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It is not death itself that is dreadful, but the fear of it that goes before it.—SENECA.

Truth and Make-Believe.

THERE is one good feature of the "Do We Believe?" controversy in the *Daily Telegraph*. It has elicited a bright letter from Sir Hiram Maxim, who is known all over the world as a distinguished practical scientist. He began his life, like other people, by learning to walk; and he is ending it by teaching them how to fly. True, the lesson is not quite complete, but Sir Hiram Maxim is as likely to "get there" as anybody.

We have called Sir Hiram Maxim's letter bright. But it is something more. Not for nothing is he the countryman of Mark Twain. His letter is a particularly good piece of satire. It is so good indeed that not a few of its victims will probably be quite unable to see it. They may even be dense enough to take it as a compliment. There is no end to some people's stupidity. We once saw a long extract from Gibbon's grandly ironical fifteenth chapter printed in leaflet form as a serious tribute to Christianity.

Sir Hiram Maxim starts with a reference to himself as peculiarly fitted to "look upon all religious subjects with an unbiased and unprejudiced mind." Then he refers to the works of two eminent writers (both American) on the Conflict between Religion and Science. After which he asserts that there is "not the least particle of excuse for this warfare." "Science, like religion," he says, "has its own sphere, beyond which it cannot go."

All this sounds very comforting, we dare say, to the men of God who are looking out for allies in the scientific world. But, alas, it is not as innocent as it seems; for the writer goes on to explain why it is that science and religion have no quarrel with each other; and the explanation is positively sickening to the more ingenious seekers after consolation.

Both science and religion are concerned with Truth. But there are two sorts of truth. "A scientific truth," Sir Hiram Maxim says, "must, in the very nature of things, be an exact truth, otherwise it has no value." The indicator-card of a steam-engine shows exactly what takes place in the cylinder. Oxygen and hydrogen, in certain conditions, combine and form water; not sometimes, but always; and not nearly, but precisely. Scientific truths are exact truths, without distinction of time or place. But religious truth is of a very different character. "A religious truth," Sir Hiram Maxim says, "may be considered as a conventional truth instead of an exact truth."

"All the narratives in the Bible which are being so much discussed are conventional religious truths, and may be believed by religious people who have no interest in science, exactly as scientific truths may be believed by scientific people who have no interest in religion. It is the greatest mistake in the world to suppose for a single moment that it is necessary for a religious truth to be an exact truth. Religion is not founded on fact, but on faith, whereas, on the other hand, science is founded on fact, and fact alone. Religious truths are not at all the same as scientific truths, and there is no reason why they should be."

Nor is that all. Religious truths have a geo-

graphical and chronological boundary, while scientific truths have neither. "It is absolutely impossible," says Sir Hiram Maxim, "to point to a single theological truth that has always been true, and will remain true through coming ages; it is also impossible to find a single religious truth that is not local in its character. Not one particular religious truth is accepted by more than a quarter of mankind." Christians find, of course, a great deal of comfort and consolation in believing their own conventional truths; but so do the Brahmans, Buddhists, and Mohammedans. Why, then, should they quarrel with each other, or send missionaries to convert each other? Why not let sleeping dogs lie?

What follows reminds us of the party who said that the climate of England was the best in the world; there were so many kinds of weather that a man must be very fastidious who could not find something to suit him. Sir Hiram refers to "the various religions which prevail in England at the present moment," and suggests that they are numerous and diverse enough to suit "all sorts of people with a religious turn of mind." And the moral is that every man should select his own faith, and settle down comfortably with it, leaving his neighbors to do the same in their own way, so that all may be for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

Religion is thus treated by Sir Hiram Maxim as President Lincoln once treated a certain book. It was in great vogue in America, and Lincoln was asked his opinion. "Well," he replied, "I should say that if people like that sort of book it's just the sort of book they'd like." Abraham's answer was discreet and subtle, but not substantially flattering; and the same may be said of Sir Hiram's praise of the Christian religion.

Sir Hiram Maxim's letter ends like a lady's with the sting in the tail. In a postscript he begs the religious Press, in quoting him, to "stick to the exact truth" and not "mutilate or misrepresent" what he has said. He does not want *religious* methods applied to himself.

What is the sum and substance of Sir Hiram Maxim's letter under its satirical veil? Simply this. Belief as a scientific word, and belief as a religious word, have nothing to do with each other. One is founded upon knowledge, the other upon faith; one relates to fact, the other to fiction; one belongs to the world of reality, the other to the land of dreams.

It is probable that a man so busy as Sir Hiram Maxim in the sphere of practice is not aware that this difference between science and religion, which he has evolved out of his own head and presented to the trembling clergy, was seriously appealed to by Giordano Bruno, the great Freethought martyr, when he stood before the dread tribunal of the Inquisition. He argued that philosophy and religion were distinct, and might be pursued separately; that the philosopher, in following his ideas to their logical conclusion, ought not to be subject to religious penalties; that reason and faith went along different roads, and could not properly be antagonistic to each other. It was a subtle plea, but it did not save him from the stake. Nor will Sir Hiram Maxim's argument save him from the detestation of the clergy who can read between his lines.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and the State.

BROADLY speaking, there are two theories as to the function of the State in relation to religion. The one is that religion is a legitimate function of the State, and one which it cannot relinquish without running the risk of disaster. The other is that the State has no proper connection at all with religion, this being wholly an individual concern. The State, it is said, has no more right to interfere for or against a person's religious opinions than it has to regulate his opinions concerning the habitability of the moon. Whether a person adopts this or that religion, or none at all, is ultimately his own concern. Each one has a perfect right to go to hell in his own fashion; and, provided the route chosen does not interfere with the freedom, or comfort, or life of other people, the State is not justified in any act of interference.

No Freethinker will dispute the soundness of the latter of these two positions, as it is one of the principal planks in the Freethought platform. And his acceptance of the principle is based upon the belief, tacit or expressed, that all the essential and important functions of life can go on as well in the absence of religious belief as in its presence. Nowadays, however, this belief as to the relation—or want of relation—of religion and the State is subscribed to by large numbers of the Protestant world, and their adhesion is based upon quite a different principle to that of the Freethinker. The believer in religion does not, and cannot, openly affirm that the affairs of life can go on as well without as with religious beliefs. Such a plain declaration would be quite suicidal. On the contrary, he *does* assert that of all things a belief in religion is the most important; no individual, and consequently no community, can get on without it for long without undergoing a process of deterioration. And from the mouth of a religious leader like Dr. Horton we have the explicit declaration that all who do not believe in religion bestialise life, and should be excluded from human society.

Now, either of the two positions above indicated are logical and self-consistent. There is nothing self-contradictory in asserting that every State ought to teach religion; nor is there anything self-contradictory in saying that the State should leave religious beliefs severely alone—so long, that is, as those who make this declaration do not believe in them. But Nonconformists are not in this position. They do believe in religious doctrines, and give them, on the whole, a less liberal interpretation than other sections of the Christian world. And, therefore, their position is of a quite self-contradictory character. If it be true that religious beliefs are essential to the well-being of a community, the State has the same justification for teaching religion that it has for teaching any other subject. For the only justification that is ultimately to be found for State action is that the welfare of society demands it. The State regulates, and rightly, the conduct of people towards each other, both positively and negatively; and does this on the ground that, in the absence of such regulations, social life of a tolerable kind would be next to impossible. And, therefore, if it can be shown, or if it is believed, that one of the things essential to social well-being is a belief in a God or a future life, those who do believe this are logically bound to believe in the State enforcement of religious beliefs.

Consequently, when a question such as "Is Religion a Public Matter?" is raised by a writer in a leading religious journal, the answer is, "If you believe in religion, yes." The reply is, indeed, contained in the expression of belief. The writer, however, being a Nonconformist, answers it in the negative, and enforces it by several historical references more or less misleading. The conclusion is so obviously dictated by the need of finding a consoling explanation for the falling off in church attendance, and the

general decline of religious belief, that it is worth while dealing with the subject at greater length.

To commence with, it is to be noted that the separation of religion from the State, even in theory, is a modern doctrine. Although the Greek and Roman conception of social life was too sane to permit it being subordinated to so grossly and crudely conceived a supernaturalism as afterwards obtained under Christian rule, still the worship of the gods remained a part of the general functions of the State. Splendidly tolerant as Rome was of differing creeds and gods, the head of the State, as such, was the head of the national religion, and officiated as such on occasions of State. And certainly nothing would have been deemed more impious by the early Christians than any separation of the two functions. Their objection to obeying the State in matters of religion was not based upon the belief that it was overstepping its functions, but that it was teaching the wrong religion. The Catholic Church has never receded from the position that the State ought to enforce the true religion; nor has it taken much pains to hide its intention, if ever it has the chance, of carrying this into practice.

Protestantism in its early stages showed no departure from this principle. None of the Protestant leaders believed that the State ought not to teach religion; all they said was that the State ought to teach only the *true* religion—theirs being, of course, of the correct brand. But the duty of the State to enforce the true and suppress the false was held by all the Protestant leaders, and all used the civil power as occasion offered. Indeed, as a matter of historic fact, in every instance where Protestantism succeeded Catholicism was forcibly suppressed, and the newer form of faith as forcibly imposed upon the people. Nor could anything be more false, nor (in the case of modern Nonconformists) more hypocritical, than the claim that the Puritans and the seventeenth-century dissenters generally fought either for real liberty of conscience or for the separation of Church and State. Nothing was farther from their thoughts. It was merely a repetition of the historic struggle—a desire to replace one form of religious belief by another, and to impose the same penalties upon dissentients. The reign of Puritanism in England and America, with its lengthy and savage list of imprisonments, nose, tongue, and ear-slittings, brandings, and whippings—all for religious offences—is surely enough to give the lie to the modern Nonconformist claims. That those who make these claims *know* better there can be little doubt. That they do not speak more accurately betrays a lively faith in the ignorance of their congregations or in the power of impudent reiteration.

Nor is there anything genuine about the modern Nonconformist cry that the State has no right to interfere in matters of religion. For the truth is that dissenters are as anxious as Catholics or Episcopalians to secure State support, and quite as willing to take all that is offered. They support heartily all statutory measures for the prevention of anti-religious propaganda, they would protest energetically against the abolition of religious services at all State and Parliamentary functions, they take readily all the solid cash the State cares to give them in the shape of a remission of taxes, and they advocate the teaching of religion in all State schools. In the face of these facts it requires impudence of no mean order to claim that Nonconformists do not believe in the alliance of religion and the State.

