

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

We promise heaven, methinks, too cheaply, and assign large revenues to minors, incompetent to manage them. Epitaphs run upon this topic of consolation, till the very frequency induces a cheapness. Tickets for admission into Paradise are sculptured out at a penny a letter, twopence a syllable.—CHARLES LAMB.

Jesus at a Hanging.

LAUGHTER is better than medicine—and I have been having some. I have been reading a brief report of the annual meeting of the Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment. Well, the reader may say, that is a very odd subject for jesting. Not at all; not at all. It all depends on how you are built. If a man tells you a joke, and calls the next morning to know if you have seen it, you will of course think Capital Punishment a very serious thing—far too serious for laughter. But there you are mistaken. A laugh may be found almost anywhere; and for some people it has a curious way of lurking amongst the solemnities. Charles Lamb said that he got nearly turned out of church at a wedding, and once misconducted himself at a funeral. And although Charles Lamb was a great humorist he was also a profound and serious thinker—as your great humorist is pretty sure to be; for laughter and tears lie very close together, and we often laugh till we cry, and sometimes cry till we nearly laugh again; and, besides, Charles Lamb had enough of sad and solemn experience in life to make him serious, even if he had no natural bent in that direction. Nature, indeed, is the greatest of humorists, as well as the greatest of tragic dramatists. Heine pictured Brutus smelling the dagger with which he meant to stab Cæsar, to see if it retained a flavor of onions; and we all know with what infinite cunning, like that of Nature herself, wise Shakespeare mixed up the wit with the pathos in *Hamlet* and the marsh-fire of folly with the lightning of grief in *King Lear*.

Very well, then; one may be innocently mirthful even in the vicinity of Capital Punishment, and the understanding reader will need no further explanation; and as for the reader without understanding, he must be a very casual reader of a paper like the *Freethinker*.

And now let us get to business. The annual meeting aforesaid was presided over by Dr. Josiah Oldfield, who is a good Christian, as might be half inferred from his Biblical first name. Dr. Oldfield deduces all sorts of impossible virtues from the Bible; vegetarianism, for instance, although the first vegetarian was the first murderer, and his dietetic principles were most repugnant to Jehovah. I was not surprised, therefore, to find this Christian reformer complaining that Christians were not yet prepared for the abolition of capital punishment, after nearly two thousand years of Christianity. That was natural. The joke was that he seemed to see no discrepancy in the complaint. He even regretted to say that “nearly all the Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops still believed in the necessity of hanging.” Of course they do; they will be the last persons to give it up; but it was bad policy on Dr. Oldfield's part to emphasise the fact, and a

little sense of absurdity would have saved him from the blunder.

Several good Christians followed Dr. Oldfield. One of them was Mr. Atherley Jones, K.C., M.P. This gentleman thought that “the granting of the suffrage to women would solve this and many similar questions”—which is extremely unlikely, although this is no argument against woman suffrage; for it is the physically weak who are the most apt to favor the most violent forms of punishment, especially for crimes against themselves.

Another good Christian speaker—if he will pardon me for writing so plainly—was Dr. Stanton Coit. What he said, if I may judge by the report, was nothing in itself, but it echoed the talk of the hour about “conditions,” although murder is one of those crimes which have the least to do with “conditions,” in any proper and workable meaning of the word.

Then came the comedian of the occasion in the person of the Rev. Dr. Horton. This gentleman's long religious face only lent a piquancy to his entertaining effort. “In moving the re-election of the Council,” the report said, “he declared that for him the crucial question was ‘Can you imagine Jesus Christ at a hanging?’ Christ cured not by punishment (for instance, stoning the adulterer), but by forgiveness—‘go and sin no more.’” Dr. Horton forgot—or was he only trying it on?—that the story of the woman taken in adultery is one of the admitted interpolations of the New Testament. The editors of the Revised Version, even, felt bound to state that this story does not exist in the earliest manuscripts. But let that pass. Let us concentrate ourselves on that peculiar question about Christ. Can we imagine him at a hanging? Well, he was certainly present at *one* hanging. It was his own. (“Jesus Christ, whom ye slew, and hanged upon a tree.”) And why shouldn't he be present at somebody else's hanging? If he be God, as Dr. Horton teaches, he was present at every hanging that ever took place. Probably the reverend gentleman means that Jesus Christ could not be imagined as assisting (as the French say) at any man's execution. But what about the beautiful words—“Those mine enemies, that would not I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me”? Surely there is any amount of rope and gallows in a text like that.

How is it that men of God like the Rev. Dr. Horton supply unbelievers with so much amusement? Why did he drag Jesus Christ into the matter so gratuitously? It has only recently occurred to such gentlemen that he had any particular objection to the execution of any barbarous law that exists in Christian countries. When humanity stamps a law as savage the professional representative of Jesus Christ finds that he was always against it—only the way in which his views were stated raised a misconception that unfortunately lasted so many hundreds of years. But until humanity stamps a law as savage the professional representatives of Jesus Christ never discover that he was misrepresented. Altogether it is a pretty little game, several degrees worse than burglary or crimes of that kind. But it is infinitely amusing too, to a philosophic eye. And as, according to the report, Mr. G. B. Shaw was in the meeting, he must have picked up some capital matter for a future comedy.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Gloomy Outlook.

