage was, as already stated, a Christian of the school of Justin and Clement of Alexandria.

We will now turn to the historical evidence. The first to discover the paragraph was the ecclesiastical historian, Eusebius. Whether this writer forged the passage himself or merely found it in a copy of the *Antiquities* in use in his day, cannot now be determined. It is perfectly certain, however, that the paragraph was not in Josephus within, say, a century and a half of the date of the first publication of the work; for no writer before the time of Eusebius appears to have seen this remarkable testimony to Christ. We have evidence that many of the Christian writers prior to that time were well acquainted with the works of Josephus; but not one of them has quoted or made any reference to this notable passage. This fact in itself might not, perhaps, be decisive, did we not know that these writers were constantly on the look-out for anything in non-Christian works that might be twisted into evidence of the truth of the Gospel history.

Amongst those in the list of writers who must have noticed the paragraph in the *Antiquities*—had it been

there—are Theophilus of Antioch, Irenæus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen. Let us see if we can discover the reason for this conspiracy of silence.

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH (A.D. 180).—This bishop, in his Letters to his friend, Autolyceus, endeavors to prove to him the truth of the Christian religion, with the view of effecting his conversion. In four of these Letters (iii., xx., xxi., xxii.) he quotes, or takes his subject-matter, from Josephus, and in two of them he mentions that writer by name. Now, the interpolated passage containing the testimony of the Jewish historian to "Jesus, a wise man," a "doer of wonderful works," would have been the very best evidence he could have adduced for the purpose he had in view; but, needless to say, he does not once refer to it. The inference is plain: the passage was not in this bishop's copy of Josephus.

IRENÆUS (A.D. 185).—This writer mentions Josephus, and quotes matter from his *Antiquities*; but he makes no reference to the paragraph in question.

TERTULLIAN (A.D. 198).—This Christian writer, as we know, refers to the Report of Pilate to the Emperor Tiberius and to the Epistle of Pliny to Trajan; he also shows acquaintance with the writings of Tacitus and Josephus. The last-named historian he calls "their critic, the Jew Josephus, the native vindicator of the ancient history of his people." But this collector of forged evidence, as might be expected, makes no mention of the interpolated paragraph in the *Antiquities*—the inference again being that it was not in his copy.

ORIGEN (A.D. 250).—The testimony of this Christian scholar proves conclusively that the paragraph respecting Christ was not in Josephus in his day. In his Commentary on Matthew he quotes a passage from the *Antiquities* relating to "James, the brother of Jesus that was called Christ"; but he is silent concerning the witness of Josephus to Christ himself. But the testimony of Origen goes even further; for, in commenting on the passage respecting James, he says of Josephus: "And wonderful it is, that while he did not receive Jesus for Christ, he did nevertheless bear witness that James was so righteous a man." In the interpolated paragraph, however, the writer does "receive Jesus for Christ"; he says: "If it be lawful to call him a man.....He was the Christ."

Again, in his arguments against Celsus, the opponent of Christianity, Origen says:—

"I would say to Celsus.....that Josephus testifies in the eighteenth book of his *Antiquities* that John was the Baptist, and that he promised purification to those that were baptised. The same Josephus, also, when he was inquiring into the cause of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the demolition of the temple.....says: "These miseries befell the Jews by way of revenge for James the Just, who was the brother of Jesus that was called Christ," etc.

This writer, it will be seen, refers to the passage respecting John the Baptist, and quotes the interpolation relating to James; but he says nothing about Josephus having borne testimony to a far higher personage, to "Jesus, a wise man," a "doer of wonderful works," who "appeared to them alive again the third day." Had the interpolated paragraph respecting Christ been in Origen's copy of the *Antiquities*—and in the same eighteenth book from which he had quoted the statement concerning the Baptist—there cannot be the shadow of a doubt that he would not have failed to cite it. Origen quotes the minor passages respecting the Baptist and James, which really prove almost nothing; but the grand passage which would have completely annihilated the arguments and objections of Celsus he passes unnoticed. Though his object in quoting from the *Antiquities* was to prove the Gospel narratives historical, he carefully abstained from citing the only paragraph in the whole book which could have achieved that object. The reason for his silence is obvious. No such passage was in the *Antiquities* in his day, and the great Eusebius, who first discovered it, was not born until twenty years later.