That the State should not interfere in matters of religion is essentially a modern teaching, and there are two causes that will account for its existence. The first is that of the growth of sects. If the limits of Church and State were conterminous, if, that is, only one religion existed in society and all people belonged to it, there would be nothing politically unjust in all people contributing to its maintenance. Injustice commences when from a multitude of religious sects the State selects one and uses the whole of the social force for its maintenance. Dissatisfaction, springing in the first

instance from religious rivalry, arises, and later an elaborated political expression of this discontent gives birth to the theory that the State should, amid the numerous religious bodies that go to make up modern society, steer a perfectly impartial course. But this condition can obtain, not when the religious world is united, nor even when it is divided into great rival bodies, but only when a number of sects render the mastery of any one a practical impossibility. Nothing short of this condition ever did, or ever will, bring a Christian church to advocate the separation of Church and State.

But a deeper and more powerful cause than this is the steady growth of religious unbelief. It is to me quite inconceivable that so long as anyone honestly believes in the Christian claim as to the all importance of Christianity that he can at the same time advocate the State leaving it alone. For the State to do so implies that it is not a matter of first-rate importance at all; it is merely a speculation, more or less ingenious, more or less truthful, but one which we can get on very well without. Unquestionably this is the attitude of a growing number of thoughtful people. These are beginning to realise, if they have not already realised, that the Christian theory of things supplies neither an intellectual need nor a satisfactory moral stimulus. If a man is not worse for being a fervent believer, he is usually not any better for it. He may be good, bad, or indifferent, and may in each case cover his mental and moral characteristics with a religious cloak or express them in religious phraseology. But it is the acceptance of Christianity—even with believers—as a theory that may be true or may be false, but of which we are not and cannot be certain, that is finally responsible for the belief that religion is not a matter of public importance. A nation of sincere believers simply could not arrive at such a conclusion.

The demand for the separation of Church and State is, therefore, one further piece of evidence of the prevalence of unbelief. To a Christian, the only logical attitude is the Catholic one. The religious Nonconformist is occupying a position that shows a complete inability to appreciate the position of either the sincere believer or unbeliever. It is true the Catholic ideal is to-day a hopeless one, but this does not make it the less logical. For it is simply absurd for any Christian to argue on the one hand that rejection of Christianity means bad husbands and wives, bad parents and children, bad citizens and governors, and, on the other hand, to argue that religion is not a public matter. If he is right in the first place, there is every reason for the State enforcing religion and suppressing Freethought. It is true this involves bigotry, intolerance, persecution, but this does not alter the logic of the situation; and after all these have always been the accompaniments of the logical application of Christianity to life.

C. COHEN.

The Origin of Life.

THE origin of life is a subject upon which science is ever acquiring fresh knowledge. The problem is still unsolved, but we are nearer a solution now than we ever were before. The patient investigator is always realising his reward in the discovery of additional facts. Now, let us bear in mind that theology, as such, has never possessed a single grain of knowledge concerning the genesis of living things. Theology rests upon a series of unverified and unverifiable assumptions, and is composed of impossible dogmas. The theologian is a gigantic believer and an inveterate dogmatist rolled into one. He belongs to a school, the real motto of which is:—

We have but faith: we cannot know;
For knowledge is of things we see.

When asked, What is Life? the theologian answers, "Life is one of God's creatures." When we ply him

with the further inquiry, How do you know that? his reply is, "Because dead matter cannot of itself become living." If we insist upon knowing the ground on which he makes such an audacious assertion, he can only say: "Because the chemist has never succeeded in making a living cell." Poor theologian! He cannot know, and the making of discoveries is not in his line. It is the scientist alone who knows, and his knowledge is the reward of his discoveries.

What has science to tell us about life? For one thing, it confidently assures us that life is not a distinct entity resident in matter and animating it. Apart from matter there is no life. Some biologists speak of a "vital force," but not one of them has ever seen it, or discovered its existence by any experiment. Vital force is a theological or philosophical invention, made with the object of getting out of a difficulty. Vital force is as difficult to find as a soul, a mind, or a ghost. We are aware that people who believe in ghosts say they are always seeing them. But, according to their own admission, what they see, or say they see, is material—a form draped in white. No one has ever seen a ghost, and no one can prove that ghosts exist. Science has never discerned a trace of them, and does not believe in their existence. So, likewise, science has not had the least inkling or glimpse of such a thing as vital force, and does not believe in its existence. When Von Helmholtz and Lord Kelvin suggested that life was originally brought to the earth by means of a meteorite, they spoke as theologians or philosophers, but certainly not as scientists. The argument used against such a suggestion—namely, that the extreme cold of interplanetary space would have killed all life in transit, was equally unscientific. The point emphasised by science is that life is an attribute of matter when matter is "combined in a certain way and under certain conditions." This is what Professor Dolbear says:—

"If there are any that would still hold that life is a something *sui genesis*, that may be considered apart from some material structure and not as a *transformation process*, it will be well for such to inquire what can become of such life as a grain of corn or an egg has, when it is cooked, or when either of them is left for months or years, and they rot. At first it is in the grain of corn or egg. If it be an entity of any sort, it must be somewhere else after leaving either the one or the other" (*Matter, Ether, and Motion*, p. 294).

The theologian has kept on repeating from the beginning until now, "Life is the gift of God to the world"; but the scientist, after making innumerable experiments, exclaims: "Is it likely that, in the long history of tens of thousands of years, man would never have discovered life, if such a thing existed? There is no thing which we can call life, if we think accurately. We ought to say there are living bodies, living things; for what people mean by life is a certain state or condition found in certain arrangements of matter. Life, apart from matter, is as inconceivable as motion apart from matter."

Another truth brought out by modern science is that the line of demarcation between the living and the not-living is amazingly narrow. Very often it cannot be seen at all. There are substances of which you cannot determine whether they are dead or alive. There are tiny bits of protoplasm floating about which only the experienced scientist can discover. They have no distinct parts, nor are they in any degree organised. And yet they are verily alive and must be classed with living things. In this sense it is not easy to say when things began to be alive. One of the greatest of our philosophers says: "I distinctly deny the 'absolute commencement of life on the globe.' The affirmation of universal evolution is in itself the negation of an 'absolute commencement' of anything." There are many "borderland" organisms, from which Haeckel deduces his Carbon Theory. The lowest animals are scarcely distinguishable from plants. There are animals that are stationary for the greater part of their lives, and there are plants which are motile. There are plants which digest organic food. These facts show that plants and animals are very closely related, and that

often it is supremely difficult to tell the difference between them. So, likewise, the distinction between the living and the not-living is in numerous instances almost imperceptible. Haeckel has proved that "every element found in animal and vegetable bodies is also found outside in the inorganic," and that "in the Monera the whole body—a semi-fluid, formless, and simple lump of albumen—consists, in fact, of only a single chemical combination, and is as perfectly simple in its structure as any crystal which consists of a single inorganic combination." He also argues that, inasmuch as carbon is the most influential force in organisms, "we are driven to the conclusion that there is a unity of organic and inorganic Nature; an essential agreement between the inorganic and organic in matter, form, and force." This being so, there can be no yawning gulf, no impassable chasm between the living and the not-living. They seem to overlap each other in a wondrous fashion.

The fault of those who reject and denounce the theory of spontaneous generation is that they compare the highest organisms with inorganic matter. "Can a Plato or a Shakespeare," they triumphantly ask, "have been evolved from dead substances?" A more pertinent question would be, "Can your man of genius, the marvellous artist or the divine poet, belong to the same species as your ruthless cannibal? The distance between these two is much greater than that between the lowest man and the highest monkey. But there are no breaks between man on the summit of the animal kingdom and the Protozoa at its foot. We can trace the human pedigree back to the simplest organism in the slimy depths of the sea. There are no missing links anywhere. And there is probably no missing link between the Monera and inorganic matter. The distance between sponges, oysters, and other mollusca and the rocks attached to which they spend the greater part of their lives is not unbridgable. Have you never read of those tiny forms, called Cocoliths, which are to be found everywhere at the bottom of the deep sea? Their average length is from 1-2,700th to 1-11,000th part of an inch. It takes eleven thousand of them to make an inch. And yet they are living organisms. If we study these minute, simple forms we shall soon learn that the organic and the inorganic are very much akin.

There are those who say: "We understand and accept the theory of evolution in so far as it relates to life; but we utterly fail to see how the living can have been evolved from the not-living. Between the two there is, to our mind, too deep a chasm to be crossed except by a miracle. At this point there must have occurred some sort of creative intervention." Formerly, the same difficulty was felt as to the origin of species. It was argued that the existence of species could be explained only on the supposition that each of them had been specially created. But practically all theologians now accept substantially Darwin's scientific account of the origin of species. For my own part, I am confident that in less than twenty years from now theology will have absorbed the theory of spontaneous generation. For what is meant when it is said that a thing is living? One of the signs that an object lives is its possession of irritability. It responds to stimulus from the external world. It is affected by its environment. Without this irritability or sensitiveness there can be no life. Well, two years ago a remarkable book appeared, entitled *Response in the Living and Not-living*, by Professor Bose, the distinguished engineer. We know that, under certain conditions, tissue can be converted from the responsive to an irresponsive state, either temporarily as by anaesthetics, or permanently as by poisons. It is a natural inference from this that when tissue has been killed it is no longer capable of being excited by stimulus. But Professor Bose has demonstrated that such an inference is purely gratuitous. He has also proved that it is not living tissue alone that responds to stimulus. He has found the same irritability in the inorganic world; and this is the conclu-

sion to which his electrical experiments have driven him:—

"Living response in all its diverse manifestations is found to be only a repetition of responses seen in the *inorganic*. There is in it no element of mystery or caprice, such as we must admit to be applied in the assumption of a hyper-mechanical force, acting in contradiction or defiance of those physical laws that govern the world of matter."

He found that metals respond quite as readily as animal tissues. The one is subject to the same physical laws as the other, which act equally and uniformly throughout the organic and the inorganic worlds. In this respect, animal tissues, plants, and metals belong to the same essential category. In the face of such scientific demonstrations, it would be folly to assert that Abiogenesis is an impossible myth, or has had the final blow administered to it. It would be much more reasonable for each one to say, in Huxley's words, that "if he could have been a witness of the beginning of organic evolution he would have seen the origin of protoplasm from not-living matter."

But why should Freethinkers be so anxious to argue for the physical origin of life? For three cogent reasons. The first is that they regard the theory of a physical origin as undoubtedly true. It is everybody's duty to defend what he believes to be the truth both in season and out of season. The second reason is the fact that evolution is the law of Nature. Matter itself is evolved stuff. It assumed its present forms very gradually through countless millions of years. Worlds are not the products of a day. Then the highest organisms have been evolved from inconceivably low ones. And the stuff that lives is identical in nature with the stuff that constitutes the earth. Is it not reasonable to infer that the process of evolution has been continuous from the original ether right through to proud man on his giddy throne? The third reason why Freethinkers believe in Abiogenesis is their conviction that belief in it is an act of justice to man. According to theology, man is an alien upon the earth. He has come down from above, and he can never be happy until he returns thither. He is a stranger, a foreigner here below, and the sooner he is translated to the Heavenly Jerusalem the better it will be for him. But according to evolution, man is as much a product of the earth as a tree or a flower. Here is his rightful home, and all living things are his brothers and sisters. His chief end is to glorify the world of which he forms a part, and to enjoy it as long as he can. It is his high privilege to study and know himself, and to study in order to know and make the most of his environments—to learn the noble art of feeling perfectly at home, and of being of some enduring use in the world out of which and into which he finds himself born.