THERE are various opinions as to the cause of England's greatness. Some have attributed it to the elusive factor of "race," others have laid stress on our insular position, to our geographical position, or to our being first in the field with modern industrial developments; but, according to Dr. R. F. Horton, all these suggestions are wide of the mark. The real cause of England's greatness is the English Sunday; this is "the day that has made England what she is." And he is just as certain that if we go on Secularising Sunday at the present rate the days of England's greatness are numbered. One must admit that the last statement is as true as the first. If England became great because of the Puritan Sunday, and continues great only because of its influence, then obviously its disappearance will be the signal of our decay. Dr. Horton has said it, and Dr. Horton is acclaimed as a thinker—among Non-conformists—and he who traverses the statements of so eminent a man should do so with a full sense of the greatness of his daring, and of the risk he runs of aiding, even though it be unconsciously, the disintegration of a great people.

But there are several considerations that stand in the way of a complete acceptance of Dr. Horton's position. In the first place, the English, or, to be accurate, the British Sunday is, as its name implies, a peculiarly British institution. There is nothing quite like it elsewhere. Yet other countries, notably France and Germany, have progressed in its absence, and the people of these countries might conceivably claim to be ranked under the category of "great" nations. Doubtless it would be very foolish—from the Lyndhurst-road Chapel point of view—for them to make such a claim, but this does not prevent the claim being put forward. It would seem, therefore, since other nations develop in the absence of the British Sunday, and appear to be, taking one thing with the other, neither better nor worse than we are, that this institution is not quite so indispensable to a nation's welfare as Dr. Horton imagines. Of course, it might be contended that these people would have been much greater had they possessed the British Sunday, only the argument suggests the retort of the teetotal advocate who informed an octogenarian tippler that, but for drink, he might by that time have reached his century.

Next, the British Sunday, as Dr. Horton understands it, is really quite a modern affair. It does not date back more than two hundred years, and has not been observed with anything like strictness for more than a quarter of that period. Before the rise of the Puritans the English Sunday was much like the much-abused Continental Sunday, only more so. Sunday was very like any other holiday. There were games, sports, dances, even fairs and markets, business of State was conducted on Sunday, banquets held, royal processions witnessed. And something of England's greatness was surely achieved before a Puritan Parliament made enjoyment criminal during one-seventh of every person's life. England was England even during the Elizabethan period. It is true that it had not a Free Church Council, still it had Drake and Frobisher and Raleigh and Spenser and Bacon and Shakespeare, and many others whom these names will suggest. These men knew little of the "English Sunday," and cared for it less. And they certainly would be surprised, could they be made aware of it, to learn that England owes its greatness to an institution that would have seemed to them little else than a gloomy manifestation of religious dementia. So that it would appear, if Dr. Horton is correct, that the centuries preceding the seventeenth century had nothing whatever to do with building up the greatness of England—that, in fact, this greatness only began about the middle of the seventeenth century, and is entirely owing to an institution that has never really commanded the support of the people as a whole.

Dr. Horton is quite depressed when he thinks of what the Sunday has come to. "The rich," he says, "play golf or drive in motor-cars.....the middle class is very largely on bicycles or in boats or coming back from football matches. The working people, for the most part, sleep on Sunday morning, lounge on Sunday afternoon, and are in the public-house if it is wet, or perhaps in the open spaces if it is fine, on Sunday night.....And not content with making the railway tracks hideous on Sunday.....the peace of our Sunday morning service.....is now disturbed by the rush of motor-cars." One must have a heart of stone not to sympathise with the preacher in his dolorous plight. We may not see how the railway tracks are more hideous on Sunday than on any other day, but the latter portion of his lament breathes a truly Christian spirit. Knowing how much better is attending church than motoring, golfing, or rowing, he wishes to share this happiness with others, and therefore would compel them to cease such frivolous amusements. He is content in church, and so should all else be. Even the right of others spending the Sunday in a different manner to himself is a clear proof of the degradation that afflicts our lives. And he feels this because he is convinced that "every person who has broken the Sabbath to-day is a day's march nearer hell, has received into his body and soul another grain of the principle of death, has extinguished another flame of the light of God that was burning in him, and has sealed his fate, so far as one day can, not for life, but for eternity." Q. E. D.

If further proof be needed the preacher supplies it. "Science has made a discovery." Apparently science is a sabbatarian of the approved Lyndhurst Road type. When a six day's laborer has been examined, it is discovered that each day he consumes out of his own system an ounce of oxygen. He only recovers during the night five sixths of an ounce, so that by the time Sunday arrives he is one ounce to the bad. One can only say with Dominie Sampson, Prodigious! and wish that we knew the scientist so that he could be publicly thanked for discovering this great truth. How are we to recover this missing ounce? This is the great question. Obviously it cannot be recovered by boating, or driving, or motoring, by lying on ones back in a field, or walking about in open spaces. If it could be, the discovery would be of no use to the upholder of the English Sunday. The only way it can be recovered is by going to church or chapel. Only there can we receive the blessing of the gospel, and incidentally our lost ounce of oxygen. No wonder Dr. Horton announces that "I shall in future always use this as one of the greatest arguments for the inspiration of the Bible." It is certainly as good as any that Dr. Horton has ever used.

