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If one shall read the future of the race hinted in the organic effort of Nature to mount and meliorate, and the corresponding impulse to the Better in the human being, we shall dare affirm that there is nothing he will not overcome and convert, until at last culture shall absorb the chaos and gehenna. He will convert the Furies into Muses, and the hells into benefit.—EMERSON.

That Horrid Japan.

MR. A. G. HALES, the *Daily News* war correspondent, is not able to send much fighting news from the Far East, for the Japanese generals allow no place at the front for his fraternity. He seems, however, to have been anything but idle. His leisure has been occupied in writing melodramatic, and almost hysterical, rhapsodies on the present war and its probable consequences. And either because he is a Christian himself, or because he wishes to please his Christian employers—or the Christian public they cater for, Mr. Hales expresses a fond hope that Holy Russia will yet win, and that Heathen Japan will be hurled back to its island home. He has a sneaking love for Russia because she is a Christian nation; and, apparently, the worst Christian nation is a great deal better than the best Heathen nation—if only because it worships the Cross and mumbles the orthodox shibboleths. He has also a corresponding hatred or dread of Japan; for behind her he sees a renovated China, and hundreds of millions of yellow men banded together against the white races of Europe. Mr. Hales appeals to the European's fear of the "Yellow Peril," and bids us look on Russia as the vanguard of Christian civilisation. He forgets Dr. Johnson's saying that the adjective is the natural enemy of the noun, or does not see that this is a case in point. He also forgets that Nature cares for nothing but strength; strength of body, mind, and character; and that she does not trouble herself in the least about the color of her favorites' skin. If the Japs and the Chinese together are able to dominate this planet, Nature will not exclude them from the front position because they are yellow. And the white man should really try to rid himself of the silly egotism connected with the color of his epidermis.

For our part, we have no belief whatever in this Yellow Peril. Undoubtedly this war is the first instance, in modern times, in which the East has stood up against the West on something like terms of equality; and assuredly, when Japan and China assert themselves, on the basis of their population and resources, it will be an evil day for all the European buccaneers. Asia in the long run will not be governed by Europe. Asia will govern itself. But it is a fantastic idea that the Yellow races will wage a war of extermination against the White races. Europe is powerful enough to protect its own independence. It is only not powerful enough to trample for ever upon the independence of Asia. And this will be a good thing for the aggressor as well as for the victim. For every race, and every nation, profits by the development of its own internal faculties and external resources; and cannot, in the long run, by any possibility profit in any other way.

But let us keep, as far as possible, to the religious side of Mr. Hales's argument. First of all he

emphasises the cruelty of the yellow heathen. "Russians," he says, "remember the sack of Moscow." And he asks us how we should feel if our fathers had seen London in ashes, if our women had been the sport of Goths, if "our little ones had been slaughtered like shambled sheep upon our hearths." Should we then cry "Hurrah for the yellow man!"

What nonsense is this! Go back a few hundred years, and you find the Christian Crusaders, in a perfectly wanton struggle with the Mohammedans, practising cruelty and bestiality that have hardly been paralleled in human history. But this is a sort of generality. Let us come nearer home. Have the Russians proved themselves full of mercy and loving-kindness? Has Mr. Hales read, or has he forgotten, Byron's awful account of the assault and sack of Ismail in the eighth canto of *Don Juan*? Thirty-nine thousand Turks—men, women, and children—were put to the edge of the sword by the victorious Russians, amidst and after unspeakable barbarities. After the lapse of a hundred years the Chinese of Manchuria—men, women, and children again—felt the Russian tenderness as they perished by the thousand in the river Amur—even babies being tossed into the flood from the point of Cossack lances. That was only a few years ago. And when the Christian Powers sent their "punitive expedition" to Peking, after the Boxer rising, the excesses of the white troops are admitted to have been beyond description. The path of the Allied Army was a desolation, and wells and streams were choked with Chinese wives and maidens, who had preferred death to the "purity" of the soldiers of the Cross.

During the present war nearly all the humanity—as far as humanity is possible in bloody strife—has been shown by the Japanese. This cannot be denied. Let us be honest, and let us go by the facts.

Mr. Hales says that the only religion in Japan is the Religion of the Rifle. He thinks this phrase so fine and appropriate that he puts it at the head of his article. The Russians have something more than the Religion of the Rifle. Yes, they have the Religion of the Rifle, the Bayonet, and the *Knout*.

Japan, it appears, is "a nation without a God." All they believe in now is the rifle, and they are "going to startle the world." But who drove them to the use of the rifle? The Japanese took it in self-defence. They had to protect themselves against the insolence of Christian Europe. The very Port Arthur they are now besieging they were turned out of by Christian hypocrites ten years ago, and as soon as they left it Russia stepped into possession. Christian Powers taught the Heathen Power that they had a monopoly of stealing territory.

Mr. Hales knows very well that Japan was driven into this war by Russian tactics. She invited Russia to join in guaranteeing the integrity of Korea. Russia declined. This was clear proof that she meant to swallow Korea when she was ready for the meal. Japan had no alternative but to fight. She had to occupy Korea in order to keep Russia out. Her national existence was at stake. And peoples will always fight for that until Tolstoyism converts the world.

Mr. Hales seems to us equally at sea in his account of the attitude of Japan towards Great Britain. "It

was our wealth," he says, "and our wealth alone, that made them eager for an alliance with us." "This is political philosophy with a vengeance. Is it not obvious that Japan secured a clear arena by the British alliance? At least it balanced the Franco-Russian alliance. Troops could not be brought from Trans-Russian Europe except by water, and they could not be so brought against the fiat of the old "Mistress of the Seas." There is no evidence that the Japanese were after our wealth. They sought a specific advantage in the immediate future. They remembered the Port Arthur scandal, and the British alliance was their clever safeguard against its repetition.

It may be possible, as Mr. Hales prophesies, that the carrying trade in the far East, ninety per cent. of which is done by British ships, will in ten years be done by Japanese ships. But if we *must* lose it, the Japs may as well have it as the Russians. Mr. Hales is simply appealing to our cowardice and selfishness. Yet he pretends to be arguing on higher ground. He says that the Japanese "despise our religious professions" and regard Christianity "as a shadow." They will not take "the Bible of the civilised world." They have taken the rifle instead. But where did they take it from? Why, from that very "civilised world" which offered them the Bible. It appears, therefore, that the rifle and the Bible together are the proper combination. If the Japs had taken the rifle and the Bible too, Mr. Hales could not have found a word to say against them. They would then have been able to fight and slay in a proper manner. They would have been in the swim with the rest of the "civilised world."

Mr. Hales is of opinion that "when such a people preach the gospel of the gun they are going to make a deep mark in the world's history." This can only mean that the rifle is the effective part of the Bible-and-Rifle alliance. Which is probably true.

The Yellow Peril is accentuated in the following manner in Mr. Hales's final paragraph. This is how he winds up about the Japanese:—

"Their very bravery, their physical strength, their indomitable energy, their tireless industry, their strict temperance in alcoholic liquors, their unswerving thrift—all these things help to make them doubly dangerous, because they have no moral check. A nation so full of strenuous vitality, if utterly Godless, must be a menace to the peace of the world."

We infer from this that Mr. Hales thinks it better for the world to be in the hands of drunken Christians than in the hands of sober Heathen. Well, we cannot claim the honor of agreeing with him. If the *virtues* of the Japanese are the greatest danger that threatens us, it is high time that they took our place. We cannot retain it by our *vices*—even with Christianity and the Bible thrown into the scale. Energy, industry, temperance, and thrift will carry the day against the opposite qualities. Not even a miracle was ever known to alter that.

But there is still more to be said. Mr. Hales assumes that a nation which will not accept our religion has "no moral check." Now we beg to tell him that this is flatulent egotism. It is also a gross intellectual blunder. Morality has no necessary connection with religion. Nothing is clearer to the evolutionist. Morality and religion were not born together, and they will not die together. During a certain period of their existence together they are found in association. But this is owing to the strategy of religion under the impulse of self-preservation. Religion finds in the course of time that morality is instinctively felt by society to be of the highest importance. It therefore takes morality under its patronage; then it controls, perverts, and exploits it; and finally pretends to have invented it. But all the while the "moral check," which is supposed to have been supplied by religion, is at work purifying and elevating religion itself, and dragging it forward in the path of progress. Religion does not improve morality; morality improves religion—and will at last improve it off the face of the earth.

We have a last word for Mr. Hales. His idea of the "Godless nation" being the only (or the chief) menace to the peace of the world is positively grotesque. Most of the fighting on this planet has been done by Christians. Christian Powers have been the greatest disturbers of the world's peace. War was becoming almost a Christian monopoly when the Japanese joined in. Who raise and drill the great armies? Christians. Who build the great battleships? Christians. Who manufacture the guns, rifles, and explosives? Christians. Mr. Gladstone actually cited it as one of the proofs of the divine origin of Christianity that the *material power* of the world was in the hands of the Christian nations—including the power of making war. Yet in the face of all this Mr. Hales talks as though the peace of the world were horribly menaced by the advent of a "Godless nation." Christian nations have done their level best to turn this earth into a hell; and in the midst of this infernal stench of mischief and misery Mr. Hales sniffs his nose, says he believes there is a bad smell about, and suggests that it comes from Japan.

G. W. FOOTR.

Philosophic Small Beer.

IT is an indication of the present low ebb of English philosophy that Mr. Balfour's address, as President of the British Association, should have been taken, in so many directions, as a profound utterance on an important subject. From a mere dialectical point of view the address was "clever," as Mr. Balfour's philosophic utterances are apt to be; but the reflections were anything but new in kind—although dealing with modern theories of matter—and one could not help feeling, as in the case of the *Foundations of Belief*, that the political leader was not without an influence on the philosophic lecturer. The two professions are, indeed, incompatible; and all experience shows that when the two are combined one is bound to suffer. The politician, living as he does from hand to mouth, watching every expression with an eye to the ebb and flow of public opinion, cannot profitably coalesce with the philosopher, whose deliverances, if they are to be of value, must rise above the fluctuations of the moment and embrace broad and permanent human issues. John Stuart Mill, and even Mr. Lecky and John Morley, are standing examples of, on the one hand, what little weight the *thinker* has who enters the political arena, and, on the other hand, how much the thinker suffers who does become a political power.