JOHN T. LLOYD.

Are There Any Christians?

IT is difficult to say what Christianity is. If we ask those who profess to be Christians what it is, no two answers will be alike; and sometimes it will be given in such vague language that no one can understand the meaning. If, again, we turn to creeds and confessions of faith to see what it is, we are more puzzled than enlightened, for they all differ and contradict one another. And if we go to the New Testament we are no nearer to a solution; for there, again, differences and contradictions meet us in all the books.

The same difficulty meets us as to who are Christians and who are not. There are so many different sects, all claiming to be Christians, and all differing and contradicting one another, that it is impossible to know which is the true and real Christian sect. And inside of each sect there are vital differences often existing. One member vehemently affirms, another as vehemently denies and rejects; and each claims to be the orthodox believer; and each

Church claims to be the genuine Christian Church, and affirms, in effect, that all others are false and spurious counterfeits. All this medley of differences and contradictions cannot possibly be all Christian, unless one is prepared to assert and prove that truth and error, right and wrong, are one and the same thing; and this, I fancy, even desperate Christian apologists are not quite prepared to maintain, though some of their late defensive theories seem to me quite as absurd.

"And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts xi. 26). And why were they called Christians? Because they were disciples of Christ. They believed and held his teaching, accepted him as their teacher and exemplar, confessed themselves publicly as his followers, and took his name as their own. I know of no other ground or reason for anyone to call himself a Christian. The only foundation for a Christian Church is Christ, in his life and teaching. Any Church founded on anything else is founded on sand, and cannot stand the storm of criticism without collapsing. Whether Christ is better than sand as a foundation for a Church is doubtful, seeing how the Church totters under the force of opposition.

At the beginning of our inquiry one fact strikes us forcibly—namely, that none of the great Churches and sects call themselves after the name of Christ. Here are some of the distinctive names by which supposed Christians wish to be known: Roman Catholic, Church of England, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, Calvinistic Methodist, Congregationalist, Baptist, Unitarian, Friend or Quaker, and so on. Is it not strange that men who profess to be disciples of a God called Christ should in every case prefer to be known by any name rather than the name of their Savior? I verily believe that a proposition to substitute the name of Christ for their present cognomens would produce a revolt in the Churches.

As the Churches are not Christian in name, are they Christian in substance? Do they believe as Christ believed? Of course, in an inquiry of this sort, we must assume that Christ is a historical person, and that the four Gospels contain a true narrative of what he believed and taught, and how he lived; otherwise it would be difficult to argue with believers on this aspect of the question.

Do the Churches believe as Christ did? In answering this question I am afraid I must leave the Roman Catholic Church outside. The Church of Rome does not profess to be founded on the Bible, or, strictly speaking, altogether on Christ and his teaching. The Church is the Pope and the priests, having its foundation and authority in itself. The lay members are nothing but waste matter to fill in. They have no say in the Church, either in teaching or ritual. All they can do is to close their eyes and open their mouths to receive whatever the priests like to throw in.

But Protestants are different. They profess to accept the Bible as the Word of God and Christ as their only Savior, on whose foundation they claim to be founded. Much is made of the passages in Matthew respecting the foundation of the Church and its impregnability. "When Jesus came into the coasts of Cesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, . . . upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 13-18). The attempt to make Peter the rock is absurd. The foundation rock is the declaration of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, Son of the living God."

Now, do the Protestant Churches accept Christ fully, all in all? I cannot see how they can be Christian if they reject anything believed, taught, and commanded by Christ; nor, indeed, if they add anything to his doctrine, and treat the addition as

of equal value and authority. Christ, according to the Gospels, believed in devils and in demoniacal possession, and therefore in witchcraft; for devil-possession is the foundation of witchcraft. I need not quote passages to prove that Christ believed in devils, as they are so numerous and so well known. And the Church up to very recent times believed the same, and millions of wretched creatures have been murdered for the impossible crime of witchcraft by Church and State, owing to the existence of the belief. That the Church in the past held the belief cannot be denied. The evidence is overwhelmingly for it. And on the supposition that the Bible is the Word of God and that Christ was God in flesh, the Church was justified in holding that belief. And on the same supposition the Church would not be justified in giving the belief up. But they have done so, and it is to the credit of the Church that witchcraft and the devil have been dropped, and can only be found in some catechisms and ancient confessions of faith. But if the abandonment of the devil is a credit to the Church, it is a discredit to and a denial of Christ.

Christ believed in a material hell. There are many passages indicating the belief of Christ in hell. I will only refer to two. In Mark we have the following remarkable passages: "If thy hand offend thee cut it off; . . . If thy foot offend thee cut it off; . . . And if thine eye offend thee pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix. 42 to 48). If it be said, as some do, that the hell in these verses meant the valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem, where there were furnaces to burn human beings as sacrifices to Moloch and other gods, that explanation will not apply to all passages where hell is named. For instance, take the following from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom; the rich man also died and was buried: And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom," etc. (Luke xvi. 22, 28). These words can scarcely mean the valley of Hinnom, and if it be said the words are only a parable, the reply is ready that a parable can show a belief as well as a direct declaration. There is no doubt Christ believed in an everlasting material hell. And the Churches till very lately followed his teaching, and some of them pretend to hold the belief still. But the more enlightened and progressive portion have discarded the horrible doctrine, and this is a credit to them, but a discredit to Christ. They are less Christians but greater saints.

R. J. DERFEL.

(To be continued.)

Religion Amongst the Japanese.

(Translated from "La Raison.")

IN Japan, as in China and Indo-China, religious propaganda has helped to demoralise the people.

In this connection, here is an anecdote to add to the number told of the fashion in which the missionaries recruit adherents amongst the criminals or the outcasts. A young girl reduced to the most extreme destitution—in this poor country—listened to a Protestant missionary, who, to the help which he offered, naturally attached as a condition *sine qua non*—conversion.

The girl resigned herself to it, but kept secretly the funeral tablets of her parents—sole souvenir of the beings who were dear to her, sole link with a venerated past. By accident the man of the Bible learnt of so natural a weakness, and, instead of closing his eyes with a paternal indulgence, the wretch ordered her, under pain of being driven out of the mission, to throw away these "instruments of superstition." The unhappy girl went to the

river, and threw there the tablets, but threw herself in also. Had she not better have drowned herself at first, and before having committed this sacrilege which had so tormented her poor heart!

The missionaries, besides, recognise easily enough how evil, from the moral point of view, has been the influence of Europe on Japan. The Catholic Bishop of Tokio, whom I met in a railway carriage, said to me that the Japanese had raised themselves to the highest morality before the opening of their country to Europeans, and that they had lost much by the contact with the latter. A Frenchman and a representative of Catholicism, he threw all the responsibility for this deplorable fact on the English and the Americans, and on their missionaries, who, said he, limit all their activity to a practical instruction in languages and European technology. But if they have, as my informant alleged, almost entirely abandoned giving religious instruction, properly so-called, it is that they have recognised its inefficacy. I had politeness enough not to question the Bishop on the results obtained by *his* subordinates!

The educated men of the Empire of the Rising Sun are all, without exception, students of Free-thought. If they do not break completely and openly with their national religions, they do not know very well to which they belong. During their life they would appear to be adherents of Shintoism, the official cult of the Emperor, and which symbolises loyalty to the sovereign, to his dynasty, and to the institutions and to the greatness of Japan. At their death they are buried with the ceremonies of Buddhism, the clergy of which are thus reduced to these funeral functions.

The school children imbibe early in their career the most complete scepticism. I will always recollect the embarrassed giggling, before the Japanese gods of a temple of Nara, of several pupils of a professional school who had met us in the park, and had joined us in order to practise their English.

As for the common people, the superficial character of their faith was plain even to the most superficial observer. I call to mind the temples of Kobe, whither we wended our way in the evening. In the great court, lighted by electricity, moved a crowd solely occupied with the baskets of the *camelots*, and hugely amused by their wares.

And the temples of Kyoto, of Nara, and other celebrated places! The splendid view which these edifices present, of natural or red-lacquer wood, in the green framework of their parks, where tame deer wandered at liberty! What a delightful spectacle for the eye, but how less religious compared to our own Gothic cathedrals; to the sombre and shining Greek churches; to the temples, full of terror, of Southern India.

The Japanese, with their families, crowd there; but, unlike the Russian pilgrims of Athos or Kieff, they come out of pleasure to admire, in spring the cherry-trees in flower, in autumn the reddening maples.

Then they have shown them the celebrated pictures of the monastery—that is, paintings on glass, a wrinkled box of cherry-wood covered with snow, a flight of eagles or of partridges. The little monk-attendants exhibit, to the general admiration, the tea service of the Japanese Napoleon, Séyasu, of whom the lacquered armor and the horrifying helmet are preserved in a glass case.

Oh! of course, they pray—but so little! From time to time a little *mousse* advances, her baby on her back, by little steps, on her wooden shoes, before the temple. To prevent the distraction of the god, she strikes with her hands or pulls the cord of a huge bell, and mutters a prayer so short that it is finished before the kodak would be able to fix, in bowing attitude, the amusing silhouette.

A very small number—ten at the most—squatted before the Buddhist preacher, who, comfortably seated, gave them, in a short sermon, a kind of childish and honest "moral," which, to render less tiresome, he interspersed with numerous anecdotes, so droll that he laughed heartily at them himself.

And as for his auditors, are they there for edification, or to rest themselves on the matting of the temple, so white, so soft, so fresh?

Here is one who has unceremoniously opened her *bennto* (box of refreshments) and made a little dinner, devouring with her sticks the glistening rice and the odd preserves, sugared and fermented, which give it a flavor.

In truth, I declare, it all recalls the wood of Vincennes, Bongival, Chaville; only it is better.

Is it necessary to say that in this very happy country there is neither a Merry del Val, nor a Sarfo, nor a Pobiedonotzeff? These good men, with yellow habits, who live in their temples, more like our guardians of squares and museums than our dealers in sacraments and our merchants of *post-mortem* happiness, have no political influence. If the example of Japan is humiliating to our friends of the Russian intellectual class, who weep to see their country terrorised by a Holy Synod, it is not less so for us Frenchmen; the reform that we have not been able to obtain yet, and that we demand with determination, the Japanese have achieved several years ago. They have separated the Churches from the State.

ERNEST TARBOURIECH.

Acid Drops.