Dr. Horton does well to remind us of the benefits that the English Sunday has conferred on the community. On Sunday "Even the frivolous are awed, the vicious are rebuked, the weary rest, the earth-worn recover their touch with heaven." Only modesty could have caused Dr. Horton to give such a brief list of the effects of the English Sunday. For the ten generations during which it has existed have not passed without bearing fruit. But for the Sunday, children in thousands of homes might have lived their young lives without distinguishing Sunday from the rest of the week. They would have laughed, sang and played as freely then as on any other day. The Sunday alone taught them that there was a time to laugh and a time to be solemn, that great as God is he is not above marking the child that trundled hoop, rolled ball, blew trumpet, or sang songs on the day of rest, and will punish them hereafter for their misdeeds. Had the Sunday only existed for a generation its influence might have been soon lost, and people would have reverted to the frivolity of pre-puritan days. But ten generations have so purified the nation that, thanks to the long time people have been debarred spending Sunday in a worldly manner, a large number of the people have almost lost the taste for so-called rational enjoyment on Sunday, and are so far fitted for the kingdom of heaven. Other nations, too, have opened theatres,

music-halls, museums, libraries and the like, as so many means of robbing the people of their day of rest. We, the greatest of all nations, have been wiser in our generation. With a stern unbending morality we have forced them to choose between God's house and the public-house. No other attraction has been permitted. The opportunity of choice has been clear and definite, and the responsibility equally plain. Not that the Church has entered into competition with the publican. On the contrary, it has only opened when the public-house has closed. Then the churches were ready, as they are still, to take the people in.

Only one gleam of hope—short of restoring the sabbath in its old form—does Dr. Horton discover. And even this is of a sad kind. In Protestant Nuremberg he saw the theatres opened on Sunday, and saw the people walking in the gardens and laughing. Of course, the laughter "implied no real joy." How could people enjoy a laugh on Sunday? And Dr. Horton with profound penetration said to himself, "This German people are becoming a negligible quantity..... You English people need never dread German competition unless Germany recovers the sabbath and you lose it." So that our industries are safe so far as Germany is concerned. She has lost her sabbath and therefore her greatness. Pity it is that we retain our commercial supremacy at the price of German spiritual damnation, yet so it is; and so great is our own spiritual depravity that one would not be surprised, once this profound truth is grasped, to find English commercial men sending out agents to prevent the Germans regaining their lost sabbath, and so keep them in a condition of industrial subserviency.

Dr. Horton's sermon is well timed. One can detect only too plainly the growing desire to make Sunday a day of enjoyment and recreation, instead of a day of prayer and meditation. How often does one see nowadays children of even six and seven years of age going along the streets on Sunday laughing loudly as though the sabbath had been created to make people happy. A people who love laughter seldom fear God. Luxury breeds corruption, and the desire for happiness fosters unbelief. Above all, there is for the laboring man that missing ounce of oxygen. Think of it you laborers who never attend church. One ounce of oxygen lost every week. And if we take fifteen as the age at which one starts work, by the time a non-going laborer reaches fifty he has lost nearly *one hundred and fourteen pounds* of that important element—over eight stone of him is missing as the result of his evil habits! No wonder Dr. Horton intends to stick to that argument as one calculated to make unbelievers tremble.

C. COHEN.

The Papacy and Protestantism.

THE Rev. William Ernest Beet, M.A., in his interesting essay entitled "The Roman See in the First Centuries," which forms No. 23 of *Essays for the Times*, fatally over-reaches himself. In his zeal to demolish the Papal position, he forgets that if it had not been for the Papacy there would have been no Protestantism, and even Christianity itself might have been crushed out of being at an early period in its history. Even under the slowly developing Popedom it was at one time very doubtful which would survive, the Christian religion or Manicheanism. This is frankly admitted by Professor Harnack in his scholarly work, *The Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, vol. i., pp. 391-397. Mr. Beet's argument against the Papal claims may be perfectly sound, but it applies with equally destructive force to the Protestant claims.

Let us consider the claims of the Papacy for a moment. On the assumption that Jesus actually lived and was a Divine Being, clothed with all authority in heaven and on earth, it must be conceded that these claims are fairly reasonable. The