Mr. Balfour entitled his address "Reflections Suggested by the New Theory of Matter," and it has been sufficiently reported by the press to obviate the necessity for any lengthened description in the *Free-thinker*. It consisted of a brief review of our present knowledge of force and matter as contrasted with the knowledge of a century ago, with special reference to the "electric theory of matter," and concluding with some reflections in the well-known style of the *Foundations*. It is these "Reflections" with which I wish to specially deal. And one thing may be said at the outset. This is, that it is in all probability their philosophically commonplace character that has attracted so much attention from the religious press and from the religiously-minded writer on the secular press. One writer is of opinion that Mr. Balfour has shown that an adequate explanation of the universe must include theology. And another starts off on a two-column excursion with the remark, "In the highest quarters there is no encouragement in these days for the unbeliever and the Materialist," and winds up with saying that "Mr. Balfour held in reserve a decided belief in a *living* Creative cause"—as though it were just possible that he might have believed in a dead one. Such statements will no doubt give great comfort to the religious world, which will learn from its ministers and writers that Mr. Balfour has quite

demonstrated that mere men of science and philosophic unbelievers have no longer a leg to stand upon.

Not that Mr. Balfour anywhere distinctly says this. It is an inference that may be drawn from his speech, and which quite a number of writers have drawn. And they have been able to do so for three reasons. First, because of his treatment of "matter"; secondly, because of his criticism of experience; and thirdly, because of the alleged "inadequacy" of natural selection.

A hundred years ago, Mr. Balfour informs us, scientific men regarded the universe as being composed of "ponderable" matter the mass of which remained unchanged and indestructible throughout all its modifications. This "matter" possessed certain primary and secondary qualities, the former independent of, the latter dependent on, the observer. But the atom—the essential thing—was there, solid and indestructible. Electricity was known, but existed as little more than a scientific theory. A century later electricity is everything. It is, indeed, in the opinion of many, the reality of which matter is the sensible expression. Not alone does the electric theory promise to explain the "primary" and "secondary" qualities, but it also promises to constitute itself the very essence of the universe. As the *Times* puts it, "Matter is explained away."

Now, I must confess all this looks to one very much like the discovery of a mare's nest. To begin with, I do not know that any leading thinker in the nineteenth century has maintained that the primary qualities of matter were any more independent of ourselves than warmth or colour. Certainly the two principal writers of the experience school, Mill and Spencer, always took that view. And, in the next place, it is difficult to see how the electric theory of matter can at all disturb materialism, properly understood. Of course, if Mr. Balfour joins in the common trick of pinning the materialist of 1904 down to a statement of his case that obtained a couple of centuries ago, the game is an easy one to play. But if the essence of scientific materialism is grasped, namely, that natural forces are not in themselves vital, nor are they controlled by an external intelligence, then this is not affected in the slightest degree by the electric theory of matter. After all, all that we know of matter is something that offers resistance; and all that we know of electricity is that that also is something which offers resistance. Philosophically, whether we call the substance of the universe matter, force, or x does not affect materialism in the slightest; and scientifically, electricity is as much a physical force as anything else with which science deals.

Mr. Balfour also indulges in some curious juggling with the word "experience." We profess, he says, to found all our knowledge upon experience, and yet the world of sense-experience not only does not supply us with our present knowledge of the universe, but the one is in direct contradiction to the other. This, says Mr. Balfour, is surely something of a paradox. Well, if it is, it is one that is soon disposed of. The paradox only exists because Mr. Balfour has obviously tied down experience to the sense-impressions of the moment. Experience has, however, a much wider scope than this. But without going into this point at any length, it will be enough to point out that *all* of the experiments upon which the electric theory of matter is based *do* appeal directly to sense-impressions. All that happens in addition is the co-ordinating of these impressions. But as Mr. Balfour would not, I presume, allow that the experience philosophy cannot account for the existence of reason, this may be left for the present.

In this connection a word may be said as to Mr. Balfour's complaint that men of science have been concerned with "laws of Nature" and have neglected them for the "inner character of physical reality." If by this expression is meant what it should mean on the face of it, an adequate reply is the theories which Mr. Balfour passed in review during the

course of his speech. If, however, he means that science has neglected to frame or to propound a theory of some metaphysical "reality," some "absolute" of which the universe is the symbol, the reply is that it is not the business of science to do anything of the kind. Nor is it the business of science to furnish on demand "a self-sufficing system of beliefs," any more than it is to be expected to answer every conundrum that an ingenious metaphysician may care to propound. It is the business of science to get steadily along with its work of research, experiment, and verification, speaking out where knowledge is available, and where it is not preferring the silence of conscious limitations to the speech of unconscious ignorance.

Mr. Balfour's final sop to the obscurantist is in the shape of a criticism of natural selection. Natural selection, he points out, only works through utility—a statement that may be admitted as true so long as one is careful as to the meaning of utility. "The blind forces of natural selection, which so admirably simulate design when they are providing for a present need, possess no power of prevision, and could never, except by accident, have endowed mankind, while in the making, with a physiological or mental outfit adapted to the higher physical investigations. So far as natural science can tell us, every quality of sense or intellect which does not help us to fight, to eat, and to bring up children is but a by-product of the qualities which do. Our organs of sense-perception were not given us for purposes of research; nor was it to aid us in meting out the heavens or dividing the atom that our powers of calculation and analysis were evolved from the rudimentary instincts of the animals."

And the conclusion, partly stated, partly hinted, is that science alone can never adequately explain man.

The astonishing thing, however, about such a passage is that so nimble a thinker as Mr. Balfour did not see how open it is to criticism and guard against it. In the first place, while it is true that natural selection works through utility, it is also true that natural selection will only weed out qualities that are either quite unused or positively dangerous. Short of this there is nothing against an organ or a quality flourishing that serves, apparently, no utilitarian end. And, in the next place, the whole passage is vitiated by the assumption that all except the mere animal propensities, and these in their lowest forms, are luxuries, extravagances, and could be dispensed with. Surely it might strike Mr. Balfour, on reflection, that the primary appetites of man, during the course of evolution, take on secondary and tertiary qualities which disguise even while they subserve the primary ones. It is a long step from the human animal laboriously counting ten to the calculations of a mathematician. Yet one is a development of the other. It is a long step also from the first warlike implements to a modern machine gun; but one is a sequel to the other. And is it not also plain that during this development the strengthening and perfecting of faculties for one purpose is naturally applied in other directions? And from a still wider point of view, the powers of investigation and analysis are as much means consciously taken to understand and secure the conditions of adaptation to environment as any of the lower qualities which man possesses. After all, research and analysis are not confined to the world of science or to philosophers. It can be seen in all stages of human evolution, and, if I am not greatly mistaken, in some portions of the animal world also. It may not be the analysis of a chemical laboratory or the investigation of a Newton, but it is analysis and it is investigation, and without the one we should certainly not have had the other.

Mr. Balfour has, in short, performed the old theological trick of taking the beginning and the end, omitting all that intervenes, and then asking how on earth can we expect one to come from the other? It is a performance diverting enough to some, but

very insipid to those who have seen it before. With General Booth undergoing a series of official receptions throughout the country, and half-hearted religious apologies of the above description on the platform of the British Association, one begins to think that Christian Evidences threaten to become quite fashionable. Mr. Balfour has done his share, and is reaping his reward. The anonymous philosophers of the halfpenny daily and the profound thinkers of the *Christian Commonwealth* hail him as a brother student, a kindred spirit, and one moving on the same level of thought as themselves.

C. COHEN.

Nature.

NOT long before he died, Professor Huxley defined Nature as "the totality of that which is." It is a term that embraces "the world of psychical phenomena" no less than "the world of physical phenomena." Nature is immeasurable. Her boundary lines have never been discovered because they do not exist. Time and space laugh our little tapes to scorn, and revel in their own immensity. There never was a moment when Nature did not exist. She is both infinite and eternal. A beginning is unthinkable as well as impossible; and so is an end. Nature has worn numerous faces, and aspects, and whole bodies; but she herself, in her true essence, persists through all modifications and transmutations, and is as young and fresh as ever to-day.

In this article I wish to consider only a tiny section of Nature, namely the earth, of which we are the offspring. How long this little planet has been in existence no one can tell; but in the light of geology we know there was life upon it fully fifty million years ago. At what particular stage in the cooling process life made its appearance we cannot even surmise; but scientists incline to the opinion that its genesis was perfectly spontaneous, and not the result of any act of interference. Life is not a thing of yesterday, as theologians were accustomed to assure us. Instead of being 6,000, it is at least 50,000,000 years old. The chronology of Genesis and the Church has been entirely discredited, and all serious thinkers have discarded it. During the whole of that long period, so minutely described by geology, life has persisted; but thousands of species of animals and plants have utterly perished. There are fossil remains of plants and animals that have been extinct for thousands of years.

It is our privilege to feel at home with Nature, to sing songs of praise to her, to appreciate her own harmonies, in short, to make her our daily companion. But we must not be too prodigal of compliments. Nature is far from perfection. Many and grievous are her short-comings. Her wastes and cruelties are stupendous. Of tenderness and compassion she has absolutely none. As Emerson says, "She arms and equips an animal to find its place and living in the earth, and at the same time she arms and equips another animal to destroy it." She seems to take keen delight in scenes of blood and slaughter. She makes a million promises to enjoy the fun of breaking them. Not one in a thousand of her children comes to maturity. The bulk of them die or are slain in their infancy. Her tremors, her fiery eruptions, her rivers and her oceans, her plagues, pestilences, and accidents, her droughts and her floods, are all weapons of wanton destruction. Yet there are those who have the audacity to proclaim that she was made and is directed and controlled in all her movements by an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving Heavenly Father. But, as Mr. Mallock observes, if Nature is directed and controlled, it must be, not by "a holy and all-wise God," but, rather, by "a scatter-brained, semi-powerful, semi-impotent monster," by "a criminal madman," who ought to be secured, bound in adamant chains, and tortured to death. "Habitually a bungler as he is," adds Mr. Mallock,

"and callous when not actively cruel, we are forced to regard him, when he seems to exhibit benevolence, as not benevolent, but merely weak and capricious, like a boy who fondles a kitten, and the next moment sets a dog at it." Such a being "would be a God too absurd, too monstrous, too mad to be credible." These specially strong and violent terms are all the more significant when we remember that Mr. Mallock is a Theist and despises Atheism.

Yes, Nature has her faults, and is the cause of unspeakable sufferings and sorrows throughout the world. But we must forgive her, for she is our mother, and she is blind and knows not what she does. Had a God been responsible for the evolutionary processes, he would have been a sinner beyond the possibility of forgiveness. Nature's blunders and atrocities are all her very own, and she is not to blame for them because she works blindly, and in obedience to iron laws.

