

THE Freethinker

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There are but two alternatives, the way to Rome, and the way to Atheism: Anglicanism is the halfway house on the one side, and Liberalism is the halfway house on the other.—CARDINAL NEWMAN.

Reference, for the sake of Christian unbelievers: *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, p. 204, edition 1883.

Christianity in the East.—II.

(Concluded from p. 174.)

MR. PEERY, the American missionary, speaks very highly of Japan and the Japanese. After an excellent summary account of the nature, extent, climate, and products of the country itself, he exclaims, "surely this a country highly favored by Heaven." But, alas, how sad it is "to think that those to whom God has given so much know so little of Him!" Yes, the great defect, and the great misfortune, of the inhabitants of that highly favoured country is that they do not possess, and do not hasten to seek, an acquaintance with the Deity whom Mr. Peery and his American and European friends preach to them. The Japanese have many virtues, but they lack the saving grace of Christian faith. "The moral need of the nation," Mr. Peery says, "is a Christian morality—not just the morality of the West, but a morality founded on the ethical principles inculcated in the Bible." What is this, however, but saying that the morality of the West is *not* founded on the teaching of its Holy Scriptures; in other words, that Christians profess one thing and practise another—which is precisely what the educated and thoughtful "heathen" say of them wherever they go? Mr. Peery is simply prescribing for the Japanese what he should first commend to the acceptance of his own countrymen.

Let us see, rather more in detail, what Mr. Peery says about the Japanese. First of all, they are a very polite people. "Politeness," according to this Christian missionary, who has lived amongst them for years, "is a national characteristic." Mr. Peery tries to minimise this admission; he declares that the Japanese exalt politeness above everything, above "even truth and honor," and that a good deal of their politeness is mere etiquette. But he gives himself away when he descends to particulars. All the facts he reports are creditable to the people whom he evidently likes and respects, although he feels bound, as a good Christian, to qualify his friendly expressions towards the "heathen"; for if they were too admirable it might be difficult to justify the efforts of the missionaries on their behalf. One fact speaks volumes. The very railway officials are polite; and, if they are polite, we can take all the rest for granted. "One of the things that have most impressed me about the railroad service," Mr. Peery says, "is the kindness and politeness of the officials, in striking contrast with the gruffness and incivility one often encounters in America." From which we infer that Mr. Peery has never visited *this* country. For the gruffness and incivility of the railway officials in Christian America are splendid courtesy in comparison with the speech and deportment of the railway officials in still more Christian England.

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In the next place, the Japanese are a sober people. There are few teetotallers amongst them; on the other hand, there are few drunkards. England and America contain a multitude of both classes, but Japan prefers the golden mean even in this matter. "While nearly everyone drinks," Mr. Peery says, "in general the Japanese do not drink to such excess as other nations. One seldom sees such beastly drunkenness as is often seen in the West." That is, in Christian Europe and America.

This is a point on which Mr. Peery, or any other Western visitor in Japan, is entitled to speak. But when he states that the Japanese are liars in business, and that their merchants are not generally to be trusted, we doubt the value of his authority. We should have thought that commerce was rather out of his line; and, while he seems to tell the truth pretty fairly within the scope of his personal experience, it must be easy enough for him to tell the opposite when he trusts to the reports of his Christian friends. For if ever there was a religion in the world that said as little as possible about veracity, that religion is the one that takes (in vain) the name of Christ.

There is one virtue inculcated in the Old Testament which the Japanese do practise; more so even than the Jews, infinitely more so than the Christians. "Every Japanese," Mr. Peery says, "feels deeply this obligation to his parents, and properly to support and nourish them in their old age he holds to be a sacred duty." This is a noble characteristic. It is also an element of social strength, and partly accounts for the national longevity of China and Japan. Some sociological truths were anciently expressed in theological language, and one of these was "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land"—the words "which the Lord thy God giveth thee" being merely a pious addendum.

Mr. Peery candidly admits that the Americans, to whom he belongs, could "learn much that would be profitable from the reverence and respect shown for parents and teachers by the Japanese." But he thinks that in Japan the principle is carried too far.

"It continues after death as binding as before, and divine honours are paid to dead ancestors. Periodical visits are paid to their tombs, religious candles are kept burning in their honour, and prayers are said to them. Among the more enlightened to-day there is perhaps nothing in these ceremonies but reverence and respect; yet by the masses of the people ancestors are worshipped."

Well, superstition for superstition, that of the Japanese is preferable to that of Mr. Peery's fellow Christians. Reverence for the dead whose blood runs in our veins, whose life subsists in ours, whose labors and sacrifices made a smoother way for us—is surely better than reverence for some perhaps mythical dead man of a far-off alien people, or some half legendary saint to whom our relationship is purely imaginary. And burning candles in honor of those who brought us into the world is surely better than burning them in honor of those whose principal object in the world was to take themselves out of it.

Yes, even the superstition of the Yellow men runs in a finer channel than ours; one less selfish, and more disinterested; one that leads to the vestibule of the Temple of Humanity. It may be true, for in-

stance, as Mr. Peery asserts, that "virtues have differing values in the Confucian and Christian systems." But why assume that the Christian valuation is necessarily more accurate? "The great Chinese moralists," as he says elsewhere, "were statesmen, and their chief concern was, not the salvation of the individual, but the peace and prosperity of the state." From the Christian standpoint this is their condemnation. From the standpoint of secular civilisation it may be their glory.

This ancestor worship is a great strong barrier against the Christianising of Japan. What reader of Gibbon does not recollect his story of the Frankish chief who was about to be baptised in the Christian faith, but drew his foot back from the river to ask whether his forefathers were in heaven; and, on being told that they were of course in hell, replied that he would go to hell with them? The same human sentiment operates in the breasts of the Japanese. Mr. Peery says:—

"Christianity not only claims to be the only religion, but she can offer no hope to those outside of her pale. While the Bible does not demand that I teach the Japanese that their ancestors are surely lost, it certainly gives me no ground for assuring them of their salvation. We all revere our forefathers, but none so much as the Oriental. He pays periodical visits to the tombs of his ancestors; he worships his father and commemorates the day of his death by mourning. A heaven from which his ancestors are excluded has little attractions for him. Often does the Shintoist say, 'I would rather be in hell with my ancestors than in heaven without them.'"

Christians may think this shocking. To us it is admirable. We admire a people in whom human love, and reverence for the dead—which is human love in the keeping of memory and imagination—are stronger than death, stronger than the hope of heaven, and stronger than the fear of hell.

It is not a want of intellectual hospitality that gives the Christian missionaries any trouble in Japan. "The Japanese are open-minded and receptive of truth," Mr. Peery says, "from whatever quarter it may come." Their fault is that they are too open-minded. They listen to the Agnostic as politely as they listen to the Christian—and apparently with more agreement. Which our missionary friend laments.

When the fate of his faith is in question Mr. Peery eyes the Japanese with melancholy severity. There must be something radically wrong with a people who will not accept Christianity. They are certainly ungrateful, or they would give the hard-working missionaries a little more encouragement. Even the few who do get converted are very unthankful.

"The missionary who has left home, friends, and country for the sake of these people, and who labors for them with all the powers God has given him, is often not rewarded by that gratitude and kindness on the part of his converts which he reasonably expects. Frequently he takes young men from the humbler walks of life, provides for their food and clothing, gives them six or eight years' instruction in well-equipped schools, supports them liberally as evangelists, only to have them rise up against him, oppose him in his work, and pronounce him an ignoramus."

It is really quite pathetic. We see the flourish of Mr. Peery's white handkerchief, and the tears welling from his sad eyes, as he groans that "From such facts as these we are forced to conclude that the feeling of gratitude is not very strong."

But these ungrateful converts, who insult the kind gentleman who took the trouble to rope them in—yea, and to feed and clothe them; in short, to keep them—are happily few in number. The Japanese lack a sense of sin, they are ancestor worshippers, and they are being trained in the worst school of modern unbelief. Hence the Christian faith stands no chance with them. Mr. Peery practically admits it. He sees only too clearly that the splendid school system in Japan is a fatal difficulty. Perfect religious freedom obtains under it. "But," alas, "the general tenor of the education given is unchristian—an exaltation of reason above faith, of science above religion." This is especially true of

the higher education. "Science, learning," Mr. Peery says, "is thought to be all that is necessary, and religion is left for old women and children."

"Men who still believe in religion are thought superstitious and uneducated, and are regarded with a sort of lordly contempt. In a conversation some time ago with a graduate of the Imperial University I was dogmatically told that Christianity was acknowledged to be absurd by all thinking men everywhere, that all religions are only for the infancy of the race, and that full grown men can dispense with them. This man's views are the usual product of the higher education of Japan to-day. Hence it happens that few students of the higher schools are Christians, and frequently men go there with Christian sentiments, only to lose them before they leave."

Mr. Peery's conclusion is that "The educators of Japan are training a nation of atheists and agnostics." He even declares that "educated Japan is to-day largely a nation of atheists, or at least agnostics." Already! Well, if this be true, it is good news from the East. And it ought to be true when a missionary says it.

The Christian outlook in Japan "is not to the natural eye very bright." But to the "spiritual eye," the eye of faith, "all is as noonday." This is what Mr. Peery says, and our readers will know what it means. His confidence is not based upon facts, but upon "the promises of God." "The victory," he says, "has been assured from the beginning." Yes, but will it be achieved before the end? It is all very well for Mr. Peery to burst out at the finish with the prayer, "May God hasten the day." There is not the least sign that God is going to hurry this job. And if prayer is all Mr. Peery has to trust to, the missionary cause in Japan must be perfectly hopeless.

G. W. FOOTE.

Art and the Churches.

RELIGION is the mother of Art. That is what the Church has taught us, and the saying of it sounds well. Were Art to assert that the Churches are her children it would sound equally well, but the parental relationship is not obvious, and we only know that both have existed together throughout the range of human history.

It is true that the Church was paymaster when slave labor was unobtainable, for she recognised that Art was a necessity toward her very existence. The bare religious idea was not a sufficing attraction even for the uncultivated, but there was a business to be developed that would pay better than that of any betting or drinking house. Thus have churches and hostels grown up together. The flashing accessories of the gin-palace add sparkle and warmth to the liquor, even as the accoutrement of the Church to the dramatic setting of worship. Behind, in the one instance is the thirst of the toper for alcohol, and in the other the thirst of the believer for sensual excitement, flattery, and acquisition. Both tend to delirium, bringing profit alike to distiller or priest, and not infrequently, the victim methinks, leaves one form of inebriation for the other, saying, "I have conquered the habit, I am free of it."

Then the ecclesiastical artists were not presumably religious, though having to live, they sold their talent to the wealthier priesthood. Musicians and architects, with fine workers of every description were drawn toward the only available market.