Catholic Church maintains that the apostle Peter visited Rome and became its first bishop. Mr. Beet observes that "in the New Testament, our first and most important source of information, there is no positive evidence of any direct communication between that apostle and the Church in Rome, or that he ever even so much as set his foot within the Eternal City," and the statement is quite true, but proves nothing. Is not Mr. Beet aware that at a certain point the New Testament drops the apostle Peter, and takes no further notice of him? Professor Harnack says: "After Acts xii. Luke loses all interest in Peter's missionary efforts; why, we cannot quite make out." Luke was Paul's friend and champion and it is well known that Paul and Peter were not on terms of the closest friendship. Our essayist has but scant "respect for the reliability" of the first definite non-Biblical statement on this point, namely that of Dionysius of Corinth, "who speaks of the Church in Rome as founded by St. Peter and St. Paul." But the reliability of a primitive writer is largely a matter of opinion; and here Mr. Beet is opposed by so great a scholar as Professor Harnack, who defends Dionysius, and treats as historical Peter's residence both at Corinth and subsequently at Rome. "He stayed for some months at Rome," he says, "before he was crucified. This we learn from an ancient piece of evidence which [one is surprised to find] has not yet been noticed. Porphyry, in *Macarius Magnes* (iii., 22), writes 'Peter is narrated to have been crucified, after pasturing the lambs for several months.' This passage must refer to his residence at Rome, and its testimony is all the more weighty, as Porphyry himself lived for a long while in Rome and had close dealings with the local Christianity."

Now, on the assumption that Jesus, Peter, and Paul are historical characters, I repeat, there is much to be said in favor of the Catholic claim that Peter was the first bishop of Rome; and, on the same assumption, there can be no doubt whatever but that Jesus promised Peter, as a reward for his famous confession, some positive precedence in the founding of the Church:—

"And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 18-19).

Of course, Freethinkers regard those words as legendary and Peter himself as a myth; but to those who reverence the Gospels as historical documents, and who speak of the Church as the body of Christ, which was inspired in all its deliberations by the Holy Ghost, the Papal claims must appeal as valid, or at least as unopposed by any historical evidence. In this sense the Papacy is fully justified in representing itself as of a distinctly Divine origin; and this no Protestant can consistently deny.

Mr. Beet, however, looks upon the Papacy as a growth that can be explained on purely natural principles. Having dismissed the testimony of Dionysius and Irenæus as unreliable, he adds:—

"It is in the Liberian Catalogue of 354 that St. Peter is, for the first time, unambiguously referred to as the earliest bishop of Rome, and the duration of his episcopate stated in definite terms. Further quotation is perhaps unnecessary here; sufficient has, at all events, been made to indicate that the Petrine tradition becomes continually more definite and full as it recedes in time from the data of the event. This, in itself, is a most suspicious circumstance."

The remainder of the essay is devoted to a description of the gradual process through which the Papacy came into existence. The most patent fact in connection with the whole movement is that the Church lacked originality, but possessed, in no small measure, the gift of imitation. Its central policy was one of continual adaptation. We are often told that Christianity destroyed Paganism. It did nothing of the kind; it merely absorbed it. Pagan rites and ceremonies, Pagan feasts and fasts, were adopted,

somewhat modified in course of time, and given new names; and thus Christianity, in its completed form, may accurately be described as the most syncretistic religion in the world. On this account, "Christianity," to adopt the words of Professor Harnack, "may be just as truly called a Hellenic religion as an Oriental, a native religion as well as a foreign. From the very outset it had been syncretistic upon Pagan soil; it made its appearance, not as a pure and simple gospel, but equipped with all that Judaism had already acquired during the course of its long history, and entering forthwith upon nearly everything that Judaism lacked. Still it was the middle of the third century that first saw the new religion in full bloom as the syncretistic religion *par excellence*; and yet, for all that, as an exclusive religion." So, likewise, the Papacy, as a form of ecclesiastical polity, may be said to have been modelled on the Roman Empire. The Pope came to be to the Church what the Emperor was to the State. As the emperor governed the whole of the State so should the bishop of Rome govern the whole of the Church. It was but proper that Rome should become *religiously* what it was *politically*—the centre and mistress of the world. And such in course of time it actually became.

Mr. Beet traces the early stages in this momentous process in such a way as to leave the impression upon the mind that it was a characteristically *human* process. There is nothing at all to indicate the guiding presence of divinity in it. The bishops of Rome were religious imperialists, who did not rest until they became religious monarchs of all they surveyed. They were afire with the ambition natural to them as residents of the capital of the world. As a result we see the Papacy in full bloom, one of the most wonderful and perfect organisations the world has ever seen; and it is with us still, the mightiest political as well as religious force in Christendom.

But if the Papacy is not a Divine institution, neither is the Church, because for a thousand years the Church and the Papacy were one, and, according to the majority of Christians, are one and inseparable still. And again, if the Catholic Church is not a Divine institution, inhabited and controlled by the infallible Christ, does it not follow that the same thing must be true of Protestantism? The Catholic Church was supreme for a millennium, during which period the Papacy was perfected. If during that long time it was the Church of God, the body of Christ, are we not bound to regard the Papacy as a creation of the Holy Ghost? Surely the body does nothing without its head; and the Church, being the body of Christ, could never have done anything without *its* head. Thus we are inevitably led to the dogma of the Infallibility of the Church. If Christ, a Divine Being, all-wise and all-powerful, is the head of the Church, the Church cannot but be infallible. And this dogma, of necessity, carries with it the utter condemnation of Protestantism. If the Church was infallible, to protest against it was the most heinous of sins; but if it was not infallible, an infallible God could not have been its head; and if an infallible God was not its head, we must pronounce it an exclusively human creation. The one alternative involves the complete indefensibility of Protestantism, and the other, its degradation to the level of a purely natural movement.