But Nature has her good and noble qualities which, in spite of all her drawbacks, endear her to our hearts. Just think of her *inexhaustible productivity*. Substance never varies in its quantity. We are familiar with the saying that not one grain of matter can ever be destroyed. The sum of matter in the Universe to-day is identical with what it was a hundred million years ago. But the law of substance is such as to enable it to assume innumerable different shapes, and forms, and combinations. All bodies, all plants and animals, are made out of the same stuff. There is precisely the same material in the highest, most complicated, and refined species as in the lowest and least complex. Very beautifully does Emerson express this thought in his fine essay on "Nature":—

"The whole code of her laws may be written on the thumbnail, or the signet of a ring. The whirling bubble on the surface of a brook admits us to the secret of the mechanics of the sky. Every shell on the beach is a key to it. A little water made to rotate in a cup explains the formation of the simpler shells; the addition of matter from year to year, arrives at last at the most complex forms; and yet so poor is Nature with all her craft, that, from the beginning to the end of the Universe, she has but one stuff,—but one stuff with its two ends, to serve up all her dreamlike variety. Compound it how she will, star, sand, fire, water, tree, man, it is still one stuff, and betrays the same properties."

Man possesses nothing that is not implicit in the lowest plant. Man stands on the summit of the evolutionary process; but the whole of him has ascended, by slow degrees, from the very bottom of the mountain. No new ingredient was ever added on the upward way. Intelligence, consciousness, thought—this is Nature's masterpiece; but it was all latent in the primordial germ. This is the great significance of the doctrine of evolution. This is how Emerson puts it: "Plants are the young of the world, vessels of health and vigor; but they grope ever upward towards consciousness; the trees are imperfect men, and seem to bemoan their imprisonment, rooted in the ground. The animal is the novice and probationer of a more advanced order."

Evolution is complete in itself. The moment a new ingredient would be added from without, the process would be interrupted and broken, and there would have to be a fresh start. Science knows nothing of such interruptions, and breaks, and additions, and new departures. Idealists maintain that the stuff or matter of which all things consist does not really exist, but is merely the unsubstantial creation of thought; and Mr. Balfour, in his Presidential Address to the British Association at Cambridge, in his haste inferred that the electrical theory of matter affords a new and striking argument in favor of Idealism. But it is to be borne in mind that, according to the scientists who have made it their special study, electricity is undoubtedly a form of matter, and quite as objectively real as it can be.

It is most essential to keep this objective reality of Nature ever in view. I have no sympathy whatever with Emerson's conviction that "Nature is the incarnation of a thought, and turns to a thought

again, as ice becomes water and gas," or that "the world is mind precipitated," and that "the volatile essence is for ever escaping again into the state of free thought." It would be more accurate to pronounce thought visionary, to regard mind as a form, or condition, or aspect of matter, and to represent spirit as Nature's breath of life. Nature exists as a physical reality, and thinking, feeling, or imaging is only one of her functions. Indeed, the only abiding thing is substance, matter with its forces, all else being phenomenal and ephemeral. Matter is not necessarily visible and tangible. All agree that the interstellar ether is material; but no one has ever seen it. Our solar system shall have its day and dissolve into invisibility; but the stuff of which it is composed is indestructible, and some other system or systems will follow this. Who doubts the reality of man? And yet we know absolutely, from geological and astronomical indications, that he too is doomed and must vanish; but the matter that constitutes him cannot pass away. Life depends upon physical conditions. There was a time when life was impossible on this planet, and such a time shall come again. All life is an accident, and it shall cease to be. Nature sets no great store by life, nor is she partial to any of its grades. Man is of no more value in her sight than a blade of grass, and she destroys the former with as little compunction as she does the latter. There is no heart of love at the core of things.

And this utter disregard of Nature for her highest and most perfect products, this utter indifference to their destiny which she shows, is, after all, the strongest and most convincing argument against the existence of a personal and all-loving Heavenly Father who, if he existed, would direct and guide all her activities.

But my present object is to emphasise the duty incumbent upon us to make the most and best of things as we find them. Pessimism is a crime, whether taught by Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hardy, or George Gissing. We are not living in the best possible world. We are subject to many humiliating disabilities and disadvantages; but if we are wise we will dwell, not on those, but on the numerous grand and glorious possibilities which we may convert into actualities, on the precious privileges and opportunities which Nature lays at our doors, for these may become ministers of self-discipline, peace, and joy to us. After all said and done, we must recognise Nature as our mother who prepares a sumptuous table before us in the presence of our enemies. Let us rejoice and be glad in our rich inheritance. Instead of meditating upon and brooding over Nature's ugly and repulsive qualities, let us turn her lovely and fascinating attributes to our best advantage. Every student is aware that Buddhism is another name for Atheism; but it is a false Atheism, as well as a false religion, inasmuch as it teaches that misery is man's appropriate lot while he lives. The Buddhist is supposed to be longing unspeakably for his last sleep in death; and even the Christian is instructed to *endure* the present wretched life upheld by the hope of the heavenly life of bliss. But Nature bids us to enjoy the life that now is, to be gay and merry while we can, and to make the discharge of every duty a source of an ever deepening pleasure. Our mother wears a bright and smiling face.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose,
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth.

Yea, "the birds sing a joyous song," and "the young lambs bound as to the tabor's sound"—

The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep,—
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea

Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday.
Thou child of joy
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd boy.

Such is the true keynote of life. Merely to be alive ought to be ineffable bliss, and is, to all who live wisely and well. Pain is only an undertone in Nature's melody. The discord of suffering only heightens the effect of the general harmony. Nature is our cheerful, joyous mother; let us learn to be her loyal, happy children, obeying her laws, and fulfilling the possibilities she has so liberally sown within us.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

Hindu Asceticism.

THE indefatigable labors of modern investigators have done much to dispel the once popular delusion that the doctrines, rites, and practices of Christianity constitute an absolutely unique manifestation in the history of religion. Exploration in Egypt, in Babylonia, and in India has revealed to us that many beliefs which used to be regarded as peculiarly characteristic of Christianity have very close parallels amongst what we call heathen nations. As for the external observances of Christian worship, it would be difficult to point out a single custom or ceremony that has not been borrowed, or copied, or adapted from some one or other of the religions of antiquity.

In the matter of asceticism and self-inflicted tortures, the Christian Church laid claim to special pre-eminence. It was considered an infallible indication of remarkable holiness, and a convincing proof of the divine nature of the faith that could induce men to undergo such terrible voluntary punishment. But the belief that the *Lives of the Saints* furnishes humanity with a record of austerity, and penance, and miracle-working that is entirely unrivalled is a belief that is now mainly confined to those whose reading does not extend beyond Christian hagiography. In any case, even if it could be shown that the sufferings endured by the Christian ascetics for the love of God and the salvation of their own souls have never been equalled, the *subjective* reality of their faith would be proved, *not its objective* reality. In other words, their lives do not demonstrate the truth of their religion, but only that they *believed* it to be true. The fact is, however, that the penances and mortifications of the Christian saints and martyrs are by no means unexampled in the history of mankind. They have been rivalled, if not surpassed, in severity by people who never heard of Christ, or who, at any rate, did not believe in him. It would almost seem that the one particular in which the Christian religion is differentiated from all others is its capacity for inflicting punishment on *other* people. And we need not envy it its monopoly of this distinction.

In his *Mystics, Ascetics, and Saints of India*, Professor Campbell Oman gives us a remarkable picture of the kind of life led by the *Sadhuis* and *Faquirs* of Hindustan, and the fearful tortures to which they submitted themselves in their efforts to conquer their rightful natural instincts. Indian thinkers and teachers evolved at a very remote date the theory of the dual composition of man's personality, and long centuries before Christ the Indian ascetic had essayed the task of subjecting matter to spirit. The methods he employed were very much akin to those adopted by Christian fanatics for a similar purpose at a later period. Alexander of Macedon, in his march across the plains of the Punjab in the fourth century B.C., fell in with the Indian *Sadhu*; but "*Sadhuism* in his day was already hoary with antiquity." And the strange, if somewhat revolting, practices of the Hindu ascetic have been continued to the present time.

It is satisfactory to note that Professor Oman, in dealing with his interesting subject, brings himself into line with the best modern thought in accounting

for the peculiar frame of mind that leads to the abnormal conduct of these Indian hermits and religious mendicants. It is the outcome of purely natural causes; although we believe many good Christians regard it all as the work of the devil. However, to quote Professor Oman's words, "It would appear that, under the combined influence of the physical, political, and social conditions (existing in India), aided powerfully by the intellectual and moral peculiarities of the people, a dull stagnation has been for ages the unenviable lot of the masses of the Indian people—a state very conducive to mental depression and gloomy religious speculations, leading naturally to abnegation and ascetic living."

Professor Oman has had an intimate and firsthand experience of the methods of the various Hindu sectaries from the days of his childhood, and he gives the reader a vivid conception of the appalling expedients they even yet resort to for the ostensible purpose of subjugating their bodies. Some of them sit and sleep on a bed of spikes, or have their wooden shoes bristling inside with pointed nails. Some of the *Sadhus* practise hanging head downwards, suspended from the bough of a tree or a suitable framework, for perhaps half an hour at a time. "Severer forms of voluntary torture are also known, as when a man ties his arm to a support such as a light bamboo, so as to keep it erect overhead, till at last the disused limb, reduced to a shrunken and rigid condition, refuses to be lowered again to its natural position. When both arms are so dealt with, the subject becomes a helpless cripple, entirely dependent for everything upon the kindness of others." And all this for the good of his soul!

Instances of a kindred nature might be multiplied indefinitely, and, as is the case with the Christian Saints, the further back we go the more wonderful do the legendary achievements of the *Sadhus* become. The actual performance of these men, however, at the present day is sufficiently amazing. Oman himself made the acquaintance of a young *Sadhu* who performed the pilgrimage from Juggernaut to Benares *on his stomach*; literally *covering*, in his progress, six hundred miles of ground! Long fasts, mutilations of the body, and perpetual vows of silence have always been common; and it is very suggestive to learn that from time immemorial, according to Hindu theory, "the performance of penances was like making deposits in the bank of heaven." This idea curiously resembles the Roman Catholic belief that the Church possesses a spiritual treasury in which the merits of Christ and his saints and martyrs have accumulated, and upon which drafts can be made for the benefit of the faithful.

