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If Midge will pine and curse its hours away
Because Midge is not Everything For-aye,
Poor Midge thus loses its one summer day;
Loses its all—and winneth what, I pray?
JAMES THOMSON ("B.V.")

Lord Kelvin and Christianity.

ONE of our readers sends us a press cutting—apparently from the London *Sun* or *Echo*—which was sent to him by a Christian friend. It is a quotation from Lord Kelvin under the heading of a "Sermon of the Day." Our reader's Christian friend sent him a note with the cutting. "It is reasonable to assume," he wrote, "that Lord Kelvin would be as much in touch with the prevailing opinion of scientists as the editor of the *Freethinker*." This has reference to Lord Kelvin's statement that "The belief that most of our leading scientific men are hostile or indifferent to Christianity is entirely without foundation."

No doubt it is "reasonable to assume" that Lord Kelvin knows a larger number of scientific men than we do. But it is not "reasonable to assume" that this is of any importance to the matter in question. Lord Kelvin has a right to speak for himself. He has no right to speak for others—unless they have expressly commissioned him to do so. No one need be at Lord Kelvin's mercy for information on this subject. Many scientific men have given their opinions to the world, and everybody who chooses can learn at first-hand what those opinions are. It is perfectly clear, on the other hand, that scientific men who keep their opinions to themselves cannot be counted either way in a public discussion.

No one need ask Lord Kelvin what was Darwin's attitude towards Christianity, or Huxley's, or Tyndall's, or Clifford's; or what is the attitude towards Christianity of Haeckel, Berthelot, Sir Henry Thompson, or even Dr. Russel Wallace—for it must be remembered that, religious as he is, Dr. Wallace is not a Christian. One is able to go to authoritative sources for the opinions of these distinguished scientists, and for the opinions of a good many more whom we have not room to catalogue. Lord Kelvin's statement, therefore, is quite gratuitous; and, as such, it is really, in the logical sense of the word, impertinent.

After all, it is not so much the attitude of scientific men towards Christianity that is of the greatest importance; the attitude of Science itself is the great thing. Science is hostile, for instance, to the idea of miracle. No scientific man expects one to-day. But a scientific man cannot tell, any better than an ordinary man, whether miracles happened two thousand years ago. He can only say, just like an ordinary man, that as science is hostile to the idea of miracle now, there is a presumption against the occurrence of miracles in the past. And in the long run it is precisely this presumption that decides the question. We contract a habit of mind against what is contrary to our experience, and contrary to what we see is the wider basis of our experience. In this way we have discarded witchcraft; and in this way we are discarding the miraculous.

Take another illustration. It is very interesting to learn that Darwin could not see any "design" in the working of Natural Selection. But a rational man will not merely say "ditto" to Darwin. He will gladly accept information from Darwin, and then he will think the matter out for himself. And really it is not so difficult. One can easily see, in the light of Natural Selection, that the Design Argument is simply putting the cart before the horse. Adaptation of organisms to their environment is the admitted *fact;* not *perfect* adaptation, by a long way, but still *adaptation.* Well now, what is the *cause* of this adaptation? The "Design Argument" theologians say that God produced it by the foresight of his infinite wisdom. Natural Selection, however, shows us that adaptation is the result of a struggle for existence. All the non-adapted, who are the greater number, get knocked out; only the fairly well-adapted survive and continue the species. There is no discernible wisdom or benevolence in the process; it is a perpetual battle, with the slaughter of the unfit and the survival of the fit; and the result is merely a natural necessity. This can be perceived by any man who will use his own wits.

"There may be something," Lord Kelvin says, "in the study of science that leads to materialism—no doubt the advance of science has upset, legitimately, many of our theological notions—and I do not think it at all wonderful that young scientific men and readers of scientific books should be affected that way." It is a pity that Lord Kelvin is not more explicit. What *is* that "something" in the study of science that leads to materialism? And what *are* the "theological notions" that the advance of science has legitimately upset? Perhaps, if Lord Kelvin were to state *what* theological notions have thus been upset, it would be found that they are notions which all the Churches regard as vital to Christianity.

Lord Kelvin says that the majority of the leaders in his own particular branch of science (chemistry) in England are Christians; and he adds that "this is much the case in France also." This is rather loose language. What is "much the case"? It is either the case or it is not. With regard to France we consider the statement as untrue. But even if it were true, what is its value? Counting heads is a crude and silly way of arguing a question. And in *what sense* are these chemists Christians? One is entitled to know—for there are all sorts of Christians nowadays. Let us take the case of Lord Kelvin himself. He is a great chemist. Well, the New Testament says that Jesus Christ turned a vast quantity of water into wine. Does Lord Kelvin believe this? If he does not believe it, on what ground does he believe any other miracle in the New Testament? If he does believe it, how does he reconcile it with chemistry? Does he know any chemist in the world who can—even with appliances and ingredients—turn water into wine? He knows that wine contains chemical elements which are not present in water. If then he believes that Jesus Christ, by the mere power of his word, turned water into wine, it is perfectly clear that he does not believe it as a great chemist. He believes it, not *because* of chemistry, but *in spite of it.* And to hold him up, in that case, as a great chemist who believes in the New Testament, is on the face of it perfectly ridiculous. Such a belief is what the theologians

call "an act of faith," and has no relation to science whatever.

We must leave Lord Kelvin for the present. But we will give this parting advice to our readers. Never bow down before the mere prestige of great names. Think for yourself. Do not recognise the truth of authority. Recognise the authority of truth.

G. W. Foote.

Religion and the Moral Sense.

Last week I dealt with the chapter in Mr. Armstrong's book, *God and the Soul*, recommended by that gentleman as a simple and direct method of dealing with certain theistic difficulties. Mr. Armstrong's object in his book is to establish theism on a purely reasonable basis—a commendable object, often enough striven for, but never yet attained. The chapter I dealt with was concerned with what is known as "The Problem of Evil." But that, of course, took the existence of God for granted; and in earlier chapters Mr. Armstrong had to his own satisfaction given intellectual warranty for the belief in God in the shape of an examination of our consciousness of the external world, our sense of causation, and the existence in man of a moral sense. It is with the chapter dealing with this last line of defence that I am now concerned.

There is obviously only one apparently sure way of deriving the existence of God from the existence of a moral sense—that is to argue that we cannot explain its existence on any other hypothesis. If it is once admitted that the moral sense came into existence and has developed by the operation of known and non-intelligent forces, then there is no need to drag in God at all. Not that the demonstration of our inability to explain the origin and development of the moral sense is adequate grounds for asserting that its existence is due to supernatural causes. At most this is only a demonstration of our ignorance. But the theist usually takes the absence of knowledge on any particular topic as so much to the credit of religion, and Mr. Armstrong is, in this instance, no exception to the general rule.

Mr. Armstrong accordingly does not believe that any explanation can be given of the moral sense. In a sense it has grown with man, but *per se* it was there fully formed from the start. "This moral sense, which we all have, but cannot explain, is simple; therefore it is given to us in our nature, not derived from any other sense or senses. It is part of the original make of human nature, like the sense of causalty, or memory, and though we can never prove it, we cannot help believing it.....We can believe no other than that our moral nature is given us of God." Here is the orthodox religious argument in a nutshell. First a statement that a certain thing does not admit of explanation, then an inconsequential "therefore" to the effect that it never can be explained, and finally, a triumphant conclusion that it must have been given or created by God—"God" standing here, as always, as the symbol of our ignorance.

And, in making this statement concerning the moral sense, Mr. Armstrong is not conscious that he is "saying anything contrary to the great doctrine of evolution, rightly understood." One can only reply, So much the worse for Mr. Armstrong's understanding of evolution. If the teachings of evolution be correct, every faculty possessed by the human and animal world has been developed from non-human and non-animal beginnings. And, if that be so, every faculty must be decomposable, given the knowledge adequate to effect the process. To speak of any faculty as having been "given," either at once or gradually, is to betray a clear misunderstanding of the essential principles of evolution. If evolution be accepted, the only thing that is "simple," and that does not admit of any explanation, is bare existence. All else must be a more or less complex rearrangement of existent forces.

But what are the proofs that the moral sense does not admit of explanation? Mr. Armstrong's proof is that there are certain things we "instinctively" recognise as right or wrong, certain feelings that are "spontaneously generated," that utilitarianism does not adequately explain the moral sense, and that "right" and "wrong" are "unanalysable conceptions .....not derived from any reasonings, but appealing to a special faculty or sense within us." Let us see what this proof really amounts to.

That we "instinctively" recognise certain things as right or wrong no one will deny. The evolutionist, believing that the moral sense has been determined by the pressure of certain invariable factors in the environment, that essential morality is only another name for the feelings and actions which subserve the interests of the race, and that this morality is unconsciously practised long before it is consciously preached, would be the last to question the statement that we "instinctively" exercise moral discriminations. The essential question is not this, upon which time is so often wasted, but whether we can account for the growth of this instinct. The evolutionist is convinced that we can, and the mode of explanation can be seen from one or two simple illustrations.

We will take Mr. Armstrong's own illustration, selected as proof for his argument, that of disloyalty and dishonesty to a trusting friend. This brings about, we are told, a sense of shame, of personal unworthiness, of having broken an obligation and rebelled against an authority. In common parlance, we are suffering "qualms of conscience." Agreed, once again, although the cases where no such "pricks" are experienced, and the different degrees of self-torment experienced, are fatal to his position, if he only realised it. But what does it amount to? What *is* conscience? How is it formed? What is its value as a judge of right and wrong? Conscience was said by the late Kingdon Clifford to be the "tribal-self," and this put the answer in a phrase. Individual human nature has been developed in conjunction and co-operation with human nature in general. The individual has been responsive to the welfare of the tribe or of society, for the simple reason that social welfare was *the* condition of individual existence. *As* man, human individuality is a product of social life, and it is impossible to separate the two. Human nature has consequently been moulded—one might almost say created—with constant reference to this larger tribal-self; and the stings of conscience, after an act of disloyalty to a friend, is the natural outcome of the operation of the sense of corporate being, resulting from the nature of social life. For the first condition of social life is mutual trust and mutual help. And the development of social life inevitably weeds out such as run counter to the tribal sense of right and wrong. If Mr. Armstrong only reflects that some Hindoo widows felt all the agonies of self-torment when the British Government abolished Suttee, he will see that there is no more mystery about the moral "instinct" than there is about any other feeling that man possesses.