Musical accompaniment counts for much in the rendering of religious service; for the delectation of the hearers, however, rather than for the benefit of any imaginable deity. Moreover, the instrument may be a tom-tom or an organ, but the maker thereof is not always superstitious. Organ builders are frequently Freethinkers, yet they seldom build organs for Secularists, for pecuniary and self-evident reasons; neither can the Secular organist find frequent opportunity for playing outside of the sacred precincts of some house of religion. Then where is the Freethinker who will not

stretch a point in order to hear the harmony of its majestic eloquence?

I know of a certain church orchestra wherein more than one of the violins are out and out Atheists. They go for the pleasure of playing under the organ; the 'cello has his doubts of the resurrection, and the double-bass is agnostic upon all the vital dogmas of Christianity; but then they all love music, and are willing to suffer even an evangelical sermon for the sake of it.

Above all, the music of devotion must sound out slowly, with an organ or an army band to drown the imbecility of religious verbiage, for this latter would foredoom music even in Secular song, witness the unhappy lines in "Killarney" for example:—

But man's faith can ne'er decline
Such God wonders floating by,

or some of the last verse in "Tom Bowling." It may be that we ignore the words instinctively for the sake of the music.

Has it not often occurred to us that the gilded gentry who love the masterpiece of poor Piccolomini—he died a year or so back of want and misery like the child in his prophetic song—never take to heart the sarcasm, splendid as it is told in the words of it?

On the other hand, so-called sacred music with a rapid movement, such as that section of the "Hallelujah Chorus" suggestive of a chicken run, cannot but injure the conservation of true piety; while "Sister Mary" or "Ta-ra-ra" is pious enough, when played *adagio*, without the words.

The whole outfit of a church has a picturesque quality which must be maintained. To the ritualistic mind candelabra may be lit of electricity, but it should bear the semblance of a waxen build; the altar-cloth must be purple, and the pulpit must take the form of a wooden wine-cup, wherefrom the nasal haw-hawish elements of trained loquacity may gush upon the ear of a well-warmed and belighted flocking of the faith-filled.

Then there is the omnipresent crucifix. How lucky for æsthetic appearance that Christ was crucified. Supposing that the guillotin had been in vogue, or even the gallows; is it possible to imagine for one moment the Holy Scaffolding, with pendant noose, shadowing the altar-piece, and decorating churches from the spire without to the design upon the tapestry within; and would my Lord FitzFoodle take his seat in the ancestral pew, bearing upon his martial chest the Order of the Gibbet of the Legion of Honor? Or if the method of punishment had concurred with that of the time of Socrates, is it thinkable that Mr. Barrett, *Ohimé!* would have performed his pocket-reaching play *The Sign of the Dose of Poison*—this last, albeit, in extra large red-lettering? Alas! the giant muffin-bell swinging within its tower can never be replaced by any steam-whistle or fog-horn. Garden seats may not be set out instead of pews; prayer-books, must be gilt-edged; the hypocritical threepenny-bit must forever reign supreme in plate or chapel-purse, for it represents the value of it all payable per sinful unit of the congregation.

When our forefathers, the Puritans, saw the incongruity of art as allied to religion, they attempted to rid religion of art, but only succeeded in bringing down about their ears the House of Art. We understand now the mockery of it all, and it shall be our work to exorcise the ghost of belief, with the hollow, senseless sound of dogma, from the house of art.

GEORGE WOODWARD.

BIBLE FABLES.

We have first to understand that all the stories telling how God made the world 6,000 years ago; how Adam sinned, and the human race fell, and how the Son of God (a God born of a virgin) came on earth and redeemed man; and all the fables in the Old Testament and in the Gospels, and all the lives of the saints with their stories of miracles and relics—are all nothing but a gross hash of Jewish superstitions and priestly frauds.—*Tolstoy.*

Darwinism and Design.—II.

(Concluded from p. 276.)

MR. SCHILLER'S reply to this position would be the familiar one that it reduces human beings to automata. He says:—

"The ease with which the Darwinian argument dispenses with intelligence as a factor in survival excites suspicion. It is proving too much to show that adaptation might equally well have arisen in automata. For we are strongly persuaded that we ourselves are not automata and strive hard to adapt ourselves. In us at least, therefore, intelligence is a source of adaptation. Intelligence therefore is a *vera causa* as a source of adaptations at least co-ordinate with Natural Selection, and this can be denied only if it is declared inefficacious everywhere; if all living beings, including ourselves, are declared to be automata."

And this being taken for granted, he asserts that a difficulty arises on the basis of the Darwinian theory—namely, "If intelligence has no efficacy in promoting adaptation—i.e., if it has no survival value—how comes it to be developed at all?"

Now, to commence with, the ease with which Darwinism dispenses with intelligence as a factor in the production of species need excite no suspicion, as it is entirely due to the fact that the opposite theory was never more than a mere collocation of words. That species were, or are, produced by a "Divine Intelligence" is merely a grandiloquent way of saying nothing; and it is absurd to pretend that such a formula ever had, or can have, any scientific value. The expression really explains nothing. Nor is it proving too much to argue that adaptation would arise equally well with automata. For in the widest, and most exact, sense of the word, on Mr. Schiller's hypothesis as on that of Materialism, animals are automata. Even allowing that intelligence is a force not resulting from any possible combination of physical, chemical, and biological forces, it is still a force, and a conditioned force. What it can do is conditioned quite as much as gravity is conditioned. Mr. Schiller would only claim that intelligence is free in relation to known physical forces, and therefore its expression in or through man is determined precisely as the expression of other forces are determined. So that the position that human actions are determined is, in final analysis, not destroyed by asserting that intelligence is independent of physical forces. It only reintroduces the determinism from another quarter.

And our *persuasion* that we are not automata is quite beside the point. The persuasion no one denies—it is its accuracy that is questioned; and its veracity is not proved by reaffirming the persuasion. Spinoza touched bottom here, as in so many other places, when he said that the consciousness of freedom arose from our knowing actions while being ignorant of their causes. A feather, endowed with consciousness, falling to the ground in a zigzag manner might as reasonably be convinced that it could determine the precise spot on which it would alight, yet its "persuasion" would be of no more intrinsic value than Mr. Schiller's persuasion that we independently adapt ourselves to our environment.

The difficulty of seeing how intelligence develops if it has no efficiency in promoting adaptation is quite a manufactured one. For intelligence has a survival value on either theory. As has been pointed out, no one questions the fact of intelligence, and once existing it has as real a survival value as color, or instinct. As a natural force it plays its part as one of the factors in determining survival by securing adaptation. I do not know that anyone has ever questioned this, and Mr. Schiller's statement that intelligence "cannot be a mere surplussage" is a piece of surplussage in his essay that seems to show a somewhat inadequate conception of the Darwinian position.

Mr. Schiller's *positive* arguments for Design in Nature—although one of them is really negative—

are concerned (1) with the question of variation; (2) with the existence of Progress. On the first question it is pointed out that while Natural Selection operates by way of favoring certain variations, the origin or cause of these variations remains unknown. And although Mr. Schiller does not say so in as many words, there is the implication that there is room here for a divine intelligence, inasmuch as science is at present unable to fully explain the cause of variations. Further, Darwin, we are told, assumed for the purpose of his theory that variations were indefinite both as to character and extent, and it is upon these variations that Natural Selection operates. This indefinite variation Mr. Schiller asserts is a purely methodological device—that is, it is something assumed as a groundwork to build a theory upon, but assumed without any subsequent verification; and it is in virtue of this assumption that intelligence is ruled out of evolution. And, further, as Mr. Schiller does not believe that in fact variations are of this indefinite character, he asserts that there is in evolution room for a teleological factor, viz., “a purposive direction of variations.”

Now it hardly needs pointing out to students of Darwin that indefinite variation is the equivalent of “a variation to which no exact limits can be placed,” and so long as this is so, the assumption is a perfectly sound one. From one point of view the variations must be definite, that is, they can only occur within certain limits. The force of gravity places a limit upon bulk, and other forces are equally imperative. But so long as our knowledge does not enable us to fix the exact limits of such variations we are obviously warranted in speaking of them as indefinite. That it is a methodological device no one denies, but then so are all, or nearly all, the other distinctions that we draw. Most scientific generalisations consist of abstractions only, and as we shall see presently Mr. Schiller himself builds part of his case upon a device of the same description.

Proceeding, Mr. Schiller argues that while Natural Selection states the conditions under which animal life evolves, it does not state any reason why it *should* evolve. Selection may keep a species stationary, or it may even cause it to degenerate. Both are fairly common phenomena in the animal world. Moreover, if there are an indefinite number of variations, and if they tend in an indefinite number of directions, then the variation in any one direction can never be more than an infinitesimal portion of the whole; and that this one should persist supplies a still further reason for belief in a “purposive direction of variations.” This argument, while ingenious enough, overlooks one very important point, but a very simple one. This is that while the variation is infinitesimal in relation to the whole, it is so in its *quantitative character only*; qualitatively it is not so, and it is this that primarily determines survival.

Further, as Mr. Schiller afterwards admits, the very smallness of the number of successful variations makes against intelligence rather than for it, while he practically surrenders his position in the statement that “the teleological and anti-teleological interpretation of events will never decide their conflict by appealing to the facts; for in the facts each finds what it wills and comes prepared to see.” After this lame conclusion it is difficult to see what value there is in Mr. Schiller’s examination of the “facts.” Although it is not true that the facts bear out each view equally, and Mr. Schiller only brings this about by converting the Darwinian position, which is teleologically negative, into an affirmative. The Darwinian, he asserts, denies intelligence as a cause of evolution. What the Darwinian does is to deny the validity of the evidence brought forward by the teleologist to prove his case. The theist asserts mind as the cause of organic evolution. The Darwinian simply points out that the facts cited may be explained in quite a different manner, by the working of mechanical processes, and that when there is a known cause that adequately covers a phenomenon, it is unwarrantable to drag in an utterly unknown

one. In such a case it is sheer prejudice that decides in favour of teleology.

Mr. Schiller’s other plea in favour of Design is that Natural Selection gives no account of the fact of progress. While degeneration and stability both occur in nature, yet “life has been on the whole progressive; but progress and retrogression have both been effected under the same ‘law’ of Natural Selection. How, then, can the credit of that result be ascribed to Natural Selection? Natural Selection is equally ready to bring about degeneration or to leave things unchanged. How, then, can it be that which determines which of the three possible (and actual) cases shall be realised?.....It cannot be Natural Selection that causes one species to remain stationary, another to degenerate, a third to develop into a higher form.....Some variable factor must be added to Natural Selection.”

Now, the objection contained in the above passages turns wholly upon a peculiar, but really unscientific use of the term “Progress”; although it may be noted in passing that it *is* Natural Selection that causes a species to be stationary, to retrograde, or to develop; for the very essence of Natural Selection is the maintenance of an equilibrium between an organism and its environment. A variation in the direction of an ideally higher type is crushed out as effectually as a variation towards a lower form. And an alteration in the environment that would give an earlier type an advantage in the struggle for existence would mean that Natural Selection would favour all variations in the direction of that type—I do not say towards a *lower* type, for the reason that “high” and “low” have really no meaning apart from the environment.