In addition to presenting the rich fruits of his own varied experience, Professor Oman has collated the testimony of earlier students of the subject. The temptation to quote is almost irresistible, but let the following suffice as an example of much more that might be reproduced did space permit. The passage is taken from the *Oriental Memoirs* of James Forbes, and it affords eloquent proof of the extremity of misplaced zeal to which unrestrained religious enthusiasm inevitably leads.

"Some of these ascetics enter into a solemn vow to continue for life in one unvaried posture; others undertake to carry a cumbrous load or drag a heavy chain; some crawl on their hands and knees for years; others roll their bodies on the earth from the shores of the Indus to the banks of the Ganges, and in that posture collect money either to build a temple, to dig a well, or to atone for some particular sin. Some swing during their whole life, in this torrid clime, before a slow fire; others suspend themselves, with their heads downwards, over the fiercest flames."

Needless to say, many of those who thus submitted themselves voluntarily to the most excruciating torments were regarded with awe and reverence by their simpler neighbors, and were credited with divers supernatural powers. So much so that Bishop Heber recognised that the existence and popular reputation of the Hindu ascetics constituted a powerful hindrance to the conversion of the people to Christianity. In the eyes of the mild

Hindoo the humility, the self-abnegation, and the voluntary sufferings of the Christ were of no great account: their own *faquirs* and *Sadhus* could go one better on all these heads. And as for miracles! Pooh!—India is a land of wonder-working!

But undoubtedly, to the sober student of the development of religious beliefs, the most important sections of Professor Oman's book are those which suggest comparisons between the fundamental ideas of Hindu and Christian theology. For instance, without in any way forcing the analogy, he cites more than one Hindu myth (that we cannot enlarge upon here) the basic idea of which seems to be akin to that which lies at the root of the story of the Crucifixion.

Hindu customs analogous to those of the Church of Rome are numerous. Most of our readers will be conversant with the fact that, although the founder of the Dominican Order of monks is credited with having devised the *Rosary* of the Virgin, the use of prayer-beads travelled from the land of Buddha to Europe many years prior to the time of Dominic. A less familiar fact is that a sect of Hindu devotees—the *Udasis*—make use of sacred ashes, which, at certain periods, they apply to their foreheads. This suggests a point of resemblance to the Ash Wednesday custom of the Roman Church.

One turns with interested curiosity to Professor Oman's account of his visits to various Indian monasteries. As is well known, Buddhism inculcates what will be regarded by the average Western as a quite extravagant reverence for the principle of life, even in its meanest and most insignificant forms. This consideration for living things is carried to extreme lengths by the *Jain* monks of India. The *Jain* boasts an antiquity of at least 2,500 years as a brotherhood. These monks are most gentle creatures, and may be seen, year after year, wandering about the country, "without staff or scrip." They carry about with them "soft besoms of cotton threads to tenderly brush away minute insects that may happen to be in danger of destruction" at any spot where they desire to sit down and rest. The guiding principle of the lives of these monks is to avoid hurting any living thing. Yet they know nothing of Christ or Christian charity! Perhaps those defenders of Christianity who have of late been slobbering over Robert Blatchford and assuring him that he is not *really* an Atheist will also tell us that these humble and peaceful monks are really Christians at bottom, and in spite of themselves. The ratiocination of the Christian apologist is a fearful and wonderful process.

Without being enamored of the methods of the Indian mystics and ascetics, we are constrained to recognise that here are men who inflict upon themselves—never upon others—the most excruciating tortures and exhausting penances for the "faith that is in them." The sincerity of the vast majority of the *Sadhus* is undoubted, and they are as confident and steadfast in the performance of their peculiar rites as the most fanatical Christian zealot could be. Yet how often are we told that only Christ can inspire men to complete renunciation of the world and the absolute subjugation of the body!

In the course of a moderately-expressed plea for a less sweeping condemnation of Eastern practices by Western critics, Professor Oman justly observes that "happiness, virtue, dignity, *personal* freedom, and reasonable comfort are quite compatible with modes of life, political institutions, industrial systems, and religious creeds which are not those of England or the Western world."

Professor Oman can drop into a vein of gentle irony, and there is a sharp little sting concealed in the latter sentence of the following passage which is quoted from the conclusion of his work: "Naturally, everyone who believes that the chief end of man is to produce things of various kinds grieves over the deplorable waste of productive energy represented by the *Sadhu* population of India. But, after all, is it of no importance that the country has been able to produce for a hundred

generations whole armies of men able to practise, with a religious purpose, that contempt of the world and earthly riches which is, at least theoretically, one of the most important of the Christian virtues?" At any rate we should be inclined to say that the religious drones of Christendom ought to be the last to reproach their Hindu compeers.

G. SCOTT.

Acid Drops.

Now we *shan't* be long. The tables will soon be turned in the Far East. At every point of the compass the Japs have beaten the Russians, and, humanly speaking, the Mikado has got the Czar "in chancery." But we shall see an end of all that presently. A Russian newspaper, the one that used to be edited by the pious Katkoff, proposes that the Russian nation should go on praying for victory until they have "obliged Heaven to perform a miracle." The author of this happy proposal points out that national prayer has done the trick on former occasions. When Tamerlane was marching on Moscow, with the intention of destroying it, the Ikon of the Holy Virgin was brought from Vladimir, and when it reached Moscow the terrible Tamerlane skeddaddled. On a later occasion Russia was saved by a national three days' fast, which was imposed even on "infants at the breast"—who must have cried enough to bring about a heavenly intervention.

"Now the situation is serious. It would be an awful thing if the efforts of the defenders of Port Arthur proved futile, and if we were compelled to retake the fortress. Miscreants may laugh at us, but we will do our best. We must snatch that unfortunate fortress from the clutches of the Japanese, and if we are to succeed in our task nothing but hope in Almighty God can avail us. The Russian people must pray for the safety of Port Arthur as the woman of Canaan prayed for her daughter. Let the Heavens tremble with those cries of souls in distress which are not heard on earth, but which are heard in Heaven, and may God listen to our prayer! If the Holy Synod had ordained a three days' fast for the purpose of beseeching God to save the fortress, would not hundreds of thousands of pilgrims have performed such an act of supplication?"

We may see from this that Port Arthur is in a bad way, and will inevitably fall unless God intervenes. Evidently this is God's opportunity. And there are ways of prompting him besides national fasting and supplication. "We have the Holy Virgin," the St. Petersburg paper says, "who watches over our country, and who has never forsaken those who entreat her aid." There is also a new saint, Serafin, who is a great wonder-worker and a prime favorite with God. Holy Mary and Saint Serafin, between them, will stir up God to stretch out his Almighty arm, and it will be all U.P. with the Japs then.

The following choice paragraph is taken from "The Religious World" column of the *Daily News* :—

"In the course of a recent sermon at St. Martin's Church, Birmingham, Archdeacon Diggle related a remarkable coincidence which will cause him to have a vivid recollection of his recent visit to Palestine. It is recorded in the Second Book of Kings that the Shunammite's son, whilst with his father assisting the reapers, was stricken dead with a sunstroke. While he was in the Holy Land, Archdeacon Diggle endeavored to locate the exact spot where the occurrence took place. It was a terribly hot day, and just when the Birmingham's archdeacon had satisfied his curiosity, he himself was seized with a sunstroke. He was taken back to his hotel, and for three days and nights he had a grim fight with death during the delirium of fever. The reverend gentleman displayed considerable emotion while he was telling the story, and the coincidence has evidently made a deep impression on his mind."

Archdeacon Diggle's "emotion" is of the sentimental order. Some would call it hysterical. Fancy a man, not an escaped lunatic, travelling thousands of miles to locate a casual case of sunstroke that may or may not have happened thousands of years ago! We shall hear next of his trying to fix the spot where a sunstroke converted Paul. And if the investigator experiences another sunstroke on *that* spot, he may himself be converted, as Paul was, and turn a Jew or something before the end of the chapter.

Archdeacon Diggle's logic seems quite convincing to the *Daily News* writer. But what does it amount to? He had a sunstroke at a particular spot; therefore that was the spot where the other sunstroke happened. Of course this is perfectly childish. Yet if Archdeacon Diggle did not mean this, what *did* he mean? One is really tempted to say that Christianity conduces, at least nowadays, to softening of the brain.

After printing this puerile stuff about Archdeacon Diggle the *Daily News* repeats the old statement about General

Booth's deriving no sort of advantage from the Salvation Army. "The General," it says, "never receives a shilling from any of the Army's funds—a point strangely overlooked or ignored by the Army's critics." No doubt this is very interesting as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. A negative statement is not as good as positive information. General Booth started as a poor man, and he is not poor now. What is the explanation of the difference? General Booth does not live on the east wind, his clothes cost money, and his nice house costs money too. If the cost of his food, raiment, and shelter does not come out of the funds of the Salvation Army, the question arises, Out of what fund *do* they come? This is a point that needs clearing up.

But that is not all. Those who are interested in the matter from a Salvation Army point of view might ask themselves a pertinent question. Why should General Booth figure for a salary, or any kind of payment in the accounts of the Salvation Army, when all the Army's money belongs absolutely to him? Every bit of it stands in the name of William Booth. And the so-called Trust Deed is a monstrous sham. Professor Huxley took counsel's opinion about it, and was advised that the only person who could call William Booth to account under this precious Trust was William Booth. Now if this be true, and it is not seriously challenged, General Booth need not appear at all in the Salvation Army balance-sheet, any more than a flourishing tradesman, with a handsome villa residence, need appear personally in the balance-sheet of his own business.

When the "Darkest England" scheme was launched by General Booth the confiding public soon subscribed £100,000. A portion of this was contributed by mistaken "Agnostics" like Mr. Samuel Laing and the Marquis of Queensberry. These gentlemen subscribed £100 each. They were never known to subscribe as much for any "Agnostic" object. Well, the £100,000 was raised, and apparently another £100,000 has been raised since. And what has the General to show in the way of "social work" for all that money? Is the Hadleigh Farm Colony a success? And what guarantee is there that the major part of the money has not, after all, been spent upon religious propaganda? On the whole, it seems pretty certain that only a poor return can be shown for the subscribers' cash.