Mr. Beet is clearly a Protestant; and as a Protestant, he is quite right in pressing the point that "no argument upholding the legitimacy of the admitted development of the Papal office can be regarded as valid unless it affords sufficient proof that the power actually wielded by the sovereign Pontiffs, when at the zenith of their political greatness and splendor, was at least implicit in the office from the very first"; and we have seen that such is the claim made by the Catholic Church. Mr. Beet, in the interest of Protestantism, totally disallows the claim that the Catholic Church has always been and still is indwelt by the Holy Ghost, because to admit the truth of this claim would be equivalent to admitting the Divine origin of the Papacy, in which

case Protestantism would be without a leg to stand upon.

Now, in opposition to both Catholics and Protestants, Freethinkers aver that all Religions and all Churches are alike human creations, and that no spirit animates them other than the human spirit. Every Church is a reflection or embodiment of the beliefs, convictions, and ideals of the people constituting it, or of those of the few men that dominate it. This is the only ground on which the history of the Church is in the least degree intelligible. No Church has ever risen above the standard of the age in which it flourished. As long as slavery was believed to be a Divine institution the Church justified and practised it. The Church condemns slavery to-day simply because human nature has sufficiently progressed to see its unnaturalness. The Church has never been in advance of the age, and often has it lagged behind it. At the present moment the world is far ahead of the Church; and it is this fact which accounts for the desertion of the Church by its own children. In its own countries Catholicism is rapidly losing touch with intelligent people. Even in Spain, once the stronghold of the faith, the educated people are nearly all Atheists, and journals advocating Freethought are circulating widely. The same thing is true of Italy, Portugal, and France. It is boasted that in Great Britain Catholicism is making great strides; but its converts come from the ranks of Protestantism, and not from those of positive unbelievers. Protestantism is also decidedly on the wane, and that in spite of its desperate efforts to adapt itself to new conditions. The explanation is that it is impossible to adapt any form of superstition to an age of reason and knowledge. At last men are getting to know enough to confess their entire ignorance of God and the world of spirits, and to adopt Science as the only reliable guide in the realm of conduct and character. J. T. LLOYD.

Our Missionary Monroe Doctrine.

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY.

WE had a story in London of two young English scholars (I will not name them) perfected in Eastern languages, who were travelling together in Arabia. They had got themselves up with the exact Arab complexion and dress. At one old village where they arrived they found themselves without money, their London remittances being sent to a farther city. While thinking what to do they observed a deserted mosque in bad condition. They awaited the proper hour for Moslem prayer, and from the little outside pulpit sounded loud the usual call. The startled villagers hastened out, and the two stained Englishmen recited finest passages from the Koran, professed a mission to look after all desolations, and warned them to renovate that mosque or else prepare for hell. Then they took up a good collection and went on their way rejoicing. If any of the Bedouins had suspicions they were allayed by the collection. The collection is a sign of orthodoxy in all religions.

Both of these masqueraders were admirers of Mohammed, and one of them always called himself a Moslem. But practically he could only be a sham Moslem. It appears that none of the older religions now wish to make converts. They may be pleased by the sympathy of aliens with their doctrines, but it is doubtful if anyone born outside could obtain practical membership as a Brahman, Parsi, Buddhist, Israelite or Moslem. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam started as missionary religions, but now Christianity seems to be left alone in that respect, and it looks as if the older Church were tending to confine its missions to its own straying flocks.

It is no joke when the youngest of nations, whose constitution ignores religion, stains itself morally with precisely that criminal complexion which was once attributed to Mohammedanism. Fifty years

ago Protestant preachers were never weary of accusing Mohammed of propagating his religion by the sword, but in the opening twentieth century Commander Roosevelt goes with warships to the chief Moslem nation and says, "Pay for that American missionary property damaged by a mob or I will kill your people and burn your capital." And I heard a missionary, lecturing in our Century Club, New York (1906), boasting that by this menace by the admirable President, the American mission was the only one that got its money! Of course so long as comfortable "collections" can be made in this way it can hardly be expected that churches will turn from the spurious text, "Go ye into all the world," to the genuine words of Jesus, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans." "If they persecute you in one city go to the next." That will not do for missionaries wrapped around with the stars and stripes!

But how far have we fallen below President Washington, who in 1796, sent to the Senate a treaty with Tripoli whose opening words are these:—

"As the Government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion,—as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility of Mussulmans,—and as the said States have never entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mahometan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries."