But Mr. Armstrong admits the variation in moral judgments. "It is not contended," he says, "that he (God) intimates that certain kinds of conduct are good and certain other kinds are evil.....What God's voice in conscience does is to extol benevolence and to condemn cruelty." One would like to know what on earth is the use of "God's voice" if this is all it does! There never has been, and never will be, any dispute as to whether there are certain things that should be called cruel. The characterisation is the condemnation. And, so long as human nature is capable of any discrimination whatever, the distinction is bound to exist. The whole dispute is whether *particular* things should be called cruel or not; and Mr. Armstrong must be aware that so long as religious beliefs have been associated with morality, in the majority of cases actions which we should agree in calling barbarous and inhuman, have been perpetrated with an approving conscience, and with "God's voice" directing. Mr. Armstrong further

remarks on this head that the way one's judgment goes in a particular case is "a question not decided by conscience, but by accident of education, association, tradition, and circumstance," is almost too hopelessly confused for criticism. If conscience does not decide, what does? And if conscience is not formed by "education, association, tradition, and circumstances," what is it formed by? And how does Mr. Armstrong explain the difference in the style of conscience possessed by say an African savage and a Unitarian preacher?

Mr. Armstrong imagines that he has disposed of utilitarianism by quoting Mill's famous declaration that he would call no God good who was not good in the human sense of the word, and that "if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go." This he imagines to be a disproof of the principle of utility, and cites Dr. Ward, approvingly, that "When a crucial case really comes before him [J. S. Mill] his better nature compels him to decide sternly, peremptorily, effusively, indignantly, against his own doctrine."

How so? Mill's teaching was that the only grounds for calling an action moral was its conduciveness to the general happiness. Does Mr. Armstrong or Dr. Ward really believe that if Mill had, under the fear of hell, admired in God qualities that he abhorred in man, and, carrying out the same principle, flattered all who were strong enough to punish him, and only condemned those he was strong enough to punish, that the general welfare of society would have been promoted? Does he believe that if we all acted on the same principle the stock of human happiness would be greater than it is? Of course, if he does, then his criticism will have at least the recommendation of his understanding Mill's position and condemning it. But if he does not believe that an abject attitude towards the powerful, and that an entire misuse of moral terms under the influence of fear will make for the general happiness of society, then it seems that Mill is right and Mr. Armstrong is, in spite of himself, supporting the principle he repudiates. Not that this is at all a unique position for a theologian to be found in.

Having tried to show that the moral sense is a gift from God, and that it cannot be explained by any known natural cause, Mr. Armstrong next proceeds to argue that morality is a virtual impossibility in the absence of the belief in God. "Cut this thought right out of the human heart, and who will say how terrible will be the fall of man and the breaking up of the bonds of human society?.....It is the one lever beyond all others to lift mankind to pure, effective, and noble manhood."

But against this very old-fashioned and stupid view there is the undeniable fact that those who have "cut this thought right out of their heart," are no worse in character than their Christian neighbours, and are sometimes even better. Perhaps they ought not to be so, and very likely the fact of their not being worse than they are is a fresh proof of moral weakness, but the fact remains. How are we going to explain this? Well, says Mr. Armstrong, the explanation is that "they have been born into an atmosphere of belief in God, and the solemn religious sanctions of morality. They enjoy the heredity of a moral character formed under the influences of the Christsan faith." It is the salutary influence of dead and living Christians that keep Freethinkers up to the mark. The consequences of being left to ourselves are horrible—for Mr. Armstrong—to contemplate.

But Mr. Armstrong's argument proves just a little *too* much. If the morality of Freethinkers is the result of their Christian ancestry, Protestant morality may also be said to be the result of a Catholic ancestry, Catholic morality the result of Paganism, and so on, until one is left wondering how on earth there ever came to be any morality at all. Surely Ms. Armstrong ought to realise that unless each generation lifts itself a little above its predecessors progress is a complete impossibility. And when one remembers that Mr. Armstrong has deliberately disassociated himself from historic Christianity, when ws recollect also the gross distortions of the moral sense under the influence of Christianity, that Christianity has admittedly been partly purified and humanised by the attacks of Freethinkers, and that these attacks were, in a large number of instances, in the name of a loftier morality, Mr. Armstrong's argument is not merely an impertinence, but it is so absurdly unphilosophic, that it disarms resentment by its grotesque character.

There is a glimmer of the perception of a valuable principle in Mr. Armstrong's statement, although it is at present covered and rendered useless by religious prejudice. This principle is the one that the morality of any generation is the outcome of certain forces, constant in their action operating upon successive generations. The special characteristics of English or Turkish or Kaffir morality or character are due to the general circumstances prevailing over special areas for many generations. And the general characteristics of human morality, taken as a whole, are also due to the pressure of certain forces operating upon humanity as a whole. And these are, in a word, the *social forces* modified by special local conditions. The contact of men and women, the existence of the family, the necessity for mutual help, mutual protection, and the consequent development of certain faculties and feelings are the constant factors in the shaping of human morality, not the belief in an inconceivable Deity or a mythical hereafter. If Mr. Armstrong sees any probability of these factors vanishing with the belief in God, then he will be warranted in trembling for the future of a society divested of religion. If not, I would venture to suggest that the perception of character is made or marred by forces that operate upon all alike, is far more likely to make for mental charity and moral sanity than resting morality upon an unprovable theological speculation.

C. Cohen.

The Refutation of Dr. Wallace.

"Men are in the habit of measuring the greatness and the wisdom of the universe by the duration and the profit which it promises to their own race; but the past history of the earth already shows what an insignificant moment the duration of the existence of our race upon it constitutes."—Professor Helmholtz, *Popular Lectures*, p. 191.

"It can, however, be no longer doubted that nature proceeds in a way which has no similarity with human purposefulness; nay, that the most essential means is such that, measured by the human understanding, it can only be compared with the blindest chance."—Lange, *History of Materialism*, vol. iii., p. 33.

"It no longer occurs to physicists, chemists, mineralogists, or astronomers to seek to find in the phenomena which continually appear before them in their scientific domain the action of a Creator acting for a definite purpose."—Professor Haeckel, *History of Creation*, vol. i., p. 21.

"The earth is now known to be an insignificant speck, a mere atom of dust in the universe, and that the millions of stars, visible with any good telescope, are suns like our own, many being much larger, and that these are almost certainly surrounded by encircling planets."—Sir Henry Thompson. *Fortnightly Review*, March, 1902.

Dr. Wallace, in his article on "Man's Place in the Universe," in the March number of the *Fortnightly Review*, attempted to prove the anthropocentric theory of the universe—the theory taught in the Bible, and believed all through the Middle Ages (until shattered by Copernicus and Galileo), that the sun, moon, stars, and planets, in fact all the universe, was created for the sole use and benefit of man.

The full title of the article was "Man's Place in Universe, as Indicated by the New Astronomy." Now, although Dr. Wallace is a famous naturalist, he is not an astronomer, and two astronomers who enter the arena in this month's magazines have no difficulty in quickly demolishing Mr. Wallace's house of cards.

Professor Turner, who is Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford, contributes "A Reply" in the *Fortnightly Review* for April; and Mr. Walter Maunder, the well-known astronomer, contributes one to *Knowledge* for the same month.

Mr. Maunder opens his article by remarking that perhaps the greatest drawback under which science "labors at the present time is the impatience of the general public to receive precise, definite, and striking results," and instances Madler's celebrated suggestion that our sun and planets were travelling in a gigantic orbit. "In how many thousands of essays, lectures, books, and sermons the statement has appeared that science has proved that the centre of attraction of the universe is located in Alcyone, the chief of the Pleiads, it would be useless to guess. Contradicted a thousand times, the legend seems to have lost none of its pristine vigor. Give a fable a yard's start, and truth appears to be unable to overtake it in less than a century. We greatly fear that just such another myth has been started on its career, and by one of the most highly and most justly honored living men of science."

Mr. Maunder goes on to point out that, unless Dr. Wallace proves his first point—viz., that our universe is finite—his whole argument falls to the ground; for, "unless the material universe can be proved finite, we certainly cannot prove that any particular body occupies its centre." Dr. Wallace argues for the limitation of our universe by pointing out that the great telescopes do not reveal fainter stars in anything like the proportion which smaller telescopes had done; as if we are getting to the end of the stars, and looking out into the blackness of space beyond. But, as Mr. Maunder points out, this is partly accounted for by the fact that the increase in the size of the telescope "is necessarily accompanied by an increase in the absorption of its object-glass, and we are approaching the limit where the gain and loss will be balanced. So, too, with the photographic plate."

Dr. Wallace's next argument for a limited universe is that, if the stars were infinite in number, we should receive an infinite amount of light from them, and "we should at least receive quite as much light from them as the sun gives us at noonday," and quotes Professor Newcomb in his support. But, says Mr. Maunder, "Dr. Wallace has omitted two important limitations which Professor Newcomb attaches to this conclusion." And he points out that:—

> "Professor Newcomb's demonstration rests on the two conditions that light must come through space to us without any loss, and that the stellar universe must, on the whole, be uniform in constitution; it must not be structured. We know that neither of these conditions holds good. As there are bright bodies in space, so are there dark bodies. If the first be infinite in number, so must also be the second; we may almost say that the infinity of the second must be of a higher order. As Sir Robert Ball recently put it, 'the dark stars are incomparably more numerous than those that we can see.....and to attempt to number the stars of the universe by those whose transitory brightness we can perceive would be like estimating the number of horseshoes in England by those which are red hot.' The same line of argument which would infer that from an infinity of bright suns the background of the sky should shine as the sun at noonday, will lead yet more forcibly to the conclusion, when the dark stars are the basis of the argument, that we are shut in by a veil which no light from an infinite distance can pierce. On the second point, that of structure, we need only the evidence of our eyes. The existence of the Milky Way is proof that our stellar system has a strongly marked form. There is no approach to uniformity of the stars as to direction, why should we assume that there is in distance?"

Professor Newcomb's book,* upon which Dr. Wallace relies, was published in 1901, and, says Professor Turner, "It is a striking illlustration of the rapidity of advance in astronomy that since 1901 a new fact has been discovered which renders insecure some of the steps by which Professor Newcomb arrives at the conclusion that the 'collection of stars which we call the universe is limited in extent.'" In February, 1901, a new star blazed up in the constellation Perseus, and gradually resolved itself into a nebula. This fact, interesting in itself, led to another highly interesting discovery. The brightness of this star brought to light "the previously unsuspected existence of a *vast nebula, not self-luminous, but capable of reflecting light, and therefore of partially obstructing it.* We have known of '*dark stars*' before —here we learn of '*dark nebula.*' How many such bodies are there?"

Professor Turner goes on to ask:—

> "Are the 'dark rifts' in the Milky Way—the most notable of which is called the 'Coal-sack'—are these really tunnels through the visible universe into an outer space void of stars? This is the view favored by Professor Newcomb. But another view has been suggested —that there is some screen which obstructs the light from stars beyond. When Professor Newcomb's book was written there was no positive evidence to support this view; since it was written, we have obtained indications of a dark nebula such as might satisfy the condition."