The very florid accounts we have been getting lately—from interested parties, of course—as to the progress and influence of Christianity in Japan are evidently too much even for some Christians. Bishop Audry, of South Tokio, writes in the *C.M.S. Japan Quarterly* deprecating the statement that it is Christianity that has made Japan progressive and victorious. The Japanese, he says, feel that they have become what they are in virtue of their own national spirit and qualities. And to say that they owe their development to Christianity is only calculated to embitter both Government and people against it. Of course, everyone who knows anything about Japan knows that Christianity has had no more to do with Japanese development than has the man in the moon. A handful of Freethinkers, in fact, has been the immediate personal influences at work. And the Bishop's complaint, being interpreted, is the advice to his fellow-Christians not to draw the long bow too rashly or the Japanese will show less inclination than ever to take on with Christianity, and that is already small enough.

Sir John Gorst, M.P., who is both a Churchman and a Conservative, tells the editor of the *School Manager* that "This dispute about religion is contemptible. It is of no account, compared with the important question of the physical well-being of the children in the schools. I think the health of the children is of far more importance than any instruction in the dogmas of particular religions." "It is silly," Sir John Gorst added, "to try to use the schools for proselytising. You cannot make a Roman Catholic man nor a Nonconformist man by teaching a baby." Yes, you can, though; and that is the weak part of Sir John Gorst's argument. The various Churches know very well that "teaching a baby" is not only effective but their "only way" to prosperity. This accounts for their anxiety about education. We agree with Sir John Gorst substantially, and are glad to see him regarding the quarrel of Churches over the children with contempt. What we wish is that he would now recognise the true inwardness of the quarrel over religious teaching in the public schools.

Sir John is also reported as saying that "It would be better to have a large population of healthy Nonconformists than a population of the most orthodox Church people, scrofulous and rickety, and with all manner of diseases resulting from neglected childhood." It is, of course, always better to have a population healthy than

diseased, and it hardly needed a philosopher to discover that much. But what on earth has the antithesis of Nonconformist and Churchman to do with it? We do not hold a brief for either, but we certainly see no reason for believing that the children of Church people are greater sufferers from rickets or scrofula than the children of Nonconformists. The Nonconformists are already claiming all the conscientious conviction in the country, and if they are to be allowed to monopolise all the health as well, the rest of the world will be in a bad way.

Sir John is on sounder ground when he says that "It is one of the most extraordinary signs of the times that people will agitate themselves to the extent they do about whether a child shall have Catechism or not, and yet show a total indifference whether the child goes to school hungry day after day, and thus, of course, totally unfit to receive religious, or any other, instruction." There is a good deal of what Americans call "horse sense" about this, and it gives rise to one or two reflections. The first is that so long as it is possible to have any form of Christianity taught at the public expense, just so long shall we have a class of people manipulating the educational machinery in the interests of certain religious opinions. The seed sown in the school is reaped in the church or chapel, and the clergy naturally fight for possession of the ground on which the harvest may be gathered. And the second is the comment upon the value of Christianity as a civilising power given by the picture of thousands of little children going to school day after day without adequate food. Think of it! A rule of centuries, the use of practically unlimited money, the exercise of practically unlimited power, energy enough to sow churches and chapels broadcast in the land, determination enough to burn and imprison in the interests of a creed, but neither will nor ability sufficient to so organise human society that each child shall have secured to it enough food to eat and enough clothing to wear! And, with such a fact staring them in the face, people allow themselves to be bluffed by talk of the value of Christianity, or blinded by the establishment of a few charitable homes, often enough run for the salaries—and pickings—accruing to the officials!

"Sand Services" is the *Daily News* phrase for the fearful and wonderful evangelistic efforts that may be seen and heard at seaside resorts. We heard an evangelist trying to play a cornet the other day, and there seemed to be a lot of "sand" in his mouth or in the instrument. It was a terrible performance, and if it had been done in the name of anything but religion the very dogs would have howled it off the beach.

The cheek of these "Sand Services" leaders is immense. They assume they have a right to make any row they please in the name of Christ. There is a text about making a joyful noise unto the Lord; and they certainly make a "noise," but only a pious man who felt that he was on a fire-escape from hell could call it "joyful."

Rev. Hugh B. Chapman, vicar of St. Luke's, Camberwell, once debated with Mr. Foote in the Camberwell Secular Hall. He did not shine as a humorist on that occasion. But he is a bit of a wag now. He announces that he has got hold of a "vegetable drug" which is perfectly harmless, yet cures the craving for alcohol. A dose has to be taken every hour during the day for three weeks. At the same time the patient must abstain from alcohol. This, the reverend gentleman says, is "naturally insisted upon." Well, if a toper will abstain from alcohol for three weeks, he will find the craving for it disappear, with or without Mr. Chapman's "vegetable drug."

The magistrates of Wimborne had before them as an applicant for a vaccination exemption order no less a person than the Duke of Hamilton. All the Duke said was that he objected to vaccination, and the order was granted. Now we do not for a moment believe that the Duke should not have been given the order, or that more ought to have been said. The mere fact of a person coming to court on such an errand shows that he has a conscientious conviction against vaccination, and this is all that the Act requires. Nevertheless we cannot help feeling, in view of the many cases reported in the papers, that had the applicant been an ordinary individual the order might not have been given so easily. But a real live Duke—well, flunkeyism has too strong a hold on human nature in this part of the world to subject such an individual to any sort of unpleasantness.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie, the reputed Agnostic, is striking out a fresh line of "philanthropy." He has promised £125 towards a new organ for the Jubilee Bible Christian Church, New Brompton, Kent. The pastor's name is Lark. Some will think that Mr. Carnegie's gift is a lark too.

Millionaires who give away money generally look out for a commensurate advertisement. That is why rich men give so little to "advanced" causes. All the more honor, therefore, to those who give to such causes out of pure love. These are the true men of principle—the real salt of the earth.

A little boy at Meopham, a village between Gravesend and Wrotham, Kent, went to the children's service at the parish church with his brother and sister. It was on Sunday afternoon, too. Yet on the way home "Providence" allowed him to be run down and killed by a motor-car. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

South Cliff Congregational Church at Kirkley, near Lowestoft, had a costly stained-glass window put in. When the firm that put it in wanted payment the Building Committee disowned responsibility. Maybe they felt with a certain Shakespearean character that "Base is the slave that pays." Judge Wills, however, in the Norwich County Court, ordered them to shell out. Their only resource now is prayer—and that is a poor aid to the afflicted nowadays.

"The economic importance of the family" was one of the subjects discussed at the recent annual meeting of the British Association. It was generally agreed that the disintegration of family life was working incalculable mischief in this country. One of the speakers found out what Herbert Spencer, the Freethinker, insisted on forty years ago, namely, that life is conducted primarily on a basis of feeling, and not on a basis of reason. It was urged that family affection was the root from which wider affections were developed, and that a nation must be weakened when family affection was impaired. This is true enough, but it was all said in a few pithy words by another Freethinker many years ago. Ingersoll once said that men would always defend their homes, but nobody ever shouldered a rifle in defence of a boarding-house.

Christian teachers, in day schools, Sunday schools, and churches and chapels, still inform their hearers that the Bible is the basis of morality, and that "heathen" nations all live, and always did live, in ethical darkness. But the truth, which is something very different, leaks out occasionally even in religious papers. Recently, for instance, the *Daily News*, in reviewing Messrs. Newbery and Garstang's *Short History of Ancient Egypt*, declared that in the Memphite period—long before Christ, and long before a word of the Bible was written—the monarchs ordered the judges to make not the slightest distinction between rich and poor. "There was," the reviewer says, "in the Egypt of that day, under this purely oligarchical constitution, a spirit of justice which it would be hard to match in democratic twentieth century England." But if this be true, what is the value of nearly two thousand years of Christianity? Why did Christ take the trouble to come at all if there is less justice in Christian England to-day than there was in "heathen" Egypt four or five thousand years ago?

Perhaps the best reply to the balderdash one hears concerning the power of Christianity in promoting feelings of brotherhood is the negro question in the United States. Slavery was unknown in North America until Christians introduced it. It flourished among Christians just so long as it continued profitable. And now that slavery is legally abolished, the hatred of white Christians to black Christians seems to grow stronger rather than weaker. The latest instance of this race hatred has arisen over the appointment of a negro to the post of clerk on one of the Southern railways. The rest of the staff threaten to resign, and the press solemnly declares the government must remove the negro or prepare for a tragedy. Thus does Christianity break the barriers between black and white.

Rev. W. J. Bowman, a Passive Resister, acted as spokesman for a number of his brother martyrs at the Rothbury (Northumberland) Petty Sessions. He declared that "under the preposterous Education Act he was compelled to stand by and see the education of the youth of the district made subservient to the teaching of a farrago of ancient rubbish, otherwise known as the Catechism." Good! But the reverend gentleman does not see that his plain speaking can easily be turned against himself. He calls the Church Catechism "a farrago of ancient rubbish," and objects to its introduction in public schools on that ground. But what about his own "farrago of ancient rubbish" commonly called the Bible? Why should that be introduced in the public schools, at the expense of citizens who have no doubt as to its rubbishy character? Mr. Bowman's objection is one that may be carried a great deal farther than he imagines. And if he had the sagacity to see it he would understand why we speak of the Comedy of Passive Resistance.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

September 11, Stratford Town Hall; 18 to 25, International Freethought Congress, Rome.
 October 2, Queen's Hall, London; 9, Queen's Hall; 23, Leicester; 30, Birmingham.
 November 6, Coventry; 27, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—September 4, morning, Ridley-road, Dalston; afternoon, Victoria Park; evening, Stratford Town Hall.

ALFRED DELVE.—You are quite right; the lines from Browning are—

"Oh, the little more, and how much it is!
 And the little less, and what worlds away!"

But we did not print the lines out in verse form; we quoted from memory, far from a copy of Browning, and gave the substance accurately enough—as many of our betters have done before us; while the *Chronicle's* substitution of "with" for "to" turned a passage of exquisite poetry into absolute nonsense. Thanks, however, for your trouble in the matter. You do us an honor by such a communication.

Lux.—We print a standing notice that we cannot insert letters from correspondents who do not give their names and addresses. This rule is absolute.

T. LEVISON.—You say that Mr. W. T. Stead is a greater friend of liberty than we are. We print your opinion for what it is worth.

W. B. BROWNIGG.—We cannot answer merely controversial questions in this column. For the rest, we quite understand that Freethinkers have to suffer "for conscience sake" what would paralyse most of the Passive Resisters.

