

THE Freethinker

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We can only infer that it [human consciousness] is a specialised and individualised form of the Infinite and Eternal Energy which transcends both our knowledge and imagination; and that at death its elements lapse into the Infinite and Eternal Energy whence they were derived.—HERBERT SPENCER.

God and the Weather.

WITH characteristic inconsistency the Christian will exclaim "Here is another blasphemous title. What has God to do with the weather?" Everything, sir. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge, and do you think he fails to regulate the clouds? The hairs of your head are numbered, and do you think he cannot count the rain-drops? Besides, your clergy pray for a change in the weather when they find it necessary; and to whom do they pray but God? True, they are getting chary of such requests, but the theory is not disavowed, nor can it be unless the Bible is discarded as waste-paper; and the forms of supplication for rain and fine weather still remain in the Prayer Book, although many parsons must feel like the parish clerk who asked "What's the use of praying for rain with the wind in that quarter?"

We might also observe that as God is omnipotent he does everything, or at least everything which is not left (as parsons would say) to man's freewill, and clearly the weather is not included in that list. God is also omniscient, and what he foresees and does not alter is virtually his own work. Even if a tile drops on a man's head in a gale of wind, it falls, like the sparrow, by a divine rule; and it is really the Lord who batters the poor fellow's skull. An action for assault would undoubtedly lie, if there were any court in which the case could be pleaded. What a frightful total of damages would be run up against the defendant if every plaintiff got a proper verdict! For, besides all the injuries inflicted on mankind by "accident," which only means the Lord's malice or neglect, it is a solemn fact (on the Theist's hypothesis) that God has killed every man, woman, and child that ever died since the human race began. We are born here without being consulted, and hurried away without the least regard to our convenience.

But let us keep to the weather. A gentleman who was feeding the fish at sea heard a sailor singing "Britannia rules the waves." "Does she?" he groaned, "Then I wish she'd rule them straighter." Most of us might as fervently wish that the Lord ruled the weather better. Some parts of the world are parched and others flooded. In some places the crops are spoiled with too much sun, and in others with too little. Some people sigh for the sight of a cloud, and other people see nothing else. Occasionally

a famine occurs in India which might have been averted by half our superfluity of water. Even at home the weather is always more or less of a plague. Its variation is so great that it is always a safe topic of conversation. You may go out in the morning with a light heart, tempted by the sunshine to leave your overcoat and umbrella at home; and in the evening you may return wet through, with a sensation in the nose that prognosticates a doctor's bill. You may enter a theatre, or a hall, with dry feet, and walk home through a deluge. In the morning a south wind breathes like a zephyr on your cheeks, and in the evening your face is pinched with a vile and freezing northeaster.

"Oh," say the pious, "it would be hard to please everybody, and foolish to try it. Remember the old man and his ass." Perhaps so, but the Lord should have thought of that before he made us; and if he cannot give us all we want, he might show us a little consideration now and then. But instead of occasionally accommodating the weather to us, he invariably makes us accommodate ourselves to the weather. That is, if we can. But it is anything but easy in a climate like this. Men cannot be walking almanacks, nor carry about a wardrobe to suit all contingencies. In the long run the weather gets the better of the wisest and toughest, and when the doctors have done with us we head our own funeral procession. The doctor's certificate says asthma, bronchitis, pulmonary consumption, or something of that sort. But the document ought to read "Died of the weather."

Poets have sung the glory of snowy landscapes, and there is no prettier sight than the earth covered with a virgin mantle, on which the trees gleam like silver jewels. But what an abomination snow is in cities. The slush seems all the blacker for its whiteness, and the pure flakes turn into the vilest mud. Men and horses are in a purgatory. Gloom sits on every face. Pedestrians trudge along, glaring at each other with murderous eyes; and the amount of swearing done is enough to prove the whole thing a beastly mistake.

It seems perfectly clear that when the Lord designed the weather, two or three hundred million years ago, he forgot that men would build cities. He continues to treat us as agriculturalists, even in a manufacturing and commercial country like this. Why should people get drenched in Fleet-street while the Buckinghamshire farmers want rain? The arrangement is obviously stupid. God Almighty ought to drop the rain and snow in the country, and only turn on enough water in the cities to flush the sewers. He ought also to let the rain fall in the night. During the daytime we want the world for our business and pleasure, and the Rain Department should operate when we are snug in bed. This is a reforming age. Gods, as well as men, must move on. It is really ridiculous for the Clerk of the

Weather to be acting on the old lines when everybody down below can see they are behind the time. If he does not improve we shall have to agitate on the subject. We need Home Rule for the globe, and we cannot afford to let the weather be included in the imperial functions. It is a domestic affair. And as the Lord has considerably mismanaged it, he had better hand it over to us, with full power to arrange it as we please.

G. W. FOOTE.

[This article was written many years ago, and I hope I need not apologise for introducing it to the notice of present-day readers of the *Freethinker* in these times of rain and change.—G. W. F.]

Leslie Stephen.

AS we are going to press we learn of the death of Sir Leslie Stephen, and this is the only open space we have to refer to it. Sir Leslie Stephen came of a freethinking family. His father was a very liberal-minded man, and his brother, the late Mr. Justice Stephen was a pronounced Agnostic, with a turn for polemics against the popular faith. One of Sir Leslie Stephen's books was entitled *Essays in Freethinking*, and he wrote extensively on the Deistic movement in England in the eighteenth century. His latest important work was one on the English Utilitarians, including Bentham and Mill. But his most important work by far was his *Science of Ethics*, which is likely to stand as of independent value. It is, indeed, a fine exposition of natural morality in the light of modern science. Sir Leslie Stephen was not a crusader; he had not the vigor of a Huxley, much less the splendid courage of a Clifford. But he followed the truth as he saw it in accordance with his own temperament; and that is something to be thankful for in these days of moral degeneration.

Papuans, Limited.

FROM time to time there have been stories current, some ugly, some humorous, as to the connection between missionaries and trading. People on the spot, who see the missionary when he has laid aside his Exeter Hall manner, are often inclined to put their tongues in their cheeks when told of his meekness and self-sacrifice. They have hinted, sometimes pretty plainly, that the missionary is not always averse to turn a shilling or so in strict accordance with business ethics; and if writers on life in the South Seas are to be trusted, the combination of missionary and trader is by no means uncommon. In obtaining concessions of land from natives missionaries are often able to give the layman points; and on more than one occasion this has played no small part in fomenting a rising against the whites.

Hitherto, however, the connection between trading and Gospel preaching has been illicit. From an article in a recent issue of the *Examiner* I gather it is now about to be open and unashamed. There is to be floated in the immediate future a trading company—"Papuan Industries, Limited"—run by missionaries, promoted by missionaries, for the sake of Jesus and incidental profits that may arise. The promoter of the Company is a Rev. F. W. Walker, who some years ago gave up preaching the Gospel for the sake of trading; and as he is now endeavoring to combine the two, it may be assumed that his career as a trader has not been as successful as it might have been. However this may be, Mr. Walker is now convinced that the best way, if not the only way, of doing the native any good is by exploiting him—which is exactly what the average trader says, although he does not print the name of Jesus on his billheads.

But in this respect the trader proved that he was far behind the missionary in business astuteness. To succeed with the British public there is nothing so effective as a proper mingling of religion and

finance. The English public loves its religion, but it also loves dividends; and it may be taken as a proof of God's care for his servants that it is very rare indeed to find religion interfering with financial profit. Many years ago it was discovered that slave-owning, for instance, was religiously wrong; but by a curious coincidence this was not until slave-holding had become unprofitable, and even then it cost twenty million sterling to buy out the slave-owner. So we have no doubt that "Papuan Industries, Limited," will duly receive the support of good Christians at home, who will see the finger of God in the work of utilising the natives as a means of providing dividends for the supporters of London suburban chapels.

Mr. Walker, it is almost needless to say, professes to have a purely religious object in view in promoting his Company. So had Jabez Balfour, if we remember aright. The native, apparently, has not a very exalted idea of missionaries, a circumstance often dwelt upon in these columns, but one stoutly denied by missionaries—except when it suits them to tell the truth. The natives, says Mr. Walker, say: "Me good fellow; me all same missionary man; me go preach, me sing, me pray plenty; me no go along work," which reminds one of the story of the native who claimed to be a good Christian on the grounds of his eating pork and drinking brandy. But it is clear in the native mind religion and loafing go hand in hand. And that the native is not alone in this the following from Mr. Hamilton's recently issued book on *Korea* will show:—

"The American missionary is a curious creature. He represents a union of devices that have made him a factor of considerable commercial importance.....He has a salary which frequently exceeds £200 a year, and is invariably supplemented by additional allowances. Houses and servants are provided free.....There is a provision for the education of the children, and an annual capitation grant for each child.....They have large families, who live in comparative idleness and luxury..... They own the most commodious and attractive houses, and appear to extract the maximum of profit for the minimum of labour."

Mr. Walker's object is twofold. In the first place he wishes to show that the missionary *can* work; hence the company. Christian character is to be indispensable as a qualification for position in the Company, which means that no native who wishes to work will get it, so far as the Company is concerned, unless there is a profession of Christianity. And this means in practice that the Company, when founded, will be an active agent for the manufacturing of hypocrites. "None but Christians need apply" is the notice, although if the experience elsewhere is any guide, other traders are not likely to show any great anxiety to employ converted natives.

The second object involves what is practically a confession of the failure of missions as civilising agencies. "The position," says Mr. Walker, "is this. We go to a race like the people of New Guinea and preach to them the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is a gospel of peace (the natives must feel convinced of this at least when they learn of the Christian armies and navies of the world). We teach them to leave off fighting (generally with the aid of a gun-boat)—which is one of the principal things they live for—and if we simply cast out one devil, the devil of fighting, and leave the space in their lives empty, swept, garnished, what will happen? As Christ foretold, seven other devils—devils of sensuality and idleness and other evils—will come in, and the last state will be worse than the first."