"What," asks the Professor, "would happen if we had an infinite succession both of bright bodies and dark bodies intermingled?" And he answers, "We should probably get the sort of appearance we actually see." So much for Dr. Wallace's attempt to limit the universe, and with the collapse of this part of his argument, all the rest falls to the ground; but even if this point is conceded, the remaining parts of his argument are equally baseless, and quite as easily refuted, viz., that we occupy the centre of the universe, and because of the greater advantages of that position for producing life, ours is probably the only planet in the universe on which humanity has been developed. In support of this view, and speaking of the stars on the confines of our system, he asks: "Must not a certain proportion of these stars continually escape from the attractive powers of their neighbours, as a result of collisions, or in other ways, and, wandering into outer space, soon become dead and cold and lost for ever to the universe." But, objects Professor Turner, "we have no reason for supposing that if the stars were blotted out of existence our sun would become dead and cold sensibly sooner than under present conditions..... it has never, so far as I am aware, been suggested that we are kept alive by the 'attractive powers of our neighbours,' the fixed stars, or by their influence in any other form. We might 'wander into outer space without losing anything more serious than we lose when the night is cloudy and we cannot see the stars."

As to our occupying the centre of the visible universe, says Professor Turner, "the fact itself, if fact it be, can only invite our polite attention as a curious coincidence.....If there *is* a centre of the visible universe, and if we occupy it to-day, we certainly did not do so yesterday, and shall not do so to-morrow." For our solar system is travelling among the stars at such a speed that if we take Dr. Wallace's "own conception of the approximate dimensions of the universe [if I rightly interpret his words], so far from our having tranquilly enjoyed a central position in '*unbroken continuity* for scores or perhaps hundreds of millions of years,' we should in that time have traversed the universe from boundary to boundary," and "the time we shall take to travel from our present position to the remoter stars is less than five million years; and, similarly, five million years ago we were among the remoter stars, where he considers life to be impossible."

Mr. Maunder uses the same argument, and points out that if we have travelled in a straight line at the speed we are going now, "five million years ago we were deep in the Milky Way; five million years hence we shall have completely crossed the gulf which it encircles, and again be a member of one of its constituent groups, but on the opposite side. And ten million years are regarded by geologists and biologists as but 'a trifle on account' to meet their demands on the bank of Time." It should be remembered in this connexion that life has existed upon the earth, according to modern geologists, between fifty and one hundred million years.

Professor Turner disputes that we are at the centre of the universe even if it were limited in extent; he says; "Now there is one important

* *The Stars. A Study of the Universe*, Lond. Murray, 1901.

previous question: has the universe a centre? Has a saucepan a centre? The bowl may have a centre, but if we claim a centre for the whole saucepan we must not leave the handle out of account. There is an exceptional and extraordinary feature of the universe of stars which has something in common with the handle of a saucepan, and cannot be left out of account in a discussion of this kind."

We have gone into this subject at some length; our apology is that Dr. Wallace will be cited for years to come as upholding the authority of the Bible by placing the earth at the centre of the universe. Our aim has been to show that however great Dr. Wallace may be as a naturalist, he is no authority on astronomy, as our leading astronomers have hastened to show.

His fame will rest not on this astronomical vagary, or his advocacy of spiritualism, but as the co-discoverer with Darwin of the origin of species.

W. Mann.

"God" or Humanity?

At the "New Religious Educational Association," recently organised in Chicago, Mr. Beard said:—

It is something to be wondered at that so many of the great leaders of religious and educational thought and activity should leave their work, in many cases of the utmost urgency, and come thousands of miles to give a half-hour's, or perhaps but five minutes', address. Such a zealous movement is no wonder at all; the move was a perfectly natural one. Religious teachers begin to see that a great move must be made or else they will soon have no people to teach. Sectarian, religious teachers begin to realise that they cannot do much individually, so they, like the business trusts, are driven to try to reach the people collectively. The object of this organisation is to revive religious work in church, in the Sunday school, in the various young people's societies, and in the home, by maintaining a family altar. It is clear to all observing people that all of these religious fires have gone out and that religious people have lost faith in the so-called means which, as it has been alleged, give life and vigor to all religious work. It is not religious work that the world needs; it needs good, sound, moral work outside of the home, the church, the Sunday school, and young people's societies. Moral work is far superior to religious work, which consists of forms and ceremonies. When all religious forms and ceremonies are done away and true morality is practised, every day and every hour, the world will be a great deal better. Religious observances are a detriment to the practice of morality, because by them the worshipper feels justified, and is led to think that so long as God is adored his whole duty is done. An ounce of morality is worth more than a ton of religion. If all the time, money, and individual effort, which is now spent in worshipping and trying to please a fanciful god, was used in doing good to real men, women, and children, there would be more sense and reason manifest in the work. It would really be "something to be wondered at" if "so many religious teachers" would travel thousands of miles to devise a plan to start a moral reform to educate people to be moral, instead of religious.

The worship of a god is a gigantic hallucination that must be dispelled; it is a delusive adoration of a being who has no real existence, and it is robbing mankind of the rightful homage which they should pay to one another. It is humanity that needs assistance, not "God"; and when the world wakes up to this fact, men and women of a humanitarian character will travel thousands of miles from the east, west, north, and south to organise to give the much-needed movement a forcible and enthusiastic start. The religious worship of a god is similar to that which is practiced by the court women of the King of the Zulus, who, when he is seated upon his throne, dance around him and sing, "Great is Cetshwayo; big as a mountain, strong as an elephant." It is the subjects that need adoration, not kings.

A Death-Dealing Missioner.

We advise all opponents to keep out of the way of the Jesuit Father Kipp, who is a missioner in Sangamner, a town about a hundred miles north-east of Bombay. He has ghostly protection that cannot be resisted. He tells the story in the *Vorkener Wochenblatt* of September 20, 1902. He tells how the Protestant emissaries attempted by gifts of money, food, and clothes, to seduce his converts. An English missionary (name not given) opened war on his work and declared that in a brief period the entire Sangamner Mission would be destroyed. Thereupon Father Weishaupt—and a wise-head he was—laid the case before the image of St. Joseph, and bade the mission children pray for the deliverance of the mission. "Behold! in a few days came the information that the preacher had suddenly died of a hemorrhage." Shortly afterwards a heathen officer in the same relief camp, where the poor people got work, kept making trouble for the Christians. See what happened: Father Weishaupt began nine days' mind to the Holy Heart of Jesus, with the children. On the third or fourth day of the mind the officer was a corpse. A malignant ulcer had produced blood poisoning. Thus had St. Joseph and the Divine Heart of Jesus removed two enemies of our mission out of our way. Then a heedless Brahman gave them trouble. He was the chief officer in a relief camp, where some 15,000 men were at work. He once went so far as to strike one of the native catechists with his cane. This time Father Kipp took the matter in hand, but his prayers were not quite so effective as Father Weishaupt's. He says: "I laid his name before the image of the Holy Heart of Jesus, and directed our children to pray. Help was not slow in coming. A severe fever seized the Brahman, so that he had to take a furlough, and soon after was permanently removed from the camp."

It is not easy to understand why a church, whose agents have control of such dire powers as those exercised by Father Kipp, should be asking the Chinese Government for indemnity on account of missionaries killed and property destroyed. Why not set the Holy Heart of Jesus and the image of St. Joseph after the Boxers?—*New York Independent.*

War Against the Clergy.

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," says the Bible. Our friends would do well to observe that rule. Post any amount of blasphemous literature and matter, especially from the Bible; but don't let anyone know you are doing it. Disguise your hand, do anything to turn the holy blood-hounds off the scent. We live in a state of war; and it is universally allowed that the very best of men may, and ought, to deceive the enemy in war. Don't play into the hands of your implacable foes more than you can help. Remember, the clergy and their tools have no sense of justice, no conscience, no decency, no consideration for us, and that they scorn the very notion of giving us fair-play. We can have no consideration for such fellows; we ask no quarter from them, we shall give none. If I felt inclined—as my nature has often prompted me—to show them some consideration, I should remember the murdered Bradlaugh, done to death by their devilish conduct; I should remember the last time I saw Mr. Foote, saw him, but could not reach him, in Holloway Gaol, there punished as a felon for speaking the truth and striking for human freedom; I should remember the nineteen years of their persecution and incessant slander of myself in Melbourne; I should recall the brutal treatment of William Lea in Ballarat; I should remind myself of the case of Charles Rose and the case of John Chandler. No, no! my life must be a ceaseless war with the clergy. Destroy their power, and the world will be free, moral, and prosperous, but never till then. I fight for human emancipation, for human virtue, and manliness; and as the worst foes of man are the clergy, it is against them and their trade that I turn my double-shotted guns. The sneaks and cowards dare not meet me in fair debate or a stand-up duel, but they resort to tricks and expedients that would disgrace footpads or highwaymen. Verily the clergy are the worst cowards and the worst rogues in existence, and I mean to treat them as such.—*Joseph Symes, the "Liberator"* (Melbourne).

Acid Drops.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell, Dr. Parker's successor at the City Temple, speaking at Hornsey the other day, said that the object of the Education Act was to destroy Nonconformity. He was a member of Lord Rosebery's League, but he did not know how long he was going to be. If Lord Rosebery did not fight their battle now, he would never have another chance; and if all political parties failed them they would pray God to give them ten more years of Dr. Clifford and they would win the victory by themselves. Well, if they can win with the aid of God and John Clifford—or John Clifford and God—what do they want to trouble about political parties at all for? And why all this pother and anxiety?

Dr. Campbell will not see (at least in public) that the Nonconformists made the whip with which they are lashed. If they had stood from the first upon the Nonconformist principle of complete separation between religion and the State, there would never have been any religious instruction in the public schools, and consequently no struggle over it now. The Nonconformists are being beaten in that struggle, and they have only themselves to thank for it. They are paying the penalty of betraying their own principles. And some of us are pleased to witness the spectacle.

The meeting that Dr. Campbell addressed at Hornsey pledged itself to refuse voluntary payment of the Education rate. We shall see by-and-by what these pledges really amount to. We shall also see whether rate-collectors will receive rates on the instalment system.

The report of the Mosely Industrial Commission to the United States is now published. The Commission finds many things in which the American workman is ahead of ourselves, the principal reason for the superiority being that the American workman receives a sounder and better education. "Education is given unsparingly, from the elementary to the higher grade and technical schools. In the Northern States no child is allowed to leave school till it is fourteen years old. An inquiry at what was said to be an average school in a working-class locality elicited the statement that 50 per cent. of the children remainnd at school until they were fifteen, and nearly 25 per cent. until they were sixteen. At the technical college the full course of engineering is four years, and the junior course two years. Some go in for an all-round training, and others for special training in one subject."