T. H. ELSTOB.—Thanks for your interesting and encouraging letter; also for the two suggested corrections. Experience proves that it is utterly impossible for any one pair of eyes to be absolutely accurate throughout a whole book. We are pleased to hear that you have been re-reading *Bible Romances* in the new edition and find it is "very striking." You say it is "both readable and decisive" and "will be read through by at least nine out of every ten purchasers, which is more than can be said of all sixpenny reprints." We were much struck by the account of your meeting a young Scotch Presbyterian minister who had met Mr. Lloyd in South Africa and did not know of his conversion to Freethought. From what you were told it appears that Mr. Lloyd gave up a very good income to follow the dictates of his intellect and conscience. He has told us nothing of this himself, which shows that he is far from a boaster. With regard to Mr. Foote's old address to the Shelley Society, we have to say that it was not printed.

ROME CONGRESS FUND.—Received this week:—S. Leesom 10s., S. Fellows 5s., Martin Weatherburn 2s. 6d., J. T. L. 2s. 6d., S. Edmonds 5s., R. H. Side £1, J. D. Edin 10s., H. G. Church 2s. 6d., I. Good 6s., Geo. Newman 2s. 6d., W. H. Deakin £2, Dr. R. T. Nichols (second donation) £1, R. Stevenson 1s. 10d., Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pegg 10s., David Powell 5s., J. J. B. 2s.

H. G. CHURCH.—Pleased to hear from a recent convert to Freethought, and that the past twelvemonth has been one of the "happiest years" you have spent. Your subscription to the "Rome Congress Fund" is acknowledged in list. Pamphlets have been sent as requested.

G. M. DAVIS.—We are not surprised to hear that you were astonished at not finding the names of the N. S. S. delegates among the list of representatives of English Freethought printed and circulated by the self-styled "English Committee." You will find both matters dealt with in "Sugar Plums."

J. C. M.—Impossible to deal with it this week; must reserve it for next issue. Always glad to receive cuttings.

N. D. (Blackmore).—We dealt with the Baltimore struck-dead Atheist story in last week's "Acid Drops," which you had probably not seen when you sent us the cutting.

J. T. L.—This is the best we can make of your signature. See the list of acknowledgments. It is odd what trouble some give themselves to render their signatures illegible. Sometimes every word in the letter is perfectly clear, and yet the signature is a world-without-end mystery.

J. H. AYLOR.—We dealt with it last week.

S. EDMONDS.—A very generous subscription in the circumstances. We wish the subscribing were left to those who can really afford it—and that they would afford it.

V. MILLS.—Would not your questions have been better addressed to a Spiritualist paper? We do not understand that Spiritualists, as such, believe in the deity of Jesus Christ or accept all his teachings. Few of them, we imagine, hold the doctrine of everlasting damnation. Probably none of them do. Of course we prefer fighting the more prevalent superstition. Besides, a Spiritualist is sometimes the raw material of a Secularist; half way through the process of conversion.

W. H. HARRIS.—We had already made it the subject of our leading article. Thanks all the same.

W. SANDELS.—Evidently the matter is looked at from two different points of view. The chief ambiguity, of course, is

in the meaning of the word "freedom." That word is used in many different senses. It is due to a writer to take the meaning indicated by the context.

MARTIN WEATHERBURN.—Always delighted to hear from a sterling veteran like yourself. Your change of address is noted. We hope the other change you mention will afford you comfort in advancing age. Thanks for your good wishes, which we feel we always possess.

S. MCGOWAN.—Your request shall be attended to when we return to London. We have read your letter with much interest and sympathy. There ought to be an active Freethought society in Belfast. Certainly there is room for it. The society that once existed there seems to have suffered from "the blight of respectability."

SAINT AUSTRAL.—Thanks for cuttings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PERSONS remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

East London Freethinkers are reminded that the first of the two special lectures at the Stratford Town Hall takes place this evening (September 4), when Mr. Cohen deals with the question "What is Man's Chance of a Future Life?" On the following Sunday evening Mr. Foote will answer the question "What do We Know of God?" We may repeat that the admission to all parts of the Hall is free. There will be a collection in behalf of the expenses. Questions and discussion will be allowed after each lecture.

The Queen's (Minor) Hall has also been engaged by the Secular Society, Limited, for all the Sunday evenings in October. The lecturers will be Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd. With the exception of some reserved seats at one shilling, all seats will be absolutely free—with the usual voluntary collection. Friends who can circulate neatly printed announcements of these lectures are asked to write to Miss Vance for same.

Freethinkers are earnestly requested to circulate copies of the new sixpenny edition of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* now issued by the Secular Society, Limited. The press boycott of this work, like the boycott of the *Freethinker*, is fairly absolute; and nothing but sheer expensive advertising will avail to bring it before the general public, who would probably buy it by the thousand if they only knew of its existence. In these circumstances the "saints" could do a great deal to counteract bigotry and jealousy. They might circulate copies of *Bible Romances* gratuitously themselves, and each copy thus circulated would be an advertisement of the book, which would certainly lead to a demand for other copies. Orders for any number of copies, not less than half-a-dozen, can be placed at our publishing office, at the rate of fivepence per copy, carriage to be paid by the consignee on delivery; or at the rate of sixpence per copy, to be delivered carriage paid. The price of the book is *sixpence net*; that is to say, it is not subject to the common discount of threepence in the shilling.

The Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society sends us a copy of its annual report and balance-sheet. The balance-sheet, which includes a grant of £20 from the Secular Society, Limited, shows that a great deal of good work has been done with a moderate income, and there is a reasonable sum in hand. We regret to read in the report that the Branch is "still without a suitable Hall for its lectures," and that "efforts during the past year to obtain the use of the Council's Schools have been unsuccessful." This means that the Branch has still to struggle against a mean, oppressive bigotry.

Owing to Mr. Foote's absence there is nothing special in this week's *Freethinker* about the Rome Congress. Mr. Foote will write about it again for our next issue. Meanwhile we may say that M. Furnémont's letter duly followed the telegram referred to last week, and that a remittance was made to him for the Paris-to-Rome tickets for the four N. S. S. delegates (Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Lloyd, and Roger), of course out of the Rome Congress Fund; and also for all the other "saints" who had definitely made up their minds to go, and had remitted the price of their tickets to Miss Vance. We presume she has secured further tickets for any "saints" who remitted to her immediately after reading our last week's special on the subject.

The Rome Congress Fund, by the way, has not yet reached the £100 asked for and really necessary. We beg all Freethinkers who mean to assist this effort to secure a good representation of fighting English Freethought at the Congress to forward their subscriptions without further delay. There should be a good additional list for acknowledgment in next week's *Freethinker*.

We have received a circular of an International Congress of Advanced Thinkers which is to be held at St. Louis, the city of the great Exhibition, on October 15-18. Unfortunately, as far as British Freethinkers are concerned, it will conflict with the International Congress at Rome, which is a more important gathering. We note that a comprehensive list of subjects is to be discussed at the St. Louis Congress. Amongst them are the following:—The Gospel of Evolution in the place of Christianity, the Future of the Religions, the Present Status of Darwinism, Christian Science and Theosophy, the Non-Religious Education of the Young, Sociology, the Law of Evolution in Social Life, the International Organisation of the Adherents of Progressive Thought, the Legal and Social Position of Woman, Ideal Law and Positive Law, the Position of the Republic with regard to the Church, the Separation of Church and State, and the Taxation of Church Property. A formidable program!

The Bethnal Green Branch brought its evening meetings to a very successful close on Sunday last, with Mr. Cohen as the speaker. There was a very large audience, in spite of numerous counter attractions, and the lecture was listened to with great interest throughout. Mr. Cohen delivers his last lecture in Victoria Park this afternoon (Sept. 4), at 3.15, when he will no doubt have as large an attendance as usual.

Mr. Morrison Davidson had a very curious article in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, for August 21, in which, while praising the work of the "Higher Critics" in demolishing certain Christian beliefs, he referred in disparaging terms to the work of men like Ingersoll and Bradlaugh. In the succeeding issue, August 28, a letter appears from Mr. Andrew Liddle, of Brixton, who rightly points out that the work of the "Higher Critics" was being done by militant Freethinkers long before it became fashionable for leading clergymen to expose the nature of biblical pretensions. Mr. Liddle also refers to the sixpenny reprint of *Bible Romances* as a production that would go far to correct Mr. Davidson's view of the work of Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, and their associates. It should be unnecessary for Mr. Davidson to need such a correction, but the convenient manner in which some journalists forget or overlook the work of the real Freethought fighters is more than surprising—it is almost miraculous.

In the same issue of *Reynolds' Miss Vance* also has a letter, as N. S. S. Secretary, pointing out that the paragraph in its previous issue dealing with the Rome Congress, quite omitted that the N. S. S., which is the only organised National Freethought body in Britain had arranged for separate representation, and would be accompanied by both individual members and delegates from provincial branches.

We are pleased to see, in the *Shields Gazette*, a letter from Dr. J. G. Stuart—a rather lengthy one—on the question of the "Passive Resistance" movement and Secular education. Dr. Stuart points out that the precedent created by the Nonconformists would justify anyone in refusing to comply with any piece of legislation they did not agree with. In a constitutional government one ought to "play the game," and while it may be possible to justify the deliberate refusal to obey a law on grounds of policy, to drag in "conscience" in the manner done by Nonconformists is ridiculous. Dr. Stuart also does well in stressing the fact that it was the Nonconformist recreancy in 1870 that is responsible for the difficulties of the present situation.

Language.

SUPERNATURALISM in Christian countries can never be abolished till belief in the Bible as the Word of God is destroyed. For that purpose there is no better propaganda book than the Bible itself. Of this I can speak from personal experience, for reading the Bible shattered my faith in its inspiration. If people could be induced to read the Bible thoroughly and intelligently, without colored spectacles before their eyes, they would never go through the book of Genesis without becoming sceptics, and probably pronounced Freethinkers.

As an example, take the account in Genesis of the origin of different languages in the world. The narrative is so rich and effective that no apology is needed for reproducing it complete. Here it is, from the eleventh chapter of Genesis:—

"And the whole earth was of one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there. And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone and slime had they for mortar. And they said, Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth; and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth" (Genesis xi., 1-9).

The narrative is so rich, so full of humor, and so suggestive that no remarks upon it can improve its effectiveness. Still, a few thoughts suggested by it may be permitted. There is nothing to be said against the writer of the story. It is very interesting as an attempt to explain the cause of so many different languages in the world. Someone, or maybe many, had observed the difficulty and inconvenience of variety of speech. They thought that all men had sprung from one original Adam, and that all the languages had been derived from one original. They wrote according to the knowledge they had. They had no idea that man had evolved from protoplasm. The idea they had was that God created man a perfect creature, and that any imperfection he had was the result of his own wilful sin. The same idea prevailed as to language. They had no conception that man for countless ages had no speech, any more than animals. Had anyone told them that every language was a growth they would have looked upon him as insane, or something worse.