Divested of cant, what this means is that if the natives are merely made Christians they will be no better off than if they remained heathen. When the Christian apologist is fighting the *Freethinker* he is fond of arguing that no amount of earnest social work is of much value unless it is accompanied by Christian faith. When the same individual is flouting a trading concern he argues that Christian faith is quite useless unless it is accompanied by some kind of social employment that will

keep the believer busy. And with this one can cordially agree. No Secularist need trouble to dispute the proposition that a missionary who treats sick natives in accordance with the latest medical science, teaches them decent occupations, or educates them in various directions is, so far, doing a good work. All he need point out is that this is not missionary work, as such. That is, there is nothing done in these directions by the missionary that could not be as well, or even better, done by him in any other capacity. Indeed, it may be fairly argued that the missionary *because* of his religious character robs much of his secular work of a great deal of its social and educational value. He outrages in the crudest possible manner all the inherited customs and traditions of the people he moves among. His religious convictions blind him to the social value of the customs of the tribes he goes out to convert, and his sectarian training prevents him recognising the important truth that much of what goes under the name of morality has its value determined by accidents of time and place. It is due to these causes that we find missionaries placing such a ridiculous value upon questions of dress and the like. And it is due to these causes that we find natives hostile to missionaries who are not hostile to other aspects of Western civilisation. Taking the matter generally, neither Chinese nor Hindoos, for instance, show any very marked antagonism to Western medicine, Western science, or Western trading. But both show a strong antagonism to the Western missionary, and the more one knows of missionary methods, the less one wonders at their antagonism.

And if Mr. Walker is correct in the opinion just quoted, it follows that if it is necessary to bring the natives of New Guinea or elsewhere under Western influences, then the trader is a much better civiliser than the missionary, to say nothing of other laymen who are not there for purely commercial purposes. For it is not in proportion as the native is convinced of the efficacy of the Christian faith that he is made a better man, but in proportion as he leaves the less civilised pursuits for more civilised ones. Mr. Walker might probably retort that the trader is not usually a staunch Christian. And to this all that one need say is that the trader comes from a Christian country, and as often as not does profess Christianity. And if, with a Christian ancestry, a Christian education, and Christian friends and acquaintances, his conduct in trade is such that someone must be sent out to protect the natives from his influence, what effect is our new Christian trading corporation likely to have upon uncivilised people? Certainly experience of firms at home who make a conspicuous feature of their religion is not all of a flattering description. Workpeople do not show any frenzied desire to obtain work with them, nor are they conspicuous for the payment of large wages, however frequently their names appear on religious subscription lists. But whether the natives benefit or not by "Papuan Limited," there is no doubt that missionaries will. Clergymen will hold the principal posts, and the native, instead of being served with cotton goods, or exploited in a purely secular manner, will have both these operations performed to the accompaniment of hymns and prayers. And, as insubordination will be treated as a sign of "backsliding," the missionary trader will have yet one more weapon with which to keep the natives in order.

Apart from the humor of the proposal, "Papuan Limited" is interesting as bearing out what was said in my last week's article. I pointed out then that all along religion had subsisted by an exploitation of the social feelings. Religion as such would to-day have but little influence over people but for one thing. It has all along been associated with feelings that are, properly speaking, not religious at all. Brotherhood, sympathy, etc., etc., are no more religious than is mathematics. But it suits the game of the clergy to speak of all these as *religious* qualities, with the result that there is a fairly general fear lest, in dis-

turbing religion, we should disturb these also. The truth is, of course, that, instead of these virtues owing their development to religion, religion owes its continued existence very largely to its association with the social feelings.

It is this point that "Papuan Limited" unconsciously emphasises. Millions of money are spent year after year on foreign missions. Crowds of more or less lazy and incompetent preachers are maintained at home and abroad, for the purpose of carrying the Gospel to the heathen. Critics who have pointed out the waste of money in this direction, the little good done, and the very questionable character of the converts, have been met with carefully cooked reports as to the eagerness of the natives for the Gospel, the crowds of converts, and the wonderful change from a South Sea savage to a civilised European, after hearing sermons by the society's agents. And now, when it is found that there is a chance of exploiting the natives in a new direction, it is admitted that, if you give the natives Christianity minus the secular civilising pursuits of Europeans, his last state is worse than the first. The moral, therefore, of "Papuan Limited" is that Christianity will do good if it is accompanied by the proper kind of Secularism. Which reminds one of Voltaire's dictum that in cases of sickness prayer might be beneficial—if taken with the proper quantity of physic.

C. COHEN.

Communion With God.

It is an oft-repeated saying that once a thing gets into the blood it is extremely difficult to get it out again. When anything has run in the blood for countless years, it is next to impossible to eject it. It was this solemn fact that led Goethe to characterise the blood as a most strange sort of juice. This is why the past dominates the present with such fateful persistence. This is why children born of parents subject to pulmonary disease are predisposed to consumption. This is the great and awful Law of Heredity from which there is no escape. What does the child inherit from its ancestors? If you answer, Its organism, your answer is correct so far as it goes; but it must not be forgotten that each organism begins its individual career with a certain bent, tendency, or disposition given to it by a well-nigh endless line of ancestral organisms. We are told by the biologists that "no structural modification is so slight, and no functional peculiarity is so insignificant in either parent, that it may not make its appearance in the offspring." We all begin life with certain potentialities, the character of which depends upon those through whom we received our being; and at a comparatively early stage in our history those potentialities enter upon the process of conversion into actualities. Whatever the contents of the organism may be, they force themselves, sooner or later, into some form of expression. This is a law of evolution.

Now, man is sometimes defined as "a religious animal," which means that religion is in his blood, a living part of himself, and as indispensable to him as his very blood. Christian teachers assure us that all men are naturally religious, and that not a single savage tribe, however low, can be found which has not a religion of some form, however crude. As far as my present point is concerned, it is immaterial whether all savages have a religion or not, although their having one would be an argument against the proposition that religion is natural to man, or a necessary article in the furniture of his mind. It is a most significant fact that in trying to answer the arguments of Agnostics or Atheists, theologians invariably insist on describing man as the offspring of God, or as having within him a spark of divinity. They say that by nature all men yearn for and turn to their Heavenly Father, just as by nature the flowers yearn for and turn towards the sun. But

when addressing backsliding disciples the same divines are found seriously contradicting themselves. Their teaching now is that by nature no one is a child of God in Christ. Divine sonship is the outcome of a second birth. It is regeneration that makes religion possible. Regeneration is defined as the coming into man of a new, divine nature, which enables him to call God his Father. Strangely enough this new nature dwells in a Christian side by side with the old, Adamic nature; and the new nature is there to work the old gradually out. Consequently, there is a fierce conflict between the two natures, of which conflict St. Paul gives an exceedingly graphic account in Romans vii. Sometimes the old nature seems to be gaining the day, and the poor Christian finds very little pleasure in religious exercises, and by degrees becomes a backslider. Then his spiritual adviser comes to him, and prescribes a remedy for the dreadful malady. Of course, the only hope of recovery lies in prayer, in a more constant and earnest communion with God, the author of the languishing new nature.

The divines take their doctrine of regeneration from Jesus and Paul. But Paul also contradicts himself on this point. It was in his speech at Athens that the apostle enunciated his belief in the original divine sonship of man. The subject of that address was "God," and, quoting from the poets, the preacher is reported to have said: "For we are his offspring." Well, then, it follows that the two natures which are said to be at war with each other in a Christian are both from God, and each is from him by a mysterious birth. The Bible says that the first man was created or born in the image and after the likeness of God. Adam was God's son. But if man is by nature a child of God, how can he be born a second time of the same Father? Or how can two natures, both from God, be at war with each other? I am aware what the explanations of theology are; but I submit that two plain, unambiguous statements, which flatly contradict each other, do not need to be explained. Either the one or the other must be false. At present I will only consider the first; and this is the question I ask concerning it—Is belief in and communion with God natural to man? My answer is in the negative. Two notable facts conclusively prove the correctness of that answer. The first is the uniform experience of Christian adults, and the second the uniform experience of children.

What is the uniform experience of Christian adults? I have attended thousands of Class or Church meetings in different parts of the world—meetings at which professing Christians are in the habit of relating their experiences in the Christian life—but I have never met a single person to whom the religious life came naturally and easily. The general complaint at such meetings is that it is terribly hard to be a Christian, that the attempt to serve God is against the grain, and that the tendency always is to neglect prayer, Bible reading, and Church-going. It is the Devil who usually gets all the blame, for he is always going about like "a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour." There are some, indeed, who hold the old Adam within them responsible for all their shortcomings and imperfections. But the undeniable fact is that to all alike God's worship and God's service are unnatural, and difficult, and grievous. Nature rebels against all religion. But would this be the case if man were by nature a religious being? The supreme danger that threatens all the people of God is that of falling back, forgetting, and neglecting. We are told that communion with Christ is exquisitely sweet, infinitely more enjoyable than all the pleasures of earth combined; but if that is true, why is it that everybody complains of the ever-recurring temptation to forget Christ and his fellowship? The scientist becomes utterly absorbed in the study of Nature, and can scarcely tear himself away from it for a moment; the poet loses himself in the contemplation of beautiful ideas; the philosopher gets indissolubly wedded to his subtle speculations; the physician, the artist, and the musician find their supreme delight in the

pursuit of their respective professions—why is it that a Christian has to resolutely oppose an inborn repugnance to the pursuit of holiness and heaven? Is not this very repugnance an expression of Nature's protest against religion? It was to meet this difficulty that the Devil was invented. Their belief in the malign ministry of the Devil afforded great comfort to our fathers. As soon as the Devil was dropped, the general disinclination to conform to the requirements of religion was attributed to the evil power of the old Adam still resident in every regenerate heart. But now that we are assured by so high an ecclesiastical authority as the Bishop of Worcester that the story of Adam's Fall in Eden is only an interesting fable, I wonder what will be the next explanation of men's invincible dislike of the thought of God and his heaven, and of their unconquerable objection to a life of devotion and prayer. The only reasonable explanation is to be found in the undoubted truth advocated in this article. Civilised man has outgrown religion. Religion is distasteful to him because he has passed it, and surely to turn back and pick it up again must be painful to him. Savages are all religious because they *are* savages. Mr. George Haw will laugh at all this, just as in the *Clarion* he laughs at the idea that evolution is a satisfactory account of man's origin, and avows his acceptance of an antiquated theology. But hollow laughter never destroyed nor even discouraged truth; and already the majority of people, even in Christendom, are non-religious.