On July 8, 1872, St. Paul's Cathedral, London, was the scene of a combination of functions of international interest. A large number of dignitaries of the English Church gathered on that Wednesday to receive a present from the American Episcopalian Church. This was a silver alms-basin. It was brought by the eminent Bishop McIlvaine, of Ohio, who was an excellent representative of the American clerical type as distinct from the English. He had an intellectual face, delicate features under a strong forehead. Dressed in plain black he bore the enormous basin (nearly a yard in diameter) up to the altar, where he had to support it while the Bishop of Litchfield gave an address. This bishop then received the basin and carried it before the altar; there he was met by the Archbishop of Canterbury before whom he knelt, and who made a good fraternal address. The archbishop then set the basin on the communion table, and proceeded to read the texts suggestive of alms. There were about ten other bishops present, with a great deal of scarlet in their robes, and each in succession walked up alone, knelt before the basin, dropped a coin into it, and retired. (I saw a Japanese near me make a note of this apparent worship of the silver basin!) After the bishops, the vergers came up with a dozen red velvet purses. The Anglo-American function had been united with the anniversary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. The alms-basin thus began its career by receiving gifts for the propagation of the Gospel around the world, which now, thirty years since the good Bishop McIlvaine was buried with honor in London (1873), has come to mean a propagation by the edge of the sword. The humility of the Ohio gentleman could not conceal the complacency of the sect which in its address spoke of itself as the "American Church" which with that of England made the "two branches of the one Holy Catholic Church." I remember an exchange of smiles among the large ecclesiastical Broad Church Clergymen at the high ecclesiastical tone of the address; and, indeed, it had for some time been a sort of proverb among them that the "apostolic succession" notion was American. Mrs. Hewson, daughter of Bishop McIlvaine told me that her father was cabled while in Europe to present the basin, and, his Episcopal robes being in America, the English bishops tried to find among their own one that would fit him. In vain! All were too small for the tall American, whose silk stockings being out of sight, was hardly distinguishable from an ordinary clergyman. Was this inadequacy of the English

prelatical dress for the American prelate symbolical? It was noticed by the Bishop of Lincoln that the gift from America nearly coincided with the date of the Declaration of Independence, and it appeared to me droll that in theology independence should be more characteristic of the English than of the American Episcopalian Church. A demonstration of this was given in the fact that the sermon on the occasion was by the Bishop of Exeter,—even that Dr. Frederick Temple, author of a rationalistic chapter in "Essays and Reviews" whose promotion to the bench of bishops was so heavy a blow to the protesting evangelicals. Those who hoped that in this sermon on the Propagation of the Gospel the bishop would unsay what as simple Dr. Temple, in his startling essay on "The Education of the World," he had said, were disappointed. The sermon was a *concio ad clerum*, and those who had ears to hear recognised in it the same central idea as that of the censured essay.

His text was Rom. xi, 15: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" The Bishop showed that the casting away of the Jews was due to the expansion of the Gospel to include the Gentiles. The Jews had gathered in great numbers to the religion of Christ, until Paul and others began to interpret it as a religion for mankind. They were ready to embrace it so long as they could regard it as only a reformed Judaism. He then went on to suggest that the spread of Christianity among the nations of the earth was very slow, and its conversions in foreign parts very small, chiefly because it (Christianity) was undergoing a process of expansion. Christians will not see their religion triumph in the world until they have learned their own lesson better. It must first become a larger thing in their own minds.

This tall, large-framed bishop, with his glittering black eyes, and black hair and whiskers, and his loud, clear voice, spoke without any accent of timidity either towards the right-wing Churchmen whose eyes were fixed sharply upon him or towards Dean Stanley and his group who were all present. He said that although the foreign propagation of Christianity was at a stand-still, the important fact remained that heaven had married heavenly light to earthly light. "The wisest and most civilised nations are Christian."

This almost seemed true when that same bishop became Archbishop of Canterbury. But, alas, since his time the American churches have apparently resolved not to let foreign enlargement wait for their own spiritual enlargement at home. The marriage is of Gospel to Gunpowder. As the late Lord Salisbury said, the missionary is regularly followed by the soldier. Of course there are some rationalists who, believing that the process makes ultimately for "progress," may see with satisfaction Christianity rendering itself odious all round the world. The missionary already alluded to, who lectured for us at the Century Club, invoked our horror at Turkish intolerance because they are forbidden to sing such hymns as "Onward Christian Soldier!" For myself that gave me an impression that the Moslems have now become the peacemakers and that they know by long experience that the American "Christian Soldier" is now never contented with a mere spiritual sword. The race of missionaries has so deteriorated that when in India I could not hear of a single one who had commended himself to the natives by eloquence, learning, or kindly services. Fortunately the emperor of India, Edward VII., is the head and defender of its non-Christian religions, and the salaried American propagandists cannot there wrap themselves in the star-spangled flag to any advantage, but in other countries they are able by the blessing of Jehovah Roosevelt to surround themselves each with the authority of the United States, and consequently with a personal Monroe Doctrine. The most important item in the apologies of the missionaries in China for their outrages and lootings following the Boxer riot was the declaration of the chief American missionary: "Whatever we did was with the approval

of the United States minister." It is certain that in every part of the world unprotected by power equal to our own, America has become a terror under which are conceded the treaties we find so lucrative, and which elicits trembling flatteries for this nation and its president from all the powers, small and great, which have something to hope or to fear from us. Our ignorant, million-headed salvationism believes that all this is necessary to fulfil a prophecy that "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of God and his Christ," and the mercantile millions conciliate our honest masses by declaring it all the advance of civilisation. The agent of it is the missionary, who, protected by his movable Monroe Doctrine, combines the characters of a sectarian minister and an American ambassador.