The reason for the superior education given to the American industrial population is partly found, perhaps, in the statement of one of the delegates that "the Americans have no religious difficulty to contend with in their education." We presume that what is meant is that it has not the religious difficulty that we have. He proceeds to say that "There is no religious education in America as we understand the term, yet secular education there produces results that, outwardly at any rate, bear comparison with our own. There is a remarkable absence of bad language in the streets; this was particularly noticeable in the Saturday night crowds." Another delegate remarks that "Americans laugh at our Education Bill, and twit us with caring more for dogmatic teaching than for the intelligence of the children."

The two last quotations carry with them their lesson for English people, if they are only sensible enough to see it. While other countries are using their public shools as instruments for turning out a keener and more intelligent generation, we permit our schools to be used as a fighting ground for Episcopalian parsons and Nonconformist ministers. The public allows itself to be bamboozled by the idiotic cry of no sound morality without religion by the one, and the hypocritical cry of "the rights of citizenship" by the other. There is nothing but the religious question that stands in the way of English schools being made at least as efficient as those of other nations; but so long as we tolerate religion in the schools we shall continue to lag behind. Time was when religion crushed reform by burning the reformer. The times have changed, and this drastic method is no longer possible. The method now is to obstruct the reformer by keeping the general intelligence down to as low a level as possible. And in this work the great instrument is, and always has been, religion.

The accident to Sir Thomas Lipton's new yacht, by which a steward lost his life, recalls to the memory of a *Daily News* writer that two years ago, during the trial runs of *Shamrock II.*, the King would have suffered a sudden death had not "Providence" preserved him. On which one feels inclined to ask why was not "Providence" equally attentive to the poor fellow who was killed last week? Or is this expecting too much? If "Providence" looks after the lives of kings and yacht-owners, it is perhaps too much to expect it to condescend to protect common, every-day kind of people. The Englishman dearly loves a lord, and the Englishman's God appears to follow suit.

Having heard so much of Turkish atrocities, we may as well listen to reports on the other side. For the Mohammedans are not all born devils, and the Christians are not all born angels. The *Daily News* has been telling how the Mohammedans have been treating the Christians in Macedonia. Now the *Times* tells of a Christian performance of the same character, with some slight improvements. "The latest Bulgarian achievement," the *Times* correspondent says, "was the total destruction of a small village with an exclusively Mussulman population of 165 persons—men, women, and children, all of whom, excepting a very few who saved themselves by flight, were massacred in cold blood. All the pregnant women were disembowelled, and their corpses, with those of the unborn children torn from them, were discovered scattered about among the ruins of the village. One woman was impaled."

It was just the same more than two generations ago in the struggle between Greece and Turkey—which was, of course, eventually decided by the European Powers. Finlay, the historian, records that the Greeks were not at all behind the Turks in "atrocities." They were rather a bit in front of them—especially in the savage massacre of women and children. Religion, in fact, did not soften either side. It rather aggravated their animosities. This, indeed, has been the universal effect of religion.

Corporations have neither bodies to be kicked nor souls to be damned. Perhaps it is for this reason that so few people think it really wrong to "do" a Railway Company. Even ministers of religion have been known to share this popular sentiment. Quite recently, for instance, the Rev. Robert James Savage, of Muswell Hill, was fined forty shillings and costs for "travelling on the Great Northern Railway without paying his fare, with intent to avoid payment thereof." The reverend gentleman's "explanation" through his solictor was not accepted by the Court.

General Booth's seventy-fourth birthday was celebrated at Exeter Hall on April 15. There was the usual crowded meeting, and the usual enthusiasm. The new Moses (hair, beard, nose, and all) delivered a lengthy address to his "children," in the course of which he said that God had made him a mighty instrument in saving thousands of souls. This is a compliment that the "General" ought to have waited for God or somebody else to pay him. But modesty was never William Booth's strong point. Indeed, he went on to say that the Salvation Army had revolutionised the idea of Christianity, and it would be for the third or fourth generation to say what a "mighty movement" it was. Naturally it does not occur to Mr. Booth that the third or fourth generation may never hear of him or his "Army."

The *Daily News* religious census for Woolwich was taken on Sunday, April 5. We thought the enumeration was kept secret until it was over, but our contemporary is "indebted to the Rev. Canon C. E. Escreet, Rector of Woolwich, for kindly entertaining a number of enumerators to tea." The aggregate attendance (reckoning morning and evening worshippers as different persons!) worked out at one in 3·69. One person in eight went to church in the morning, and one person in seven in the evening. One woman in eight went in the morning, and one woman in five in the evening. One man in eleven went in the morning, and one man in nine in the evening. Which is deemed "encouraging." The total Church of England attendance was 12,335; Nonconformist, 14,312; Roman Catholic, 4,212; Other Services, 606.

Mr. Holyoake often writes letters to the *Daily News*. He should really address it another letter on the use of the word "lie." When that word was applied by Mr. Foote to the late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes's "Atheist Shoemaker" story, Mr. Holyoake could hardly find terms to express his indignation. Fancy associating the word "lie" with the name of an eminent Wesleyan minister! It was *too* awful. Now the *Daily News* represents Wesleyans and other Nonconformists, and it does not scruple to use the word "lie." We have often seen the word in its editorial columns. We noted it in "Table Talk," on April 16. Here is Mr. Holyoake's opportunity for another discourse on "manners."

Richard Turpin (our old friend "Dick") has a place in the new Index and Epitome of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. His career is given in a few lines, and the succinct account ends with the words, "the romances connected with his name being legendary." Tell that to boys who are still in the "highwayman" stage, and they will laugh or spit at you. They are not going to be robbed of a beautiful belief. Just in the same way, the Christians laugh or spit at those who say of Jesus that "the romances connected with his name are legendary." They are not going to be robbed of a beautiful belief either.

There are at least three "last words" of Jesus on the cross—"It is finished," "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," and "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Which were the real "last words"? Tolstoy settles it by taking all three, and placing them in the order most flattering to the god of his idolatry. Probably all three are quite legendary, like the Duke of Wellington's "Up guards, and at 'em," at Waterloo; and the Abbé Edgeworth's "Son of St. Louis, ascend to Heaven," at the execution of Louis XVI—which appears to have been invented by a journalist named Charles Hiss.

Heine, who drew attention to the Louis XVI. legend, pointed out that the world insisted on making the mild Abbé Sieyès mount the Tribune and vote for "*la mort sans phrase*" when the King's fate was under discussion. What really happened was this. As he stepped down from the Tribune he said to a friend, "*J'ai voté la mort sans phrase*"—meaning that he would not add to the speechifying. But the legend was too striking to be abandoned, and the terrible "*la mort sans phrase*" still holds the field.

Apparently there are officials in Sunday-schools whose proper place is the penitentiary. Assembly Ulrich of New York recently had occasion to rebuke a young man in a street-car for persecuting a young lady with his unwelcome attentions, and the youth said to him, "Back to Germany with you, you damned Jew." When the assemblyman alighted from the car the rowdy followed, provoked a quarrel, and nearly killed Mr. Ulrich by stabbing him in the face and neck. The fellow, upon being arrested and examined, proved to be one William Gettys, treasurer of Class No. 4 in the Greene Avenue Presbyterian Church Sunday School, Brooklyn.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

One does occasionally meet with a little straight talking—even in the pulpit. The Rev. Dr. Parkhurst, of New York, somewhat surprised his congregation by saying: "I have not lived to my age without knowing what internal and infernal lies I sometimes tell myself, and how desperately hard I sometimes work in the effort to fool myself. And I would stake all I am worth on the assertion that in this particular you are just like me—insincere, evasive; part wool and a good deal of cotton; knowing duty, lying out of it; beholding God, crouching behind the trees." The *Christian World* doubts if this sort of preaching does good to anyone. We beg to differ. True, it may not advance theological interests; but, with this exception, we are of opinion that straightforward talking does everyone more or less good. True, the pulpit is not usually the place where one gets it, but its appearance there is welcome none the less.

The *British Weekly* is so disturbed at Mr. Charles Booth's criticism of the work of the Churches in London that it has elicited and printed the opinions of the ministers criticised concerning the strictures passed by the great sociologist. One minister plaintively remarks that he is "sincerely sorry Mr. Booth thought it wise to write of us as he did," a feeling which we have no doubt is shared by the others. The customary method is for someone to visit a mission or a church, listen to the glowing reports of those who run the concerns, and then testify as to the great good done. Mr. Booth's method was different; hence the tone of his work. For the *British Weekly* to pit the opinions of the ministers and missioners against Mr. Booth is almost childish in its simplicity. Mr. Booth has nothing to gain by coloring the facts; the others have everything to gain by magnifying the results. Besides, it hardly needs much consideration to see that the facts support Mr. Booth. In the absence of remedial social agencies, poverty, prostitution, and other evils remain what they were in quality and quantity, in spite of the efforts of Church and Chapel. And it is notorious that, as in the case of the Salvation Army, in the districts where they have been longest at work the present results are the poorest. Why does not the *B. W.* set to work to show that in any special district certain social evils have been diminished by religious agencies, and by them alone? If it will do this, it will have accomplished something worth talking about. To ask for the opinions of clergymen and the like as to whether their work is beneficial or not is like discharging a prisoner on his bare assertion of "Not guilty."

In the *Hibbert Journal* Dr. Josiah Oldfield writes on the subject of "Christian Missions in India." Like nearly all non-interested observers he pronounces them a failure. The Hindu, he says, considers the missionary as preaching a lower religion than their own, also as being ignorant, and, after reading the reports sent home, dishonest. Respectable and educated Hindus feel insulted by the class of men sent out to convert them. People asked him, "Would you send an East-end coster to address the members of the University of Oxford in order to convert them to Christianity"—a remark which shows pretty clearly the educated Hindu's opinion of the average missionary.

The much talked-of self-sacrifice of the missionary is illustrated by a friend—a European—telling him that if they went to see the missionary of the town they would find him at anything but "spiritual" labors. They drove round to the missionary's house, and were informed by his servant that he was at the club. On a message being sent for the missionary, he came to them dressed in flannels with a tennis racquet. Lastly, Dr. Oldfield confirms the statement so often made that Christian converts are gained from the lower classes, and usually from interested motives.