But the experience of children is more decisive still. It is through his sense of wonder, and of fear that religion first approaches the child. He is told that on a great white throne, far beyond the stars, there sits a dread Sovereign who made and sustains all things. Against that inconceivable Being all, even little children, have sinned, so that by nature we are all under his wrath. His only begotten Son, however, in his infinite love, voluntarily undertook the responsibility of our sins, and offered himself as an atonement for them to his Father; and for Christ's sake God is willing to save us all, and adopt us as his own children. All this is an insoluble mystery to the child, but because of his boundless faith in his parents he tries hard to believe it. He is taught simple little prayers which he repeats every night and morning after his mother or his nurse. If at any time he objects to saying them, he is told God will be angry with him, and he is quite sure that his mother is extremely displeased, and so to please his mother and to avoid God's anger and probable punishment, he forces himself to say them. By and bye the Sunday School teacher emphasises and adds to the home instruction, and the preacher, who is said to be God's ordained messenger, drives the nails further in still. But, in spite of all, the child is still, at heart, a sturdy little Pagan. If he listened to the voice of his inclination, he would not pray, nor go to church, nor read the Bible. That is to say, were he *allowed* to be natural, he would have nothing to do with religion. The thought of God would never arise spontaneously within him: it has to be forced into him from outside.

That this is a true interpretation of the child-experience is proved by the fact that children who are brought up naturally, who are duly instructed in the knowledge of Nature and of themselves, betray no disposition to seek after God. They have no craving whatever for a deity; and the so-called instinct of immortality is not in them. They are entirely satisfied with life as they find it, and their one ambition is to quit themselves like men and women. This is not a fancy picture, but a veritable transcript from life. There are men and women among us to-day, bright examples of righteousness, and truth, and purity, and high honor, and selfless love, who have neither believed in or felt the need of a God, nor had the faintest longing for a future life. And yet they are exceptionally radiant, and serene, and happy, and doing their utmost to increase the happiness of the world. Some preachers would call them unconscious Christians; but they would

indignantly resent the false nomenclature, and avow themselves out-and-out Atheists.

Is it not fair to infer that in a hundred years from now there would be no religion, if from tomorrow the religious training of the young were to utterly cease? Religion is not innate; it is taught. Worship is not inborn; it is a habit slowly learnt that has never blossomed into an instinct. God is only an enlarged likeness of man, and so-called communion with him is nothing but man's fellowship with an artificial projection of himself.

JOHN LLOYD.

Religion.

(Concluded from page 124.)

It may be freely admitted that the majority of Christians feel and believe that their religion is good, and doing good. The same is true of Buddhists, Confucians, Mohammedans, and even of idolaters. Therefore the feeling and believing prove nothing but their own existence. Christian apologists claim every good and progress as the work of religion. They assert already that religion emancipated woman and the slave, though the Bible and the Church sanctioned and defended their slavery as long as it could. The Church is already beginning to take credit for the discoveries of scientists and the introduction of the higher criticism, ignoring the fact that it opposed science and criticism as long as it was possible to do so. It would not surprise me if Christian apologists, in the near future, will claim that the Church destroyed religion and established Freethought, for some of them already claim Darwin and other Agnostics—even Robert Blatchford—as eminent Christian men.

Of the good of supernatural religion I am in doubt, as I believe all the good effects claimed for it can be realised by other means without any of its bad results. And I have no doubt that most of the good supposed to be derived from religion is the result of evolution, social progress, and better education. Of the bad fruit of supernatural religion a large volume could be written. But I must confine myself to a few points in a very brief way. In speaking of religion, we must always include the Church and the priest, as they are inseparably linked together. What the priest and the Church do, religion does; and what religion does, the Church and its priests do. Religion is nothing apart from the Church.

Religion makes men dogmatic and arrogant. The religion of every Christian is the only true religion. Their belief is a revelation from God. Every church, and almost every Christian, in their own way, are infallible, like the Pope and his Church. Hence they look upon all who differ from them as heretics. Hence, also, the suspicion and bad feeling between the different sects and religions. The remarks may be applied to every religion in a smaller or greater degree, as they are all of the same root and nature.

Religion makes men intolerant and persecuting—at least, the Christian religion does so. Catholics have persecuted Protestants, Protestants have persecuted Catholics, and all sects have persecuted unbelievers. Christians talk and write much about Christian martyrs, but are silent about the martyrs of Christians, who are far more numerous. The victims of religion by means of the Inquisition, religious wars, and social persecutions, baffle description and defy figures. The spirit of the age has stopped some of the outrages, but enough still remain to show what priestcraft would do if it got the power once again. Religionists have many instruments to punish unbelievers besides fine, imprisonment, the stake, and the gallows, as many know by sad experience.

Religion tends to produce pharisees and hypocrites. It did so in the time of Jesus, as the parable of the pharisee and publican show. It does so now, as daily revelations prove. Christians are right, all others are wrong; they are the children of God, all others are the children of hell; they are saints,

others are sinners. Hence, when they are anything but saints, they pretend to be, and so fill the churches and chapels with a crowd of pharisees and hypocrites, as most people know.

Religion disintegrates society. If there is one thing more than another wanted, it is something to unite man to man, class to class, district to district, and nation to nation, all the world over. Science does that, as it is the same everywhere. But religion differs in every country, and all are in a state of war against each other. In our own country, nominally Christian, religion divides the people into hostile sects. They must have different temples to worship in. They must have different schools for their children. They must not marry one another, nor live in fellowship together. And when they die they must have separate ground to be buried in. Religion is a bone of contention between man and man, and nation and nation, all over the world.

Religion perpetuates errors and superstitions. Errors that were exposed thousands of years ago still flourish because religion keeps them alive. It is a barrier in the way of progress and an enemy to science. The Church has always opposed advanced and new thought and discoveries, and persecuted every pioneer of science. There is no doubt that many discoveries would have been made many centuries ago but for the terrible deterring terror of the Churches. It is true that Christians persecuted, hated, libelled, and tortured one another to death because their opinions differed. But all of them united to destroy the unbeliever. And the disabilities and persecution of open sceptics is not over yet. Ostracism and exclusion from tens of thousands of appointments awaits all who cannot believe, or pretend to believe, the orthodox creeds.

Religion warps the mind, dulls the understanding, and colors the mental vision of its devotees, so that they cannot see opponents as they are, cannot understand their objections, and cannot feel the weakness of their answers. At all events, it is more charitable to attribute their conduct to a warped mind than to a wilful malevolence. The almost universal habit of Christians to libel and bear false witness against unbelievers, cannot well be explained, except by supposing that religion has infected their minds. The invented lies and libels told about Voltaire, Thomas Paine, Robert Owen, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, and other prominent unbelievers, show, I think, that only men of diseased minds could be guilty of uttering them.

In conclusion, there cannot be a doubt that religion robs this world of services that society greatly needs. Had the churches devoted half the talent, time, and energy to this world, instead of an imaginary world to come, it is inconceivable that the condition of the masses would be what it is to day. The poor have been neglected by the churches. Instead of providing decent homes for the masses, they have built grand cathedrals, churches and chapels for imaginary gods, palaces for the rich, and mansions for the priests. No wonder the masses are turning their backs on the churches. Until the churches unite with others to provide better homes, better food and clothing, better surroundings and comforts for all the people, they deserve nothing better than failure and extinction.

R. J. DERFEL.

N.S.W. Education Act provides that clergymen of any recognised denomination (and you can be a recognised denomination in N.S.W. about as easily as you can be an actor) shall be permitted to attend the State schools and explain the inwardness of Jonah and the whale to such children as belong to their denomination for an hour each day. The clergy carefully avoid taking advantage of the facilities offered. Their total visits to the schools only average eight per year. There are about 240 school days in the year, and in only one of thirty does a parson or priest of any sort attend to give "spiritual comfort" to the youngsters. The painful absence of any material for a collection (a school-boy has even a better use for his buttons) is probably the reason of this.—*Sydney Bulletin*.

Acid Drops.

Admiral Alexeieff, who allowed the Japs to play the devil with the Russian fleet at Port Arthur, seems to have a very powerful friend. He has fallen back upon the Almighty. It is a case of "God help us"—which means, generally, that your plight is hopeless. Addressing the "heroic army and fleet" after the disaster, this gentleman said: "Our God, who has always upheld the cause that is just is doing so now." *Our God!* Evidently the Russians have a different God from the Japs. Two deities, as well as two nations, are fighting in this war. And we suppose, as usual, it is ten to one on the winner.

The Russian God, it must be confessed, had rather a singular way of upholding the Russian cause. Admiral Alexeieff, when viewing his sunk and disabled ironclads, might well have cried with Jack Falstaff, "Call you that backing of your friends?"

Admiral Alexeieff, in his dispatch giving full details of the Port Arthur disaster, referred to the Japs as the "insolent foe." This phrase is sneered at by a pious halfpenny morning newspaper, which probably did not recollect that the very same expression was used by Othello in his address to the Senate. Othello looked down with contempt upon his captors, being conscious of his own superiority. Admiral Alexeieff looks down in the same way upon the Japs. He is a Christian, and they are Heathen. And for Heathen to knock Christians about is always "insolence." The reverse, of course, is perfect good breeding.

The Russian declaration "God is on our side" is smiled at by the Japs in America. Mr. Uchida, the Consul-General there, says the evidence is the other way. "It is true," he says, "that we have torpedoed many of the Russian ships—that is the act of man; but the freezing of Russian soldiers at Lake Baikal is the act of the Almighty." A hit, a palpable hit!

Another "providential" view of the situation in the Far East is attributed to a prominent Greek. "The Japanese victories," according to this gentleman "are the vengeance of God on Russia for her treatment of Greece." Doubtless this gentleman is as right as any of the other speculators.

The Metropolitan of St. Petersburg has a different view of the matter. Naturally. He has sent the Czar a large and beautifully painted image of Russia's warrior-saint, and with it a letter in which he calls the Japanese "pagans" and "heretics," who must of course get the worst of it when the Lord chips in effectively. Here is a pretty extract from the Metropolitan's letter:—"But though the desire for peace is innate in the Christian's heart, the infidel pagan knows no such holy feeling. And now the false-hearted Japanese have dared to raise the banner of war against the Russian people. Holy Russia trembles with wrath." Yes, holy people are very apt to tremble with wrath when they are crossed and circumvented.

"If Christ were at Port Arthur" is the title of "An Important New Series of Articles" in the *V. C.* It might as well put it "If Christ were in Hell." He is as much in the one place as in the other—for he is everywhere or nowhere.