A good deal may be pardoned in one who has suffered like Mr. Adolf Beck. We should shrink from hurting his feelings. But, at the same time, his public utterances are open to criticism. We devote a paragraph, therefore, to his recent speech at a Salvation Army gathering in the Clapton Congress Hall. His tribute of thanks to the Salvation Army for receiving him when the doors of those who used to be his friends were closed against him was sound and natural. What we wish to say a few words about is the reference he made to God. Mr. Beck said that "he had always had in his mind a prayer which his mother had taught him—the Our Father—and whenever he felt overwhelmed his recital of it strengthened him and afforded him comfort." Very likely, and so would the recital of any other formula to which he had been accustomed. But we should like to know where God's help comes in. It is a curious act of benevolent providence to let a man suffer a long imprisonment for a crime he never committed. If the Deity did interfere at all in Mr. Beck's case, which does not appear in the record, it is a great pity that the interference did not come *before* instead of *after* he had swallowed the last dregs of his bitter cup.

There were more high jinks in Dalkeith Evangelical Union Congregational Church on Sunday morning. Two rival preachers occupied the same pulpit—happily without effusion of blood; and the rival parties in the congregation sang and howled at each other, as though they belonged to the Menagerie of the Apocalypse. Fortunately they did not come to blows, though they may do so on the next occasion. But their opinions of each other flew about the sacred edifice. Even pastor Brown joined in this little recreation. When several people rose from the body of the church and called upon him to leave, he ordered one man to "Shut up," and said to another, "You have five children; have you ever seen your wife?" How they round on each other when they quarrel! And how the truth leaks out when calculating godliness gives way to reckless anger!

Rev. Thomas Waugh, Wesleyan Methodist evangelist, preached a sermon recently in the Wesley Chapel, Rochdale, in reply to Mr. Robert Blatchford. This gentleman (we mean Mr. Waugh) blew his own trumpet pretty lustily in the pulpit, but his "reply," unless it is vilely reported in the local press, was a very poor thing. He had the folly to say that since Bradlaugh's death "Christian workers had had to meet no intellectual opposition." This is true enough, however, in one sense; for the Christian workers have shunned opposition as the Devil is said to shun holy water. Another of Mr. Waugh's statements was that the myriads (his reporter says *millions*) who perished under the Spanish Inquisition "were not put to death by Christians." There is only one place in the world where a man can talk like that with impunity—the coward's castle of the pulpit. It is a wonder that Mr. Waugh did not represent the Spanish Inquisitors as Freethinkers and early members of the National Secular Society.

Mr. C. Crossland (we don't happen to know the gentleman) solemnly warns Mr. Robert Blatchford against making the *Clarion* "a second edition of the *Freethinker*." Mr. Crossland need not worry himself. There is only one *Freethinker*, and there is not likely to be another. Anyhow, a second edition would hardly be of much use while the first is in the field.

How the conspiracy of silence against the *Freethinker* breaks down when people get heated! Mr. Crossland, whoever he is, is probably sorry now that he mentioned this accursed paper.

Mr. Crossland states that he himself was a Freethinker some sixteen years ago. Perhaps he was. We don't know. But he could not have been well acquainted with the Free-thought party. He talks as though the leaders of Socialism were nearly all Christians. As a matter of fact, they are nearly all non-Christians.

The vicar of Grimsby parish church preached before the mayor and corporation on Sunday, and as good as called Grimsby a pagan town. Afterwards there was much indignation expressed at the Town Hall by Sir George Doughty, the borough member, the town clerk, and other local personages. But was it not a storm in a teapot? Grimsby is a pagan town, in the sense that it is not a Christian town—just like every other town in Great Britain. There is a profession of Christianity on Sunday, and a total disregard of it all the rest of the week. And the worst of it is that, while Christianity holds the field from Sunday morning till Sunday night, it blocks the way for a better system to control human life from Monday morning till Saturday night.

Judging from some words let fall by the vicar of Grimsby we conclude that he has a personal quarrel with the Corporation. He referred to their action in "not allowing him to minister to the sick and dying in the fever hospital." We suppose this means that he is not allowed the free run of the place, and is only permitted to come when he is sent for. If this be the case, we hope he will always be able to nurse that grievance. Moreover, we hope other towns will follow the example of Grimsby. It is high time that these men of God were kept in their proper places. In their own churches they may dance about as they please, but in hospitals, and other public places built and maintained by the citizens, they should enjoy no other rights than those which belong to every member of the community.

"Converted Infidels" are wonderfully numerous. Every enterprising evangelist keeps a good stock of them. The latest recruit to the noble and nameless host of brands plucked from the infidel fire is paraded by Lieutenant Black, of the Salvation Army. We take the following from the *War Cry* of November 6:—

[BY WIRE.]

Monday Morning.

"STRIKE ME DEAD!"

INFIDEL LECTURER WHO BURNT FIFTY BIBLES.

Among our audience at HOLLOWAY Sunday week in open air was infidel lecturer, who desired our prayers. She followed to the inside meeting, where she was taken hold of by the Spirit of God. She went home convicted, unhappy and undecided. In her own room, she sought her once-despised Savior, but still remained in great darkness. On waking in the morning she felt her load of sin was gone. This woman has been engaged in lecturing on infidelity for the past two and a-half years, on one occasion calling upon the Almighty—if there were a God—to strike her dead. She has also burnt fifty Bibles. Her remarks yesterday in the open air—held on a spot where infidel lecturers congregate—drew the crowds nearer the ring, and great attention was paid while she spoke; 6 souls the result of day's fighting.—Lieut. Black.

(Our usual prize has been awarded to Holloway 1. for the above wire, which takes premier place.)

Lieutenant Black should have given the name of this "infidel lecturer," who has been "lecturing on infidelity for the past two and a-half years," besides burning fifty Bibles and inviting God to strike her dead. Female lecturers are not very common. Every one of them is easily recognised. We don't recognise *this* one, and we invite Lieutenant Black to explain. He has everything to gain by candor if this is a real conversion. Besides, the *War Cry* has given him a prize for his communication, and it ought to feel bound in honor to have this story substantiated when it is challenged. We are sending a proof copy of this paragraph to the *War Cry* office, so that the case may be dealt with in its next issue.

"All Souls' Church Home," 54 Great Titchfield-street, London, W., had a "Men's Service" on a recent Sunday afternoon. According to the handbill, there were to be

"band selections" and a "sacred solo," and "all men" were "warmly invited" to attend and hear an address by the Rev. A. C. Macnutt, M.A., on that profoundly interesting and up-to-date subject, "The Gunpowder Plot." Women were not admitted to this spiritual repast. Perhaps it was thought that the treat would be too much for them. Only the sterner sex could stand it.

On the back of this All Souls' Church Home handbill "Some Bits" were printed. We suppose these were for the benefit of the women as well as the men. The first is a fair sample from bulk. "Far better neglect your body than your soul," it says, "your meals than your prayers." Now we do not wish to examine the body of the author of this handbill, with a view to seeing whether he neglects cleanliness rather than godliness. Our time is limited, and our feelings are tender. But we should like just a look at him—for that would be enough—to see whether he neglects his meals rather than his prayers. Our experience of his profession is that they generally look well-fed. They may pray a lot, of course; we are not in a position to dispute it; but their devotion to their meals is rather more apparent.

Mr. J. P. Pollitt, churchwarden of Mellor, declares that "Sunday-schools are an unspeakable curse to the country." His reason for saying so is that the teachers are mostly ignorant persons, and that religious teaching which is not done in church should be done at home. A good many letters in the *Northern Daily Telegraph* condemn Mr. Pollitt's wicked utterance. But one correspondent sides with him—though for another reason. "Seeker after Truth" regards Sunday-schools as being "used as tools for the propagation of superstitious beliefs." And the same may be said of the churches. "The schoolmaster has been abroad," this plain-spoken correspondent says, "and the sheep are now seeking to work out their own salvation, whilst the shepherds are basking in the sun and living on the fat of the land."

Dr. Clifford's last long letter in the *Daily News* on "The State and the Child" is replete with the sly humbug of your modern Dissenter, who is against all State endowment of religion—except so far as he can profit by it himself. The chief object of this particular epistle is to tear, and mangle, and destroy the High Church proposal of Canon Scott Holland's *Commonwealth* that in the matter of religious education there shall be "complete equality of treatment all round," by letting all the children be taught the views of their parents through the agency of outside teachers admitted to the schools for that purpose. Dr. Clifford denounces this policy as "unjust," "injurious," etc., etc. He says that the Nonconformists will never accept it. They would rather have "secular education." And why? For a very simple reason, which he has not the candor to state. The Nonconformists feel that the Church of England would gain by such an arrangement; for the Church clergy would take the trouble to give religious instruction in the schools, while the Dissenting ministers would not. This is the whole case in a nutshell.

The High Churchmen want to get rid of "undenominationalism," which is at present the religion of the State (provided) schools. But the very thought of such a thing drives Dr. Clifford nearly frantic. "Undenominationalism" just suits the Nonconformist book. It is precisely the amount and quality of Christianity which allows the Free Churches a fair start in the competition with other Churches. It leaves the children eligible for Church or Chapel. Of course the Nonconformists would like to see them all stamped "Chapel," but as that is impossible the alternative is to keep them from being stamped "Church."

But how is "undenominationalism" to be defended? Dr. Clifford does it with the greatest ease—and the greatest shamelessness. He drops theology utterly out of sight, and pretends that all he is fighting for is *morality*. Let us hear him:—

"If 'undenominationalism' stands for civic religion, love of truth, and hatred of lying, for devotion to justice, and the practice of fair play, for the culture of sincerity and courage, of reverence and goodness, for training in patriotism and brotherhood; then, surely that civic religion may be taught, and should be taught, by the officers of the State, and I hold that the State may justly use selections from the Bible in teaching these things."

"Surely," to use Dr. Clifford's style, this "civic religion" is a new brand, which is not yet tabulated in Whitaker's Almanack. Many of us think that "civic" spoils the "religion" and "religion" spoils the "civic." But the object of this wild abuse of language is pretty obvious. Dr. Clifford starts his "civic religion" solely for the sake of working in the Bible. If he can keep the Bible in the schools, and keep everything else out, he feels that the trick is done. For the Bible *is* his religion. It is not the High

Churchman's religion, nor the Roman Catholic's religion; it is the Evangelical's religion, and Evangelicalism is a losing cause everywhere except in the Nonconformist Churches. Dr. Clifford is really fighting, therefore, for the establishment and endowment of Evangelicalism in the State schools.

How cunningly Dr. Clifford goes to work. To all appearance quite incidentally, but actually with a calculated design, he says of Secular Education that "The Amalgamated Society of Engineers voted for it, 'including instruction in the Bible.'" This is meant to suggest that the working classes officially support "instruction in the Bible" in State schools. Dr. Clifford knows, however, that this is untrue. He is perfectly well aware that the Trade Union Congress subsequently (at Leicester in 1903) voted almost unanimously for absolute Secular Education; the majority being more than a million and the minority only five thousand. We repeat that Dr. Clifford is well aware of this fact. He simply did not choose to mention it. Had he done so it would have spoilt his argument. He did not tell a lie. Oh dear no! What he said was true enough. Only by keeping back something that would have given it its proper value, he managed to produce a false impression. But this is common to religious advocates. So we need not be too hard on Dr. Clifford, who merely follows the etiquette of his profession.