ABRACADABRA.

Providence and Arthritis.

THE various salts of sodium are so exceptionally soluble that, according to Fownes's *Chemistry*, there is no good precipitant for sodium. Confronted with this unusual difficulty, the analytical chemist often has to determine the presence of sodium by negative evidence, or by the yellow color imparted to flame and the identification of the sodium line by spectrum analysis.

Having (unfortunately) had occasion to read up the latest medical information on the causes of rheumatism and allied diseases, I find, somewhat to my surprise, that in the organic world the rule of the solubility of the sodium salts has an important exception. After arranging the general solubility of the sodium salts, Providence broke through its rule and made the bi-urate of sodium insoluble, or practically insoluble, so that when this salt is formed in the blood (from the quad-urate, which is partially soluble) it deposits itself in the joints, extremities, etc., and is the cause of gout. Ordinary kinds of arthritis and of rheumatism in general (though not rheumatic fever, which is a distinct disease) are closely related to gout, and are probably of more or less similar origin, though the action of the superabundant urates may often be more complicated than in the case of gout. Gravel, eczema, and other complaints, are also due in some measure to these uneliminated urates. But arthritis (= affection of the joints, from the Greek *arthron*, a joint) is the predominant evil, this arthritis sometimes taking the form of gout, but more often of rheumatism, which of course is not confined to the joints.

The excruciating pain caused by gout is well known; and rheumatism, from the great number of its victims, especially among the old, and from the number of years during which it afflicts them, is, according to one writer, the cause of more suffering than any other disease, and perhaps of all other diseases put together. Providence ought to be proud of its work, by whatever devices it has secured such ends. Imagine the pretended Designer, the Intelligent Being, the God, looking down upon the world and beholding his handiwork—in this case men and women groaning with the agonies of gout and rheumatism, and poor aged cripples with bursting joints hobbling along painfully with the help of sticks or crutches, or helpless, with their hands mere distorted masses of chalk-stone, the arthritic deposit coming even through the skin, so that they tell you they can write on the wall with their knuckles as with a piece of chalk. And this, of course, is but a specimen of the innumerable evils and torturings over which the Great Designer of Diseases and Carnivora, and of Volcanoes and Earthquakes, and of Droughts and Famines, would be rejoicing as demonstrative examples of his wonderful skill and peculiar beneficence.

In the case of the various "uric acid troubles," the impious medical skill of the age endeavors to counteract the cruel designs of Providence by promoting the elimination of the uric acid by means of salts of lithia and potash, whose urates are soluble. Unfortunately, lithia, from which much was hoped, appears to be unable to take the uric acid from the sodium compound when once it has been formed. So that Providence is still triumphant, and man still suffers, though not so much as in bygone ages, when Science could neither cure nor mitigate the diseases so plentifully provided for man's comfort by their Great Designer.

Some Christians allege that gout is a punishment of the sins of the individual or of his forefathers. They forget that there is "poor man's" gout, associated with hard living or insufficient food, as well as "rich man's" gout. And they forget that there is no moral justification for punishing a son or grandson for his father's or grandfather's sins. A Being who tortures men for other men's misdeeds is guilty of gross injustice.

W. P. BALL.

A Parable.

ONCE upon a time there lived an Asiatic king, who ruled over many people, and raised his slaves to glory or sent them to imprisonment and cruel death just as he felt inclined. This king was praised and honoured by all, and his justice and goodness were declared to be infinite. Yet there was no evil that could be mentioned which he did not every day inflict upon his subjects, old and young, black and white, male and female. His cruelty knew no bounds. He delighted especially in setting the various tribes at war with each other, and revelled in the bloodshed. In spite of this, those about his court called him great, good, merciful, bountiful, tender, compassionate and kind; and declared that the lives and fate of all his subjects depended solely on his majesty's bounty and undeserved goodness.