It is asserted that the French Minister of War has sent to all commanders of army corps a dispatch ordering them to forbid soldiers to frequent clubs which are connected with any religious society. This, if it be true, has the appearance of a wanton tyranny. But a moment's recollection will bring to the mind that at the present moment the Roman Church is accentuating the facts that it is an antagonistic State within the State, and that it has for ages tabooed secular organisations and secular literature, and so carried on a one-sided warfare. It is, apparently, by the tone of its announcement of the fact, in a state of epileptic convulsion at the mere conception that a nation may make a feeble effort to adopt one of her own weapons as a means of defence from her aggressions.

A correspondent of ours at Southend tells us how the Gipsy Smith Mission was worked up there lately. First of all the district was plastered with preliminary bills and portraits of the Zingali soul-saver. Then every house in the borough was visited by amateur advertisers of the "softer" sex, who probably had a more amiable reception in some cases than would have been accorded to similar publicists of the "harder" sex. The next effort was a limelight lantern

throwing portraits and "messages" from Free Church leaders on a sheet in High-street, which is the principal thoroughfare, and where any excitement is welcome at this desperately dull time of the year. For six weeks 700 male and female (especially female) workers were on the job, under the Southend Free Church Association. Ministers wrought and laymen labored to let everybody know that the great Gipsy Smith was coming, and that his visit was the event of the 1903-4 winter season. A choir of 250 voices was got together from various churches. Finally, the naughty Kursaal—a place of what the godly call "sinful amusement" during the summer, but available for better (or worse) uses during the rest of the year—was engaged for the week's meetings; and special trains and special tram-cars were arranged for, so that people might flock in from all parts of the borough, and from all parts of the surrounding district. This was a master-stroke. Fancy going to the Kursaal night after night, and all for the love of Christ! What a delicious excitement!

Handbills and picture-cards flew about Southend like autumn leaves. The mission, indeed, was worked for all it was worth; and, as there was absolutely no counter-attraction in the place, Gipsy Smith did a roaring business. There was nothing to pay, except what you chose to put in the plate. "Three thousand free seats" were advertised, except for the last night when there was a charge for admission. Until then Gipsy Smith had been talking about Christ "free, gratis, for nothing." Money had to be planked down when he talked about himself. He told the Story of his Life—at least the advertisements said so, and perhaps the crowd expected something spicy, though we dare say they were disappointed, for it is not usual to tell *all* on these occasions.

Our principal point is this. Gipsy Smith's mission was worked up on the most advanced circus principles, and we hardly see how it could have helped succeeding in such circumstances, in such a place, and at such a time of the year. There would have been another tale to tell in August. The crowd don't want salvation then. They have plenty of better amusement.

We see it reported that the Hon. Joseph H. Choate "will represent the United States of America" at the forthcoming centenary of the Bible Society, and will speak at the evening meeting at Queen's Hall on March 8. We guess there is some mistake about it. The United States of America have not, to our knowledge, appointed Mr. Choate or anyone else to represent them on this occasion. When the American ambassador talks at a religious meeting he simply represents himself.

How fine, not to say finical, the *Daily News* is getting. Referring to a recent mission at South Shields, it said that a notable feature of the meeting was "the large number of young men who have been led to decision." We suppose this is a euphemism for finding Jesus.

The halfpenny daily organ of Passive Resistance and the Nonconformist Conscience has made a discovery. It is not a new discovery—thousands of people have seen it before—but the *Daily News* sees it now for the first time. Our contemporary finds that there is something wrong with the Conscience Clause—a fact which Secularists have insisted upon for thirty-three years.

The National Society's "Leaflet No. 2" sets forth a number of "lies" told about the new Education Act. "It is a lie," one paragraph says, "to say that the children of Nonconformists are forced to receive religious teaching to which their parents object. Any child may be withdrawn from the religious teaching at its parents' desire." This is perfectly true in point of fact. Moreover, it is precisely what Nonconformists have told Secularists. But it does not satisfy the *Daily News* now. And why? Simply because the game is played against its Nonconformist clients by Churchmen, instead of against the poor Secularists by Nonconformists and Churchmen combined. It is another instance of circumstances altering cases.

"Is compulsion," the *Daily News* asks, "only applied by law? Are there no terrors in the voluntary excommunication, which is the only means in a Voluntary school of escaping sectarian instruction?" This means that Nonconformist children who are withdrawn from religious instruction in Voluntary schools under the Conscience Clause suffer what is practically an excommunication and a martyrdom. True. But the very same excommunication and martyrdom were suffered by Secularist children withdrawn from religious

instruction in Board schools, where Church and Chapel made up the syllabus of Bible lessons between them. When the Nonconformists were told of this they pool-pooled it. They said that the Conscience Clause was an absolutely ideal arrangement. But all its idealism vanishes now that the Nonconformists are the sufferers themselves. The ideal arrangement is denounced as a mockery, a delusion, and a snare.

Passive Resisters came up in a batch of thirty-two before the Bench at Great Yarmouth. They had at least two friends on the Bench. One magistrate, Mr. J. T. Bottle, retired from the Bench as a protest against the injustice of the Education Act, and to show sympathy with his friends. He should now take another step. A magistrate who protests against laws he has undertaken to administer should clear off the Bench altogether. That is the only honorable course. Mr. Bottle's example was not followed, however, by Mr. T. J. Saul, who impudently said that he should remain on the Bench to see justice was done the Passive Resisters. Naturally the Passive Resisters applauded this insolence. But the Mayor very properly said that no one need fear but that justice would be done. And some citizens applauded that. Thus the Nonconformist Anarchists (when it suits their purpose) turn the courts of justice into centres of political agitation.

Rev. G. W. Wellburn, Primitive Methodist, now of Deal, but recently of Folkestone, has been sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment for non-payment of rates, amounting to about ten shillings. What a chance for the Almighty! The Passive Resisters claim that God is on their side. A good many people would believe it if the Lord got this Christian martyr out of gaol as Peter and Paul were rescued from prison in the Acts of the Apostles. A miracle would be very handy just now, and the Passive Resisters should pray for one. No doubt they will obtain it if they pray long enough.

Passive Resisters remind us of Voltaire's *mot* on the prophet Habbakuk. They are capable of anything. One of them, the Rev. Udy Bassett, turned up the other day at the Birmingham Police Court, and attempted to harangue the Stipendiary Magistrate on the subject of his "cherished convictions." "I am afraid I cannot listen to you," the Stipendiary said. "But," the reverend non-ratepayer replied, "applicants for vaccination certificates are allowed to state their objections." Could anything be sillier? There is a special law for conscientious objectors to vaccination. When there is a special law for conscientious objectors to the payment of rates and taxes the Rev. Udy Bassett will be perfectly in order.

Passive Resisters turned up in strong force at the Huddersfield Police Court. There were eighty-nine of them, and they all wanted to make speeches. But the Bench was firm, if polite, and most of the Nonconformist barrels of eloquence remained untapped. Some of them, however, got off references to Fox's *Book of Martyrs* and other up-to-date affairs. One gentleman, the Rev. J. E. Radcliffe, said he wanted to urge "a constitutional objection," but the Chairman pointed out that "they could not dispute an Act of Parliament in that court." Thereupon the man of God impudently asked, "But this is a court of justice, is it not?" To which the Chairman replied with dignity: "We are not here to be cross-examined."

The baser sort of American Christians go on lying about the late Colonel Ingersoll. A Cincinnati man of God, the Rev. F. A. Strough, circulated the fiction that Ingersoll committed suicide by swallowing poison. Being taken to task, the professional exhorter crawls off in the most contemptible manner. The following is his letter to one of Ingersoll's relatives:

"I regret exceedingly that my name has been attached to the unpleasant incident in regard to Mr. Ingersoll's death. I merely said, 'A man of national reputation made the statement at a meeting of the state synod in Michigan a few months ago that Robert G. Ingersoll died a suicide.' The papers have taken it up that I was the originator of that statement, which is false. I heard it from a man who ought to have known what he was talking about. However, I shall not repeat the statement, and I am very sorry to have caused the relatives any remorse or sorrow. Those who know me know I would not do a wrong intentionally. Trusting that this may end the unpleasant matter, I am," etc.

Note what this fellow regrets—not the lie, but the unpleasantness. His "apology" rather makes the matter worse. All it comes to is this: that he did not say that Ingersoll committed suicide, but that he said that another man said it. He is therefore liar and coward in one.

Another Christian, at Idaho, circulated the yarn that Ingersoll wrote to someone before his death that he did not

desire to have any of "the foolish attacks he made upon Christianity reprinted." Naturally the Colonel's relatives and friends want to see the letter. Mr. C. P. Farrell, Ingersoll's relative and publisher, offers to bet all he has got against a copy of the New Testament that Ingersoll never wrote such a letter. The odds are long, but the bet is safe.

Lydia Denison, a lady "inspired" and with "a mission on earth," turned up at the Clerkenwell Police Court on a charge of assault. According to the evidence she tried to force her way to the front of the congregation at the Catholic Apostolic Church, Duncan-street, Islington. She declared that she was "the woman of Revelations, sent to search out their sins, and to test them." Apparently a case for the doctors.

The trial of Mrs. Helen Wilmans Post is on in the United States Court at Jacksonville, Fla. Mrs. Post is accused of using the mails for fraudulent purposes, she having advertised to give absent treatment for all kinds of ills, curable and incurable. A woman who was once her correspondence clerk has testified that Mrs. Post "received money from patients desiring to regain lost affections, to get persons out of gaol through working on the judge's feelings, to grow hair on bald heads, to restore limbs where cut off, to secure the love of some person, to cure insane persons, to cure cancer and consumption, to make new growth of teeth in old persons, and in one case a person born with one leg shorter than the other took treatment to have the shorter leg lengthened." These facts, if as stated, do but furnish fresh illustrations of the age-old truth that a fool and his money are soon separated. It is impossible to see how the government can justly discriminate between the mental science practitioner who receives money for absent treatment and the priest who accepts coin for substantially the same service. A vibration, whether it gets there or not, is as well worth paying for as a prayer which may or may not be said. In behalf of Mrs. Post there were witnesses who testified that her treatment had cured them of "pneumonia, dysentery, liver complaint, Bright's disease, asthma, stomach troubles, fevers, catarrh, and deafness; and one man said that after curing him of Bright's disease she caused hair to grow on his bald head." Can any priest submit testimony that by reason of prayers said at so much apiece or by the dozen somebody's term in limbo has been shortened? Can even a hair be produced where none grew before to prove the efficacy of "good works"—meaning gifts to the Church? If the law is to be applied to the mind doctors at all, its operation should be horizontal, and take in all the practitioners who are on the same level.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

General Booth has issued his annual appeal for Self-Denial Week—from February 27 to March 5 inclusive. He says he would be glad to receive cheques for £1,000—which no one doubts. At the same time he does not expect them. He feels that what he is asking for "are the crumbs." Yes, and a large number of these crumbs are not contributed by Salvationists at all, but begged from the British public. In London particularly the Salvation lasses are "all over the shop" during this "week of grace," and the rattle of their boxes is heard everywhere.