The *Church Times* commenting on Dr. Oldfield's article attempts to take the sting out of the condemnation by pointing out that Christianity in its earliest years gained its converts from the lowest classes and was looked down upon in consequence. Quite so; but it by no means follows, as the *Church Times* assumes that the same thing is going to happen to Christianity in India as happened to it in the Roman Empire. There is now no unscrupulous Emperor to force Christianity upon the people, nor is there any likelihood of science, philosophy, and anti-christian forces being repressed by the State. And without these helps Christianity never would have become the religion of the western world. Under fair conditions Christianity would have gone under as so many other Eastern superstitions went. It was the unsound conditions of social and political life that gave Christianity its chance; its political power gave it the means of crushing by brute force the opposition it could not otherwise destroy; and these conditions are not likely to recur. In India the educated native is conversant with European literature. He knows all that can be said against Christianity, and he says it. Christian effort may enable him to shake off his own religion, but like the Japanese, the Hindu having got rid of his own superstition, does not seem inclined to adopt another.

The Council of the University of Dorpat recently elected Count Tolstoy as one of its honorary members. At the same time it conferred upon "Father John," of Kronstadt, the same honor. The latter, however, declines the honor, and feels himself aggrieved at being elected by a body "which by an insulting misunderstanding has placed me on a level with that godless man, Count Leo Tolstoy, the most evil heretic of our time, surpassing all the heretics that have ever been in his pride and presumption. I do not wish to be placed beside anti-Christ. Moreover, I am astonished at the latitudinarianism which the Council has displayed with regard to a Satanic author, and at the manner in which it burns incense before him." Nothing like Christianity for developing love and charity.

One of the most interesting documents extant is the letter from Adam Smith to William Strahan, giving an account of the last hours and death of David Hume. The eulogy with which it closes is honorable to both sides. "Upon the whole," Adam Smith concluded, "I have always considered him, both in his lifetime and since his death, as approaching as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wise and virtuous man as perhaps the nature of human frailty will permit."

Dr. Black, who attended Hume and saw him die, said that during his illness "He never dropped the smallest expression of impatience; but when he had occasion to speak to the people about him, always did it with affection and tenderness." A few days before his death he had been reading Lucian's "Dialogues of the Dead," and in conversation with Adam Smith he humorously sketched a Dialogue he might himself have with Charon, excusing himself from being ferried across the Styx just yet, until Charon should say, "Get into the boat this instant, you lazy, loitering rogue."

Joseph de Maistre, the famous Catholic champion, who hated Hume even worse than Voltaire, suggested sneeringly that the dying sceptic was probably reading the Dialogues of

Courtesans. Reading a writer like Lucian at all was, to the Catholic's mind, a shocking offence in such circumstances. Hume ought to have had the New Testament in his hand and a priest by his side. Yes, but he might have told de Maistre that the New Testament was more comical than Lucian.

John Wesley was annoyed at Hume's calm decease and his humorous deathbed talk about Charon. Preaching at Halifax, in April, 1790—between thirteen and fourteen years after Hume's death—on "The Deceitfulness of Man's Heart," Wesley fell foul of "Sir R——" (Sir Robert Walpole), who had said that "every man had his price." "Yes," said Wesley, "every man like you; every one that sells himself to the devil." Which was rather rough on poor Walpole, who was honest enough on his own part. Wesley fell foul next of the great "Lord C——," meaning Lord Chesterfield, whose Letters "deserved to be burnt by the common hangman." Then he fell foul of the great sceptic and historian. "Did Mr. David Hume," he asked, "lower, if possible, than either of the former, know the heart of man? No more than a worm or a beetle does. After 'playing so idly with the darts of death,' do you now find it a laughing matter? What think you of Charon. Has he ferried you over Styx? At length he has taught you to know a little of your own heart! At length you know it as a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Such was the charity of John Wesley where an "infidel" was concerned. He drew the line at unbelievers. There was mercy and hope for thieves, adulterers, and murderers; but none for those, however virtuous, who did not accept Christ. Nevertheless it must be allowed that Wesley was honest. He read in the Bible what he taught in the pulpit, and he could not play the hypocrite, even for the sake of liberality and toleration.

Dumfries School Board has been agitated—we might say, convulsed—by a religious difficulty. A proficient assistant master was appointed to the Academy, and it was afterwards discovered that he was a Roman Catholic. On learning this the Board met in secret conclave, but without Mr. Carmont, a Roman Catholic member, who refused to be a party to such proceedings. A decision was come to that "the assistant referred to in the last minute should not teach English history and Bible knowledge." The members protested that this was quite fair and reasonable, as a Catholic would not teach history and the Bible to suit Protestant parents. But would it have occurred to them to interfere if the assistant master had been a rabid Protestant? Mr. Carmont, at any rate, did not think so, for he immediately resigned all his offices under the Board.

We drew attention a few weeks ago to the Hindu "Messiah"—Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. It now appears that this gentleman has heard with indignation of the claims of "Messiah" Pigott, pastor of the Ark of the Covenant, Clapton. Both pretend to be Jesus Christ, and one of them at least must be an impostor. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad says it is Pigott. He calls our English Messiah's conduct insolent, blasphemous, arrogant, presumptuous, extravagant, insulting, etc. He also warns him against an approaching "judgment." "If he does not repent of this irreverent claim," says the Hindu Messiah, "he shall soon be annihilated, even in my lifetime, with sore torment proceeding from God." Pigott had better look out.

The Ashanti village at the Crystal Palace is attracting a large number of visitors. The *Daily Telegraph* account of it is very interesting. The following extract may be welcome to our readers:—"Various native industries are carried on, such as metal working, weaving, and wood carving. A few of the villagers are Christians—of a sort—but most of them are Fetish worshippers. There is a fully-qualified Fetish priest, a very intelligent but somewhat sinister-looking young man, and a Fetish house has been put up, so that the spiritual needs of the township will be duly attended to. The chief is a very fine portly old fellow, who presides with great dignity at the songs and dances. He sits on his own royal stool, under his own royal umbrella, and would have waved the royal ox-tail, which he carries in his hand with regal air, only there are no flies at Sydenham now to tickle his Majesty's scalp. Yesterday he made a fine speech, in Ashanti, saying how proud he was to be in London, under the British flag, of which he was a loyal subject. He poured several libations of rum on the green, Sydenham sward, and took a stiff 'pull' at the jug himself; passed it round afterwards to be finished by the umbrella-bearer, the stool-bearer, the sword-bearer, the mace-bearer, the high priest, and the other chief officers of the household who danced about behind his Majesty trying to keep their bare feet warm in a searching north-east wind. The courtiers apparently knew good liquor, and Adjaye, the Prime Minister, looked regretfully at the mystic holes in the ground where the libations had been poured, as if he thought that the local gods could have done with less."

A Leicester boy, fifteen years of age, jumped into the canal with a view to terminating his miserable existence. Fortunately, or unfortunately—nobody knows which—he was rescued from "a watery grave." In his waistcoat pocket was found a piece of paper, on which was written his name and address and the following note: "I am tired of life. I hope to see you all in eternity. Don't make a trouble of it, any of you. Good-bye to all. God bless my class. Thy will be done." Being brought before the magistrates, he promised not to attempt his life again, and was handed over to his father, who explained that his son had been teaching a class at the mission room, and it had upset his mind. Is this to be counted as one of the benefits of religion?

It is strange the different things clergymen see around them in connection with the same subject. We imagine their view is determined by the necessities of the sermon. A week ago the Rev. R. F. Horton wrote to the *Daily Mail* asserting that the attention of men everywhere was "rivetted" upon the Cross as providing the only solution to social evils. About the same time an ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference, Mr. W. L. Watkinson, discovered that "Christ had no attraction for multitudes of men.....He is ignored, rejected; men crucify afresh the Son of God, and put him to open shame." One can hardly say that Christian preaching will not suit all classes after this example. And we have no doubt that these two gentlemen will be quite ready to exchange sentiments on the smallest provocation.

A Sunday-school teacher writes to the *Sunday Circle*, saying that she is disheartened, as she seems to have told her scholars all she knows. Disheartened! If it has taken this lady twelve years to tell her class all she *knows* about her subject, instead of being disheartened she ought to have a monument raised to her erudition. Why, the whole of the clergy combined could say all they know about God and the soul and a future life in as many minutes as it has taken "Teacher" years. Perhaps, however, the lady only means that she has exhausted her capacity for guessing; in which case it is not her knowledge but her imagination that is at fault.

Herman Warszawiak, the "converted" Jew who runs a Christian mission to the Jews in Grand-street, is a bankrupt, and is accused of being a fraudulent one. A Mrs. Nichols gave him $26,000 with which to build a "Christ Synagogue," but he never built it. It is said that Warszawiak has collected as much as $100,000 for his various schemes for Christianising the Jews, and has nothing to show for it.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Many of our readers will remember pious stories of wicked Atheists who insulted and defied God by burning his Holy Word. It appears, however, that Christians are not above this performance themselves. The Catholic *Universe* states that a large number of Fijian Wesleyans, who seceded to the Catholic Church, burnt all their stock of Bibles—which were "Protestant translations" and therefore "inaccurate." The *Universe* justifies this. "They might have been destroyed," it says, "as waste, they might have been thrown into the sea, but the best course was that adopted—burning." Burning Bibles is therefore quite a proper practice—when you believe them to be wrong.

What a God some men have! Vicar-General Parel, who was officiating in the Island of Martinique for the Catholic Bishop, wrote the following in his note-book on the eruption of Mont Pelée which wiped out the town of St. Pierre with its thirty thousand inhabitants: "Suddenly, at ten minutes to eight, as the hospital clock—providentially preserved among the ruins, as if to mark for all time the instant at which the justice of God was meted out—bears witness, the detonation resounded," etc., etc. The justice of God, was it? And where was his mercy?

God's justice was oddly displayed on this occasion. Men, women, and children were destroyed indiscriminately. The only person who escaped was an imprisoned criminal, a negro named Ciparis.

AN HONEST EPITAPH.

Here lies the body of Sternhold Oakes,
Who lived and died like other folks.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, April 26, Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): at 3, "The Fable of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ"; 6.30, "The Doom of Religion: with a Reference to 'Nunquam's' Confessions in the *Clarion*."

May 10, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

C. Cohen's Lecturing Engagements.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.

W. Nelson.—The Sheffield lecture notice did not arrive last week till Wednesday.

T. Maxwell.—James Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*, with some of the best of his other poems, is published in a neat volume at 5s. by Bertram Dobell, 77 Charing-Cross-road, London, W.C. The complete edition of Thomson's poems is in two volumes at 12s. 6d.—same publisher.

R. G. Robinson.—You will see that we have dealt with the matter.

H. Lessik.—You have made a mistake. The article on "Girded with an Ephod" was *not* by Mr. Cohen. You must have overlooked the signature. The writer of the article is a thoroughly competent scholar. The first part of his article covers the same ground as your letter, and in much the same way—as you will see if you refer to it again. There is something on the subject in the chapter on "Saint David" in our *Bible Heroes*, in which the matter of religious dancing is carefully dealt with.