Now Mr. Schiller says that evolution has been on the whole progressive, and appeals to “progress” as though it were some concrete fact. In sober truth it is as methodological as any term can be. How is it possible to measure progress except in relation to some purely arbitrary, and actually non-existent, standard? Nature as a whole is not more perfect or more complete than it was millenniums ago. The earth as a fiery globe was as perfect as it is as an inhabited planet. An ascidian is as “perfect” as a cow; a cow is as “perfect” as a man. Each object in nature is what it is as the result of all the forces that produced it, and each is therefore as perfect as the other. Scientifically, life has not progressed—it has persisted; and it has become modified as the surroundings changed as a *sine qua non* of its persistence.

Progress, then, is not a natural fact, but a methodological one. It is a useful word, a valuable ideal; but it is something created by man—one of the many abstractions that become personified by careless thinkers. Not that Mr. Schiller deserves to be called a “careless” thinker; still he has in this case at least made a serious slip. He has treated an arbitrary creation as a natural fact, and then called upon Evolution to explain it. And in so doing he has followed the line of all theistic and metaphysical reasoning. All theism and all metaphysics rest upon this personification of abstractions; and an analysis of their nature is all that is necessary to expose the weakness of the structure built upon such foundations.

C. COHEN.

The Bible Society and Foreign Missions.

A DROWNING man, in the attempt to save his life, clutches at any twig or straw, however unsubstantial and fragile it may be. The fear of death makes him desperate. Present-day defenders of the Christian Faith find themselves in a similar predicament. The cause they have at heart is being discredited from all directions, and they are making frantic efforts to save it. They cling with the utmost tenacity to whatever is in the least degree likely to be of assistance to them. Their one object is to prove that Christianity is true; and in their indefatigable

search for possible evidences they go everywhere. Even so great a man as Newman resorted to the fallacy which says that the Christian Religion *must* be true because it has had so many martyrs. Christian Apologists still make use of equally silly arguments. Some of the Manchester Lecturers refer with great confidence to the witness borne by the Bible Society and Foreign Missions. This witness, they declare, is absolutely irrefragable. The success of these Christian Societies is a practical demonstration, we are assured, of the truth of the Bible and of the deity of Christ. But a little serious reflection will show how utterly baseless such a contention is, and how easily people are misled by it.

The lecture entitled, "The Witness of the Bible Society," is by the Rev. John H. Ritson, M.A., one of the Secretaries of the British and Foreign Bible Society. Mr. Ritson contends that the Bible is the book for all time and for all men, that it contains a message from God, and is the world's great missionary. That the Bible is the book for all time is proved, we are told, by the fact that it is the most popular of books, and that its popularity is still growing. But the popularity of a book is no guarantee of its superior excellence. The books in greatest demand at our Public Libraries are not numbered among the world's classics. Again, almost any book could be boomed if there existed a strong and wealthy society for that very purpose. The popularity of the Bible is the result of the assiduity of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which has its agencies and colporteurs in all parts of the world. That the Bible is a book for all men is surely not proved by the fact that it is capable of translation into all languages; but Mr. Ritson knows of no other proof. He enumerates the different tongues into which the Scriptures have been successfully rendered, and then says: "No book is so translatable, and no book has so great an influence on language." Whether this is true or not, we cannot be blind to the fact that had it not been for the Bible Society, the Scriptures would not have been so widely circulated as they have been.

What proof is there that the Bible contains a message from God? None. Mr. Ritson says that "The words of Jesus Christ, when sifted from the narrative in which they are embedded, can be written on a few sheets of notepaper, and read within an hour," and that "whoever reads them, be he friend or foe, is compelled to exclaim, 'Never man spake like this man.'" But the lecturer is radically mistaken. There are hundreds and thousands of people who do not acknowledge the superiority of Christ's teaching to that of all others, and who maintain that the influence of the Bible is not wholly for good. I know what plausible stories colporteurs often tell, and how such stories are embellished at Bible Society meetings; but we cannot shut our eyes to the truth that in the most Bible-loving countries under heaven the most damnable vices flourish, while in so-called heathen lands even the very highest virtues are by no means absent.

As "The Witness of the Bible Society" is contributed by an official of that Society, so is "The Witness of Foreign Missions" the work of a missionary from Mysore, India. The Rev. Henry Haigh cherishes a high estimate of his vocation. He believes the missionary is the most self-denying and heroic of men. He gives us several instances of the truth of this statement. He tells us of men and women who make tremendous sacrifices in order to be permitted to labor among savage tribes, who forsake the refinements and pleasures of civilised society and the joyous fellowship with cultured friends and loving relatives that they may face unspeakable perils and privations in the service of the heathen, and who even cheerfully lay down their lives rather than abandon their mission. But this is no proof whatever of the divinity of the Christian Religion. Some people are by nature lovers of adventure, and at any cost they will repair to where adventure is practicable. There are multitudes who continually risk their lives in the pursuit of sport. It is a well attested fact

that fortune-hunters make as great sacrifices to satisfy their ambition as any missionaries. And does not the warrior also carry his life in his hand? It is not missionaries alone that court death on the west coast of Africa, or the Zambezi, or among the South Sea Islands. And yet Mr. Haigh devotes two-thirds of his lecture to a vivid description of the exceptional courage and enthusiasm for humanity displayed by people who carry the Christian Religion to foreign parts.

Far be it from me to belittle or depreciate the work done by able and honest missionaries. I frankly admit that the story of their achievements at Tierra del Fuego is in the highest degree inspiring. Everybody remembers how fully Darwin appreciated the rapid transformation effected there by missionary effort, and how on learning of it he became a subscriber to the Church Missionary Society. The same language would correctly characterise the work accomplished in Fiji and other islands of the South Seas. But Buddhist missionaries, had they undertaken the task, might have produced the same happy results; and there was a time when the missionary zeal of Buddhism burned quite as intensely as that of Christianity has done during the last hundred years. It is undeniable that the improvement that has taken place in the character of converted savages is purely moral in its nature, and the outcome chiefly of education. Some savages have been made Christians without being ethically elevated. It is an incontrovertible fact that religion and good morals do not always go hand-in-hand.

Mr. Haigh tells us that Christianity "assumes the value of man as man." He may be low in his development, and degraded and even disgusting in his manner of life; but Christianity does not on that account pass him by as beneath regard and beyond betterment." But surely this is not an argument for the truth of Christianity as a supernatural religion. The fact that it goes to the lowest and most degraded people and wins converts among them only proves that such people are naturally more susceptible and responsive to supernatural appeals than races higher up in the scale. Superstition is congenial to them, and they give heartiest welcome to whatever is marvellous and startling. It is comparatively easy to persuade them to believe in miracles, in the dread Spirit that rules the world, and in the efficacy of prayer. And on account of his supposed intimacy with unseen realities the missionary is more readily listened to when he enunciates his moral code, and urges them to exemplify the higher virtues. The inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego and the Fijians became Christians so soon *because* they were so low in the human scale. Superior savages are not so easily won to the Christian Faith. Among these missionaries have labored for twenty and thirty years, often, without making a single convert; and as a rule conversions begin in the day-schools. The children are taken in hand, and they, almost without knowing it, eventually become Christians.

The witness of Foreign Missions possesses no greater evidential value than the witness of the home-churches. The fact that so many people believe in Christianity is no evidence of its truth. For many centuries people believed in witchcraft, and during that period witches were generally feared; but to-day witchcraft stands utterly discredited, and witches are laughed to scorn. The day may come when Christianity and Christians will be overtaken by the same fate. The signs of the times are by no means encouraging to the ambassadors of the cross. Science is slowly undermining all the foundations of the Faith, and theologians and preachers are finding it impossible to hold their own. The bulk of the churches are empty, and their leaders are finding it more and more difficult to secure adequate financial support. Enthusiasm for foreign missions is dying out, and the great Missionary Societies have to face enormous deficits in their balance-sheets almost every year. A big wave of secularism is sweeping over the world. Even

foreign missions themselves are being secularised. Mission Stations are rapidly becoming educational centres, where domestic service, carpentry, smithing, and agriculture, as well as theology, are being taught. The pure Gospel has been found to be insufficient, and the skill and tact of the teacher have practically supplanted the Holy Ghost.

To Mr. Haigh's questions, "Has Christianity made for the world's betterment? Has it eased social conditions? Has it helped the handicapped? Has it uplifted degraded nations, and within the sphere of its influence made human life cleaner, wholesomer, and more hopeful?" we are bound to return negative answers. In Christendom, beyond dispute Christianity has retarded progress, discouraged reform, suppressed knowledge, favored the rich, and kept the poor in subjection. It has never insisted on having justice and fairplay done to all without distinction, and the consequence is that, as a class, the poor and handicapped have renounced it. All the world over, the black races, be they Christians or Pagans, are under the heels of their white lords, and if they show any disposition to complain or rebel they are mown down like hay. Their countries are taken from them, and they become hewers of wood and drawers of water for those whose missionaries assured them that in God's sight all men are equal. Their conversion to Christianity is only a prelude to the stealing of their lands; and the loss of country is usually followed by the loss of freedom. Can Mr. Haigh deny these facts, and admitting them can he still maintain that Christianity takes the part of and helps the handicapped either at home or abroad?

Generally speaking, foreign missions have been signal failures, and, on the whole, the races upon whom they have operated are losers rather than gainers in consequence. If foreign missions bear any witness at all, it is to the stupendous moral impotence of the Christian Religion.

JOHN LLOYD.

Acid Drops.

Admiral Skrydloff, who went eastward to take the place of the Admiral who went down with his ship, was seen off at St. Petersburg by a crowd of patriotic admirers. Some of them presented him with holy wooden images of saints. One sprinkled him with water from a miraculous well. Probably this will keep him floating if his ship goes down.

A lady presented Admiral Skrydloff with some extremely effective relics which had been in her husband's family from generation to generation, and dated back to the thirteenth century. No doubt relics, like cheese, get more powerful with age.

An awful calamity threatens "gallant little Wales." The Holy Well of St. Winifrede's is in danger of being drained dry through a new scheme of drainage. The result to the crippled, lunatic, and scabby believers who go there is shocking to contemplate. It is to be hoped the Holy Well will hold out.

The Lord's Day Observance Society held its annual meeting at Exeter Hall recently, and the report denounced the London County Council for promoting Sunday desecration by means of illegal Sunday entertainments. But if these entertainments are illegal they can be stopped. Why then does not the Rev. Dr. Peake take steps to suppress them? Until he does so the Sunday League indoor concerts will go on, and the Sunday bands will continue to play in the parks.

This Rev. Dr. Peake, the Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society, is not a very valorous gentleman. Some years ago he frightened Mr. Grein and a number of other persons, mostly belonging to the profession, who were holding meetings on Sunday evenings in a West-end theatre, and charging for admission in order to defray the heavy expenses. Mr. Foote offered the hospitality of the Hall of Science to the Rev. Dr. Peake's victims. He also challenged the Rev. Dr. Peake to start proceedings against him at the Hall of Science, where a charge for admission was made every

Sunday evening. Mr. Foote's challenge was made publicly through the *Star*, but the Rev. Dr. Peake was not having any. He is not much good at biting, though a devil to bark.