The story of Babel reveals a very primitive idea of God as well as of language. God knew no more about language than the people did, for he said, "Behold the people is one, and they have one language." His knowledge was imperfect, for he had to come down to see the city and the tower in order to know all about them. He was ignorant enough to suppose, because they could build a city and tower, there was nothing they could not do. He was a local magnate, for he came down from somewhere to see and know. He was jealous of his power, and did not want the people to be great and powerful. In fact, the God revealed in the legend is only a big counterpart of the people themselves. All gods are only magnified men, made by man, and having the same character.

The legend also reveals the idea that the author or authors of the story, and the writer of it, looked upon the multiplicity of languages as a punishment on the people for some supposed sin. As soon as people began to move from one country to another the difficulty and inconvenience of strange tongues

would be felt. Naturally they would think it would have been much better for all people to have one speech, as they thought all had when they were created. The confounding of the language was a punishment on the people for being too ambitious, and for having found out a way to heaven by means of a tower. The tale is silly and laughable, like many others in the Holy Bible; at least, it seems so to intelligent and educated persons at the present time. But whilst the legend was growing, and at the time when it was written, it was not only believable, but the height of knowledge and learning. And we need not wonder at this; for even now, to a child and the ignorant, there is nothing ridiculous or unbelievable in the fable. It is the simplicity of the child and the ignorance of the masses that enables the priest to propagate his pernicious errors so successfully. Were all persons soundly educated and trained to use their reason, the priestly craft would soon be gone.

But the chief idea of the story, that a multiplicity of languages is an inconvenience, a hindrance to communication, fellowship, and progress, and as such a kind of punishment, is true. It was true then, and it is true to-day, and it will remain true until

AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

is adopted and learned. The need of such a language has been a strong conviction in my mind for a great number of years. The need is becoming greater year by year, especially to all progressive movements, such as Freethought and Socialism. I think that all Freethinkers and Socialists ought to take the matter in hand. The coming Freethought Congress in Rome might do well to devote some attention to the subject.

A language that all nations could understand and speak would be such a blessing to the world, and such a lever of progress, that the masses ought, in their own interest, to strenuously endeavor to obtain it. To the wealthy class the idea will not appeal powerfully. It is possible they may look upon different speeches as a means to keep the toilers in subjection. The inconvenience to themselves they can, and do, overcome, as they have means and leisure to learn the most important languages. But to the toilers of all nations a language common to all is indispensable in the interest of internationalism.

How to get an international language is the problem to be solved. The idea of some is to make a new language. Several such have been invented, and one of them is being pushed on our attention at the present time. As there are too many tongues already in existence, it seems to me an absurd thing to add to their number. And I feel convinced that no new language will ever become an international one.

The simplest way to have a common language to all nations will be to adopt one of the living languages, say English, German, French, or Italian, or any other national tongue. I cannot see why English could not be adopted, seeing that it is already so widely spoken and understood. It is the language of America and Australia, as well as other countries. But it would not matter much what language were adopted if all nations would agree to learn it. There is no great difficulty in mastering two or more languages. Let the nations decide on a language to be an international tongue, and introduce it as a compulsory subject of study to every school, and in a generation or two the object would be accomplished.

In this method there would be no direct attack on any other language. Modern and ancient conquering nations made a great mistake by attempting to crush the language of the conquered to make room for their own. They seldom succeeded. Romans and Saxons tried hard to suppress the British tongue, but failed; the language is as alive and vigorous to-day as ever it was. There seems to be an innate love of language in the human race, and the more you attack it the firmer will the

native cling to it. But adopting one language to be an international one would be no direct attack on any other. Every nation could continue to cultivate their own tongue and literature just the same as now.

The only serious barrier in the way that I can see is the national jealousy and rivalry. But adopting one of the languages to be an international one need not check the growth and expansion of the others. Learning Greek or Latin does not prevent the study of English, and adopting English as the universal tongue would not interfere with the study of German, French, or Italian in their respective countries.

The advantages of having a universal international language are so numerous and so great that an attempt to realise it is sure to be made. What a saving of time it would be in international congresses. Listening to speeches you cannot understand, and the tedium of interpreting them, would cease; and English and French, Germans and Italians, Japanese and Russians, and all others could freely converse in the international speech without the interpreter so necessary at the present time.

I fear the nations are not ripe enough for the movement at present. They never will be ripe without taking means to convert them. The most advanced reformers are the Radicals, Freethinkers, and Socialists. Are they advanced enough and disinterested enough to agree to make some one language an international one? If this could be done, it would be a step in advance, and would help to bring others to adopt and support their views. A beginning must be made, and if Socialists and Freethinkers, and all others who agree with them on this matter, will make the initiatory move, they will do something real to bring about a time when all nations will be one people, and in effect of one speech.

R. J. DERFEL.

"What Think Ye of This?"

THIS question is put to us by a correspondent who sends us the following extract from the *New York Sun* of July 3. We may mention that the letter was deemed by the editor to be of sufficient importance to be accorded the place of honor as the first article on the editorial page—an honor which we think reflects little credit upon the discrimination of the editor:—

"THE ORIGIN OF EVIL.

Editor *N.Y. Sun*.

Sir,—The *General Slocum* disaster, falling like the Tower of Siloam on a number of innocent victims, has turned the thoughts of many of your correspondents to the origin of evil. The origin of evil is a part of the mystery of the universe, as to which all that can be said is that it is a mystery still. *Materialism offers no solution*. A material origin of being not only is not proven, but is *unthinkable*; we have no apparent reason for assuming that the evidence of our physical senses, however aided by science, is a complete account of the universe, or more trustworthy than the instincts of our moral nature, which speak of something beyond.

"We are apt to think of evil as a separate existence, embodied in Satan or Eblis, and disputing the world with good, embodied in the Deity. But all things, good or evil, are alike parts of the constitution of the universe. The same thing may be good in one aspect or in one relation, evil in another. The evil is in a certain sense the condition of the good. Human virtue is the fruit of effort, which implies an opposing force, in itself an impediment to good, and so for evil. If we try to think of virtue without effort, the result is seraphic insipidity, from which Milton's angels are redeemed only by the antagonism of Satan.

"The *General Slocum* disaster reminds us, by the way, that the law of nature—that is, physical sequence—will hardly serve in place of dethroned Deity. It lacks the indispensable complement of a judiciary. The hundreds who perished had broken no law, whatever the man whose action caused the fire may have done. Invariable sequence there may be, and we may be vitally concerned in observing it. But there can hardly

be law, in the proper sense, without a law-giver or without judicial discrimination. What breach of her law did Nature visit by the earthquake of Lisbon or the eruption of Mont Pelée?

"GOLDWIN SMITH."

Well, what we honestly think of Mr. Smith's letter is this: that it shows how slight an effect can be made by all our modern scientific research upon the mind of a man who has once been buried head and shoulders in the class and school prejudices which enter so largely into the university educational systems of both the New and the Old World.

It has been the privilege of many of our brightest intellects to have escaped the stereotyping or mind-tanning process which forms the chief feature of our highest scholastic institutions. It seems certain that, had Spencer, Huxley, Buckle, Ingersoll, and many others of the intellectual stars of the nineteenth century been trained in university scholasticism, the world would have lost much of the most useful and suggestive work of our own time.

This by no means implies that we oppose or wish to depreciate the highest form of education attainable. Our idea is, not that education and culture are either useless or injurious, but that, as imparted to the students at the highest seats of learning, they are far too conservative and stereotyped to be of practical utility to the world. Instead of turning out original thinkers and inquirers, our universities give us pedants and parrots.

Goldwin Smith's letter shows how a man of wide learning and culture, who has perforce to recognise some of the main conclusions of science, may have his mental outlook clouded and befogged by his school sophistry.

In our view, Mr. Smith's letter is a complete Atheistic avowal, tempered by some metaphysical word-twisting that places him on a level with the common pulpiteer. He admits that natural law is supreme, that it totally lacks the judicial character essential to any conception of a Deity, and that the so-called evil and good are necessary concomitants of existence. Yet this is set off by the worn-out sophism that a "law" necessitates a law-giver, and by the foolish idea that "Materialism" is a false philosophy because it does not give a complete explanation of the universe!

Of course, a material *origin* of "being" is not proven—is unthinkable. Only a believer in Bible infallibility, Papal infallibility, or Koran infallibility—or a university student—could imagine that the origin of *being* could ever be comprehended, much less proved. The human mind naturally asks—What could have existed before the beginning? and the Rationalist concludes that, so far as the human mind is concerned, no other hypothesis can stand except that which supposes that the substance of the universe is eternal, and that *being*—whether material or spiritual—always existed and could have had no beginning.

Who but a lunatic or a Christian advocate imagines that the evidence of our senses could give us "a complete account of the universe"? And why should "the instincts of our moral nature" be more trusty guides than those of our physical nature? Whose "instincts" shall we follow—those of Oscar Wilde or the Seeley banqueters, Bill Sykes or Fagin? Will Mr. Smith give us any good reason for believing that our moral instincts are not the outcome of and dependent upon our physical powers and instincts?

If our moral nature speaks of "something beyond," will Mr. Smith tell us what that "something beyond" is which his own moral nature speaks of? For our part, we dispute utterly the idea that man's moral nature speaks of any such thing; and we defy Goldwin Smith or anyone else to give a sketch, however indistinct, of any such "something beyond" that would not make a cat laugh for its ridiculous absurdity.

Mr. Smith's arguments are based upon the metaphysical idea that mind, existence, good and evil are substantial realities; and even when, to a certain

degree, Mr. Smith recognises the falsity of this conception, he fails to apply his conclusion. Human virtue, he says, being the fruit of effort, implies an opposing force, tending towards evil. Now, "evil" being distinctively a human conception, the idea that there is a force opposing virtue and making for evil necessarily involves the idea that that force is directed by a consciousness—a real devil. We simply get back to the savage's notion that every observed motion, whether of organic or of inorganic nature, has a little man or a spirit at the back of it.

Mr. Smith sees clearly enough the absurdity of imagining that the Iroquois fire and the *Slocum* horror were punishments for offences committed by who suffered; but this rational conclusion he at once offsets by the childish assumption that natural law, like human codes, must have had a "law-giver." He thinks that natural law "will hardly serve in place of dethroned Deity," because it "lacks the indispensable complement of a judiciary;" and yet he immediately admits that "we may be vitally concerned in observing it!"