One thousand pounds of General Booth's Self-Denial Fund is to be given as a thankoffering to the British and Foreign Bible Society. The modern Moses (nose and all) does not believe very much in the value of outside literature. He thinks the *War Cry* and similar publications quite sufficient for the literary necessities of his followers—or, for that matter, of the whole round world. But he makes an exception in the case of the Bible. Himself and God are two good writers.

Without wishing to discuss politics we should like to know what poor old Kruger thinks of "Providence." He told the Boers that this personage would see them through. But the Boer Republic is gone, President Kruger is spending his last days in exile, and "Dr. Jim" is Prime Minister of Cape Colony. There never was a more thoroughgoing sarcasm on human piety. It is worthy of what Heine called the Aristophanes of the Universe.

We much regret to hear that Old Dowie has had a rough time of it at Sydney. He was simply mobbed, and apparently had to bolt from the city in order to escape destruction. Even a large force of police could not protect him from the crowd. No doubt Old Dowie is a very objectionable person to many people, but he is entitled to the elementary rights of citizenship. It is a disgraceful act to break up his meetings. There ought to be fair play all

round, and those who cannot listen decently to what they dislike should not go to meetings where they are likely to hear it.

Rev. J. Stratton, of Workingham, Berks, in a letter to the *Waterford Standard*, says that "The apathy of the clergy in regard to the barbarous and cowardly practice of vivisection is enough to turn anybody against professors and teachers of religion."

Bishop Gore, a clerical heretic who hunts other heretics out of the Church, strikes us as being very far from an honest man. He has just been recommending his Christian brethren to get hold of a good book of devotion, say Law's *Serious Call*, and read it through carefully and reflectively. Well now, let us see what profit Bishop Gore has himself derived from the book he recommends. Law stuck honestly to the plain meaning of the words of Christ. "Blessed be ye poor," "Woe unto you rich," and "Sell that thou hast and give to the poor" were to him the clear commands of God, and he loyally endeavoured to obey them. Bishop Gore takes a different view in his volume of discourses on the Sermon on the Mount. He argues that those words of Christ were only addressed to the people who heard him speak. They are not binding on Christians to-day. Which is very reassuring—especially for Bishops.

The Bishop of London preached the Lenten sermon in Lincoln's Inn Chapel to "a large congregation of members of the Bar and their friends." He did not choose for his text "Woe unto you lawyers." He chose an irrelevant text from Hosea about the valley of Achor. One of his incidental observations was that "Twenty years ago it would have been said the greatest foe of the Church was a certain amount of Secularism; now it was the desire to live with flowers ever growing." Letting the "flowers" pass, we may note the Bishop's desire to make as little as possible of Secularism nowadays. When he was in East London it was the foe he pretended to be fighting. Now he is in West London he has other fish to fry.

Rev. George Hooper has been preaching a series of sermons at Bishopgate Chapel on "The Example of Christ." Some one asked him by letter how he accounted for God's permission of sorrow, and the reverend gentleman replied that his concluding address would be on "The Blessedness of Sorrow." It would be cruel to take him at his word, and wish him a full share of that blessedness. We daresay he wants as little of it as he does of the blessedness of poverty.

Seven thousand converts are now claimed for the Torrey-Alexander mission at Birmingham. But arithmetic was never the strong point of such enterprises. These Birmingham figures remind us of the wall that fell down in the Bible and killed 27,000 men. When religious people deal with numbers they are capable of anything.

The Alexander part of the Torrey-Alexander combination has struck oil at Birmingham. Sankey's successor has got engaged to be married there to Miss Helen Cadbury, the daughter of the late Mr. Richard Cadbury. As the Cadburys are a very wealthy family, it is to be presumed that Mr. Alexander has secured an ample portion of the blessedness of poverty for the rest of his natural life.

Mr. Alexander, we understand, aims at following in the footsteps of Christ; but he seems to have given special attention to Luke viii., 3.

Liberty of conscience is a principle of which Luther had no conception. He claimed the right to think against the Pope; he denied the right of others to think against himself. His attitude towards the Anabaptists was fiendish. During the Peasants War he urged the authorities to exterminate the rebels, to "stab, kill, and strangle them without mercy." Melancthon taught that heretics "ought to be restrained by the sword." Luther likewise declared that whoever denied even one article of the Protestant faith should be punished severely. Referring to a false teacher, he exclaimed, "Drive him away as an apostle of hell; and if he does not flee, deliver him up as a seditious man to the executioner."

Hallam, Buckle, Lecky, and all reputable historians, agree that the Protestant party held the same principle of persecution as the Catholics. It was not disputed that death was the proper punishment of obstinate heresy. The only dispute was—which were the heretics, and who should die?

Dullards in Demand.

(A LAY OF ANCIENT ATCHAM.)

[The Guardians of Atcham, Shropshire, have concluded that the adoption of the sixth as the exemption standard in rural State schools is likely to cause immorality among the scholars. In a prolonged discussion on the subject, it was seriously argued that children in rural districts were likely to receive more harm than good from too much education; and that it only increased the difficulty which farmers already experienced in getting boys on to their land. One speaker said he was prepared to vouch for the immorality of school children in his village; while the Chairman (the Rev. A. G. Burton) was afraid that the keeping of boys and girls at home together too long led to immorality, and he thought, after thirty-five years' experience of schools, a child in the country districts should be allowed to leave school when he had passed the fourth standard.]

Rev. A. G. Burton

By the Board of Guardians swore
That the children of old Atcham
Should go to school no more.

By the Board the parson swore it,
And pointed to the "facts":
" 'Tis plain to see we reap," said he,
"The grossest immorality,
The basest sensuality—
Besides contempt for QUALITY—
From Education Acts."

The parson's brow was dark,
And the parson's speech severe;
"These Education Acts," said he,
"I shall not suffer here!"
(Of all the five-and-thirty years
He'd worked among the schools,
Those years they were the best for him
When boys were mostly fools.)

Then out spake Farmer Wheaten-sheaf,
An elder of the land:
"Them Education Codes, an' things,
I'm danged if I can stand.
What 'standards of exemption' be
It b'aint for I to say;
But this I knows—the times were best
When parson had his way.

"Them Lunnon chaps 'as brought us to
The pickle we're in now
Ain't got no thort o' farmer folks—
They never held a plow!.....
When childer learns to read an' write
I says, 'That be enough!
Ee's got to earn thy keep, an' want
No more o' bookish stuff.'

"No good can come o' any lad
Manurin' o' his brains
Wi' all the dust o' ages past—
'Tis plaguey crops he gains!
'Taint childers' minds we want manured,
But our own idle meads.
That cultivation be the best
That corn, not culture, needs.

"An' so I says wi' parson,
Wi' schoolin' let's ha' done;
The lads be only spoiled for work,
The gals be good for none.
Clods be best to work the clods,
So let's ha' back the days
When gals were lads in petticoats,
An' lads were mostly jays."

FRED. L. GREIG.

NO CAUSE FOR THANKS.

The following example of a quaint, philosophic Scotch character, is related in the *Scottish American*: "The season had been an exceptionally bad one for farming, but in a country church not far from Arbroath the officials had resolved, according to custom, to hold the annual harvest thanksgiving service. It was noticed that on that particular occasion Mr. Johnstone, a regular attendant and pillar of the church (whose crops had miserably failed) was not in attendance. The minister, in the course of the following week, met Mr. Johnstone, and inquired of him the reason of his absence from church on such an important occasion.

" 'Well, sir,' replied Mr. Johnstone, 'I diinna care aboot approachin' my Maker in a spoorit o' sarcasm.' "

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Friday, February 26, Queen's Hall, London, Public Demonstration in Favor of Secular Education, at 8.

Sunday, February 28, Public Baths Assembly Hall, Coventry: at 3, "Japan, Russia, and the Prince of Peace"; at 7, "The Doom of Religion—With Reference to Mr. Blatchford's *Clarion* Articles."

March 13, Liverpool; 20, Camberwell; 27, Birmingham

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—February 28, Liverpool; March 6, Queen's Hall, London.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—February 28, Queen's Hall, London; March 6, Glasgow; 13, South Shields; April 3, Sheffield; 17, Merthyr Tydvil; 24, Failsworth.

ROUCHMAN.—Heine was a wit and humorist. The writer of the paragraph in the *Daily News* does not understand him. Heine said, "God will forgive me; it is his trade." There is not much real piety about that.

W. MATTHEWS.—Your letter has been handed to us. We thank you for your offer. Someone, however, will have to look after the local arrangements if Mr. Foote is to lecture at Plymouth again.

MACROBIUS writes: "I consider the importation of American Freethought literature a step in the right direction, and I hope to see Bell's *Handbook of Freethought* and Heston's *Cartoons* added to your list. *God at Chicago* is a torpedo. Why fire at Christ in the third storey when you can pot Jehovah in the basement, and bring down the whole structure with him? I eagerly await the advent of your new volume of *Essays*."

T. CLARK.—You ask why the Dowie-Torrey species of quack leave Ireland alone? We believe they get as far as Belfast. The rest of Ireland would probably give them too warm a reception, and they are not anxious for the crown of martyrdom.

M. CONWAY.—Your letter is bright and spirited, but it would do more good in the journal which is publishing Mr. Haw's outpourings. That gentleman is doing Christianity more harm than Mr. Blatchford did, though he is doing it in a different way.

W. W. BARTLETT.—Is there any reader of ours bearing this name? We have received a postcard intended for him, but addressed to us, from J. B. Elliott, secretary of the Paine Memorial Association, Philadelphia. If he communicates with us, we will forward it.