The Free Churches are getting alarmed at the growth of Roman Catholicism in England. Their leaders are blowing the trumpet to summon their hosts to battle. But there seems to be a very inadequate response. Dr. Clifford "cannot understand the apathy of the Protestants and Evangelicals at this juncture in our national life." The *Times* charges him with having "Popery on the brain," and the reverend gentleman rather pleads guilty to the soft impeachment. He may depend upon it, however, that the battle nowadays is not between Protestantism and Romanism, but between Freethought and Christianity. What is the use of quarreling within the city walls? Hannibal is at your gates!

Mr. W. R. Hearst is said to be spending a thousand pounds a day to obtain the Democratic nomination for the United States' Presidency. Mr. W. J. Bryan, a former candidate, is said to be in Mr. Hearst's pay. Both gentlemen are Christians. And we are glad to hear it.

Christians—all Socialists, apparently—continue to maunder in the *Clarion*. Last week's maunderer was the Rev. Charles L. Marson, curate of Hambridge, Somerset. Here is a sample of his plea for Christianity. "We must remember," he says, "that Bruno was not burnt and Galileo was not persecuted for saying that the earth moved, but for insulting the religion of those who held it to be fixed. Their science was not the object of attack; it was their aggressive theology." This is really too absurd—or too impudent. Mr. Marson may talk in this way to his bucolic congregation with impunity, but he ought to know better than to try it on in a London journal.

We have not time to say all that might be said in reply to Mr. Marson, nor is he worth so much trouble. We will therefore take the case of Galileo, and see what this reverend gentleman's word is worth. Galileo's "aggressive theology" is really a joke; and, as it is hard to think that Mr. Marson invented it, we conclude that someone has been "having" him. As a matter of fact, it was Galileo's science that was the object of attack. An abjuration was drawn up for him by the Inquisition, and he signed it to escape torture, which would else have been inflicted upon him in spite of his seventy years—and probably burning alive afterwards. Galileo signed that document at the Convent of Minerva on the twenty-second of June, 1633. The Church did not know that he was at the same time signing its doom.

Let us look at that abjuration. The following is a passage from it—the one important passage:—"But because I have been enjoined by this Holy Office altogether to abandon the false opinion which maintained that the sun is the centre and immovable, and forbidden to hold, defend, or teach the said false doctrine in any manner, and after it hath been signified to me that the said doctrine is repugnant with the Holy Scripture, I have written and printed a book, in which I treat of the same doctrine now condemned, and adduce reasons with great force in support of the same, without giving any solution, and therefore have been grievously judged of heresy; that is to say, that I hold and believe that the sun is the centre of the universe and immovable, and that the earth is not the centre and is movable; willing therefore to remove from the minds of your Eminences, and of every Catholic Christian, this vehement suspicion rightfully entertained towards me, with a sincere heart and unfeigned faith, I abjure, detest, and curse the said errors and heresies."

There you are. That is how Galileo was *not* persecuted for saying that the earth moved! There is not a single word in the whole document about any "insults" beyond the general one of teaching astronomy, which the Church condemned. So much for Curate Marson!

Mr. Bernard Shaw must be entertained by the *Daily News* opinion of his play "Candida" as one "for which we may be grateful in these days of barren materialism." Mr. Shaw as an opponent of materialism is Mr. Shaw in quite a new character.

The Bishop of London used to talk as though he had pretty well settled the hash of Secularism. But even his chirpy optimism, with its strong tendency to boasting, seems to have been staggered at last. Speaking at a recent meeting of the Bishop of London's Fund, this right reverend father in God said (we quote from the *Nottingham Evening Post*) that he "had been much depressed lately by the wave of Secularism, due partly to the cheap literature on the subject sold everywhere, that was passing over the country." The "ism"

which the Bishop had killed and buried is disturbing his repose. Like the ghost of Banquo at Macbeth's feast, it will look in to show its continued activity. These dead and buried "isms" will not keep down.

But now they rise again,
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools.

No wonder the poor Bishop is alarmed. He now recognises that "a great deal of the giving-up of church-going is due to unsettlement of faith." Even the "faith of boys and girls" is being attacked "all along the line." Something must be done "so that the Christian faith may not go by default." Only 18 per cent. of Londoners go to church or chapel now, and what will it be presently? "How," the Bishop asked, "are you going to fight the materialism of the day?" Ay, there's the rub. That is the question. And the Bishop does not seem able to answer it.

The Bishop also said there were hundreds of cases in London of people dying who never said a prayer and who never heard a sermon. "It was their duty to see that men did not die like dogs, but that they had the light of the Christian faith to cheer their last hours." For impertinence the Bishop of London is to the Established Church what Mr. R. J. Campbell is to the Nonconformists. From one point of view we have no objection to be told that non-Christians "die like a dog," since it is a statement of a mere physiological fact. But, as an insult is obviously intended, it is well to remind Dr. Ingram that within the past few months one man who died "like a dog"—that is, without the "light of the Christian faith"—was Herbert Spencer. Not even the Bishop would have the impudence to name Spencer in this connection; yet it clearly includes him. Dr. Ingram probably trusts that the impertinence will pass unnoticed when made in this general manner, while the feeling that the non-Christian is a poor, hopeless, degraded being will remain. Really, £10,000 a year and a seat in the House of Lords seems a pretty stiff price to pay for the kind of intellect of which such statements are the expression.

The Bishop further said he had received a letter from "an able and honest man of thirty-five" who desired to be ordained. Dr. Ingram had refused his application because he was too "liberal" in his views. Precisely so. Able, honest, and liberal men would be sadly out of place in a Christian pulpit. But, as Dr. Ingram went on to complain of the lack of candidates for ordination, we presume there is a shortage of even the opposite type.

The Bishop of Stepney does not believe in entertainments in churches. No one, he told a Bromley audience, could worship God while listening to entertainments. There was an absence of the "fear of God," and without this religion was weak. With which we agree. Religion only has a real hold upon people so long as they are afraid of it. Once taught people to stand upright and look at the bogeys they have been trembling before, and there is an end to their power. The Bishop sees more clearly than he probably imagines.

Dr. Guinness Rogers, we see, is announced to give a lecture on "What We Owe to the Bible." If the "we" refers to the people at large, the answer would be, Nothing. If, however, he refers to the clergy—well, then, there is certainly cause for thankfulness.

When people hear "the voice of God" they want watching. You never know what will happen. Sometimes they get converted and go to Bible classes and prayer meetings, but now and then they "go for" somebody. Frank Rodgers, the wretched youth who stands charged with the murder of his mother, told Dr. Octavius Ennion, "A voice distinctly told me to do it quickly." The people at Meldreth, where he lived, regarded him as being of an intensely religious frame of mind. No wonder.

The authoritative manner in which the views of great men are misstated is illustrated in a notice of Herbert Spencer's Autobiography that appeared in *Reynolds's* newspaper for May 1. The writer, at the close of an appreciative notice of "our great philosopher," remarks: "The hostility that Spencer showed to supernatural creeds became modified in time by the conviction that the maintenance of social order had always required the aid of a religious system or some such agency."

Did such a sentence accurately represent Spencer's views it would place him upon the same level as writers like Mr. Benjamin Kidd. But as a matter of fact it reverses the order of Spencer's development. In his earlier writings it is easy to trace a marked leaning towards them. References

to the "Divine Idea" are common. But not only are such expressions absent from his later writings, but in a later issue of one, at least, there occurs the very emphatic note that had the book been then written the theistic implications would have been omitted. The source of the error is probably to be found in the writer's non-appreciation of Spencer's position that supernaturalistic beliefs must have played some useful part in evolution or they would never have persisted. But the implication that Spencer believed some kind of supernaturalism to be necessary is almost grotesque in the light of his monumental work on the *Principles of Sociology*. It is a pity that such a statement should have been given currency in such a paper as *Reynolds's*.

The Jesuits are to be legalised in Germany. How this has come about we do not know. Probably it is done merely as a wooden-headed following of the example of Frederick the Great, who received them when they were suppressed by the Pope and driven from all the Catholic states of Europe. Germany will be flooded by them—or the flood of them will manifest itself, and it will not be long before the effects of their presence will be seen in the internal relationships of the many conflicting states which form the singularly loose-threaded German Empire.

It is possible that the idea is to allow Jesuits, filled with resentment against the present French Government and Republican institutions, to be encouraged to work among the people of the Roman Catholic provinces which still cherish a strong affection for the short reign of the first French Empire, and have a section of their people eager to exchange French liberty for the hated unsympathetic Prussian tyranny. The towns on the Rhine are still constituted as commercial republics, and the Prussian rule—when they feel an extra pinch—is maddening to them.

If this be the purpose, it is extremely short-sighted and foolish. At present the Rhinelander is a Catholic; that is all he knows of religion. He went to confession when he went to school, but ceased doing so as soon as he had sins to confess. Nevertheless he is a Catholic, just as he is a German—as a congenital distinction simply. The interest and earnestness Englishmen exhibit in regard to religion strikes him as a kind of dementia. But when the Jesuits have implanted fanatical love of his Church in him the first object of hatred to him will be his heretic conquerors, who are ever before his eyes and in his mind, to whom he pays his taxes, who occupy the municipal offices to which his fathers were elected, who fill his streets as policemen and officials of all kinds, who drive his trams for him, and march him off to Poland as an impressed soldier—not the indifferent fellow Catholic over the frontier.

The Bishop of Ripon, in speaking at Leeds to a crowded audience of men against the limitation of families, told them: "He would rather have five good sturdy Englishmen than ten poor creatures who could not say booh to a goose."

Quite so. But he gets £80 a week to teach those same "sturdy Englishmen" to "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly"—*me* being a Syrian carpenter, "who when he was reviled answered not again," and who advised his fellow-workmen—fishers, customs clerks, and similar folk—to go stark naked and give their shirts to any fellow who chose to steal their shawl.

The knowledge of the present species of British journalist on matters of religion is astounding. Mr. Chesterton, one would think, had reached the limit of ignorance and absurdity, but a writer in *Reynolds's* has beat even his record. This gentleman says that East End Jews cannot be induced to speak the truth unless they tie scraps of the "Gospels" around their heads. What world can a man have lived in who conceived that Jews are in terror of the Gospels?