Sir Alfred C. Lyall, the best-informed historian of religion in India, as well as observer of its present conditions, declares Francis Xavier "the one successful modern missionary of multitudinous Christian conversions in India." Xavier "usually went on foot and without shoes, living only on roasted rice, which he begged as he went on; and slept on the ground with a stone under his head." Here was an ascetic without salary or reward, asking nothing of the natives but to listen to his message; many of them listened to him, and though they could not comprehend dogmas remote from Brahmanism, they worshiped him, and ascribed miracles to him. Xavier was indeed canonised at Rome on the testimony of Hindus that he raised a youth from death at Travancore.

It is the conviction of every intelligent Englishman in India, including the clergymen of the Established Church, that the native religions there have been affected only by the British police whose influence has been limited to repressing actual evils like widow-burning. And it is certain that if in any non-Christian country the masses accept Christianity it will be by force of terror or by bribery,—in other words, it will be unreal save for their deterioration.

—*Liberal Review* (Chicago).

Acid Drops.

In a *Daily News* article on "The Fourth of July" it was confessed that "Pittsburg stands a place of an inferno, with life below any normal standard of enjoyment, refinement, and intelligence, while the wealth of Pittsburg scatters its free libraries over the Anglo-Saxon nations." This means that Mr. Carnegie's wealth is made under absolutely disgraceful conditions. Yet his money has been greedily sought by municipal bodies that would consider it a deadly insult to be called "infidel." In the same way Mr. Rockefeller's money has been accepted in large quantities by all sorts of Christian bodies in the United States, although they are all perfectly aware of how his colossal future has been built up.

It has often been said that Mr. Carnegie is an Agnostic. If he is so he is like the paternal parent of the boy in the story, who said that his father was a Christian but he did not work much at it. Mr. Carnegie has given money to pay for church organs, but we never heard that he had given a cent to any Agnostic association. And perhaps it is well that he has not done so.

One of Mr. Carnegie's friends is Mr. John Morley. Seeing this fact in the newspapers, Freethinkers have often asked us why we did not solicit a subscription for Freethought from the modern Saint Andrew. We have always replied that we had something better to do. For the rest, we have quite as much pride as any Scotch-American millionaire, and perhaps it is more justifiable.

Many people do not know, and some who do know often forget, that habitual philanthropists are not usually the most generous of men. They generally give away their money from motives of interest or vanity. We know of a few who never give a shilling unless they can get eighteen-penny worth of advertisement out of it. This advertisement ministers to their self-satisfaction. It is one of the things they live for. And persons who live for such things will never be financial supporters of Freethought. Those who give to Freethought

must give from motives of pure disinterestedness. There is nothing to gain by giving to it; there may even be something to lose.

Mr. Robert Hunter, the American sociologist, who is paying another visit to this country, finds us in the midst of a heated discussion on what sort of religion the children are to be dosed with in our elementary schools. In spite of this fact—or more probably because of it—he speaks to a newspaper interviewer of "that hopeless, drunken pauperism which is, perhaps, greater in England than in any country in the Western world." "I walked," he says, "in the alleys and courts near the Parliament buildings of Victoria-street, and the sordidness, squalor, and misery seemed more appalling than in Whitechapel several years ago when I was living at Toynbee Hall." Good old England! Pious old England! And one is sometimes tempted to say rotten old England!

In what way is our pious Liberal government better than the pious Tory government it succeeded? Certainly not in relation to the native question in South Africa. The slaughter of Zulus goes on merrily, and it is not easy to see what benefit is accruing to the Hindus from Mr. John Morley's presence at the India Office. The same old system obtains, and the same old game is played—by very much the same old sort of performers. And that distinguished Christian statesman, Mr. W. J. Bryan, who seems likely to stand again as the Democratic candidate for the United States Presidency, being in London on the Fourth of July, entertains a large company of Americans and Britishers with an oration on "The White Man's Burden"—which is a polite name for the white man's plunder of weaker races. Mr. Bryan seems quite a match for "Teddy" Roosevelt at this kind of glorification. He waxed eloquent over "the five Christian blessings" which the Christian nations were carrying to the rest of the world. The first was education—in which Heathen Japan beats both Christian England and Christian America. The second was knowledge of the science of government—in which Japan really beats us again. The third was "arbitration as a substitute for war"—which reads like a joke after the British and Boer fighting in South Africa and the vaster and bloodier struggle which the villainous diplomacy of Russia forced upon Japan. The fourth was "appreciation of the dignity of labor"—which is miserable clap-trap; and the fifth is like unto it—"a high conception of life." How the educated and thoughtful Heathen—for there are such—must smile as they read Mr. Bryan's Christian heroics! They know that what he says is all blarney. The white man's real burden is the problem of his own civilisation, and the greatest blessing he can confer upon other nations is to let them mind their own business. What the noble American orator calls "Christian blessings" the Heathen generally find to be little else than insolence, tyranny, spoliation, violence, and bloodshed.