THE IDIOTS, pious and otherwise, who send us anonymous letters, are warned that they only waste their time—not to mention the paper and postage. We look at the beginning and end of letters first, and, if they contain no name nor address, they pass straight into the waste-basket.

J. H. COOPER.—We do not know of any French journal on similar lines to the *Freethinker*. You might, however, try *La Raison*, published at Paris, of which you could probably obtain a sample copy at our publishing office by forwarding a stamped directed envelope.

F. J. VOISEY.—Must have gone astray. We find very little reason for admiring that "model Socialistic institution" the Post Office. We acknowledge all the cuttings, &c., we receive. Sorry to learn you have had trouble for nothing.

C. E. COPE.—We were not discussing politics at all, but dealing with the abuse of words. And we remain sincerely impenitent. Your letter does not convince us that you quite understood our drift. We repeat that Free Trade and Protection are both intelligible, whichever is right and whichever is wrong; but Fair Trade is a mere matter of sentiment, and incapable of definition, while the very word "Fair" begs all the questions at issue in the controversy. Now do you see?

J. G. STUART.—Your letters in the local press must be doing a great deal of good.

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

W. BINDON.—You can hardly expect us to carry on a discussion in this column. We answered your question, and that is all we can do here. We may repeat, however, that, as no individual made himself, every individual is the result of general causes, amongst which social causes are of vast importance. Supposing a Jabez Balfour or Whitaker Wright were born in a higher state of society than the present one, they would still be unable to pursue the careers for which they are notorious, because better laws and social customs would be against them.

IGNORANT.—Thanks for the reference, though we don't believe it is necessary. We do not know whether Mr. Lloyd will think it advisable to give another reply. We inserted Mr. Nash's long letter chiefly to avoid any appearance of partiality.

R. P. EDWARDS'S new address is 141 Thorold-road, Chatham. Branch secretaries, &c., will please note.

T. H. ELSTON.—A paragraph was already in type. We are very glad to hear that Mr. Cohen had such a fine audience at Newcastle, and that the *Chronicle* describes his lecture as "lucid and able."

G. D.—Thanks for your long and careful letter. Your suggestions are being considered. We shall probably do what is possible, but the difficulty of street-selling of the *Freethinker* is greater than you fancy.

SOME letters that reached our editorial office on Saturday morning (Feb. 20) will have to be dealt with in our next issue. They were posted on to Mr. Foote's residence, and should have reached him on Saturday evening, but they were not even delivered on Sunday morning, and did not arrive until Monday, long after Mr. Foote had left home for London first and Lancashire afterwards. Yes, the Post Office is a model institution.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Freethought Publishing Company, Limited, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*, which are most useful in the Freethought Publishing Company's business.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Thirty words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

There was a greatly improved audience at the Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, and Mr. Foote's lecture on "Holy Russia and Heathen Japan" was followed with profound attention and enthusiastically applauded. A number of questions were afterwards asked and answered, and it was nearly ten o'clock when the meeting broke up.

Mr. Foote visits Coventry again to-day (Feb. 28) after a long absence, and delivers two lectures, afternoon and evening, in the Public Baths Assembly Hall. By special request of the local "saints," who want to reach the general public of the town, the admission to both meetings is free—with some reserved seats in front for those who desire to be extra comfortable. There will be collections, of course, but as these very rarely pay anything like expenses the N.S.S. Executive has made a grant in aid of this particular effort. The chairman at both meetings is to be Councillor F. S. Jackson.

The Queen's Hall platform will be occupied this evening (Feb. 28) by Mr. John Lloyd. We hope the London "saints" will see that he has a good audience and a very hearty reception. His subject is, "What Think Ye of Christ?"

We are pleased to hear that Mr. Cohen had a crowded audience at his lecture for the local Sunday Society in the Tyne Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne, on Sunday evening. We understand that it was one of the best houses seen there this season.

Mr. W. H. Thresh made his first appearance on a Freethought platform at the Camberwell Secular Hall on Sunday evening. We are informed that he had a very appreciative audience, that he was most cordially welcomed, and that he was very warmly applauded at the close of his lecture. The chairman expressed a hope, which was cheered, that they might soon hear Mr. Thresh there again.

The Camberwell Secular Hall platform will be occupied this evening (Feb. 28) by Mr. F. A. Davies, who is well known to London Freethinkers as an able open-air lecturer. We hope the South London "saints," at any rate, will crowd in to hear his discourse on "The Dying Faith."

The indoor Annual Children's Party, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place on Thursday evening, March 3, in the large hall of the Club and Institute Union, adjoining the Holborn Town Hall. There will be a tea at 5.30, which will be followed by a stage entertainment, games,

and prize competitions; and a band has been engaged to play suitable selections during the evening. Of course there will be a liberal distribution of fruit and confections; and, if the funds permit, each child will receive a present. Tickets may be obtained of the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Nothing has to be paid for the children, who must be not under 6 nor over 14; but a charge of threepence will be made to parents and friends who wish to watch the fun from the galleries.

Naturally a Children's Party is an expensive function and funds are indispensable. We hope subscriptions will be sent in forthwith, and freely, to Miss Vance, who will expend them in concert with the committee. Gifts of toys or sweetmeats would also be very welcome. Miss Vance now acknowledges the following: Mrs. Henderson, collecting card, £1 4s. 8½d., George Kemp 5s.

The Glasgow Branch's orchestral and vocal concert on Sunday evening was a great success. The extremely wet weather kept some away who would otherwise have been present, but all who were present were delighted. Great credit is due to Mr. J. F. Turnbull, the conductor. The solos on the violin and 'cello were highly appreciated, and the rendering of "The Blue Bells of Scotland" elicited an encore. A feature of the concert was a "March—Strathspey and Reel" by a piper. Altogether it was a most enjoyable function.

Mr. George Weir, who was prosecuted for holding Free-thought meetings at Edinburgh in 1888, and imprisoned at Glasgow under the Vaccination Laws in 1889, has been for some time at Leeds, where he has an ambition to carry on an "advanced" bookstore for the sale of Freethought and other progressive literature. He has taken a house at 61 Portland-crescent, behind the Town Hall, and will open it in a week or so for the foregoing purpose. The local "saints" might give Mr. Weir a call and see if they can do business with him.

Dr. J. E. Roberts, the eloquent preacher to the Church of This World in Kansas City, is to some extent known to our readers, as we have reproduced some of his addresses in these columns. They will therefore regret to hear, as we do, that he has been compelled by ill-health to suspend his ministerial work. His doctors have ordered him a long vacation, and he has gone to his farm in Michigan, where it is hoped that fresh air, sunshine, and out-of-door life will soon (as the New York *Truthseeker* says) restore him to physical strength and mental vigor.

Judge C. B. Waite, whom we had the pleasure of meeting some years ago at Chicago, is now eighty years of age, and his birthday was recently celebrated by the Chicago Free-thinkers, in connection with that of Thomas Paine, by a public dinner. About a hundred sat down. The gathering was under the auspices of the American Secular Union, and Mr. T. B. Wakeman was toastmaster. We should have been proud and happy to drink Judge Waite's health. He belongs to the best type of American Freethinkers.

We hope our gallant contemporary, the New York *Truthseeker*, will be able to break down the ridiculous barrier to its circulation in Canada. America is supposed to be, in a general way, the home of freedom; but, in a particular way, it is often the home of something very different. In the United States the mails are worked by Comstock & Co. against freedom of thought and publication, and the same sort of thing appears to be going on in Canada. The following letter tells its own tale:

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2, 1904.

"MR. E. M. MACDONALD, Publisher *Truthseeker*, 28 Lafayette-place, New York, N. Y.—SIR.—I have received your letter of January 28 with a copy of your publication of January 23, with reference to its being mailed in Canada. Under date of November 28, 1903, the Deputy Postmaster-General of Canada forwarded to the Postmaster-General of the United States a list of United States publications which are forbidden circulation in the Canada mails, among which appears the name of the *Truthseeker*. The Deputy Postmaster-General stated: 'The papers named have heretofore been destroyed at the city post-offices.' Thereupon this department advised the Postmaster at New York City of that fact, and directed him to withhold them from dispatch as other 'prohibited articles.' However, I will refer your communication to the General Superintendent of the Foreign Mail Service for further consideration. Very respectfully,

R. J. WYNNE,

"First Assistant Postmaster-General."

Mr. Macdonald tells the Postal Authorities of his own country to send his paper on to Canada as well as elsewhere. It is no part of their business, he says, to recognise a foreign

editorship. We agree with him. But bigots and tyrants in one country have a wonderful sympathy with bigots and tyrants in other countries. Hence we fear the *Truthseeker* has a big hill to climb and a hard battle to fight.

According to a newspaper paragraph, the late Mr. Edmond Dresden, of Curzon-street, Mayfair, who died in December last, and whose will makes generous gifts to various charitable institutions, directed that his tombstone should bear the following inscription:—"Here lie the remains of Edmond Dresden, who believed in no religion but that of being charitable to my fellow man and woman, in word and deed."

Our excellent contemporary, the *Boston Investigator*, says: "When a minister has any sense we are always glad to help the world to know it." Then it quotes the following passage, which we have pleasure in reproducing, from a sermon by the Rev. Herbert S. Johnson, of the Warren Baptist Church, Boston:—

"We should sweep the Bible from the public school, and let us have no public praying there. Let the Sunday-schools, the churches, and the parents teach what religion is needed. I do not want to force my religion on the children of the Jew or the Catholic, any more than I should like to have my child obliged to be taught Roman Catholic doctrines. Neither method is right, and so I say take religion out of the public schools."

We have just received, rather late in the day, the first (February) number of a new monthly called the *Liberal Review*, issued by the Liberal University Organisation, at Kansas City, and edited by Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, with Mr. T. B. Wakeman as associate, and Mr. P. W. Greer as manager. We understand that the *Torch of Reason* sinks its existence in this new enterprise, which will also carry on the work of the late Editor H. L. Green's *Freethought Magazine*. The *Liberal Review* is in capable hands, and should have a prosperous future. It is well got-up and its contents are varied and interesting. There is also a capital portrait of Herbert Spencer for frontispiece. We may express a hope, however, that our young American contemporary will not be too "respectable." We see from some paragraphs that the writer of them has been reading the *Freethinker*. Quite a number of people read the *Freethinker* and are afraid to mention it. But there ought to be more courage than that amongst the "Independent Thinkers of America."