The grand vizier of this king, one Win-De-Jab-Ber-A-Way, was more flattering to the king than any other of his slaves, and therefore the king loved him and showered upon him wealth and honours. When the vizier's children grew up his son, a bright youth of eighteen, was taken to the court and made his profound obeisance to the king; and the king graciously smiled upon him and made him his cupbearer. The king loved this young man so tenderly that scarcely a day passed in which he did not box his ears; and now and then he even struck and cut him with his scimitar. On one occasion he half killed him in this extreme loving fashion, and the cupbearer was confined to bed for a month. All this the king declared he did to exhibit his love for the young man, who was sufficiently supple to tell the king he might do whatever he pleased with him so long as it added to his gracious master's pleasure or glory, the only thing which concerned him. The grand vizier thanked the king most unctuously for the many distinctions he had poured upon his most undeserving son, who certainly had no good in him except what the king himself had graciously imparted to him. Even the boy's mother told the king the same. This horrid flattery, as might have been expected, but made the king still more cruel and barbarous in his treatment of the unfortunate cupbearer.

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered of his wound to re-enter upon his duties the king recommenced his barbarities. One day he chopped off one of his fingers, and the young man bowed and thanked the king for his goodness. Some time after his most gracious majesty broke the right leg of the poor lad, who exclaimed, "Not my will, O King, but thine be done!" And the king smiled a gracious smile. Instead of running away from this horrible king, as he might have done when recovered, the poor lad, corrupted and demoralised by his parents' training and example, said, "Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him and serve him."

For many months after this the king inflicted no barbarities upon his cupbearer, and the young man and his parents began to wonder whether their Lord and master had not lost all interest in him. Suddenly, however, his gracious love flamed up higher than ever, as we shall see. The young man, so the king said, had been guilty of a most heinous sin against his majesty, but he never would explain what the sin was, nor could the cupbearer or his parents ever guess the nature of it. He had not disobeyed the king in any way, had not stolen, nor shown the least disrespect, nor neglected any known duty; yet was the king wroth with him, and his wrath burned with the greatest fury. Whether the poor cupbearer had poured out the wrong wine for his most gracious majesty, or had poured just one drop too much or too little of his favourite brand; or whether he had blinked or blushed or faltered or exhibited the barest ghost of a limp in the royal presence, none could ever say. The only thing positively known about it was that his benevolent majesty had resolved upon subjecting the poor lad to the most excruciating torture.

He commanded his agents to fasten the young man by wire bonds to a large gridiron and roast him at a huge fire. They were to be careful not to endanger his life, but to inflict the keenest agony possible short of that. This gracious treatment was repeated before the king and all his grantees every day for a year. The victim was turned every way to the fire till every part of his body was scorched and reddened. The torture soon broke down the victim's powers of endurance. He cried for mercy, whereat the king laughed and held him in derision; he yelled in his agony, and called upon his parents, who were always present, to do something to save him from his cruel fate; but they sang the praises of the torturer and told their son that he really deserved all that their great and glorious king condescended to inflict upon him.

Behold, now the interpretation of the parable. The kin is the Christian God; "whom he loveth he chasteneth;" for some paltry fault, often not known to the offender, he damns his children to Hell fires, where they are punished and tormented in sight of their parents and relatives in heaven, who—as Christians tell us—lose no throb of heaven's bliss by seeing the endless torture of their own children, but say Amen to their damnation, and shout the praises of the torturer for ever and ever. Verily, there is no barbarity equal to the smallest fraction of that which is called the religion of love and mercy.

—*Liberator* (Melbourne).

JOS. SYMES.

Correspondence.

THE REMEDY FOR MILITARISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—*Apropos* of the recent letter of Mr. Frederick Ryan and the editorial remarks in the *Freethinker* on "Disarmament," there is a very important factor in the maintenance of the military attitude and spirit, the operation of which is so disguised that it seldom receives the attention it deserves.

Paradoxical as it may seem, unprincipled taxation is not only one of the greatest effects, but is also one of the greatest causes of war. The duties collected in Custom Houses are not based upon an equitable principle, and the importance of frontiers is owing mainly to machinery necessary for the manipulation of these imposts. In their absence the other great cause of war—the personal ambition of royal families—would be practically inoperative.