West London.—We are obliged to you. Dr. Torrey's *Hard Problems of Scripture* shall be answered in our columns, and a beginning shall be made next week.

W. P. Ball.—Thanks again for cuttings.

Abracadabra.—Pleased to hear from you. Your article will appear in our next, and will, we are sure, be appreciated by our readers.

Old Admirer.—Keeping a pronounced Freethought paper going is no easy task. There have never been many men living at one time capable of doing it. The best answer to such carping critics is to ask them how many papers besides the *Freethinker* really live. The number is distressingly small.

A. Notley.—Your letter is dated April 17, but it did not arrive at our office until April 21. Mr. Foote was then journeying northward; consequently he did not see your letter until Tuesday morning, when the answer you requested through the post would have been useless. We know nothing of the evangelist named Harrison who has been preaching at Hetton Downs. It would probably be safe to say at a venture that the story of his converting a Motherwell "infidel" is apocryphal. Anyhow, there is not a word of truth in his tale of Voltaire's horrible death, and of the Christian lady who attended him. See our *Infidel Death-Beds*. It is impossible for us to say whether evangelist Harrison has ever entered the shop at 2 Newcastle-street. He must be mistaken in saying that he saw only "trash and rot" there. We don't sell Bibles.

Joseph Guy.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. M. (Plymouth).—The cutting from the *Western Evening Herald* refers to the Affirmation Act of 1869. This is not the Act that you associate, and rightly, with the name of Charles Bradlaugh. That was the Oaths Act, carried nearly twenty years later. Bradlaugh's Act covered the whole ground; the Act of 1869 only related to witnesses, and was very invidious and harassing in its operation.

D. L.—In our next. Write whenever you feel moved.

The National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., where all letters should be addressed to Miss Vance.

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two letures in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, Manchester, to-day (April 26), and hopes to meet a strong rally of the district "saints," with as many of their friends as they can induce to attend. The afternoon subject is seasonable—"The Fable of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ." The evening subject—"The Doom of Religion: with a Reference to 'Nunquam's' Confessions in the *Clarion*"—should draw a crowded house. "Nunquam" first made his mark in the Manchester *Sunday Chronicle*, and is still well remembered in the city.

Mr. Foote had good and very appreciative audiences at South Shields on Sunday, winding up the Branch's indoor work for the winter season. A general wish was expressed that the lecture on "Was Jesus Christ a Man or a Myth?" should be published. We may state that it will be published, with much more, in a book which Mr. Foote has upon the stocks.

Mr. Cohen delivered on Sunday evening the last of the winter indoor lectures at the Camberwell Secular Hall. This afternoon (April 26) Mr. Cohen lectures for the Branch in Brockwell Park. There should be a big crowd.

Mr. G. J. Holyoake has just passed his eighty-sixth birthday, and we are pleased to see that the event was celebrated at South Place Institute on Monday evening. The speakers at the function were not a very distinguished company, but flattering letters were read from absent persons of greater importance, amongst them being Mr. Herbert Spencer. We had no opportunity of being present, but we hear that Mr. Holyoake himself made a characteristic speech, and that, with the exception of a troublesome cough, he seemed to be in remarkably good condition.

The *Daily News* devoted a short leader to Mr. Holyoake's reception on Monday evening. It praised him for many things, but not for his connection with Secularism. It referred to his imprisonment in 1842, but was careful not to mention that it was for "blasphemy." As there seems to be some doubt upon the point—for we were asked about it at the Will Crooks dinner, which we attended with Mr. Cohen—we may state that Mr. Holyoake was prosecuted and imprisoned under the common law of blasphemy, precisely as Mr. Foote was in 1883.

The *Bradford Daily Observer's* ill-informed London correspondent—who actually refers to Dr. Stanton Coit as "now the chief priest of South Place"—says that the Secularism of Mr. Holyoake "had not the least resemblance to the Bradlaugh theory." This is one of those silly or impertinent things which are so often said by a certain class of persons who can never praise Mr. Holyoake except at the expense of someone else—especially Bradlaugh. The same correspondent adds that "Mr. Holyoake was never an Atheist, but was always a decided Agnostic." Without discussing the shadowy difference between Atheism and Agnosticism we beg to observe that this correspondent is mistaken. Mr. Holyoake wrote a *Trial of Theism*, and found it guilty on every count of the indictment. Could any man but an Atheist do that? Mr. Holyoake wrote previously in the old *Oracle of Reason*—"Perish the very name of God! If Voltaire ever did say *crush* such a fiction, I will endorse the saying henceforth and for ever." Could any man but an Atheist say "Perish the very name of God"?

The Humanitarian League holds its Annual Meeting and Conversazione at Essex Hall, Essex-street, Strand, on Friday evening, April 24—before the nominal date of this journal, but after our actual date of publication.

According to the annual report just issued, the National Gallery was visited by 37,534 persons on the thirty Sunday afternoons on which it was open. The Tate Gallery was visited on the same occasions by 35,494 persons. These figures do not bear out the statement so often made by Sabbatarians that nobody wants such places open on Sunday.

"Eighteen years ago," writes a correspondent, who has also contributed to our columns, "a stray copy of the *Freethinker* emancipated me. I was eighteen years old then; I have felt a debt of gratitude to that paper ever since, and have never missed a copy during those years. I never see

the name *Freethinker* without a thrill, and it is with pride and pleasure that I contribute, in however humble a capacity, to that journal."

Mr. Foote's new pamphlet, *God Save the King*, is now on sale. Press copies are being sent out, and we shall see how many papers—even "advanced ones"—will have the courage to notice this "wicked" publication.

Members and friends of the National Secular Society are requested to note that its Annual Conference takes place, as usual, on Whit-Sunday. There are special facilities for cheap travelling at that time of the year, and it is hoped that the Conference will be very well attended. Branches should be making arrangements to send delegates. Individual members of the Society have, of course, a right to be present, and will be heartily welcome.

Tolstoy on Hell.

THE latest Tolstoy pamphlet issued by the Free Age Press is entitled "The Overthrow of Hell and its Restoration." The translation from Russian into English is done by V. Tchertkoff. There are "no rights reserved" in accordance with Tolstoy's wishes. We are therefore free to make what extracts we please.

Tolstoy writes in this pamphlet as a satirist. It cannot be denied that he is a great writer, but it is clear that he has not the satiric power of a Swift. He is too much of a missionary to keep up the satire with a straight face to the very end, as Swift did on so many occasions, particularly in the extraordinary proposals for keeping down the population in Ireland. Nevertheless, this pamphlet of Tolstoy's is worth reading, and some of his shafts certainly go right home to the mark.

Beelzebub, the father and ruler of all the devils, was alarmed when Jesus was teaching in Palestine. He incited the Scribes and Pharisees to insult and torture him, and his disciples to fly and abandon him to himself. He hoped that Jesus would recant on the cross. When he heard the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he was delighted. He put the fetters he had got ready for Jesus upon his own legs. But presently, when Jesus cried, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," those fetters clung to Beelzebub and could not be removed. Finally, when Jesus visited Hell and carried away all its sinners from Adam to Judas, and the very walls of Hell fell to pieces, Beelzebub fell with a shriek through the floor into the basement. There he remained in darkness and silence for three hundred years, until he heard groans, cries, and gnashing of teeth overhead. Could it be that Hell was re-established? His fetters fell off, he gave his old whistle, his imps flocked around him, and informed him that Hell was going as strong as ever. Naturally he was anxious to know how it happened, and they told him.

The first devil to take up the story was one with "a cape thrown over his shoulders." He said that he went amongst the disciples of Jesus and found them happy in living out his teachings; but he began to sow division in their ranks, and this is how he did it.

> "Amongst these people some regarded it as necessary that all should undergo circumcision, and that none should eat meat offered to idols; whereas others were of opinion that these matters were not essential, and that one might abstain from circumcision and eat anything. So I began to instil into all their minds that this difference of opinion was very important, and that as the question concerned the service of God, neither side could possibly give way. They believed me, and the disputes became more obdurate. On both sides they began to be angry, and then I proceeded to instil into each of them that they might prove the truth of their teaching by miracles. Evident as it is that miracles cannot prove the truth of a teaching, yet they so desired to be in the right that they believed me, and I arranged miracles for them. It was not difficult to do so. They believed anything which supported their desire to prove that they only held the truth.
>
> "Some said that tongues of fire descended upon them; others said that they had seen the risen body of the Master himself, and much else. They kept inventing what had never taken place, and lied in the name of him who called us liars, worse than we do ourselves—and did not know it. One party said of the other: 'Your miracles are not genuine; ours are genuine.' Whereupon the other retorted: 'No, yours are a fraud; ours are real.'
>
> "Matters were going on well, but as I was afraid they might discern the too-evident trick, I invented the 'Church.' Once they believed in 'the Church,' I was at peace. I recognised that we were saved, and that Hell was restored."

Beelzebub had never heard of the "Church" before, so he asked what it was, and received the following answer:—

> "Well, the Church is this: When people lie and feel they are not believed, they always say, referring to God: 'By God, what I say is true!' This in substance is the Church, only with this special feature, that those men who recognise themselves as the Church become persuaded that they can no longer err, and therefore whatever nonsense they may say, they can never after recant it. The Church is produced thus: Men assure themselves and others that their teacher, God, to save the law revealed by him to men from being misinterpreted, has chosen special men who, with those to whom they transfer this power, can alone correctly interpret His teaching. Those men who call themselves the Church regard themselves as holding the truth, not because what they preach is truth, but because they regard themselves as the only true successors of the disciples of the disciples of the disciples, and at last of the disciples of the teacher Himself, God."

Beelzebub was puzzled to understand how the Church had managed to pervert the plain teachings of Jesus—for Tolstoy considers them quite plain, if other people do so or not. The devil in the cape—a theologian, of course—gives the explanation.

> "Having recognised themselves at the only expositors of God's laws, and having persuaded others of this, these men became the highest arbiters of men's fate, and therefore were entrusted with the highest power over men. Having received this power they naturally became infatuated, and, for the most part, depraved, thus exciting against themselves the anger and enmity of men. In order to overcome their enemies they, having no other arms but violence, began to persecute, to kill, to burn all those who would not recognise their power. Thus by their very position they were forced to misrepresent the teaching so that it should justify both their wicked lives and their cruelties to their enemies."

The devil in the cape then explains to Beelzebub how he further perverted the followers of Christ by persuading them to accept forty-nine books as being "the production of the Holy Ghost." This was burying a few simple truths under a heap of rubbish. Next he persuaded the Church to adopt a further method of going wrong. The first method was excellently bad, but the second was better.