Dr. Clifford affects to champion "the ethical and non-theological use of carefully-selected portions of the Scriptures." We like that "carefully-selected." It is necessary, in fact; for if the Bible were used at hazard the children might be introduced to some of the most disgusting things ever printed. Yes, a "careful" selection is indispensable; and that very fact damns the Bible, either as the Word of God or as a reading-book for children. Then again, how is the Bible to be used ethically and not theologically? The language of supernaturalism is all over it. Moreover, the teachers mostly belong to this or that Christian Church; the Bible, to them, is not a book of mere ethics—it is a book of religion; and how can they help treating it as a book of religion in reading it and explaining it to their pupils? We have asked Dr. Clifford these questions before. They have been put to him by other persons also. But he never answers. He goes on talking as though he had never heard of them. For Clifford is an honorable man; so are they all, all honorable men.

Dr. Clifford hates Secular Education. But he hates the Church of England more. Sooner than accept "the control of education by the priests" he would prefer "the ejection of the Bible." Day by day, he says, the conviction deepens that Secular Education is inevitable. The nation has "steadily and increasingly refused to take it," but the conflict of the sects is such that it "gains favor" with the public. Well, the second statement is true; but the first is a fiction. The "nation" has never "refused to take" Secular Education. It has been worried all the time by professional religionists. Nobody knows what it might do if let alone for a while. Who can say that Secular Education would not be accepted? It has been accepted by more than a million Trade Unionists. Why should it not be accepted by millions of other citizens? We believe that a Referendum on the question would be a great eye-opener to all the Churches.

The Bishop of Winchester is getting on. He does not intend to blush unseen. In the presence of some thousands of spectators at Farnham he kicked off the ball, and then scampered out of the enclosure to get out of the way of the players, who proceeded to battle for the Surrey Junior Cup. This does not seem exactly the proper thing for a leading soul-saver, but we must allow for differences of taste. Perhaps the Bishop will make progress in the football field, and ultimately become a referee. That would give him opportunities of hearing language more full of piety and flavor than the Bible itself.

"Drunken Clergyman" was a police-news heading in a Monday morning's newspaper. Beneath it was the story of the Rev. J. J. Brown, of Grove-park, Chiswick, who was charged at Marlborough-street with being drunk and disorderly, and was fined forty shillings or in default a month's imprisonment. Defendant was found lying on a seat in Hyde Park in a state of intoxication. Being roused up and requested to leave, he shouted and drew a crowd; then he struck one constable and spat in another's face. He explained to the magistrate that he was in great financial trouble and drank till he lost his reason. Perhaps he thought of the Bible text, "Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more."

The headline of a "Drunken Clergyman" attracts very

little attention nowadays. But how the newspaper readers would sit up if they saw a "Drunken Freethought Lecturer." It would be such a novelty.

There seems to be a lot of Celtic hysteria knocking about in "gallant little Wales." Perhaps it is a symptom of what Mr. Watts-Dunton grandiosely calls "the renaissance of wonder." A young collier called Evan Roberts, who is studying for the ministry, has been holding a week's mission at Loughor, near Llanelly, and this is what the *Daily News* says of it:—

"Extraordinary scenes were witnessed at each of the meetings. Each service lasted from 7 in the evening till 4.30 next morning. During these nightly vigils nearly 400 persons were kept under the influence of deep religious fervor, men and women singing aloud or reading passages of Scripture, while several dropped in their seats and sobbed aloud."

This debauchery of sentiment is called religion. Whether it will promote morality is doubtful. It is more likely to promote the population.

The *Sunday Companion*, which ought to be providing holy Sabbath reading, presents its readers with picture puzzles, and offers prizes amounting to £100 to those who rack their brains over them most successfully on the Lord's Day.

There is a "Sunday Corner" in the *Liverpool Weekly Mercury*, and it is full of beautiful things like the following: "The water of life is a sure cure for a thirsty soul." How lovely! And in Liverpool too, where so many prefer Scotch, Irish, and four-half!

The *Dublin Leader* advertises "Pure Altar Wine—sweet, medium, or dry" at twenty shillings a dozen. That cheap liquor is transmogrified by "holy fathers" into the precious Blood of Christ. Who said that the age of miracles was past?

Dr. Campbell Morgan, the man of God who poses so sentimentally before the photographer's camera, preached his second sermon at Westminster Chapel on Sunday, and his sermon seems to have been like the Psalmist's body—fearfully and wonderfully made. According to the *Daily News*, which is too pious a paper to misrepresent him, he said some curious things about the Bible, and incidentally about Voltaire.

"The preacher reminded his hearers that it was Voltaire who declared, soon after the establishment of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804, that it took twelve men to establish Christianity, but that one man (whom Voltaire modestly meant as himself) would demolish it. He declared that within a hundred years from the time he (Voltaire) wrote the Bible would be relegated to the dusty shelves of the mere antiquarian and would have gone out of use. Now, what were the facts of the case? One hundred years had passed since the inception of the British and Foreign Bible Society in London, and to-day the Scriptures were translated into languages which might be understood by seven-tenths of the whole human race."

Such is the stuff which is gravely ladled out to a Christian congregation by a leading Christian preacher. Voltaire did not say what Dr. Campbell Morgan says he did after the establishment of the Bible Society. Voltaire was not living in 1804. He died in 1778. That little bit of chronology lets all the gas out of Dr. Campbell Morgan's balloon.

"A Hypocrite" joins in the *Daily Telegraph* "Do We Believe?" correspondence. This frank person is "a school-master in a large London school." He has to give the children "religious instruction." But he "does not believe in many stories of the Bible," and he regards Jesus as simply a good man. But the children ask him "Is it true?" and he says "Yes." This is what Dr. Clifford is fighting to uphold in the State schools.

Barnsley has been evangelised by a wonderful gentleman called J. B. Priestly. According to an account of his career, in the local *Independent*, he was appointed at the age of sixteen as "lecturer for the Free Thought Society, at a salary of £250 a year, and travelled all over the country giving lectures on Infidelity." He gained great popularity as "The Boy Infidel," but at the age of nineteen, in 1898, he was converted by "Mr. Alfred Mace, the converted prize fighter." Afterwards he was at Magerfontein, and held up the dying head of General Wauchope. Of course the Barnsley Christians believe all this. What would they not believe? But the fact is that this J. B. Priestly is a romantic liar. We do not remember any Freethought lecturer of that name; there has been no "Boy Infidel" in our time; and the Freethought Society that can pay lecturers £250 a year has yet to exist in England.

Mr. Foote's Lecturing Engagements.

Sunday, November 20, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester, at 3, "What Japan's Victory Means"; at 6.30, "Robert Blatchford's New Crusade: the Right and the Wrong of It."

November 27, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—Address, 241 High-road, Leyton.—November 20, Coventry; 27, Birmingham. December 4, Leicester; 11, Liverpool.

J. LLOYD'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 11, Manchester. January 22, Birmingham. February 12, Leicester.

ROMONT.—Thanks for the cutting, which will be dealt with either this or next week. We do not know of any Freethought paper published in Ireland. There is a very liberal monthly magazine called *Dana*, however, which you might like to see. It is published at sixpence by Hodges, Figgis and Co., Lord Grafton-street, Dublin. Glad to hear you have just been reading *Bible Romances*, *God and My Neighbor*, and the *Riddle of the Universe* and found them "more than good."

J. C. POINTE.—Very glad to receive your letter. Yes, we recollect hearing from you on board the battleship you mention. Your offer to give your Salvationist visitor your twopenny *Freethinker* for his penny *War Cry* was amusing, and his declining the deal was characteristic. We are pleased to hear that you took your revenge by distributing copies of *God at Chicago* and pamphlet chapters of *Bible Romances* amongst his crowd. His denouncing you as an "accursed infidel" was only what you might have expected. In spite of all their "brotherhood," we wouldn't give twopenny for the lives of Freethinkers if Booth and his Army had the upper hand in England. We quite share your high opinion of "Chilperic's" articles. Your suggestion as to a special page every week in the simplest possible language has often occurred to us. It may be realised some day, either in the *Freethinker* or elsewhere. Thanks for all your personal compliments and good wishes.

F. TESCHELIT.—Thanks for the handbill. See "Acid Drops." If you hear from the reverend gentleman you might let us know. Pleased to hear you are looking forward to our Queen's Hall lectures in December so eagerly.

A. G. LYE.—Thanks for letter and cuttings. See paragraphs.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings. Your valued communication will appear in our next issue.

R. J. MACDONALD.—Must hold it over till next week, when we hope to give it attention.

JOHN BASSETT.—Percy Redfern's article was noticed when it appeared in the *Clarion*. He may have been a Secularist once, but it must have been a very long time ago. His article shows that he is built on sentimental lines.

H. W. P. writes: "I have just finished reading your interesting *Reminiscences of Charles Bradlaugh*, and I notice that you consider that 'Mr. Bradlaugh had not the temperament of a billiard player.' Would you mind kindly stating in a brief answer what you regard as the true temperament of a good billiard player?" Mr. Bradlaugh had a perfectly cool judgment, and could control his natural impulsiveness common to great orators for the sake of a sufficient object, but not for a game of billiards. The perfect billiard temperament may be seen in John Roberts, who "has no nerves," in the sense that they never give him any trouble. We have not seen him for years, but he used to play (winning or losing) like a beautiful machine. Roberts has (or had) a perfect eye, a perfect judgment for angles and "side," a perfect composure of self-confidence, a perfect steadiness of nerves, and a perfect connection of brain and hand. Nobody ever saw the great John ruffled—at billiards.

ANNI-HUMBURG.—Your Christian friend's story is as true as gospel. Mr. Foote never opposed the late "black champion," Celestine Edwards, for ten minutes, or any other number of minutes, either at the Manchester Free Trade Hall or elsewhere.

G. E. B.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks for sending us the paper. We hope the *Barnsley Independent* will have the candor to notice our paragraph.

W. HILL.—Yes, these big defaulters are generally "good Christians" well connected with "the religious life of the town."

F. H.—Full this week; will appear in next.

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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.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day (Nov. 20) in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester. In the afternoon at 3 he will deal with a very important question, "What Japan's Victory Means." In the evening at 6.30 he will speak on "Robert Blatchford's New Crusade: the Right and the Wrong of It." This will be an entirely new lecture, and should draw *Clarion* readers as well as *Freethinker* readers in Manchester—to say nothing of the general public. South Lancashire friends should please note.