There was some plain speaking at the recent annual meeting of the London Anti-Vivisection Society. The Earl of Tankerville, who presided, is a Christian, and, like the majority of that ilk, he cannot leave his sectarianism at home when he goes to public meetings. He described vivisection as un-Christian, and said he would like to know what preachers of the gospel who did not oppose vivisection would think of themselves when before the judgment seat of Christ—which, we venture to say, is too far off London to have any practical bearing on the question. Dr. Hadwen appears to have taken advantage of the chairman's pious initiative, but in an opposite direction. He declared that the cruelties of vivisection (we quote from the *Manchester Guardian*) were perpetrated under the shelter of Acts of Parliament, where bishops sat in their lawn sleeves, but

from whose benches never a voice was raised against such iniquities. This was too much for the Rev. Nevison Loraine, who said that the chairman was referring to the Dean of Worcester, who was a Christian gentleman. Really the meeting ought not to be hard on a special profession. Many of the clergy knew nothing about vivisection. Whereupon an interruptor exclaimed, "Then they ought to." Which common-sense utterance closed the incident.

The Passive Resisters at Leicester include twenty-four Nonconformist ministers, who would probably hear something to damp their spirits if they dropped in at the Secular Hall and interviewed Mr. F. J. Gould or Mr. Sydney Gimson. The Nonconformist ministers at Leicester have for thirty years taken money from Freethinkers to pay for Christian teaching in the Board Schools. They never discovered that this sort of thing was wrong until they themselves became the sufferers.

"The Rev. W. L. Richardson," said the *Greeting*, of Americus, Kansas, "the preacher, painter, and poet of Dunlap, came down on Monday and commenced work on W. H. Patton's residence. He will paint it outside and in, and paper most of the rooms. He is a brilliant conversationalist, a good musician, and a prominent member of the gun club." Evidently the clergy are expected to be good all-round men in Kansas.

When an alderman has dined (the proverb says) the world is happy. This truth seems to be the key to the Pope's theology. On a recent bright morning, when the air was delicious, Pius X. stretched out his arms (the *Pall Mall Gazette* says) and cried, "And some people deny God! How can they, on a day like this? Such a crime is greater, it seems to me, in Italy than elsewhere." Yes, but we cannot all live in Italy, and even in Italy the weather is sometimes horrid. In some parts of the world it is seldom anything else. It is all very well for a man whose every want is supplied to stretch his arms in the sunlight, and praise the goodness of God. But does not such a man, after all, strike a note of selfishness? What about those whose wants are not supplied? What about the strong men out of work, the pale distracted mothers, and the pining children? Perhaps the Pope will think it over.

Length of days does not always bring wisdom. Senator Wark, of Canada, has lived a hundred years, and is still going strong. His friends in the Senate have presented him with a portrait and an address in recognition of his longevity, and the report says that he made his acknowledgment in a good voice. He told the Senate that "God exercises a wise providence over the affairs of this world." Which ought to please the Almighty. He also said that God is looking "especially" after the "affairs of this Empire." Which ought to please the Imperialists. Finally, the pious old gentleman soared on the wings of prophecy, and talked of the time when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." No doubt his friends saw him safely home.

Orangeism is a most unlovely form of Protestantism. Mr. T. W. Russell, the well-known Liberal Unionist representative for South Tyrone, now confesses it himself. He declares that the Belfast people are "possessed of a spirit of religious and political rancour unknown in any other part of the King's dominions," that "boycotting is ruthlessly employed," and that "freedom of thought is unknown" there.

Rev. T. B. Meyer (Nonconformist) prays publicly in his church for the restoration to health of the Bishop of Rochester (Church of England). Both of them assist in imprisoning the Peculiar People for trusting in prayer. Leaving it to God in fun is all right. Leaving it to God in earnest is a crime.

Jonathan Rhind, of Old Trafford, who is deaf through paralysis, challenges the Christian Scientists through the *Manchester City News*. He says that if they can cure him, after he has been given up by specialists, he will plank down £10 and join them. He thinks "one local cure" will be better than a thousand cases which can only be proved on paper." Certainly. Here is the Christian Scientists' chance. Will they embrace it?

A Lambeth constable, charging a woman with drunkenness, said that on the way to the station she had called him "Everything from a Christian downwards." We will not spoil this. It is exquisite as it stands.

Myra of the Pines, by Hermann K. Viele, contains the

following conversation between the heroine and two pariah children:—

"Have you ever heard of New York?" asked Myra.
 "Naw."
 "Have you ever heard of Heaven?"
 "Naw."
 "Have you ever heard of God?"
 "Naw," from the boy. "Yes," from the girl.
 "Oh, Sis has heard," persisted Myra, much encouraged.
 "Tell me, child, who is God?"
 "His last name 's Dam," faltered the child.

Good old Bible plums are going one by one. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" turns out to be a mistranslation for "Do you think to make me a Christian with stuff like that?" Which takes all the go out of the sweet hymn, "Almost Persuaded." Dr. Henry Bradley now tells us that "He that runs may read" is also upside down; the meaning being that he who reads may run after reading—that is, go ahead, be on the job.

"M.A.P."—"Tay Pay's" paper—after referring to the late Sir Henry Thompson's proposals for testing the efficacy of prayer, says that "The grim old man died as he had lived. His remains were cremated, and neither anthem nor hymn was sung or spoken. "Grim" is rich. Sir Henry Thompson was one of the brightest and cheerfulest of men. "Tay Pay" seems to think that "a pronounced agnostic and Darwinian" must be unhappy. He is mistaken—probably from lack of experience.

The clergy in the Duchy of Brunswick and some other German States are up in arms against Cremation, and refuse to hold services at crematoriums. They declare that the practice of cremation is apt to shake belief in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This is precisely what Dr. King, Bishop of Lincoln, said twenty years ago. It is also precisely what the Catholic Church feels in refusing to countenance any other mode of disposing of corpses but burial. People who see a dead body laid in the grave can fancy it lying there till the Day of Judgment, ready to get up when Gabriel blows the resurrection trumpet. But they cannot even fancy a future for the corpse, when they have seen it reduced to a few handfuls of ashes.

A few weeks ago the *Daily News* rebuked Revivalist Torrey for slandering Unitarians. Since then it has climbed down. It now says that "the result has been to arouse more interest in the mission."

Revivalist Torrey has taken a leaf out of the book of his British rivals. He also goes in for "a great midnight march," with bands and torchlights, and Jesus Christ somewhere in the procession. "At the subsequent meetings," the *Daily News* naively says, "members of the congregation were in a state of intoxication." "But"—and this reads quite satirically—"the results were excellent." Torrey's "results" are all right, anyhow.

"Infidelity" is bound to be dealt with by Revivalist Torrey wherever he goes. He cannot drop that useful word. He knows how it helps him to trade on Christian prejudices. But what he *knows* about "infidelity" is evidently very limited. At Bristol he has been referring to Joseph Barker as "President of the National Secular Society." Joseph Barker was a Freethinker for a short time more than forty years ago. It was one of his many lightning changes. He was well called Joseph, for he had a coat of many colors, and turned it frequently. Charles Bradlaugh, who showed up Joseph Barker, founded the National Secular Society, which has had more than one President since, and not one of them has been converted. Revivalist Torrey also declared that "every anarchist is an infidel." We refer him to Count Tolstoy.

This Yankee soul-saver cannot leave Colonel Ingersoll alone. He has libelled that great Freethinker up and down Great Britain, and now he must play the part of Paul Pry on the dead man's home. The following is from the *Bristol Daily Press* report of his midday address at Colston Hall on "Infidelity":—

"He happened to be with a friend of Robert Ingersoll's on the day that Robert Ingersoll died so suddenly. They had been talking about Ingersoll that very day. He said to me, 'Every time when I call upon Colonel Ingersoll nowadays, Mrs. Ingersoll meets me and says, "Don't say anything to the Colonel about his growing old, it makes him very angry." Why should it? It did not make a true Christian angry to tell him he was growing old.'"

Torrey is simply a cad to introduce private conversations like this at public meetings. It is all hearsay to start with. And it might occur to any decent intelligence that a man who was hard at work, and meant to keep so, could easily dislike references to his "age" without any fear of death.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, May 8. Printers' Hall, Bartlett's-passage, Holborn, E.C., 7.30, "Herbert Spencer as Man and Freethinker: with Reference to his *Autobiography*."
May 15, Printers' Hall.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—May 8, Coventry.
W. P. BALL.—Thanks again for useful cuttings.
A. G. LYE.—See paragraph. There should be good meetings for Mr. Cohen at Coventry.
E. R. WOODWARD.—Very much pleased to hear of your complete restoration to health, and always glad to see your "fist."
C. J. ATKINSON.—You have an able defender of Secularism in Mr. John Grange, who is sure to give a good account of himself.
NORMAN MURRAY (Montreal), writing in reference to our article on "Pious Bragg" says that he has challenged the Canadian men of God to tell him of any place under modern Christian influence where such pure morals are practised as Tacitus describes in his *Germania*. Up to the present he has received no answer.
JAMES NEATE.—Pleased to hear of your successful opening at Victoria Park. May the success continue right through the season.
GERALD GREY.—Received with thanks. We reciprocate your good wishes.
J. SMITH.—It is easy enough to appear to bridge the gulf of nearly two hundred years by saying that Irenæus, who lived to be an old man, knew Polycarp, who lived to be an old man; that Polycarp, who lived to be an old man, knew John, who lived to be an old man; and that John knew Jesus—so there you are don't you know? But there is really no proof that these links are valid. The story is merely traditional, and would break down in two minutes in a court of law. Mr. Lloyd may, of course, as you appear to wish, devote an article to this ancient-stock "evidence." Thanks for the pamphlet.
C. JEEVES.—We are sorry to say that there are no Sunday evening Freethought meetings which you could attend at Plymouth. Freethought propaganda in the Three Towns suffered greatly by the loss, through death, of Messrs. Smith and Barter. Perhaps we shall see a revival there before long.
JAMES POLLITT.—Pleased to hear, though rather late, that Mr. Lloyd had two good audiences at Failsworth and was himself in "good form." You were very welcome to the "Sugar Plum." We wish both Failsworth and Mr. Lloyd all success.
L. B. GALLAGHER.—Thanks. See paragraph.
E. J. JONES.—We have hunted up the reference you ask for, and you will now be able to oblige your Christian friend—although we don't suppose for a moment that he will take the trouble to verify the quotation. The passage we quoted from Newman in the Preface to our *Crimes of Christianity* runs as follows:—"It is melancholy to say it, but the chief, perhaps the only English writer who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian, is the unbeliever Gibbon." The passage occurs at the end of the fifth section of the Introduction to Newman's *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. We quote from the edition dated 1885, published by Longmans, which is a reprint of the final 1878 edition, for which Newman wrote a special preface. The "various important alterations" which Newman made in the final edition did not affect his view of the greatest of modern historians.
J. R. WILLIAMSON.—Too late for this week; in our next.
W. A.—Thanks. See paragraph.
J. L. G. MACKINNON.—We are obliged for the cutting, which you will see has been useful.
A. E. Q.—Pleased to hear from you as a Freethinker who was for six years in the Salvation Army. We can quite understand that you are tabooed by most of your late Christian friends. Faith and bigotry are twins. You might find better friends if you attached yourself to the Camberwell Branch of the N.S.S., which is the nearest to your residence.
T. J. THURLOW.—In our next; too late for this week's.
G. SCOTT.—Thanks for the reference.
JOSEPHINE.—Pleased to read your letter. Revivalist Torrey belongs to a hopeless type. He is really a case of atavism; and his appeal is to the atavism in the orthodox mob.
SECLARIST.—There is no doubt something in what you say. Calling the legendary founder of Christianity "Jesus" instead of "Christ" or "Jesus Christ" might be a strategic advantage. Probably the "Christ" is more popular as being a better mouthful.
B. F.—Letter returned as desired. Probably it was well-meant, but the writer must be very simple to suppose it could have any "converting" effect on your mind. The book you refer to belongs to a class of Christian "crank" literature on which we cannot advise you to spend a minute of your time. The "casting out of Satan" and the "gathering of Israel" are antediluvian.