London Secularists will mostly get this number of the *Freethinker* in time to remind them of the Queen's Hall Demonstration in Favor of Secular Education on Friday evening (Feb. 26). Mr. G. W. Foote and Mr. J. M. Robertson are on the list of speakers, which also includes Mr. J. Keir Hardie, M.P., Mr. H. M. Hyndman, Mrs. Bridges Adams, Mr. J. F. Green, Mr. H. Quelch, and Messrs. Will Thorne and C. W. Bowerman representing the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress. We hardly need say, we hope, that this is a very important Demonstration, and that London Secularists should do their utmost to make it imposing.

The New Year's Gift to Freethought.

EIGHTH LIST OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

E. W. Hoare 5s., C. J. £1.

We are not aware that men have souls, but if they have, why should any soul be lost? We are not aware that there is a God, but if there is, why should he let any soul be lost? Sending souls to hell at all is only punishing his own failures. If he is omnipotent he could have made them as he pleased, and if they do not please him it is not their fault, but his own. Let it be distinctly understood that a creator has no right over his creatures; it is the creatures who have a right to the best assistance of their creator. The contrary doctrine comes down to us from the "good old times" when children had no rights, and parents had absolute power of life and death over them. In the same way, God had absolute power over his creatures; he was the potter and they were the clay; one vessel was made for honor, and one for dishonor; one for heaven, and one for hell. But civilisation has changed our conceptions. We regard the parent as responsible for the child, and God is responsible for the welfare of his creatures. A single "lost soul" would prove the malignity or imbecility of "our father which art in heaven."

Man's Place in the Universe.

THAT veteran naturalist, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, is one of the few remaining scientific men of any eminence who regard the facts and problems of Science from an anthropotropic and dualistic point of view. It is a point of view that has very generally been abandoned nowadays, though it might be ungenerous to suggest that the advanced age of Dr. Wallace causes him to take an old-fashioned view of things. But certainly none of the younger generation of scientists seem inclined to follow in his footsteps. The previous reputation of the author of *Man's Place in the Universe* would entitle any new work from his pen to a respectful reception; but apart from the authorship, the present volume is vastly interesting, and sheds much fresh light on a subject that is by no means new. The book under consideration is an amplification and elaboration of an article which the author contributed to the *Fortnightly Review* last year, dealing with the question of the unity or plurality of worlds, and has aroused much criticism, both favorable and adverse. Dr. Wallace holds that the consensus of ascertained fact in the domains of biology and physics is opposed to the theory that the higher forms of life, as we know them, can exist either on any planet of the solar system or on any of the globes that occupy stellar space. The probability or improbability of this earth of ours being the only habitable sphere are considerations that have greatly exercised the minds of successive generations of men since mankind awoke to the fact that the glittering gems that stud the firmament were *not* put there to give us light. It must be confessed that in dealing with this problem up to the present the pseudo-scientists with a vivid imagination have made the most of the running. Without wishing to belittle unduly the standing of M. Camille Flammarion, of the Paris Observatory, those who have some familiarity with his writings will not be disposed to quarrel with Dr. Wallace on the score of his strictures respecting the style of "argument" and the "wild and whirling words" characteristic of the brilliant French astronomer.

The truth is that the genius of Camille Flammarion is of the showy order. He is admittedly a daring thinker and speculator, but his weakness consists in a tendency to throw his outposts of theory too far in advance of the main body of fact. It is worthy of note that Haeckel entirely coincides with the verdict passed upon Flammarion by Dr. Wallace. Commenting on the extreme popularity of his works, he says: "They are equally distinguished by exuberant imagination and brilliant style, and by a deplorable lack of critical judgment and biological knowledge. (*Riddle of the Universe*, p. 131.)

Without doubt Dr. Wallace, in his latest work, marshals a formidable array of cogent arguments, and cites not a few eminent authorities, in support of his contention that *all* the essential conditions of organic life as we know it are not likely to be found on any other member of the solar system. There is no planet, so far as we know, that can be considered on a parallel with our earth as regards mass, density, of atmosphere, alternation of light and darkness, equable variation of the seasons, etc. Nor is any other planet so advantageously placed with regard to the central luminary. But even if we admit the force of all the arguments that Dr. Wallace deduces from a consideration of the extreme nicety of the balance and adjustment of natural forces necessary to the development of the superior forms of organic life, what does he prove? If anything can be said to be proved at all, it is *not* that organic life must be impossible on any other globe than ours, but merely that life, if it exists, must have developed on different lines. And this, we think, is accepted as being in accordance with the best biological opinion. Assuming that life of some kind is possible on other planets, it may be of an inferior type to that known

on this earth, but on the other hand, it may be of a much superior order of intelligence. Although man is the highest achievement of *our* evolutionary process, we are not warranted (*pace* Dr. Wallace) in coming to the conclusion that he is the ultimate—the highest form of life that the entire universe is capable of producing.

Dr. Wallace appears to treat in rather summary fashion the claims of Venus to be considered habitable; claims which were ably and earnestly put forward by such a conscientious writer on astronomical questions as the late R. A. Proctor. A reviewer has already pointed out that Dr. Wallace is not quite accurate in his statement regarding the rotation of Venus on its axis. Professor Simon Newcomb maintains that the whole subject of the rotation of the planet Venus is still in an uncertain condition, and it is not at all certain that Venus constantly presents the same side of her surface to the sun. But even if we admit that Dr. Wallace makes out his case as to the non-habitability of any planet in the solar system—with the possible exceptions of Mars and Venus—it is obviously impossible, with our present meagre data, to speak with any degree of assurance regarding those tremendously remote systems that come within the scope of sidereal astronomy. Of course, in considering the question of the probability of the existence of life upon any of the long-distance stars, Dr. Wallace, in taking the negative view, is distinctly on the safe side of the argument. The onus of proof, in the present imperfect state of our knowledge respecting these inconceivably distant orbs, unquestionably rests with those who take up the affirmative position. Still, as matters stand, it is largely a question of probabilities, and those of us who have not such an exalted opinion of man's unique importance in the scheme of things as Dr. Wallace has will hesitate before subscribing to his theory that the entire external universe is, as it were, merely the waste product and discarded material of the evolutionary workshop, and that man is the finished and perfected article.

Dr. Wallace writes ostensibly for the general educated body of readers and not merely for the scientist, and, to the end that the former may intelligently follow his later train of reasoning, he gives, in the first six chapters of his book, an admirable summary of the investigations and achievements of modern astronomical research in so far as they have any bearing on the subject with which he deals. Some—indeed, most—of his arguments will be easily comprehended by the average reader, but to properly understand the significance of a few of them would necessitate a fair acquaintance with mathematics and geometry. In one noteworthy section of the book there is a most striking attempt to convey to the general reader an adequate idea of what is meant by the "millions" so glibly spoken of by science. Perhaps, so far as the ordinary individual is concerned—for whom indeed the book is specially written—the most highly eulogistic commendation we can give to *Man's Place in the Universe* is by saying that it is much more engrossing and mentally illuminating, and will better repay perusal, than nine out of every ten popular novels. One cannot read the author's masterly analysis of the complex conditions attending the development of organic life on our earth without carrying away a deeper impression of the marvellous fertility of Nature's resources and the astounding variety of her methods, all converging for the attainment of one object—organic evolution. And we may unhesitatingly accord a high meed of appreciation to Dr. Wallace's literary *tour de force* while taking leave to dissent from his final conclusions.

If it be asked what effect a settlement of this perennial controversy (supposing such a settlement to be possible) as to the unity or plurality of worlds would have upon the Freethought attitude to the God idea, the answer must be, none whatever. The study of geology, biology, palæontology, anatomy, and psychology is making it clearer to us year by year

that the existence and present condition of inorganic and organic life on this globe are due to the orderly operation of natural forces, and to nothing else. There has been a methodical development through countless ages of time from the inorganic atom to the highest intellectual consciousness of man. There has been no room at any stage of the evolutionary process for the intervention of any personality external to nature. The same rule will hold good if there be life on any one of the glorious spheres that revolve in the vast empyrean.

There will be no need to postulate a creative or directing deity to account for life on the stars any more than it is necessary to do so in connection with our own world. On the face of it, the probabilities seem to be all against the conclusion that every single one of the innumerable starry host has been, and must continue, permanently barren and void. If, however, it should ever be decisively proved that advanced forms of life are nowhere to be found in the length and breadth of the universe save on this little ball of ours, such proof, while enormously increasing our relative importance, will scarcely be regarded by the unbeliever as being convincing or conclusive evidence for the existence of a supreme maker or designer. It could hardly be thought by any unbiased person that an omnipotent, omniscient, and superlatively beneficent and wise being could be responsible for such an appalling and unnecessary amount of waste of world material as would be involved were life restricted solely to this planet. In any case, it will be time enough for us to readjust our ideas when science is able to speak with greater definiteness on the point.

G. S.

A Dialogue Between a Missionary and a Hindu.

Missionary.—I have come, my dear benighted friend, many thousands of miles, to instruct you in the blessed truths of the Christian religion.

Hindu.—Indeed, that looks very kind. But I have a religion of my own which suits me well enough.

M.—Mine is the only true religion which God came down to earth on purpose to reveal.

H.—Why couldn't he reveal it to me as well as to you?

M.—You mistake me, poor heathen, God became man a long while before you or I were born.

H.—That's curious. I never heard of it. How did it happen?

M.—You must know that our first parents ate some fruit, which condemned all their posterity to eternal punishment, until God the Son became incarnate to appease the wrath of God the Father.

H.—You astound me. Eternal punishment for eating fruit! What a peculiar Father! But his Son, you say, prevented the punishment of all your ancestors.

M.—Oh dear no! He only came to earth four thousand years afterwards.

H.—Why was he so long in coming?

M.—It was all according to God's goodwill and pleasure, that in fulness of time he graciously permitted his only begotten son to appease his wrath.

H.—So God is a male. May I ask who his wife is? You know our Vishnu has Lakshmi, and Siva has Kali and so on.

M.—This is blasphemy coming from the foulness of a corrupt heart. God has no sex.

H.—How then did God the Father produce God the Son?

M.—He was begotten from all eternity.