The sixpenny edition of Mr. Foote's *Bible Romances* is having a good sale, and we may judge from it what the sale would be if the book were not so generally boycotted. *Reynolds's Newspaper* is the only journal that has given it a word of notice, and the booksellers who make a display of Mr. Blatchford's *God and My Neighbor* affect the belief that there must be something very dreadful in any volume written by the wicked editor of the *Freethinker*. Perhaps it is a good thing for Mr. Blatchford that there is somebody worse than himself—somebody on whom the venom of bigotry can be first expended. Mr. Foote has paid, and will have to pay, the penalty of being a pioneer; but happily his shoulders are built to bear a fairly heavy burden. Still, the support of his friends is always welcome, and it is hoped that they will continue to do their best to place *Bible Romances* into the hands of as many people as possible.

Mr. Foote's friends are also asked to do what they can to help the boycotted *Freethinker* along. Its circulation has been improving of late, and there is no reason why it should not go on improving. It is a good plan for its readers to pass their weekly copy on when they have done with it; or, if they like to keep it by them, to purchase a second copy for lending around to their friends and acquaintances. We are also willing to post a copy of the *Freethinker* for six consecutive weeks to anyone whose address is sent us as that of a person likely to be interested in its contents. Such addresses should be forwarded direct to the business Manager at our publishing office.

Readers of the *Freethinker* are requested to help us by the very simple plan of placing it in the hands of their friends. This is a cheap and effective mode of advertising. We frequently hear of subscribers who have been introduced to the *Freethinker* in this way. A letter from an Irish correspondent lies before us at the present moment, in which he says:—"I have only just come to know your valuable paper, although I have been a Freethinker for years. It was handed me a few months ago by a friend, and I have had it regularly since, and will continue to."

Mr. Cohen had two capital meetings at Birmingham on Sunday. He reports that there was "quite an unusual number of likely young fellows there"—which we are extremely glad to hear. Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures at Coventry to-day (Nov. 20), and we hope the local "saints" have done their level best to secure him excellent audiences.

The South Shields friends have arranged for Mr. Lloyd to lecture in the Tivoli, Laygate, High Shields, on Sunday, November 27; in the morning on "The Way to Heaven," and in the evening upon "Ourselves and Our Relations in Nature." Local Freethinkers will welcome this opportunity of again hearing Mr. Lloyd.

Both the *Coventry Reporter* and the *Midland Daily Telegraph* notice Mr. Foote's offer to debate with a representative local Christian and let the proceeds go to some unsectarian local charity. The Rev. G. Bainton, who took Mr. Foote's afternoon subject for his evening sermon, writes to Mr. Lye, who sent him a personal invitation, that he "would personally enjoy such an encounter," but he prefers to counteract Freethought influences "through his own ministry." No doubt.

We see by the last number to hand of the *Liberal Review* (Chicago) that its editor, Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, had a pleasant journey homewards from Rome, and that he resumed his lecturing for the Independent Religious Society

on Sunday, October 16, when the Grand Opera House was crowded from the platform to the doors. The subject of Mr. Mangasarian's address was "Rome and the Liberal Congress." We note that the *Chicago Tribune*, *Record-Herald*, *Chronicle*, and *Evening Post* all published interviews with Mr. Mangasarian on his return from Rome; while the *Tribune* and *Evening Post* contained two letters each from his pen on European problems. Which shows a great deal more press liberality than is to be found in any English big city. But then Mr. Mangasarian himself finds that "The press in France, Italy, and even in Spain is less hampered by convention and prejudice than the press of Chicago or New York." So that England seems behind all the world in this respect.

Mr. Mangasarian has some very interesting Notes on the Rome Congress in the *Liberal Review*. Incidentally he quotes, with acknowledgment, our translation of Berthelot's fine letter to the Congress. Mr. Mangasarian also reproduces from the *Freethinker* the paragraphs in our Rome articles about himself, which he says are "sincerely appreciated by the editor of the *Liberal Review*, as well as by the members of the Independent Religious Society."

We look forward with interest to Mr. Mangasarian's account of the "men whom he had the honor to meet at the Rome Congress." Meanwhile it is pleasant to hear him speaking of "Mr. G. W. Foote, whom to know is one of the pleasures of life." We are glad to think that Mr. Mangasarian remembers us with some of the pleasure with which we shall always remember him.

Thursday, November 10, may be a great day in French history. It was the day on which M. Combes, the French Premier, introduced a Bill for the separation of Church and State.

Dana (an Irish Magazine of Independent Thought) for November opens with a bright, characteristic "Memory of Parnell" by R. B. Cunninghame-Graham. There is also an admirable article by John Eglinton on "Sincerity." We hope this magazine is extending its circulation. It is bound to do good amongst the Irishmen who will read it.

We always allowed that Queen Victoria was above the average in religious liberality. She was fairly sound on the Sunday question, and took no heed of Sabbatarian bigots who cried out against her allowing a military band to play on the Terrace at Windsor on Sunday afternoons. Many stories are told to her credit in such matters. It is said that a Bishop once declared in her presence that he couldn't bear Dissenters, and that she replied, "I'm afraid you will have to put up with them in Heaven." It is rather significant, too, that her favorite daughter, who married the Crown Prince of Prussia, afterwards Emperor Frederick of Germany, was hated by the bigots of Berlin for her liberal tendencies in religion and her friendship for Strauss, the famous author of the *Life of Jesus*. Some of our readers, too, will be glad to meet with the following story told by the late Sir John R. Robinson (of the *Daily News*) in his recently-published *Fifty Years of Fleet-Street* :—

"The Queen, who was impatient of the ordinary Evangelical phraseology, protested strongly when one of the Court ladies said, 'Oh, madam, how delightful it will be in heaven to see the prophets and saints of the past; to see Abraham, and Moses, and Elijah, and David.' 'No, no,' said her Majesty emphatically, 'nobody will ever persuade me to know David!'"

This honest outburst of a woman's good instincts may be set against the laborious hypocrisy with which so many men have glozed over the character of the "man after God's own heart"—from Thomas Carlyle down to the latest apologists of Bible morality.

Professor William Knight's *Retrospects* contains the following passage, which will probably be of considerable interest to our own readers :—

"Mr. Goldwin Smith, who spent a few hours with me the other day, is much struck, on returning to this country, with the enormous spread of absolute and aggressive atheism among the educated English, as well as the general disintegration of religious belief throughout a still wider stratum of society less dogmatically disposed; and he insists strongly on the importance of presenting the 'grounds of Natural Religion' in a persuasive and reasonable way to the minds of thoughtful and serious people. The place into which the Bible was forced—and whence it has fallen—being vacated, historical religion cannot be appealed to again till under it is planted the support of a true spiritual philosophy and a tenable interpretation of nature."

The interesting part of this extract, of course, is Mr. Goldwin Smith's admission as to the spread of Atheism in England. His view as to how "Natural Religion" might be promoted is of no special importance.

A Seventeenth-Century Philosopher.

WE confess to a considerable amount of interested curiosity in turning over the leaves of such books as have preserved for us the reflections and moralisings of an earlier generation. It savors of triteness to remark that we live in an age of hurry and bustle, when solid thought is scanty and hasty generalisation only too common. But the remark, though not new, is nevertheless true; and it is almost with a feeling of relief that one turns aside for a brief space from the fret and ferment of modern thought to commune with the minds of those who speculated and wrote when printing was a leisurely process, and when men were content to spend years over the production of a single work.

Considerations such as these must constitute our apology for adverting to the literary output of so old-fashioned an author as Sir Thomas Browne. The writer of *Religio Medici* and other more learned if less well-known works (such as his treatises on *Vulgar Errors* and *Urn Burial*) flourished during the seventeenth century. His life and writings furnish us with a truly remarkable example of scholarly detachment from the actualities of existence. The works named above, together with *The Garden of Cyrus*, were all either composed or published between 1640 and 1660, during which period England had experienced the horrors of a Civil War and had executed her monarch. Yet (to quote the words of a sympathetic critic) no syllable in any of these writings, notwithstanding their profound and penetrative meditations upon vicissitudes in human lives and empires, betrays the author's partizanship in the tragedy enacted on the world's great stage around him.

Sir Thomas Browne was by profession a physician, but by nature a student and close observer of the curious. For his day he had seen a good deal of the manners and customs of foreign countries, and he was versed in many languages. We can gather from his writings that his range of reading must have been exceptionally wide, and the extent and profundity of his learning cannot be questioned. It is true that to many it must seem that Sir Thomas Browne was a scholar who wasted a vast amount of patient and ingenious research upon subjects of little interest and no permanent value, and whose erudition bordered dangerously on the pedantic. And such a judgment would be fairly correct were we to take into account solely his *Enquiry into Vulgar Errors*. But though he was the "possessor of vast and recondite learning," he was something more. He was not a mere bookworm, but a man whose interests were many-sided, and who withal lived a very happy domestic life. And his reputation both as thinker and literary stylist really rests upon his *Religio Medici*—a work which, despite its archaic diction and an unfortunate tendency of its author to coin preposterous words, is still regarded as one of the masterpieces of English prose. It has been accorded the discriminating praise of such diverse literary authorities as Dr. Johnson, Coleridge, and Addington Symonds.

But it is as a candid and mildly egotistical revelation of the author's inner thoughts that the *Religio Medici* appeals more peculiarly to us personally. It presents to the reader the picture—not altogether an uncommon one even to-day—of a man of deep learning and wide information who was nevertheless woefully narrow-minded in some things. To be sure the mental limitations of Sir Thomas Browne could not be considered extraordinary in the first half of the seventeenth century—and in England. His limitations were to a great extent the limitations of his age. Even otherwise acute thinkers had not yet outgrown that peculiar frame of mind engendered by the *Scholasticism* of the Church of Rome—a frame of mind that permitted of a given theory being considered as at once philosophically true and theologically false. Such a state of mind must have

been utterly destructive of clear and straight reasoning upon any scientific or religious problem whatever. And here again we may ask—Are there not many to-day who labor strenuously but ineffectually to bring about a similarly absurd compromise between religion and science?

We need not, then, be unduly severe on the author of *Religio Medici* for not being so very far in advance of the thought of his time. He was not, in the strict sense of the phrase, a philosophical pioneer: his genius was rather of the rhetorical order. Yet Freethinkers may account it to him for righteousness that his moralisings on religion, the Scriptures, and human life were accorded the distinction of being placed on the *Index Expurgatorius* of the Roman Church. Some of his ideas, at any rate, were sufficiently heterodox to alarm the inquisitorial censors of morals and of faith at the Vatican. How sad it is, however, to reflect that a man of the undoubted culture and attainments of Sir Thomas Browne could not only believe in witchcraft and demonic possession, but could actually appear in evidence against two helpless victims of popular superstition, and so help to secure their conviction. And this was the learned and industrious compiler of a treatise on vulgar errors!