> "The second, which they used with success for more than a thousand years, consisted in simply killing and burning all those who wished to reveal the truth. This method is becoming obsolete now, but they have not altogether rejected it, and although they no longer burn those who endeavor to disclose the truth, still they so calumniate them and so poison their lives that only very few have courage to convict them of their deceptions."

No wonder the Christian world was soon full of crime and bloodshed. Beelzebub, indeed, said it was very good, and all the devils joined in roars of laughter.

Beelzebub was told the rest of the story by other devils. One big devil with a military moustache informed him how kingship and licensed plundering were set up.

> "we instil into men the idea that instead of ceasing to plunder each other it is more convenient to allow one man to plunder them all, giving him full authority over all. What is new in our methods is only this—that for confirming this one man's right of plundering we lead him into a church, put a special cap on his head, seat him in an elevated armchair, give him a little stick and a ball, rub him with oil, and in the name of God and His Son proclaim the person of this man, rubbed with

oil, to be sacred. Thus the plunder performed by this personage, regarded as sacred, can in no way be restricted. So these sacred personages and their assistants and the assistants of their assistants, all without ceasing, quietly and safely plunder the people."

After robbing Christian nations, the gang ruled by the well-oiled plunderer went abroad spreading Christianity and robbing the nations they pretended to convert. Nor was that all. The devil of murder went to work and set nation against nation. This is how he succeeded.

"We manage thus: We persuade each nation that it —this nation—is the very best of all nations on earth. 'Deutschland uber alles'; France, England, Russia 'uber alles,' and that this nation, whichever it be, ought to rule over all the others. As we inculcate the same idea into all nations, they continually feel themselves in danger from their neighbors—are always preparing to defend themselves, and become exasperated against each other. The more one side prepares for defence, and, in consequence, becomes exasperated against its neighbors, the more all the others prepare for defence and hate each other. So, now all those who have accepted the teaching of him who called us murderers, are continually and chiefly occupied in preparation for murder and in murder itself."

Another devil set the Christians quarreling over mysteries, instead of attending to the few things necessary to be known.

"In olden times I taught men that the most important knowledge concerns the relations between the persons of the Trinity, the origin of Jesus Christ, his natures, the qualities of God, and so forth, and they discussed much and lengthily, arguing, quarreling, and getting angry. And these discussions so absorbed them, that they did not think about how they should live. Not thinking of how they should live, they did not need to know what their teacher told them about life."

This devil also started a number of useless studies; one of them being sociology, which Tolstoy pleasantly describes as studying "the various bad ways in which former people lived." We are now, of course, on the full flood of anarchism. Tolstoy has forgotten all about the "three hundred years" with which he started. Consequently a lot of other devils are brought forward. There is one for every division of what is usually called "progress." Technical improvements, the division of labor, the means of communication, printing, art, medicine, culture, education—all are under various devils. Then come the following:—

"The devil of intoxication showed that he teaches men that, instead of escaping the sufferings produced by bad life by endeavoring to improve their lives, they had better forget themselves under the influence of intoxication from wine, opium, tobacco, or morphia.

"The devil of philanthropy said that by persuading men that whilst plundering by tons and returning to the plundered by ounces they are charitable, and do not need improvement, he renders them inaccessible to good.

"The devil of Socialism boasted that in the name of the very highest organisation of human life, he excites the enmity of classes.

"The devil of woman's rights boasted that in the name of a yet more perfect organisation of life he—besides the enmity of classes—excites also enmity between the sexes."

This is rather an amusing climax. But it is just like Tolstoy. His ideal is simple primitive Christianity. He is called an apostle of "advanced" ideas; he is really old-fashioned in all his instincts. Short of unpeopling the world by means of a total abnegation of sex, Tolstoy wishes men and women to live together (if they must) under the conditions laid down by Paul. Women are to obey men; or rather wives are to obey their husbands. Woman's rights, therefore, are an invention of the devil. Such is Tolstoy's teaching; and some people think that if all his teaching were carried out it would be hell enough in its way; not the hell of the Church, but the hell of stupid stagnation.

G. W. Foote.

The human race is divided into classes—those who go ahead and do something, and those who sit still and inquire why it wasn't done the other way.—*Oliver W. Holmes.*

Who Was Mary Magdalene?

By Dr. Moncure D. Conway.

The legend ascribing to Mary Magdalene an immoral life has been perpetuated by admiration for her, and probably most readers of these words will feel irritated at the thought of parting with the romance which poets and artists have found so fascinating.

Mary Magdalene is a striking and pathetic figure in the New Testament story. She was the only lady of title among the adherents of Jesus. Although "Magdala" is generally supposed to be the name of a village no longer existing, the word means "tower" or castle;" in the ancient mystery of "Mary Magdalene" her residence is described as "The Castle of Maudleyn." The words of Luke, "Maria that was called [*kaloumene*] Magdalene," suggests a title, and in the next verse she is connected with Joanna, wife of Herod's steward, Susanna, and other ladies of property who supplied Jesus with means while pursuing his ministry. She stood close to the stake [*stauros*] to which Jesus was nailed. In the morning she came alone before daybreak to the sepulchre. Finding the vault empty, she turned away and met one [Jesus] whom she supposed to be the gardener, who said to her: "Mistress [*gunai*, a term of courtesy], why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" She said: "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." He said, "Mary!" She cried, "Rabboni," that is, "My master!" (not the formal Rabbi).

Possession by Devils a Nervous Disorder.

To the above New Testament record of Mary Magdalene it is necessary to add that Jesus is said to have cast seven *daimonos* out of her. The ailment alluded to was one originally supposed to be inflicted by the Pleiades, seven malign sisters, which entered together and left together. Certain nervous disorders were ascribed to them, as others to the moon, etc. There is in the New Testament no moral connotation with the demonic diseases with which apparently Joanna and Susanna were also afflicted. Thus, there is not in the Bible the slightest intimation of immorality in the life of Mary the Calumniated. Nor was any such thing imagined among Christians for nearly two hundred years after Christ.

But why was it ever suggested? Here one must pick his way among probabilities and conjectures.

Several incidents recorded of Jesus might be interpreted as indicating excessive leniency toward female sinners. One of these, that of a woman taken in adultery, was actually suppressed from the synoptics and saved only by interpolation in the fourth gospel. "Some of little faith," says Augustine, "or rather enemies to true faith—I imagine out of fear that impunity of sin was granted to their wives—removed from their MSS. that which the Lord did respecting the forgiveness of the adulteress." The incident of the Samaritan woman, who received not even reproof (an indication of its antiquity) could not be suppressed without omission of the narrative of a miracle; and none could be bold enough to tamper with the exaltation by Jesus for all generations of the woman of "many sins" who anointed him.

An Embarrassing Situation.

But this last touching story was especially embarrassing to the early fathers. For in the fourth gospel (xi. 2) it is declared that it was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who "anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair." This was the Mary who chose the better part of sitting at Jesus's feet when he sojourned in their house, as he often did; and this narrative of intimacy in the home of a disreputable woman might excite Gentile sneers and disturb Christian moralists. The Synoptics withhold the woman's name. On the other hand,

in the fourth gospel, where she is named, there is no hint of any sinfulness, this, indeed, being mentioned only in Luke. The majority of theologians adopted the theory that there were two anointings—one by innocent Mary in her home at Bethany, the other by a sinful woman of unknown name in the house of Simon. And, indeed, there appears no reason why Mary of Bethany, hearing of the anointing in Simon's house, might not have imitated it.

But this episode, as related by Luke, was so salient, so impressive in its elevation of the sinful woman's passionate devotion above the self-righteous Pharisee looking on her with contempt, such an illustration of the all-embracing love of Jesus, that popular enthusiasm was awakened, and there was a demand for the name of that woman. In one version Jesus had declared, "Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

WHY PAUL CONDEMNED PLAITED HAIR.

This preaching had to be largely by rhapsodies and plays, and there was required in the *dramatis personæ* a distinguished personage for the *rôle* of which Mary of Bethany had been relieved. It was not an exegetical necessity that she should be named Mary, but that name had become popularly associated with the event. There were several Marys, but two things probably led to the identification of Mary Magdalene: her wealth (Luke viii. 3), the pistic nard being "very costly," and still more her title, "Magdalene"—this resembling *Megaddela*, the title given in the Talmud to one Miriam, and ascribed the significance of plaited or braided hair. This interpretation could easily associate Mary Magdalene with the beauty in Solomon's Song ("comely with plaits of hair") who anointed the king at table (Canticles i. 10, 12). The real innocency of Shulamith can be recognised by but few pious readers to-day because of her slight costume and plaited hair, and with the warnings of Paul (1 Tim. ii.) and Peter (1, iii.) against plaited or braided hair there could easily be developed a Magdalene that never existed, but whom Gregory the Great stamped with the seal of authenticity in the sixth century.

A FEMININE COUNTERPART OF JESUS.

It is not easy to realise now the doctrinal and ecclesiastical importance of that evolution of the Magdalene. The golden age of Solomon's forty years' reign, when peace was unbroken, every man sat under his own vine and fig-tree, silver was as pebbles, and the monarchs of the world bowed to the Jewish king—this vision had shaped the Messianic dream. That splendid period was to be restored, and by a descendant of Solomon. But when this vision had ascended for fulfilment in an invisible world, the present world—like "Everyman" in the Morality—must needs renounce its splendors and put on the "garb of sorrow." The typical Magdalene of the artists in her bifold panels—here radiant as if in the court of the royal son of David, there haggard and ragged in the kingdom of the crucified son of David—was the feminine counterpart of the Jesus of asceticism.

In the ancient mystery of Mary Magdalene she has inherited from her father, Cyrus, the Castle of Maudleyn, and her beauty and splendor are such that Satan covets them for his own realm. A council is held in hell to devise her seduction, and her conversion is a great grief among the devils. The "seven demons" are personified as the seven capital sins, and these are severely punished by Satan for allowing themselves to be cast out by Christ. There are some anticipations of the Faust legend in this old mystery, and it prepared the way for the substitution of "devils" for "demons" by the James I. translators (in Luke viii. 2), and for the placing of Mary Magdalene's name in the chapter-heading to Luke vii., by which millions have been deceived into the belief that the anointing is attributed to her by Scriptural authority.

RESTORED IN FRANCE AS A VENUS.