W. BINDON.—You did quite right in telling that Congregational minister who doubted the "purity" of our work that we were imprisoned for "blasphemy"—*clean* "blasphemy." You might also have told him that Jesus Christ was arrested for the same offence. That is an extraordinary story about Mr. Lee and ourselves. There is not a word of truth in it. Mr. Lee himself, we believe, is too honorable a man to countenance such malignant absurdity. But you must expect "charitable" things from Torrey's dupes.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance, secretary, acknowledges the following sums from Branches: Huddersfield 15s., Glasgow 12s. 3d., Manchester £1 17s. 6d., Birmingham 18s.

THE National Secular Society's office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote continues his Sunday Freethought lectures at Printers' Hall. His subject this evening (May 8) will be "Herbert Spencer as Man and Freethinker: with reference to his *Autobiography*." This lecture ought to be very interesting to Freethinkers. The ordinary press notices have done no sort of justice to the two big volumes of Herbert Spencer's "Life of Himself," if we may call it so. Something new may therefore be learnt from Mr. Foote's treatment of the work; and Freethinkers should not only attend themselves, but try to bring some of their more orthodox friends.

We beg to state once more that Bartlett's-passage, in which Printers' Hall is situated, is really not difficult to discover, and quite easy of access. It is right behind the famous furnishing house of Wallis and Co., one of the most central positions in London. And the "passage" is only obscure in the sense of not being generally known. It is well lit-up at night, and the locality is considered very "respectable."

Our attention has been called to a letter from Mr. George Meredith, some six weeks old, in which Mr. Foote is honorably mentioned. Mr. Meredith was invited to a Rationalist dinner in London, and not being able to attend, he sent the following letter:—

"Let it be known at the dinner-table on the night of the 29th, when Mr. Clodd sits as chairman, that I wish I were one of the guests. You have among you two of the good and brave champions of freethought—Mr. Holyoake and Mr. Foote, who suffered grievously in the time of my younger days for seeking to establish freedom of the mind, a much greater than political freedom. We are indebted chiefly to them and the able lieutenants who fought under them for the loftier liberty, which is as fresh air of the fields and clouds in comparison with the stuffy atmosphere of an edifice. I could say much more, but have little strength at present for the delivery of personal feeling."

This letter must have been gall and wormwood to some of those who heard it read. Others, we dare say, heard it with more or less pleasure. Mr. Foote has never been a tuft-hunter, and has never sought testimonials or advertisements from distinguished people; this letter from Mr. George Meredith was not of *his* seeking; but since it has already been printed the readers of the *Freethinker* may as well have the benefit of it. Mr. Foote salutes "the Master at Box Hill"—and goes on with the fight.

The Bethnal Green Branch opened its 1904 campaign in Victoria Park on Sunday afternoon. There was a fine audience, a fine collection, a fine sale of literature, and we hear that Mr. Cohen was in fine form.

Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures to-day (May 8) in the Assembly Rooms, Union-street, Coventry. His subjects are attractive, and the admission is free, so we should hear of good meetings. The local "saints" may be relied upon to do all they can to that end.

The National Secular Society's Annual Conference takes place on Whit-Sunday at Leeds. There will be a morning and afternoon sitting, and an evening public meeting in the splendid Theatre Royal, which will be addressed by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, Ward, Grange, and perhaps other speakers. During the week before the Conference a series of out-door meetings, under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive, will be held on Woodhouse Moor. These have been entrusted to Mr. H. Percy Ward, who will go over from Liverpool. It is intended to distribute Freethought literature largely at these meetings, which will also serve as an advertisement of the Demonstration in the Theatre Royal.

Next week's *Freethinker* will contain the full Agenda of the Leeds Conference. It is too late now, of course, for any additions.

A public debate on "Is Christianity True?" take place in the Slaithwaite Coöperative Hall on Monday, May 9, and in the Marsden Mechanics' Hall on Tuesday, May 10, between Mr. D. J. E. Sykes and Mr. John Grange—the former taking the affirmative and the latter the negative. Both meetings will begin at 8 p.m., and we are informed that the chairman on each occasion is to be elected by the audience. Mr. John Grange is one of the N.S.S. vice-presidents, and a capital speaker.

Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes) has been discoursing to the Manchester Literary Club on "The Science of Life," and we hope her address will be printed in full. According to a summary report in the *Manchester Guardian*, she is not enchanted with Tolstoy, who seems to think the object of life is digging and reading pamphlets, and whose austerity she contrasted with the humor and wide outlook of Shakespeare and Goethe—who, by the way, were both Humanists, although Mrs. Craigie, we believe, is a Roman Catholic.

The spirit of Freethought is diffusing itself through the general intellectual atmosphere, even in Scotland. Criticising the Rev. W. Y. Fullerton's paper on "Lessons from the Religious Census" at the Baptist Union Conference, the *Glasgow Herald* fails to perceive any real consolation in the statement that, although working-men do not go to church, there is "a notable absence of disbelief" amongst them. The *Herald* says:—"If there had been a suggestion of disbelief, or agnosticism, or any other non-theological or anti-theological 'ism,' would it not have been a proof that the suggesters were at least in earnest? An unbeliever may be a bad or a misguided thinker on certain subjects that are considered of vital importance, but it at least argues sincerity that he should have taken the trouble to have an 'honest doubt' and come even to negative conclusions. Absolute apathy or indifference is more to be deplored than this, and it was deplored at the meeting of the Union. At the same time, it may be doubted if the chief cure recommended for the existing state of things is adequate. Dullness, it was maintained, should be avoided, and a 'robust gospel' should be preached. We have heard all this before, and also the proposal that the seats in churches should be free. But the real question is, or ought to be, not whether the gospel preached is 'robust' but whether it is true. The Baptist Union is not the only ecclesiastical body that seems indisposed to look the fact in the face that before its or any other Church's gospel is 'preached to the poor'—or the 'typical working man'—its tenets should be carefully and fully examined in the light of present-day thought. If this were done it is possible that history would repeat itself even in the twentieth century, and 'the common people would receive gladly' the gospel to which they now seem to be indifferent. The experiment at least is worth making."

Open Court (Chicago) for May gives some interesting answers contributed by various celebrities to the question "Is France in its Decadence?" Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson says: "The French people who are always brimfull of life, in decadence? I do not understand how anyone can believe it seriously. The boulevards and their debauches are not France." Max Nordau says that the very question seems blasphemous. Others reply to much the same effect. The truth is that the "decadence" of France is an idea started by the clericals and other reactionists, who find themselves outwitted and outvoted.

The Church.—III.

(Concluded from page 284.)

WE have seen that in the past the Church was not good, and in the present not satisfactory, and that mainly because it made war on science and progress to maintain errors supposed to be revelations from God. If the Church continue to exist, will it be any better in the future? Will it change its nature, its doctrines, its ceremonies? Will it abandon its creeds, catechisms, and sacraments? Will it become a new Church, with a new Gospel to man? Will it cease to be priestly, and become a democratic brotherhood?

At present the Church is mainly priestly. Members and attendants are mostly the suite of the priesthood. Under religious excitement, it is true, attendants become as priestly as the priest in spirit, and some of them very probably would form a Church even without a priest. But the soul and body of the Church is the priest. It is his patrimony. It is maintained for his benefit. The Church is to the priest the same as the land for the landlord. It is the vested interest of the priest in the dogmas and rites of the Church that makes it so dangerous to progress and so difficult of reformation.

Will the Church change? Yes; it is changing visibly at the present time. During the last forty years it has changed greatly in many ways. New meanings are given to old doctrines, rites, and symbols. But the dogmas and ceremonies are retained, with new interpretations attached. It is in this fact that the danger and difficulty centre. As long as the old names are retained there will be a danger of reversion to the old superstitions; and a Church retaining superstitious errors would be as injurious in the future as it is now and was in the past. If the Church is to be a useful institution in the future it must abandon its old code and syllabus, and adopt a new curriculum. Will it do so?

There are some who think that nothing can change a priest except in name, and the priest is the Church as a living organism. The Church was made by the priest, and not the priest by the Church. The Mormon Church was created by the Mormon founder, its first priest, and its priests keep it going. The priestly office is the real base of all churches. Therefore the Church will always remain much the same, except may be in name and fashion. To get rid of it it must be abolished and disendowed. Abolishment is easier proposed than accomplished. Persecution helps the persecuted more than the persecutor. Disendowment is possible. The civil power may confiscate all the wealth of the churches and prohibit all money and value to support them. Without endowments and voluntary revenue priest and church would gradually cease to be. But this, even if desirable, could not be done without an overwhelming majority in favor of it.

Others think the Church can be gradually changed and made into a useful institution by placing science in the place of theology, and the service of man instead of the service of God, and this world in place of an imaginary world to come. The possibility and probability of this great change is a problem difficult to solve. I hesitate to affirm or deny. Time only can solve the problem.

But a few thoughts connected with the inquiry may be stated. In the interest of truth, science, and progress, some change is required. Society in its own interest cannot long continue to tolerate the use of vast wealth to teach and support superstitious and degrading errors, and waste talent, time, and energy in the injurious work. Again, if the change can be effected, will the Church be required? Will any service it can do justify the employment of such a vast army in the service, and at such a tremendous cost? Will not the schools, colleges, and universities do the work without the church? Does not the schoolmaster make the priest, the school make the Church, and the university make

the cathedral unnecessary? Society that punishes a starving man for begging cannot for ever tolerate a Church that lives by begging. States that punish a palmist and fortune teller, sooner or later will be bound to stop the huge fortune telling by the priests. When that time comes what will the churches do? Will they change of themselves, or will they gradually decay and cease to be? Or will they be permeated from outside and evolve to new and more efficient existence? Or will new churches be formed that will absorb their members and take their place in the world? There are already several new kinds of churches slowly forming, such as the Positivist, Labor Church, Ethical Societies, and various Socialist groups which tend to grow into churches. Will these embryo churches grow and absorb the old, or will the old reform and absorb the new? Or will the new and the old exist for an indefinite time to come? The future only can answer these questions.