If our interpretation of this last passage is in any way correct, it means that morality essentially depends upon a knowledge of natural laws and an observance of their lessons.

Looking at Mr. Smith's admission that natural law is simply an observed invariable sequence, and that it displays no judicial discrimination, it is clear that he affirms—as far as he allows himself to affirm anything—that there is no law-giver; and, as a corollary, it is equally clear that he affirms that the law of nature does actually occupy the place of a dethroned Deity. He may repudiate such a conclusion, but there is no other logical meaning to his sentences; though, as always, his language is sufficiently indistinct and non-committal to admit of almost any amount of jesuitical explanation.

"Materialism," he says, "offers no solution." Will he tell us if any system of which he knows offers a solution? And if a solution is inconceivable, why not honestly admit the fact, instead of trying to discredit all the non-orthodox systems by crying out, like a Salvation Army shouter, "Science has not explained everything!" The cry, indeed, for an explanation of the unexplainable, the mysterious, and the inscrutable is the very foundation of most of the religious and theological nightmares that have hitherto troubled mankind. In any case, Materialism offers the only solution of the so-called mystery of evil that in any way appeals to rational men, positing it as part of the evolutionary process. This view is endorsed by Mr. Smith when he subsequently admits that "The same thing may be good in one aspect or in one relation, evil in another."

In thus alternately supporting supernaturalism and rationalism, Goldwin Smith exhibits a very similar result to that presented by the mass of men, age and inbred prejudices in his case having produced the vacillation and irrationality that commonly result from ignorance.—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

TRUE FREEDOM.

Is true Freedom but to break
Fetters for our own dear sake,
And with leathern hearts forget
That we owe mankind a debt?
No! true Freedom is to share
All the chains our brothers wear,
And with heart and hand to be
Earnest to make others free!

They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.

—James Russell Lowell.

Why Men Don't Go to Church.

THEY are asking why the men
 Fail to go to church at present :
 Have they not observed that golf
 Is a harmless game and pleasant ?

There are many pleasures which
 Lead to joy or lure to folly ;
 There's the auto for the rich,
 For the poor man there's the trolley.

Men who blithely whiz along
 Do not hear the preacher saying
 It is sinful to have debts
 That one never thinks of paying.

Freed from ancient faith and fear,
 Men may drive on crowded courses
 And not have to sit and hear
 Sermons aimed against divorces.

Wearied ones may calmly smoke
 While they read the stock quotations,
 Happily forgetful of
 All the Christian obligations.

Let the preachers turn aside
 From the old ways and be funny ;
 All the ancient creeds have died,
 There's a new one, " Sport and money."

Let the preachers cease to preach
 That mere riches are not splendid ;
 Virtue may have dazzled once,
 But the charm it had is ended.

Few men like to have to hear
 That they're on the way to Tophet ;
 Heaven has ceased to be as dear
 As are present joys and profit.

Man will turn to anything
 Though it have no worth nor beauty,
 Though it lead him down to death,
 If it's sport instead of duty.

Let the preachers wink at sin
 As they're winking at the devil ;
 Make the church a place wheroin
 People may unhindered revel.

'Tis the age of wealth and sport ;
 Who would waste his Sunday praying ?
 Six days let us scheme for gain
 And put in the seventh playing.

Fools they are who wonder why
 Man has left the church forsaken ;
 Let the revels there be high,
 And the pews will soon be taken.

—S. F. Kiser, in " Chicago Record-Herald."

Correspondence.

THE R.S.P.C.A. AND CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

TO THE EDITOR OF " THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—The annual meeting of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was held in London a few days ago, at which Lord Aberdare presided. In moving the adoption of the report, the chairman stated that " the object of the Society is to prevent cruelty under any circumstances," and subsequently told the meeting how, " in order to raise the necessary funds for the establishment of a branch of the Society in a large city in Spain, the promoters organised a bull fight on the most elaborate scale."

If the avowed object of the R.S.P.C.A. is to " prevent cruelty under any circumstances," why are its members permitted to flout its object, and act contrary to its principles in the manner admitted by the Chairman? The Humanitarian League have repeatedly pointed out to the Secretary of the R.S.P.C.A. the inconsistency of the position of Dr. Warre, who, as headmaster of Eton, has admitted his responsibility for the cruelty of beagling as pursued at Eton College, and is also a member of the local committee of the Windsor and Eton branch of the R.S.P.C.A. Mr. Colam has admitted that the Eton beagling " is contrary to the principles of the parent Society "; but has he taken the only consistent course of requesting Dr. Warre to stop the practice, and in the event of Dr. Warre refusing to do

so, demanded his withdrawal from the Windsor local committee ?

If such anomalies as the position of Dr. Warre at Eton and the conduct of the branch society in Spain represent the Society's procedure in the campaign against cruelty, how can it be said that it is doing its utmost to prevent cruelty under any circumstances ?

ROBERT HENDERSON.

Prison Fancies.

BY ERNEST CHARLES JONES—CHARTIST AND FREETHINKER.

(Composed when confined in a solitary cell, on bread and water, without books or writing materials, May, 1849, during a two years' imprisonment.)

TROUBLESOME fancies beset me
 Sometimes as I sit in my cell,
 That comrades and friends may forget me,
 And foes may remember too well.

That plans which I thought well digested
 May prove to be bubbles of air ;
 And hopes when they come to be tested
 May turn to the seed of despair.

But tho' I may doubt all beside me
 And anchor and cable may part,
 Whatever—whatever betide me,
 Forbid me to doubt my own heart !

For sickness may wreck a brave spirit,
 And time wear the brain to a shade ;
 And dastardly age disinherit
 Creations that manhood has made.

But, God ! let me ne'er cease to cherish
 The truths I so fondly have held !
 Far sooner, at once let me perish,
 Ere firmness and courage are quelled.

Tho' my head in the dust may be lying,
 And bad men exult o'er my fall,
 I shall smile at them—smile at them, dying :
 The Right is the Right, after all.

WRITTEN IN DISGUST OF VULGAR SUPERSTITION.

The church-bells toll a melancholy round,
 Calling the people to some other prayers,
 Some other gloominess, more dreadful cares,
 More hearkening to the sermon's horrid sound.
 Surely the mind of man is closely bound
 In some black spell ; seeing that each one tears
 Himself from fireside joys, and Lydian airs,
 And converse high of those with glory crowned.
 Still, still they toll, and I should feel a damp,—
 A chill as from a tomb, did I not know
 That they are dying like an outburnt lamp ;
 That 'tis their sighing, wailing ere they go
 Into oblivion ;—that fresh flowers will grow,
 And many glories of immortal stamp.

—John Keats.

TRUE GREATNESS.

Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
 Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
 Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame ;
 Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts ;
 History is but the shadow of their shame ;
 Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts
 As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
 Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery
 Of their own likeness. What are numbers, knit
 By force or custom ? Man who man would be,
 Must rule the empire of himself ! in it
 Must be supreme, establishing his throue
 On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
 Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

—Shelley.

A PRAYER.

And if I pray, the only prayer
 That moves my lips for me
 Is " Leave the heart that now I bear,
 And give me liberty."

Yes, as my swift days near their goal
 'Tis all that I implore ;
 In life and death a chainless soul,
 With courage to endure.

—Emily Brontë.

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.**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, R. P. Edwards; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.30, R. P. Edwards.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, near Marble Arch): 11.30, a Lecture; Hammersmith, 7.30, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Members meet at New-street Station (2.40) for Burnt Green. Thursday, September 8, Bull Ring Coffee House, 8, E. Jones, "Ambulance Work."

HUDDERSFIELD (Market Cross): Saturday and Thursday, at 8, G. Whitehead and C. J. Atkinson. Sunday (Market Place, Heckmondwike). 3.30 and 6.30, G. Whitehead and C. J. Atkinson.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Armley Park): 11, Bertie Rowe, "Christianity and the Unemployed"; Crossflats Park, 7, A. Pollock, "The Salvation of the Masses."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): H. Percy Ward, 3, "God and My Neighbor"; 7, "Is Christianity True?" Monday, 8, an Address.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Important business.

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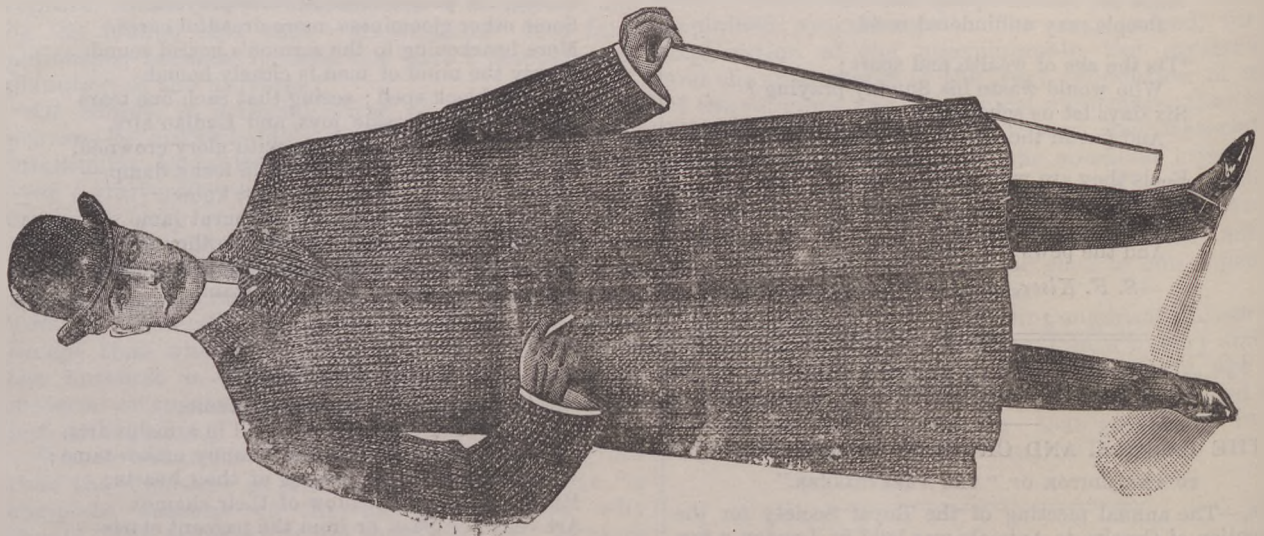
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