However, the Renaissance reached the Magdalene. In France especially she inherited little by little the cult of Venus, and the pictures in which she is most widely distributed are very different from those pallid, red-eyed ones that gave us the word "maudlin." There is no lack of physical charms, nor of their display. Her legend is the most abiding of those sanctioned by the Church, because it was not formulated nor enforced. It grew out of a combination of two or three distinct incidents in the New Testament—a combination formed by human nature and quickened in all its development by the emotions and aspirations of the human heart. The Magdalene of the Oberammergau play is a comparatively meagre conception, because it aims to make Scriptural a figure not Scriptural, albeit with some textual vestments. Under the guise of *Kundry*, Wagner woke a more genuine Magdalene, and Rostand in *La Samaritane* (with whom the Magdalene is consolidated) has written a really great work. But more thrilling than any Magdalene drama I have witnessed is *Izeyl*, because here, by the device of giving Jesus and Mary Buddhist names and Oriental costumes, the element of passionate human love is introduced without offence.

"God, when he makes the prophet, does not unmake the man." So says Locke. But when the prophet is for some generations delivered over to his believers to be fashioned, little of the man is left in him. Though Jesus regarded the best ring and the finest robe as the fit decoration of the returning prodigal, the pious instinct insists on draping penitence with ugliness.

ORIGINALLY A CHARACTER IN A MIRACLE PLAY.

Having witnessed sacred or miracle plays in various countries—Brahman, Parsee, and Buddhist as well as Christian—comparative study of them convinces me that in such dramas were originally shaped some of the most striking events afterwards written down in sacred books, and, as eventually printed, accepted as literal history. Illustrations of this at present would carry me too far, and it is enough to say here that Mary Magdalene, in appearing on the stage, returns to the place where she was born. The late Bishop of London once preached in St. Paul's an able sermon in which he portrayed Jesus as surrounded by all the various types of human character—among these "Mary Magdalene, the Penitent." I wrote a brief note in the *Westminster Gazette*, begging the Bishop to state the grounds on which Mary Magdalene had more reasons for penitence than any other lady associated with Jesus. The Bishop answered with a candid note, admitting that there is nothing in the New Testament suggesting that Mary Magdalene had ever been immoral; "but," he added, "it is an ancient Church tradition." But if the excellent prelate, with the personified types around him, could have reverted to his own prototype, he would have probably found himself near ancient Alexandria in the second century, his cathedral a tent, managing a show in which those "types" were moulded. But they may be remoulded, and Art and Literature are already beginning to return to the theatre figures received from it of old in reconstructed form—*e.g.*, a new Mary Magdalene and a new Judas. The new Jesus, as yet disguised as Siddarta, or in impalpable visions, is, I believe, already prepared by the "Higher Criticism," combined with modern humanitarianism, for a poetic and dramatic career.

—*New York Critic.*

Justice resides in truth alone, and there is no happiness apart from justice.—*Zola.*

Correspondence.

FREETHINKING PLAYS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

Sir,—In regard to the plays Mr. A. Worrall wants for the Hall of the Chatham Branch, I can remind you of one Freethought drama—Lord Byron's *Cain*. *The Serious Family* I should suppose to be suitable, but I have never seen it. A version of *The Scarlet Letter* is in existence, but did not go well when produced at the Royalty Theatre. Sue's *Wandering Jew*, a piece in which the General of the Jesuits was the villain, used to be extremely popular. A most effective drama has been made of Hugo's *Notre Dame*, the weight of the piece resting on the character of the villainous archdeacon, Claude Frollo. The Chadband scenes from *Bleak House* have been adapted in, I think, *Poor Jo*, and the Stiggins scenes from *Pickwick* easily could be. I also think *Romeo and Juliet* would at once be Freethinking if it had another title, such as, for example, *The Meddling of the Friar*. These are all I recollect; but there must be numbers of others, written during the French Revolution and the Reform agitation.

For very ambitious amateurs to work on—beside Ibsen, whom you put aside as "too heavy work"—there is Shelley's *Cenci*, Browning's plays, and Swinburne's, out of which separate scenes could be taken. If I remember *Pippa Passes* rightly, there is an act in which an artist and his model are deceived into marriage, which forms a complete story.

George Frebells.

Freethought Gleanings.

Whatever religion may be in the ascendant, the influence of its ministers is invariably strengthened by a long and dangerous war, the uncertainties of which perplex the minds of men, and induce them, when natural resources are failing, to call on the supernatural for help. On such occasions the clergy rise in importance, the churches are more than usually filled, and the priest, putting himself forward as the exponent of the wishes of God, assumes the language of authority, and either comforts the people under their losses in a righteous cause, or else explains to them that those losses are sent as a visitation for their sins, and as a warning that they have not been sufficiently attentive to their religious duties; in other words, that they have neglected rites and ceremonies in the performance of which the priest himself has a personal interest.—*Buckle's "History of Civilisation."*

Philosophy, by carrying certainty with it to a given length, and pointing out real difficulties where that certainty ends, is ever mild in its features and tolerant in its tone; on the other hand, the more implicitly we bow to authority, the less tolerant we become to those who choose not to bow as obediently as ourselves. The mind always seizes with a kind of convulsive grasp those truths for which it can give no very satisfactory account, as though the tenacity with which they are held would go to make up the deficiency in their evidence; and on this ground it is that those who are most ignorant, to prevent the appearance of absurdity, commonly find it necessary to be most dogmatical. On the other hand, an abundance of knowledge and a strength of evidence, as they define more clearly the bounds of the known and the unknown, tend perpetually toward toleration. —*Morell's "History of Philosophy."*

Christianity boasts of procuring men a happiness unknown to preceding ages. It is true, the Greeks knew not the divine rights of tyrants and usurpers. Under paganism, it never entered the head of any man to suppose that it was against the will of heaven for a nation to defend themselves against a ferocious beast, who had the audacity to lay waste their possessions. The religion of the Christians was the first that screened tyrants from danger, by laying down as a principle that the people must renounce the legitimate defence of themselves.—*D'Holbach.*

Why are we to give this Church credit, when she tells us that those books are genuine in every part any more than we give her credit for everything else she has told us; or for the miracles she says she has performed? That she *could* fabricate writings is certain, because she could write; and the composition of the writings in question is of that kind that anybody might do it; and that she *did* fabricate them is not more inconsistent with probability than that she could tell us, as she has done, that she could and did work miracles. —*Thomas Paine.*

These hundred doctors try
To preach thee to their school.
We have the truth! they cry;
And yet their oracle,
Trumpet it as they will, is but the same as thine.

Once read thy own breast right,
And thou hast done with fears;
Man gets no other light,
Search he a thousand years.
Sink in thyself! there ask what ails thee, at that shrine!
—*Matthew Arnold.*

Gaieties.

HIS OWN UNDOING.

He was an Episcopalian minister, and not in good humor; so he said to his wife at breakfast: "I'll drive to church this morning, but I do hope you won't crowd the carriage with any of your bandboxes. Last week there were so many bandboxes and packages that there was hardly room for me. Remember, now," he ended, growing heated, "if I find a single bandbox to-day I'll throw it out in the road."

In due course the clergyman set off. He had not gone far when some sort of a bundle under the seat disturbed him. He drew it out. It was a bandbox, and he threw it out of the carriage.

The coachman pulled up. "Drive on," said the minister.

"But, sir, your bandbox"——

"Don't argue, Perkins; drive on," and the man obeyed.

The preacher remembered as the carriage neared the church that he had taken his surplice home to be mended. He looked for it, but it was nowhere to be found.

"Perkins," he said, indignantly, "I told you to remember to put in my surplice. Did you forget it?"

"No, sir," Perkins answered. "It was in the bandbox."

DANIEL'S UNFORTUNATE REMARK.

King Darius was having his hair cut.

"I find," said the royal barber, "that your majesty is getting quite bald. Let me recommend our celebrated Persian hair tonic. It cleanses the scalp and gives new vigor to the roots of the hair——"

But at this moment the Governor of Babylon entered and bowed before the throne.

"May the king's years be multiplied as the hairs of his head," said Daniel.

"To the lions with him," roared Darius.

—*Princeton Tiger.*

WOULDN'T TROUBLE GOD.

A rich but parsimonious man was praying fervently, and in his prayer mentioned by name several good works in which he took special interest. His little son listened with much attention and seemed moved. When the prayer was finished, the boy said:—

"Father, I wish I was you."

"And why, my son?" asked the pious man, dusting his broadcloth knees.

"Because," answered the little son, "if I had your money I'd answer your prayers for you."

The New York *World* states that, in his farewell sermon, a preacher in Salem, N.J., said to his congregation:—"Brothers and sisters, I come to say good-bye. I don't think that God loves this church, because none of you ever die. I don't think you love each other, because you have not paid my salary. Your donations are mouldy fruit and wormy apples, and 'by their fruits ye shall know them.' Brothers, I am going to a better place. I have been called to be a chaplain of a penitentiary. I go to prepare a place for you, and may the Lord have mercy on your souls. Good-bye."

Not a Model Sermon.—A Scotch minister who had a friend to preach for him one Sunday said to an old lady on Monday: "Mrs. Duncan, I suppose you had a fine sermon yesterday. I was sorry I could not hear it myself." "I watna, sir," she said; "it was rather o'er plain and simple for me. I like the sermons best that jumbles the joodgment and confounds the sense. Od, sir, I never saw ane that could come up to yoursel' at that."

AN APPETISER.

The whale saw Jonah come along
In quite a joyous mood.
"At last!" cried the cetacean,
"A brand-new breakfast food!"

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.)

East London Ethical Society (Bromley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.: 7, Dr. Washington Sullivan, "What is Luck."

South London Ethical Society (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, H. Johnson, B.A., "Wanted Ironsides."

West London Ethical Society (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Stanton Coit: "How and Why I Pray."

Outdoor.

Bethnal Green Branch N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, Mr. Edwards, "The Heathen Chinee."

Camberwell Branch N.S.S.—Station-rd.: 11.30, R. P. Edwards; Brockwell Park: 3.15, Special Lecture.

East London Branch N.S.S. Mile End Waste.—11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Noah's Excursion."

Kingsland Branch N.S.S. (corner of Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, C. Cohen.

Stratford Grove: 7, G. Parsons, "Secular and Christian Morality."

COUNTRY.

Chatham Secular Society (Queen's-road, New Brompton): 7.0, Councillor Godbold, of West Ham, "Social Salvation, and How to Obtain it."

Glasgow (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. Open Discussion; 6.30, J. M'Dougall, "The Old Piety and the New."

Liverpool (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): E. J. Sale, "The Sermon on the Mount."

Manchester Secular Hall (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): 3, G. W. Foote, "The Fable of the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ"; 6.30, "The Doom of Religion: with a Reference to 'Nunquam's' Confessions in the *Clarion*." Tea at 5.

Sheffield Secular Society (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street: 7, W. Dyson, The Law of Evolution" (Spencer's First Principles).

South Shields (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30. Business meeting.

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