We are not aware what it was in the contents of the *Religio Medici* that specifically called forth the condemnation of the Church of Rome. We are inclined to think that it was the air of frank criticism which pervades much of the work, rather than the downright heterodoxy of any one section of it, that proved obnoxious to the Congregation of the Index. For, to say truth, though there are many passages in the book calculated to bring a smile to the lips of the modern reader, there is nothing very startling within its pages. But the following sentences embody an idea which the holy fathers of the Roman Church could not be expected to regard with favor. Thomas Browne says:—

"It moves not my spleen to behold the multitude in their proper humors; that is, in their fits of folly and madness, as well understanding that wisdom is not profaned unto the world. *They that endeavor to abolish vice destroy also virtue*; for contraries, though they destroy one another, are yet the life of one another. Thus virtue [if you abolish vice] is [or becomes] merely an idea."

The italics are ours, and we have interpolated the words between brackets in order to bring out the author's meaning more clearly. It will be perceived from the above passage that worthy Sir Thomas had a glimmering perception of an idea that Spencer in our own day manipulated to some purpose.

Perhaps the lynx-eyed critics of Rome fastened on the passage in which Sir Thomas repudiated belief in the ridiculous story of the Last Judgment that is commonly associated with the Valley of Jehosaphat. The passage referred to deserves to be quoted in full, as its author, curiously enough, seems to have anticipated the excuses of quite modern apologists for the Bible.

"I cannot dream (he says) that there should be at the last day any such judicial proceeding, or calling to the bar, as indeed the Scripture seems to imply, and the literal commentators do conceive: for unspeakable mysteries in the Scriptures are often delivered in a vulgar and illustrative way, and, being written unto man, are delivered, not as they truly are, but as they may be understood; wherein, notwithstanding, the different interpretations according to different capacities may stand firm with our devotion, nor be any way prejudicial to each single edification."

Allowing for the obsolete modes of expression in the foregoing quotation, might it not pass as an extract from the deliverances of some of our twentieth century Higher Critics, who are so busily explaining the Bible away, yet are so afraid of facing the logical consequences of their own reasoning.

The pages of Sir Thomas Browne are full of quaint conceits and amusing fancies for such as have patience to follow his amiable ramblings. He had a decided penchant for investigating all sorts of out-of-the-way questions. He argues, in all seriousness, that Adam, having been expressly *made*, and

not born of woman, could not have possessed a navel. He would have been content "that we might procreate like trees," without conjunction of the sexes. He had, of course, no knowledge of sex in plant life. There is also something grimly funny about his objection to those who labored to contrive a commonwealth without poverty, that their success would mean the taking away of "the object of our charity." And he quotes as glibly as any modern the well-known saying ascribed to Christ which has done duty so often with good Christians in search of an excuse for the extremes of wealth and poverty around us.

When our author comes to deal with dreams one can perceive the common sense and practical knowledge of the physician successfully struggling against his credulity as regards things supernatural. Who can therefore wonder (he asks) that Chrysostom should dream of St. Paul, who daily read his epistles; or that Cardan, whose head was so taken up with the stars, should dream that his soul was in the moon. And he suggests that Pythagoras might have enjoyed calmer sleep had he abstained from beans, and that even Daniel, the great interpreter of dreams, in his "leguminous diet," made a bad choice of food if he desired peaceful rest at night.

But though Sir Thomas Browne's *Vulgar Errors* has been described as a book dealing with "the obsolete curiosities of an antiquated cabinet," we agree with Addington Symonds that it would be uncritical to regard the author merely as a literary Don Quixote, tilting against windmills. The writer who inveighs against superstitious ideas can never be engaged in a work of supererogation. Sir Thomas reminds us that it is impossible to extirpate a heresy, for "heresies perish not with their authors." It seems to be equally impossible to finally destroy a superstitious idea. You may imagine it to be comfortably dead and buried, but it always reappears in some other shape, and the higher intellects of each successive generation are compelled to the task of slaying it afresh. One sometimes wonders if it is to be ever thus. However that may be, and though works such as those of Sir Thomas Browne speedily become out of date, there is still abundant scope for those who aspire to be instrumental in exposing vulgar errors.

Although to the present-day critic much of the literary productions of this old, seventeenth-century philosopher may seem utterly valueless, yet amongst the dross one comes upon many traces of better metal. In his pages we may find more than one golden sentence. Freethinkers to-day might heartily echo his plea that those who "prudently exalt new enquiries" do not necessarily thereby disparage the achievements of antiquity. And all who have suffered under the tyranny of the dead hand would sympathise with his protest against making "them the judges of truth who were but fellow enquirers of it."

The surprising reluctance of the average Christian to enter on the joys of eternal life is well known to us all. The hopeful candidates for immortality, of every grade in life from the humblest devotee to the Pope on his throne, do all in their power to keep out of heaven as long as possible. There are exceptions, but they are too few to count. This tendency on the part of Christians, which gives the lie to their professions, appears to have been noticeable also in Sir Thomas Browne's day. He comments as follows: "For a pagan there may be some motives to be in love with life; but, for a Christian to be amazed at death, I see not how he can escape this dilemma—that he is too sensible of this life, or hopeless of the life to come."

As an example of how a scholar of parts could accept as a Christian what he rejected as a Scientist and Philosopher, it may be noted that Sir Thomas—who apparently believed in the orthodox version of the conception and birth of Christ—firmly rejected the idea that generation could result from the intercourse of spirits with human beings. How he reconciled the two positions we know not.

One final extract from the *Religio Medici* as illustrating the manner in which sound sense and reason can be combined with mere foolishness. The author is, in effect, arguing against the reference of any event to chance or fortune. And he continues, "there is no liberty for causes to operate in a loose and straggling way; nor any effect whatsoever but hath its warrant from some universal or superior cause. 'Tis not a ridiculous devotion to say a prayer before a game at tables; for even.....in matters of greatest uncertainty there is a settled and pre-ordered course of effects. It is we that are blind, not fortune." Were ever two more contradictory propositions placed in juxtaposition? One would be inclined to suppose that the little word "not" (before the word "ridiculous") had been interpolated into the above passage or had slipped in accidentally, but for the fact that even in this year of grace otherwise intelligent men are guilty of similar intellectual inconsistency. We have all known people who maintained that God is immutable and his laws eternally fixed, while at the same time they committed the absurdity of praying that their personal desires might be gratified.

G. SCOTT.

An Aspect of the Rome Congress.

THE most significant fact about the recent gathering of the representatives of modern thought in the Eternal City was the generous hospitality of the Italian Government, which placed the College of Rome at the disposal of the Congress. The Government's conduct in this matter was, perhaps, influenced by political motives; but, be that as it may, we are morally certain that the Protestant and enlightened Government of America would not have shown the same tolerance had the Congress convened in Washington instead of in Rome. No Government building or even public hall in America would have been placed at their service, free of cost, as was the Collegio Romano by the civil authorities of Rome. We boast that America is the greatest and freest country in the world, and no doubt it is worthy of much of our praise; but when it comes to real religious liberty it must be conceded that the American mind still suffers from the Puritan pinch and is deficient in largeness and generosity. The Continental people, in spite of their papal training, have a finer sense of religious freedom than have we. We have no hesitation in saying that the desire to conquer perfect freedom—to remould society after a nobler pattern—is just at present more evident in Europe than it is in our country. Such a gathering as the Rome Congress would not have been, I am afraid, possible in our puritanic America. In matters of religion there is in Latin Europe a sincerity, a daring, against which we have nothing to show except what Emerson calls *cant*, which is the mortal sin of the English-speaking world. The press in France, Italy, and even in Spain, seemed to us less hampered by convention and prejudice than the press of Chicago or New York. The freedom of speech is as firmly established on the Continent as is the freedom of the press. We had the good fortune to meet Ferdinand Buisson, professor of pedagogy in the University of Paris and a member of the French Parliament. This distinguished scholar started in life as a Protestant preacher, but resigned from the Church as soon as his mind had matured, and is now the president of the Alliance of the Liberal Thinkers of France. Yet M. Buisson lost neither his chair at the Sorbonne nor his seat at the Chamber of Deputies for his anti-theological views. Is it just as safe in this country to drop orthodoxy? Minister Combes, who is to-day a power in progressive Europe, is an ex-priest. What career would there be in the United States for an ex-priest? Even the Protestants here would look down upon him as a renegade—one who had broken his holy vows and betrayed his cause. But in France an ex-priest may aspire to and attain the highest positions of responsibility and influence. The French Government voted a sum of money to pay the expenses of the French delegates to the Rome Congress. What charming impartiality! The rights of the liberal thinker are as much respected in France as those of the Roman Catholic. But, just across the Channel from France, over in England, the Established Church and the Nonconformists are constantly quarreling as to who shall have the public funds, without either party so much as imagining that those who belong neither to the one party nor to the other have an equal right to the same funds. We are inclined to infer from what we saw and heard in France

during our sojourn there that it is the only country at present where it is absolutely unprofitable to play the religious hypocrite.—Mr. M. M. Mangasarian, "*Liberal Review*," Chicago.

A Shelley Story.

I WAS returning home one night to Hampstead after the Opera. As I approached the door, I heard strange and alarming shrieks, mixed with the voice of a man. The next day it was reported by the gossips that Mr. Shelley, no Christian (for it was he who was there), had brought some "very strange female" into the house, no better, of course, than she ought to be. The real Christian had puzzled them. Shelley, in coming to our house that night, had found a woman lying near the top of the hill, in fits. It was a fierce winter night, with snow upon the ground; and winter loses nothing of its fierceness at Hampstead. My friend, always the promptest as well as most pitying on these occasions, knocked at the first house he could reach, in order to have the woman taken in. The invariable answer was, that they could not do it. He asked for an outhouse to put her in, while he went for a doctor. Impossible! In vain he assured them she was no impostor. They would not dispute the point with him; but doors were closed, and windows were shut down. The paucity of Christians is astonishing considering the number of them. Time flies; the poor woman is in convulsions; her son, a young man, lamenting over her. At last my friend sees a carriage driving up to a house at a little distance. The knock is given; the warm door opens; servants and lights pour forth. Now, thought he, is the time. He puts on his best address, which anybody might recognise for that of the highest gentleman as well as of an interesting individual, and plants himself in the way of an elderly person, who is stepping out of the carriage with his family. He tells his story. They only press on the faster. "Will you go and see her?" "No, sir; there's no necessity for that sort of thing, depend on it. Impostors swarm everywhere: the thing cannot be done; sir, your conduct is extraordinary." "Sir," cried Shelley, assuming a very different manner, and forcing the flourishing householder to stop out of astonishment, "I am sorry that *your* conduct is *not* extraordinary; and if my own seems to amaze you, I will tell you something which may amaze you a little more, and I hope will frighten you. It is such men as you who madden the spirits of the poor and wretched; and if ever a convulsion comes in this country (which is very probable) recollect what I tell you:—you will have your house, that you refuse to put the miserable woman into, burnt over your head." "God bless me, sir! Dear me, sir!" exclaimed the poor frightened man, and fluttered into his mansion. The woman was then brought to our house, which was at some distance, and down a bleak path (it was the Vale of Health); and Shelley and her son were obliged to hold her till the doctor could arrive. It appeared that she had been attending this son in London, on a criminal charge made against him, the agitation of which had thrown her into the fits on her return. The doctor said that she would have perished, had she lain there a short time longer. The next day my friend sent mother and son comfortably to Hendon, where they were known, and whence they returned him thanks full of gratitude.