Before the politicians—who are all foolish and dishonest—can be induced to any useful activity for the eradication of the plague of standing armies there must be a general appreciation of the only just theory of public revenue. It is that every penny contributed should be a voluntary payment by an individual who desires to pay this money in order to secure a specific governmental service in return—somewhat similar to the payment of postage, as it would be under a sound classification of postal matter.

Politicians, misled by certain economists, have enacted taxation on all sorts of principles except this righteous one. Taxes have been levied upon luxuries, upon income, upon foreign-made goods, and upon bases absolutely opposed to justice; and public revenue has been expended upon a multiplicity of operations equally inconsistent with the sound and only fair purposes of government.

Government has only one correct function and one righteous source of revenue—the administration of justice. Taxation in general is very like blackmail which we pay to a big thief to get him to prevent other and smaller thieves from plundering us. Every other operation of life and of commerce is better in private hands. The competition of the struggle for existence is a self-acting corrective and perfective force for securing the best performance of all mutual services. Possibly even justice itself may eventually be left to competing agencies; but at present it is generally received as axiomatic that individuals must not take the law into their own hands.

The benefits of government are undoubtedly much greater, more important, and more costly in relation to the rich than to the poor. He whose wealth is protected gets more advantage, and at greater cost, than he who is prevented from stealing it. But ought the thieves to be those who should provide strong rooms to lock up the property of millionaires? Or ought tenants to pay for the machinery by which their landlords' rents are levied?

Every obstacle, such as frontier Custom Houses, placed upon the free exchange of services between men wherever they may happen to dwell, is a most mischievous tyranny.

The people who fail to see this are themselves, consciously or unconsciously, so unjust that they demand standing armies in their own and in other countries. There is no real freedom of trade where custom and excise duties are imposed. The sending of Parisian goods to the London market is no reason for tax-gatherers, with soldiers in the background, to mulct the buyers or the sellers; but the enormous funds raised by these and other species of blackmail are themselves a cause of the expenditure upon useless and harmful armaments.

It is quite erroneous to suppose that militarism assists capitalist commerce. Free trade is a more potent aid to the gains arising from exchange than can possibly be obtained in any other way.

Taxation of income is a most abominably unfair and illogical impost. Government may protect life and property, and may uphold contracts; but it cannot help the protected life, property, and contracts to make gains. It may fairly claim to be paid for what it does, but has no title to exact payment for a function which it neither performs nor assists.

If a few politicians had just a glimmer of light upon the true principle of taxation—payment to Government for service rendered—there might be some early hope for the world. But the most important thing is for the people to realise this for themselves. The politicians must follow if the people will not be misled.

The crying need of the hour is a universal strike against unjust taxes. Nearly all our taxes are unjust. Some few stamp duties are not so. With this exception, all taxes are based on rotten, tyrannical, and illogical principles. If we could tear down the Custom Houses, the forts and the fleets would soon rust for want of employment—

And man to man the world o'er
Would brithers be, and a' that.

To abolish war the nations must abolish all unjust taxation—especially frontier taxes and other hindrances to free passage from territory to territory. GREEVZ FISHER.

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 August.

BROCKWELL PARK: 3.15, Mr. E. Pack; 6.30, Mr. E. Pack.

CLERKENWELL GREEN (Finsbury Branch N. S. S.): 11.30, Mr. F. Schaller.

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY (West London Branch N. S. S.): 7.30, Mr. R. P. Edwards.

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

STATION ROAD (Camberwell): 11.30, Mr. E. Pack.

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

STRATFORD (The Grove): 7 p.m., Mr. E. Pack. Subject, "Sinners."

COUNTRY.

BRADFORD, Vacant Ground, Morley Road: H. Percy Ward lectures on Sundays at 3 and 7, and on Mondays and Thursdays at 8.

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY, Hall of Science, Rockingham Street: August 3, Mr. Geo. Berrisford, at 7, "The Teachings of Christ."

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

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H. PERCY WARD, 51 Longside-lane, Bradford.—August 17, Freethought Demonstration at Shipley Glen; August 31 to September 7, Freethought Mission at Liverpool.

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