If the world must have a church, why not a social Secular Church? The Church has no copy-right in the name or the organisation. Both have been inherited from the past, and Socialists and Secularists have as much right to use them as the Church has. It is a matter of expediency and utility. The object of Freethought, I take it, is to destroy error and establish truth and spread it, more than to destroy the Church. Would a Secular Church be a help to accomplish the task? I am not very certain about the correct answer. Much may be advanced for and against. The strongest argument for, seems to be the inherited influence crystallised in the word and its associations. It is a sound policy, in any undertaking to move on the line of least resistance. If the adoption of the word "church" would weaken prejudice and increase the influence and attractive force of Freethought, would it not be a wise policy to adopt it? When you want to make converts, common sense would dictate the avoidance of all offensive means possible, and the employment of every winning method practicable.

Theology is kept alive by the organised churches by means of music, missions, guilds, schools, parties and so on. If the Churches have found such means powerful to uphold errors, would not Freethought find the same means effective to destroy errors and spread the truth? Imitation of the Churches in methods of propaganda would not be wrong in a Freethought Society. It seems to me that discarding Church methods of propaganda has been the chief cause of unsuccess in the Freethought movement, and if it is to succeed better, new and better methods must be adopted.

Surely truth ought to inspire us with at least as much enthusiasm as errors inspire the Churches, and move us to do as much on its behalf. If it does not, where is its superiority over errors? It is time this matter was taken seriously in hand. There will be very little chance to make much impression on the powerful orders of the Churches, without more popular and effective service by unbelievers. Children must be got hold of, and they cannot be obtained without free meetings. Working men cannot afford to pay for wives and children to attend together at paid lectures even once on a Sunday, and there must be something besides talking and discussion in free meetings to retain the attendance of men and their families. The public also must be reached if the movement is to succeed: and attractive, enthusiastic services are wanted for the purpose. The way to beat the Churches is to make Secular services as interesting and attractive as theirs, and more so if possible. A good move, also, would be to make every Secular and Socialist Society a constructing order to help the masses to free themselves from their exploiters. Variety of ways to do this will easily suggest themselves to any society of intelligent men.

As for the theological Churches, their future is in the grip of evolution. If they adopt science and the sanction of universal law, and assist to show the people that no law can be broken with impunity,

they will help to place morality on a firm foundation. And if, in addition, they will join with the Socialists to reconstruct the social order, and thereby remove the scandal and wicked shame of forced poverty, they may prove to be an useful institution, and secure a long new lease of life. Failing to adapt itself to new condition, the Church will inevitably decay, and ultimately cease.

R. J. DERFEL.

Some Accomplishments of the Colonial Clergy.—II. (Concluded.)

BY H. L. PEEKE.

(From the "New Voice.")

MARYLAND BRAND WAS BAD.

Alexander Graydon tells us that in his early days any jockeying, fiddling, winebibbing clergyman not over-scrupulous about stealing his sermons was currently known as "A Maryland Parson." The Maryland clergy are said to have been more vicious than those of Virginia. They raced horses, hunted foxes, drank, gambled, joined every amusement of the planters, and would extort marriage fees from the poor by breaking off in the middle of the service and refusing to go on until paid.

In 1711 a bequest of £100 was made to the vestry of Christ's Church in Middlesex, provided that the interest should be paid to the minister for preaching four sermons each year against the "four reigning vices," viz.: Atheism and irreligion, swearing and cursing, fornication and adultery, and drunkenness. Later in the century the living was held for eighteen years, and the sermons were preached by a minister who was notoriously guilty of all the vices mentioned. He used to be seen in the tavern porch, reeling to and fro, with a bowl of toddy in his hand, while he called to some passer-by to come in and have a drink. When this exemplary man of God was dying with delirium his last words were halloos to the hounds.

They were jolly dogs, those colonial clergymen of the Church of England in the eighteenth century, and no more to be taken seriously than Friar Tuck, whose apostolic successors they were. Parishioners who wished spiritual counsel had difficulty in finding the parson. In the morning he was fox hunting, in the afternoon he was over (or under) the dining-room table, and the midnight candle shone on his wine cup and dice box. Like their brethren across the Atlantic, the colonial clergy were strong on doctrine. "They abhorred popery, Atheism, and idolatries in general, and hiccoughed 'Church and State' with fervor. Yet their morals were at so low an ebb as to justify the complaint made against them that they were 'such as wore black coats and could gabble in a pulpit, roar in a tavern, exact from their parishioners, and rather by their dissoluteness destroy than feed their flock.'"

"One clergyman assaulted a dignitary in vestry meeting, pulling off his wig and subjecting him to various indignities, and capped the climax of audacity by preaching the next Sunday from the text: 'I contended with them and cursed them and smote certain of them and pulled off their hair.'" Another minister fought a duel behind his church, and a third, the Rev. Thomas Blewer, was presented by a grand jury as a common swearer. All efforts to reform the clergy were in vain. Ministers were sometimes tried for drunkenness, and some of the tests of what constitutes drunkenness were laid down by the court: "Sitting an hour or longer in the company where they are drinking strong drink, and in the meantime drinking of healths or otherwise taking the cups as they come round, like the rest of the company; striking or challenging or threatening to fight."

HOW TO FILL A PRAYER-MEETING.

In New York the Dutch ministers were rough characters. Bogardus of New Amsterdam and Schaets of Fort Orange were very unclerical in demeanor. Both were engaged in slander suits, both as libeler and defendant, both were abusive and personal in the pulpit, dishonoring the church by passion. The former was alleged by his enemies to be frequently drunk. The dominie did not have everything his own way, for the director drowned his vociferations by ordering the beating of drums and firing of cannon outside the church during services, and denounced the sermons as "the rattling of old wives' stories drawn out from a distaff."

One of the early Labadist travellers speaks of seeing ministers in the pulpit worse for liquor. Mrs. Earl has unearthed a liquor bill, attested by Dominie Magaliopensis, at the raising of his church, and "each rafter is steeped in

liquor." It must be confessed that the preachers bore the burden manfully. One Dr. Beatty was acting as chaplain to an army of five hundred men led by Franklin to defend the frontier against the French and Indians after the burning of the Moravian Mission at Guadenhuten, Pa. "Dr. Beatty complained to me," says Franklin, "that the men did not generally attend his prayers and exhortations. When they were enlisted they were promised, besides hay and provisions, a gill of rum a day, which was punctually served out to them, half in the morning and the other half in the evening, and I observed they were as punctual in attending to receive it, upon which I said to Dr. Beatty: 'It is perhaps below the dignity of your profession to act as steward of the rum, but if you were to deal it out, and only just after prayers, you would have them all about you.'" The shrewd suggestion was adopted by Dr. Beatty, and the philosophic Franklin says: "Never were prayers more generally and punctually attended; so that I thought this method preferable to the punishment inflicted by some military laws for non-attendance at divine service."

The fact that a Presbyterian minister would under any circumstances consent to measure out rum to his flock suggests a curious contrast between customs past and present, but as each man received but half a gill at a time, the reverend gentleman may have considered that in a certain sense he was assisting in a temperance movement.

Peter Cartwright in his autobiography, covering a period from 1800 to 1856, describes many cases of drunken ministers, and shows his own opinion of the use of liquor by describing his reproaching a preacher apologising to his congregation for a drunken spree by charging it to a parental appetite created by his mother, and his reproving the minister with the statement that his drunkenness was not as bad as the lie he told about his mother to clear himself.

He mentions a popular local preacher being disciplined by him for drinking too much at weddings, and says: "I had hard work to get a committee that were not drinkers themselves." He also states: "From my earliest recollections drinking drams in family and social circles was considered harmless and allowable. It was almost universally the custom for preachers in common with all others to take drams, and if a man would not have it in his family, his harvest, his house-raising, log-rollings and weddings, and so on, he was considered parsimonious and unsocial. I recollect at an early day at a court time in Springfield, Tenn., to have seen and heard a popular Baptist preacher, who was evidently intoxicated, drink the health of the company. I have often seen it carried and used freely at large baptisings where the ordinance was administered by immersion."

In Lyman Beecher's autobiography, covering about the same period, he describes the suspension of a Presbyterian minister for drunkenness in 1805. He states that at the ordination of Hearst in 1811 all kinds of liquors were in vogue, and "the drinking was apparently unrestrained. This preparation was made by the society as a matter of course. When the consolation arrived they always took something to drink round, also before public services and also on their return. As they could not all drink at once they were obliged to stand and wait, as people do when they go to mill. There was a decanter of spirits also on the dinner table to help digestion, and gentlemen partook of it through the afternoon and evening, as they felt the need, some more and some less, and the sideboard, with the spillings of water, sugar and liquor, looked and smelled like the bar of a very active grog-shop." He later says: "On election day all the clergymen used to walk in procession, smoke pipes and drink."

JOLLYING THE TEACHER.—At a recent examination at a public school the examiner was asking a class of small boys some questions to find out their intelligence. He wandered through different subjects and at last came to speak about measles, when a very little boy jumped up and exclaimed: "Please, sir, you will not whip me if I ask you a question?" "No," said the inspector. Then the question came: "Why did Eve never catch the measles?" This the inspector could not solve, so he gave it up. "Because she'd Adam," said the small boy.—*Tit Bits*.

EQUALS.—Two little girls were playing together on the sidewalk. One who was dressed in mourning said to the other, with an air of melancholy superiority: "My papa and mamma have gone to heaven." For an instant the other child appeared to be awed; then she drew herself up. "Well—no matter!" she said, proudly; "mine are going there soon!"—*Harper's Magazine*.

The Psalmist never saw the seed of the righteous begging bread. In our day they sometimes request pennies for keeping the street-crossings in order.—*Dod Grile*.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of the Monthly Executive Meeting held at the Society's Offices on Thursday, April 28. The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair.

There were present: Messrs. C. Cohen, H. Cowell, F. Cotterill, F. A. Davies, T. Gormot, T. How, W. Leat, J. Neate, V. Roger, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, T. Thurlow, F. Wood, and the Secretary.

The Minutes of previous meetings were read and confirmed.

New members were received for the Birmingham and Manchester Branches and for the Parent Society.

The President reported upon the arrangements already made for the Conference at Leeds on Whit Sunday. Messrs. Cohen and Rogers were elected as an Agenda Committee.

The notices of motion in the name of the Executive, together with the proposed additions to the list of Vice-Presidents, and the notices of motion received from Branches, for the Conference Agenda, were then read, and remitted to the Agenda Committee.

The President was asked to arrange for a week's open-air propaganda in Leeds prior to the Conference. The list of speakers for the evening meeting was drawn up, and the meeting closed.

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

Correspondence.

A MANCHESTER RAMBLING CLUB.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Some little time back I saw a notice in the *Freethinker* to the effect that a Freethinkers' Rambling Club had been formed in Glasgow, the object of which was the study of biology in general, and of the zoology and botany of the district in particular.

This suggested to me that if you would kindly make the announcement in the *Freethinker* by inserting this letter, a similar organisation, viz., the "Manchester Freethought Cycling Club," could be formed, with the two-fold object of pursuing biological studies on the one hand, and making propaganda on the other.