Leigh Hunt's "*Autobiography*," Chapter xv.

Concordat Finance.

The editor of the *Aurora* is publishing some remarkable facts concerning the State's pecuniary support of religion, which are sure to be quoted again in the Chambers when the Separation debate begins in the first or second month of next year.

The conclusion of M. Clemenceau's analyses is that the State—that is, the taxpayers of France—pays the clergy nearly four millions sterling a year over and above the amount they are entitled to by Napoleon's bargain with Pope Pius VII.

"M. Rouvier, the Finance Minister," says M. Clemenceau, "wants £2,400,000 wherewith to start his Old-Age Pensions. I have shown him where he may find the money."

Here are the principal figures in M. Clemenceau's statement. The Budget of Public Worship for next year amounts to £1,695,400. But on the basis and scale provided for in the Concordat signed by Napoleon and the Pope the amount should not exceed £151,200.

How has this vast difference arisen? Largely, but not exclusively, through the increase in the number of Bishops and Curés since 1801, and through the inclusion of classes of priests unrecognised when the Concordat was agreed to.

In 1801 there were ten Archbishops and fifty Bishops; there are now seventeen and sixty-seven respectively. In other words, a total addition of twenty-four dioceses. The number of Curés in 1801 is difficult, if not impossible, to discover. But it could not have exceeded the present number—3,452, in accepting which M. Clemenceau makes a liberal concession to the clerical side.

The Concordat made a legal, fixed provision for a definite number of Bishops, Archbishops, and Curés. It recognised no other orders or ranks. But gradually since 1801 whole hosts of vicars, vicars-general, and curates have been put upon the State pay list.

Protestant pastors and Jewish Rabbis were not provided for in the Concordat. But ultimately they were included, chiefly on the ground that as there was no Established Church in France the State should help all or none.

Adding up salaries to vicars, curates, canons, and others not known to the Concordat, allowances of various sorts, special credits, expenditure on building and repairs, M. Clemenceau finds that the cost of subsidising the Catholic Church in France and the Colonies far exceeds the amount shown in the annual Budget; that it comes to nearly a hundred million francs (four million pounds) in excess of the annual sum contemplated in the Concordat.

What Was Esau's "Birthright" ?

In the scabrous book of Genesis (c. xxv., v. 29) we are informed "And Jacob *sod* pottage." What he "sod" it for, how he "sodded" it, and whether he "sodded" it for sale in pennyworths to wandering savages of his tribe, is more than I know, or than Genesis tells. However, "sod" it he did; and Esau, after a hard day's swinking in the fields, was faint with hunger, and, believing himself at death's door—he was but a boy some millionth part of a second older than his infamous twin brother Jacob—agreed to part with his "birthright" for "a mess of that same red pottage," as Jacob refused to sell, or give, or lend his lentil soup on any lower terms to his dying brother. Indeed, Jacob made Esau swear to him that, in exchange for a pennyworth of soup of red lentils and a pennyworth of bread, he (Esau) would sell him (Jacob) his (Esau's) birthright.

Now, presumably Jacob "did" his brother "a thick 'un"—*comme on dit*; I say presumably, because if Jacob sold Esau twopenn'orth of food it is a fair presumption that Esau's birthright was worth three-ha'pence at least, and possibly sixpence. In the latter case Jacob would make 200 per cent. on the deal, which, seeing that Esau was his brother, may be considered a modest interest for an early Jew—and a mere boy at that. The age of the doer and the done may be put at eighteen. Their papa, Isaac, was then, at the time of the pottage swindle, some seventy-eight years of age. He lived, much worried though he was by the lying and lascivious Jacob, until his 180th birthday. So I take it the gentleman that "sod pottage" had to wait for 102 years before he got Esau's "birthright."

This record sale of lentil soup occurred some 250 years after Jah had drowned every living thing except the crowd in the ark. Putting the increase in the population at a liberal estimate, based on its doubling every twenty years, and taking the human population of the ark to have been one father, three sons, and two daughters (and considering that this incestuous breeding in-and-in was not likely to be over-fecund, our estimate of the increase, even if we admit Noah as a factor in it either with his daughters or double granddaughters, it will be seen that our estimate is liberal), we may say that when Esau gulped down the soup and gobbled up the bread the total population of the globe was 11,420, or thereabouts—about the population of the island of Guernsey to-day. It is true this calculation is rendered somewhat unreliable owing to the great age to which some of this incestuous family lived, some of them being mere chickens at 250 years of age. However, many did not begin to breed until their years were well on to a hundred, and others, whilst living, like Methuselah, for some 900 years, left but the name of one child on record, though alleged to have had others, which is quite likely, seeing that Methuselah did not begin begetting children until he was 187 years old, and that even then he does not appear to have been married. Possibly, in the case of so confirmed a young bachelor, it was not thought wise to put any formalities in the way of his becoming a family man!

What was Esau's "birthright," then? Was it the 11,420th "lay" of the money Abraham obtained by prostituting his wife under the pretence that she was his "sister"—what an old game the "sister" racket is, eh?—to the sexual embraces of Pharaoh (another of the family of Noah!) and of Abimelech, the spontaneously generated? Or was it his

share by birth in the squalid scoundrelism of the Noah family that Esau sold to Jacob? If we may judge from Jacob's career subsequent to the soup and bread "squeeze," it was probably the latter, as Esau turned out to be about the only member of the family of Noah of whom we have any record, on the male side at least (excepting, also, Ishmael, who was, as a baby, kicked out of his birthright by Abraham, his illegitimate father), who did not deserve hard labor at Dartmoor for life. Whatever the "birthright" may have been, it was surely personal property of some kind, since, with a population of less than 12,000 on the whole earth, landed estate must have been sold by the continent, and not by the acre, square yard, or foot. As Esau was a mighty hunter, and had a whole world to shoot over, what could he want with asses or goats or sheep? Camels don't seem at that time to have been known—possibly the two in the ark had bolted into the wilderness as soon as released, and the Noah boys had no time to recapture them. No; I think it was really either some of Abraham's pandar-money or Esau's share in the general blackguardism of his family which constituted his birthright, and that in either case Jacob was the quite natural purchaser.

GENESIOLOGIST.

P.S.—I don't ask why Esau was not given a plate of porridge by his papa or his mamma, or one of his sisters or his cousins or his aunts, or by whatever terms you can describe his consanguineous relatives. 'Twould spoil the story.—G.

Correspondence.

DO WE BELIEVE?

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

(a) I do believe, if I proclaimed myself a Freethinker, the good dear Christians would stop my bread-and-butter and persecute me.

(b) I do believe that the worst persecutors are in the pulpits.

(c) I do believe that 50 per cent. of the clergy and educated laity know that the doctrine of the Trinity is absolutely false—a sham and a fraud.

(d) I do believe that the *Daily Telegraph* (with a Jewish proprietor) is only inserting orthodox letters and putting the others in the waste-paper basket—this means CASH and POPULARITY!

(e) I do believe that Freethought, Truth, and Justice will conquer in the end, and make this world brighter and better than it is to-day.

(f) I do believe that Christian cowardice, superstition, ignorance, and impudence have met their match in modern progress and civilisation, and the big house built on sand is near to a deserving fall.

(g) I do believe that not one Christian sect would give Freethinkers an atom of justice or fair play on platform or in the press.

(h) I do believe that the bulk of Christians are humbugs and hypocrites, given over to religious madness.

JAMES SHIRLEY EAGLESON.

THE RESILIENCY OF TRUTH.

A New York jurist tells the following story of a lawyer who used to practice before him when he was a judge of the Supreme Court of Alabama:—

"The old man," he says, "was powerful with a jury, and had a big practice. He was fond of quoting from the classics, and it didn't matter to him whether the quotations were accurate or not. The jury never knew the difference.

"In one case before me he tried to wind up his peroration by quoting the lines beginning 'Truth crushed to earth will rise again.' He began, 'Gentlemen of the jury, truth squashed to earth will rise again.'

"Then he hesitated, and tried to remember the rest of the quotation, failed, and went on: 'And, gentlemen, all hell can't keep her down.' He won his case."

A short time ago, a lady with an only child (aged seven) was entertaining the bishop of the diocese to afternoon tea. The small girl was allowed to come to tea, but her mother had instilled into her mind the necessity of speaking reverently to the bishop. Tea came, and with it the pangs of hunger; but, at the same time, her mother's warning, "speak reverently," was always before her. After sitting for about ten minutes gazing at the good things and repeating over and over again, "speak reverently," she exclaimed, "For God's sake pass me the bread and butter."

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.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, 61 New Church-road): 3.15, Religious Freethought Parliament; J. Hampden Davis, subject, "Determinism"; 7.30, F. A. Davies, "Was Jesus Original?"

EAST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Bromley Public Hall, Bow-road, E.): 7, P. H. Thomas, "The Service of Man."

SOUTH LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Masonic Hall, Camberwell New-road): 7, Dr. W. Sullivan, Lessing's "Nathan the Wise."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate, E.): Doors open 7, chair 7.30, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Religious Intolerance."

WEST LONDON ETHICAL SOCIETY (Town Hall, Kensington High-street): 11.15, Rev. J. H. Wicksteed, "Can We Still Worship?"

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Bull Ring Coffee House): Thursday, Nov. 24, at 8, R. Poole, "From Christianity to Atheism."

COVENTRY BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Baths Assembly Hall): 3, C. Cohen, "Some Old Problems with Modern Answers"; 7, "The Benefits of Unbelief."

FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Manchester Central Socialist Choir.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class. Open Discussion; 6.30, Social Meeting.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 3, J. Arthur Jones, "The Higher Criticism and the New Testament"; 7, H. Percy Ward, "The Ranting Revivalism of Dr. Torrey." Monday, 8, Rationalist Debating Society: T. W. Gowland, "Socialism and Progress."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Rusholme-road, Oxford-road, All Saints): 3, G. W. Foote, "What Japan's Victory Means"; 6.30, "Robert Blatchford's New Crusade: the Right and Wrong of It." Tea at 5.

OLDHAM SECULAR SOCIETY (St. George's Hall, corner of Lord-street and Rock-street): 6.45, Open Discussion: subject, "Secularism."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, final arrangements for Mr. Lloyd's lectures.

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