H.—If the Son is eternal, and as old as his Father, how did he come to be the Son?

M.—He was born of the Holy Ghost, and conceived by a Virgin.

H.—You astonish me more and more. What sort of Virgin was this that gave birth to a God?

M.—It was one of God's chosen people the Jews. Her name was Mary, and she was betrothed to a Jewish carpenter, named Joseph.

H.—I think I am beginning to see through it. But who was this Holy Ghost?

M.—The third person of the ever-blessed Trinity. There is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

H.—I am in a fog again. It's against all arithmetic.

M.—It is one of the mysterious truths of our holy religion that is cavilled at by the carnal mind.

H.—But tell me about this Holy Ghost. I suppose he became man also, if he got this Virgin with child.

M.—Oh, no; though he sometimes appeared in the form of a dove. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and together with them is worshipped and glorified.

H.—A minute ago you told me that the Son proceeded from the Holy Ghost. I am really not sure which of your three Gods became man—God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost.

M.—Poor sinner; I have chiefly come to tell you about Jesus who is God the Son, our precious Redeemer and Savior, perfect God and perfect man, who suffered for our sins on the cross in our stead.

H.—Dear me! I'm sure I never wanted anyone to suffer for me. But I do not see how any infinite being could be finite and suffer. How did it all come about?

M.—He suffered himself to partake of human nature, and worked in his Father's shop till thirty years of age.

H.—I see you have sublime notions of Deity's doings.

M.—And then he began to preach, after fasting and being tempted by the Devil. But the chief priests and scribes took counsel and put him to death.

H.—And so, because his chosen people put him to death, his Father saved them from their sins. Anyhow, he's dead now.

M.—Not at all, you presumptuous heathen. He descended into hell, and on the third day he rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures, and now sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

H.—But what proof have you of all this?

M.—We have the record of his disciples.

H.—But what said the chosen people who put God to death about his rising again on the third day?

M.—They denied it. He came to his own and his own received him not.

H.—Then if the people to whom he was sent put him to death, and did not believe on him, why should you expect me to do so?

M.—If you do not believe the message that is sent to you, you will be burnt for ever in hell-fire.

H.—But I should soon burn up.

M.—You would be made immortal to be eternally tortured.

H.—Horrible! What must I do to be saved?

M.—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and all thine house.

H.—How am I to believe on him?

M.—You must have faith in what I tell you.

H.—But you have only given me words to which I can attach no ideas.

M.—You'll be damned if you don't believe as I say.

H.—I'll be damned if I do.

Nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine human beings out of every ten thousand would prefer to have a comfortable home on earth to a room in a heavenly mansion.

If there was a bank for the deposit of good deeds some men would have a small account at the institution.

Christian Salvation.

THE Christian says to himself: I am saved; and to the infidel: You are lost. Saved to what? Lost to what? Saved where? Lost where? Of all the foolish pride, the pride of salvation is the foolishest, the meanest, the cruelest. The Christian may be narrow-minded, close-fisted, intolerant, and unjust, and yet because he believes certain religious statements he is saved. We prefer to be lost with a kind heart, generous feelings, and noble sentiments rather than to be saved with a big bank account and ideas too mean to carry out in life.

What can a mean man be saved to? What can a generous man be lost to? A mean man can be saved to nothing good, to nothing beautiful, to nothing grand and glorious. A generous man can be lost to nothing good, to nothing beautiful, to nothing grand and glorious. Fate goes with deeds, with character, not with faith, with profession.

Where are we saved? Where are we lost? The Christian says he is saved in heaven and we are lost in hell. Neither place troubles us. If we get through this life well and get out of it without too much suffering, the hereafter is a small consideration. We see no sense in running after salvation. If we can steer clear of present difficulties that is enough.

To lay all of this saving and losing business, all of this blessing and damning business, to God, is contemptible. The priest is the author of it all. And he invented it to get his royalty. If there is a place to which human souls go after death we choose to go where there are no priests. That will be heaven enough for us. We can supply the rest.

It looks like small business to try to save one's soul. It is nobler to do something to improve human life here. Sweep the earth of misery and pain, and our greatest work is done, and destiny follows work. We never did a single thing to save our soul. In fact, we have never felt dead sure that we had a soul. We know that we have a head, a heart, a stomach, a body; but a soul? That is where we are in doubt. And what use to save our soul if we cannot save our body? It seems petty to go through life, perhaps for seventy or eighty years, just to save a soul. But if we can save a man or a woman to something better, something higher, that seems a worthy object—something worth living for, worth dying for. The Church has got hold of the wrong end of the salvation business. The thing to save is the thing in sight. When one is starving, freezing, it does not amount to much to talk about saving the soul. Food, clothes, fire, these are what are wanted. Salvation can wait.

We are told what God wants. Well! we don't know what God wants; we do know what man wants, and we know that God can wait better than man. Human suffering is apparent. Divine suffering is not. Love of man helps man. Love of God helps nobody.

The Christian says he is saved and we are lost. We would rather be lost in our way than saved in his. It is nobler to destroy the wrong than to save superstition. The Christian thinks that all the machinery of the universe is run to save his little soul, and because he feels saved he feels justified in maligning and injuring others. Nature does not stand back of the Christian scheme of salvation, and, if there is a God, he does not either. Nature saves the best, the strongest. Christianity saves the meanest, the weakest.

The Christian heaven is no temptation to a thinking man, to a man with red corpuscles in his blood. It must be a dreary place, piously dreary, with its equipment of Abraham's bosom, the great white throne, harps and halos, and the lamb, sheared of his wool by his followers on earth. We could do the place in a few hours. To endure it long would drive one to suicide.

The Christian hell is only a fire, superfluous in

July but all right in January. A fire is nice to warm the feet by, but one does not want to tumble into it. But think of grown-up human beings seriously, solemnly talking about a heaven and a hell hereafter, when not a man or a woman knows what is one hour in the future. Heaven is to lure man into giving money to the priest, and hell is to scare him into giving it. Get rid of the priest, and heaven and hell would burst like a soap bubble.

—*Boston Investigator.*

Correspondence.

MR. LLOYD AND MR. NASH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I respectfully suggest that you should not devote so much of your valuable space to Mr. Nash? You extend far more hospitality this way than one can procure from local newspapers for such important subjects as Education, Science and Religion, Housing, etc. I have tried to secure a hearing, and know.

In order that Mr. Lloyd and you may know with what type of gentleman you are dealing, allow me to relate a little bit of experience I had of him. He obtruded himself here in a local discussion on the Education Bill, etc.—the "etc." being mostly personal abuse showered on me by Christian bigots—ostensibly to rebut a charge against Sunday-schools I never made, and at the same time went out of his way to endeavor to prove that Thomas Paine (whose name, as "Tom Payne, the Atheist," a Christian had introduced) was towards the end of his life the victim of inebriety and its usual accompaniment, filthiness of person. When his attention was drawn to the fact that I had made no charge against the Sunday-schools of originating any stories, this gentleman had not sufficient nobility of character on this occasion to express regret for misinterpreting me. Of course, the omission of this act of simple courtesy may have been traceable to his absorbing zeal to establish the slander with the ancient and fishlike odor against the name of Paine. At the same time I consider it proper you should know about the incident, in order more thoroughly to appreciate the gentleman to whom Mr. Lloyd has devoted a generous article and you a liberal slice of your valuable journal.

Haltwhistle, R.S.O.

J. G. STUART.

A DECADENT FAITH.

WHEN the spirit of a faith has departed, that faith is dead, and its burial is only a question of time. When the noblest hearts worship not at its altars, when the most vigorous intellects abandon its creeds, the knell of its doom has rung. At the risk of being thought bigoted or prejudiced, I must avow that to my mind the decomposition of Christianity is so offensively manifest and advanced that, with the exception of a very few persons whose transcendent genius could throw a glamor of glory over any creed however crude and mean, and whom I recognise as far above my judgment, I can no longer give my esteem to any educated man who has investigated and still professes this religion, without grave deduction at the expense of his heart, his intellect, or his conscience, if not of all three. Miraculous voices are not heard in these days; but everywhere myriads of natural voices are continually announcing to us, and enjoining us to announce to others, Great Christ is dead!—*James Thomson* ("B. V."), "*Satires and Profanities.*"

We shall do so much in the years to come,
But what have we done to-day?
We shall give out gold in a princely sum,
But what did we give to-day?
We shall lift the heart and dry the tear,
We shall plant a hope in the place of fear,
We shall speak with words of love and cheer,
But what have we done to-day?

We shall be so kind in the after-while,
But what have we been to-day?
We shall bring to each lonely life a smile,
But what have we brought to-day?
We shall give to truth a grander birth,
And to steadfast faith a deeper worth,
We shall feed the hungering souls of earth,
But whom have we fed to-day?

—*Nixon Waterman.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice," if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

QUEEN'S (Minor) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 8, John Lloyd, "What Think Ye of Christ?"

NORTH CAMBERWELL HALL (61 New Church Road, Camberwell): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Dying Faith."

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Brixley Vestry Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, Aylmer Maude, "Leo Tolstoi."

FINSBURY PARK DEBATING SOCIETY (79 Grove-road, Holloway-road, N.): 7, "Christianity Necessarily a Persecuting Religion."

NORTH KENSINGTON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Cornwall Hall): 7, Dr. Stanton Coit, "How to Find God."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, "The Imitation of Buddha."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, "Ethics of Buddha."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Harringay): 7.15, John M. Robertson, "The Problem of Free-will."

COUNTRY.

COVENTRY (Public Baths Assembly Hall): G. W. Foote, 3, "Japan, Russia, and the Prince of Peace"; 7, "The Doom of Religion—With Reference to Mr. Blatchford's *Clarion* Articles."

FAILSWORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane Failsworth): 6.30, Fred. Morgan, A Recital.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): Joseph McCabe (lately Rev. Father Anthony, O.S.F.), 12 noon, "Modern Priestcraft"; 6.30, "A Godless People: The Japanese."

LIVERPOOL (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): C. Cohen, 3, "The Present Position of Religion and Science"; 7, "Is Christianity Worth Preserving?" Monday, 8 p.m., Social Meeting.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints'): H. Percy Ward, 3, "The Wonders of Radium?" 6.30, "Will Man Abandon God?" Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, March 3, at 8, Mr. G. Christie, "The Problem of Interest."

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