I propose a "Cycling" club for reasons which will be obvious, and if any Manchesters Freethinkers will apply to me on the subject, I shall be very glad to hear of them. I enclose my card.

L. LECRIQUE.

262 Moss Lane East, Moss Side, Manchester.

The Confession of Weary Willie.

"What a Friend we have in Jesus."—HYMN.

"Jesus is a friend worth 'avin," Weary Willie did declare. "Ow should I know? Well, so 'elp me! but for 'im I'd live on air!

As it is I'm seldom 'ungry—*thirsty* I may sometimes be— ('Ave one? Well, I thank 'ee kindly.....mine's a rum..... Good luck to ye!)

I was sayin' when you stopped me, thanks to 'im I've grub enough,

And 'e keeps me, too, in baccy, shag and pigtail, likewise snuff.

As for clothes, 'e gives me plenty, but I, 'as to stick to *these*—

Couldn't cadge in togs what's decent, 'sides I like ter feel the breeze.

What say? 'Ow does Jesus do it?.....Think I'm stuffin' you, no doubt!

Listen. (Thank 'ee, same agen, please), and I'll let the secret out.

"Lady 'long a lane is strollin'. Do I beg? No, not so flat,

But be'ind a 'edge I 'uddle till I 'ear 'er pit-a-pat.

Then I prays: 'O blessed Jesus, gimme grub and save me soul.'

I am busted, Lord, thou knowest; only *Thee* canst make me 'ole.'

Lady stops and listens!—juties!—calls me! Up I jumps, amazed.

'My pore man, I chanst ter 'ear you. God will 'elp, 's name be praised!

'E will save your soul, be certain, and the grub you long 'as lacked

This will buy you.' (*Tips a dollar*). Then I 'as to start and act.
Sobbin' like a kid, I murmurs, 'O sweet lady, did you 'ear
Them few words I spoke to Jesus? (Blessed Jesus! Saver dear!)

..... Thank 'ee for this coin, dear lady, I ain't 'ad a crumb ter-day.
May God bless you now and allust!—Then I sighs and turns away.

In the village next I lands at, to the pub my way I wend,
And I 'as a quart, and baccy—thanks to Jesus, dear old friend!

"Do I meet a meek young parson, I perdoose the precious Book

Which I carries in my pocket ('ere it is, I'll let you look),
And I ast 'im, will 'e tell me, does 'e think as I'll be saved,
'Cos afore I read of Jesus I were sadly misbehaved—
Stole and lied, and lived by beggin' (and a lot of sitch-like rot),

And 'e'll say, 'My friend, yer pardoned if the change of 'eart you've got.

Then I'll ast some pious questions, and I'll mention as I'm poor,

Like as was my precious Master, 'im what shed for me 'is gore.

Arter that (*wi'out me beggin'*) Mr. Parson fumbles round
In 'is pocket; ten secs later 'alf-a-crown's 'earned, I'll be bound.

"Yes, my friend, I'll take another, seein' as you *are* so kind,
But I musn't get past 'moppy'—'twouldn't do to get 'fair blind,'

For I 'as my reppytashun as a servant of the Lamb
To retain while in this nay-brood—else I wouldn't care a damn.

If I cared ter, I could tell you 'ow I tackles every type
With a eye to makin' money for ter fill meself (and pipe),

But I thinks I'd best be mum, lad, though o' dodges I've no end.....

INTERVAL FOR REFRESHMENT.

(*Huskily*) Doan' forgesh, my ladsh, ther motter: 'Schtik ter Jesush, yur ol' friend!'"

JOHN YOUNG.

French Drones in England.

SEVENTY-SEVEN Dominican monks, recently expelled from France, may now be found at Edmonton, Middlesex. Over 100 Benedictines are to take up their abode at Woolhampton, and a section of the French Fathers of the Soudan will go into residence at Sidcup. Many of the original Catholic religious houses receive ecclesiastical refugees from France, and accommodation will be found for them at Brighton, Hastings, Seaford, and Leastowe Castle. Since March French Orders have established themselves at Pwllheli, Bodmin, Chertsey, Newhaven, Canterbury, Burntash, Farnborough, Newton Abbot, Hoyle, and Penzance. Old Leamington College not many months ago throbbled with the irrepresible life of the boisterous schoolboy. To-day the boys are gone, and hooded French nuns—Ladies of the Sacred Heart—are scouring and polishing at their new home. The Order of the Sacred Heart, to quote a prospectus, "is essentially aristocratic." Therefore, the boarding-school which the sisters are founding for young ladies is a place where "only girls of the better class" will be able to obtain admission. About February, 1902, sixty-five monks arrived at Ventnor, Isle of Wight. That number has since been augmented by forty-four. In June, 1902, eighty Benedictine monks settled at Northwood House, Cowes. They, too, have added thirty-five to their number. Local report at Osborne puts the number of French nuns now resident there as considerably over 100. Devonshire is full of conventual establishments. A dozen new buildings are in course of erection. The old manor house at Ingsdon has undergone a transformation, and ninety-two white nuns of the Order of the Holy Spirit have quietly settled down in it. Seventy-three Trappist Fathers are now domiciled in Kingsbridge Valley, and unknown numbers have settled at Buckfast Abbey, Abbotskerwell, and Teignmouth this year. Within three months forty brethren of the Immaculate Conception from Cherbourg have taken up their quarters at the Beacon, Ilfracombe. At Martin, on the borders of the New Forest, over eighty Trappist Fathers have arrived in small parties. Six hundred acres of land have been acquired at Martin, too, and at Swanage, where 187 monks and nuns put in an appearance a little while ago, a beautiful church is being rapidly put up.

—*Reynolds's Newspaper.*

Sing a Song of Stipends.

Sing a song of stipends:
Parsons wink their eyes,
Pockets full of lucre,
All for telling lies.

"Telling" heavenly "fortunes"
Leads to great regard;
"Telling" earthly "fortunes"
Leads to "six months' hard."

Parsons are deceivers:
Tricksters, when they teach;
Humbugs, when they worship;
Liars, when they preach.

Ev'ry forward movement
Priests oppose and ban,
Then, when triumph 'waits it,
Wriggle to the van.

Now that people ponder,
Priests begin to quake;
Livings are endangered;
Stipends are at stake.

Dull and foolish people
Reverence the priest;
Those that hold him highest
Know and reason least.

Honest folk who reason—
Folk from "Faith" exempt—
Treat the priest and parson
Always with contempt.

Bairns, who tend to copy
Much that they detect,
Note their elders treating
Parsons with respect;

Therefore, thoughtful parents,
Fighting priestly lies,
Teach their sons and daughters
Parsons to despise.

Kind, but thoughtless parents,
Teaching bairns to pray,
Sow the seed of sorrow,
Falsehood and decay.

Teach your children science;
Teach them how to think;
Truth will then attract them;
Lies will make them shrink.

Shun the canting parson;
Spurn the truthless priest;
Study your surroundings;
Leave the ancient East.

Cultivate your reason
Ev'ry living day,
Then, at Life's last sunset,
Smile, and pass away.

G. L. MACKENZIE.

A BRAVE FAREWELL.

I could wish for many another year; yet, if I knew that not one more awaited me, I should not grumble. When I was ill at ease in the world, it would have been hard to die; I had lived to no purpose, that I could discover; the end would have seemed abrupt and meaningless. Now, my life is rounded; it began with the natural irreflective happiness of childhood, it will close in the reasoned tranquility of the mature mind. How many a time, after long labor on some piece of writing, brought at length to its conclusion, have I laid down the pen with a sigh of thankfulness; the work was full of faults, but I had wrought sincerely, had done what time and circumstance and my own nature permitted. Even so may it be with me in my last hour. May I look back on life as a long task duly completed—a piece of biography; faulty enough, but good as I could make it—and, with no thought but one of contentment, welcome the repose to follow when I have breathed the word "Finis."—*George Gissing, "Private Papers of Heney Ryeacroft."*

NO IMPROVEMENT.—First Millionaire: "Don't you think our religion has improved since ancient times?" Second M.: "Not at all. Why, they used to sacrifice lambs on the altar, and now they take young girls."

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

PRINTER'S HALL (Bartlett's passage, Holborn, London) at 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Herbert Spencer as Man and Freethinker: With Reference to his *Autobiography*."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (61 New Church-road, Camberwell): 7.30, *Conversazione*.

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Ethical Hall, Libra-road, Old Ford, E.): 7, George Jackson, Essex C.C., "Political Ethics 100 Years Ago."

NORTH KENSINGTON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Cornwall Hall, Notting-hill): 7, Alderman Sanders, L.C.C., "Shelley as Social Prophet."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, J. M. Robertson, "Economics of Social Reform."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Kensington Town Hall, High-street): 11.15, Dr. Coit, "The God of the Living."

WOOD GREEN ETHICAL SOCIETY (Fairfax Hall, Portland-gardens, Haringay): 7.15, Dr. Stanton Coit, "Modern Spiritualism and Ethical Religion."

WIMBLEDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (6 The Broadway): 7, Miss Zona Vallance, "James Thomson ("B. V.") a Poet and His Pessimism."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, F. A. Davies, "Slavery—Black, White, and Yellow."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey; Brockwell Park, 3.15, W. J. Ramsey.

EAST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Mile End Waste): 11.30, G. Parsons, "The Bible and the Monuments."

HAMMERSMITH BROADWAY, 7, A Lecture.

HYDE PARK, near Marble Arch (West London Branch): A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, R. P. Edwards.

COUNTRY.

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Assembly Rooms, Union-street): 3, C. Cohen, "What is a Man's Chance of a Future Life"; 7, "Christianity's Last Stand: With Reference to the Education Question and the Passive Resistance Movement."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street). Open-air Meeting (Glasgow Green, Jail-square): 4, Ignatius McNulty, J. Glen.

HODDERSFIELD (near).—(Peel-street, Marsden): Public Debate, "Is Christianity True?" Slaithwaite Co-operative Hall, May 9; Marsden Mechanic Hall, May 10. Affirmative, D. J. E. Sykes, L.L.B.; negative, John Grange.

LEEDS (Armley Park): 11, George Weir, "Christ's Resurrection"; Woodhouse Moor: 3, "Christian Inconsistency"; Town Hall Square: 7.30, W. Woolham, "A Reply to the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury" (continued).

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "Herbert Spencer's *Autobiography*: an Atheist's Criticism and Appreciation." Outdoor Propaganda: Islington Square (if wet, in the Hall), 3, "An Hour in Hell." Monday, Edgehill Church, 8, Mr. Ward will lecture.

MANCHESTER SECULAR HALL (Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Percy Redfern, "The True Grounds of Positive Belief."

SHEFFIELD SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall of Science, Rockingham-street): Members and Friends meet near General Post Office corner at 2 o'clock to take car for Walkley, and will thence walk via Sandygate and Fulwood to Whitley Wood for tea, etc.

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