"Teddy" Roosevelt called Thomas Paine a "dirty little Atheist." It was pointed out to him that Thomas Paine, until he was old and ill and dependent upon others, was always very fastidious about his person and his dress; that Thomas Paine was not a little man, but some inches taller than Mr. Roosevelt; and that Thomas Paine, so far from being an Atheist, wrote with elegance and eloquence to prove the existence of God. But in this respect President Roosevelt was like the Rev. Dr. Torrey. He took the attitude of "What I have said I have said." What did it matter about slandering an "infidel" who was hated by all the Churches? Christians had a lot of votes, "Teddy" wanted them, and why should he not please them whenever he could? So he let the slander on Thomas Paine stand. That was bad enough, but "Teddy" is now doing worse. He is actually dishonoring Shelley and Keats with his patronage—Shelley who was an Atheist, but an admirer of Thomas Paine; and Keats who was a Freethinker to his very marrow—witness many a strong passage in his Letters. It is proposed to raise £4,000 or so to purchase the house at Rome in which Keats died, and to dedicate it for ever to the memory of both Keats and Shelley; to make it, indeed, a Keats and Shelley museum. We see the names of George Meredith and Algernon Charles Swinburne appended to this proposal. That is all right. We also see that it has "the warm approval of President Roosevelt." But that is all wrong. This man insults one Freethinker, and patronises two others; in both cases his motive is purely selfish; and Shelley and Keats do not deserve the ignominy of his patronage.

Under a cloak of great humility Mr. R. J. Campbell is yet a consummate egotist. In a recent sermon he refers to Dr. Stanton Coit as believing in the moral idea as God, and as doing this in no cold half-hearted way. Then he adds: "I agree with Dr. Stanton Coit all the way he is prepared to

go; the only difference between him and me is that I think I have an experience that entitles me to go farther." An experience of what, pray? What is there, what can there be, beyond and above the human sphere, of which it is possible to have an experience? Can Mr. Campbell tell, or does he know, of anything that can legitimately be called supernatural? Vague, unintelligent experience is essentially valueless. The moment a man transcends the realm of knowledge he becomes a wild speculator and a vain babler.

In the opinion of many Ethicists, Dr. Stanton Coit is injuring his own cause by his free use of theological terms in the service of ethics. He is bound to be misunderstood every time he speaks. Mr. Campbell, however, errs in the opposite direction when he assures us that every truly good man is, without knowing it, a believer in God. But, in doing this, he commits the sin of bearing false witness against his neighbors. He is not wise who judges all others by himself. Certainly the minister of the City Temple is not qualified, nor has he a right, to speak for all mankind. As a matter of fact, there are thousands of thoroughly good people who neither believe in God nor know anything of love to him. They are conscientious Atheists; and to call them anything else is the very acme of impertinence.

Mr. Campbell's impertinence is simply appalling. He had just heard of certain comedians who, after their performances are over, go along the Thames Embankment and give food and warm drinks to the poor outcasts who spend the night there. Mr. Campbell gratuitously took for granted that the comedians in question are unbelievers. "Those comedians," he went on, "though they might be very much astonished to hear one say so, really knew something of the meaning of love to God. How surprised one of them would have been had you said to him, 'Sir, I am glad to see that you believe in God.'" An Atheist would hotly resent such an address as inexcusably impudent. Rightly he would repudiate with indignation and scorn the imputation to him of such a belief. "Sir," he would be tempted to reply, "you are an unmitigated liar." Let Mr. Campbell, therefore, remember, and lay to heart, one of his most recent texts: "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

It is interesting to note that Mr. Campbell's successor in the conduct of the Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly*, the Rev. David Smith, Tulliallan, Scotland, is in the habit of getting tips from heaven. In introducing himself to the readers, he claims to be on terms of special intimacy with the risen Christ, and promises to give inquirers only what he receives from above. Mr. Campbell could not write with authority: he had only his own opinions to offer for what they were worth; but Mr. Smith comes in the name and by the authority of the Divine Shepherd of souls. "I regard my new office," he says, "as an extension of my ministry on the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; and I desire to address my larger audience as his ambassador, proclaiming what He has revealed to me." The editor of the *British Weekly* is supposed to have made wonderful discoveries in his day—Mr. J. M. Barrie and Ian Maclaren, for example; but surely this is the crowning discovery of his life—a man who undertakes to proclaim what the Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to him.

After making such an exalted claim for himself, it is rather disappointing to find Mr. Smith humbly confessing that his "knowledge must move within a small circumference, bounded by impenetrable mystery." He frankly admits that there are many puzzling questions which he cannot hope to solve. What a sorry contradiction is here! What is the use of getting revelations from heaven if they fail to solve the deep problems which perplex and bewilder the minds of thinking people? Mr. Smith may be a profound theologian, he may be a careful student of what others have thought and believed about God and the Universe; but in reality he knows absolutely nothing about the Supernatural realm concerning which he has undertaken to enlighten anxious inquirers: *there is nothing to know*. All this flourish about "the New Testament revelation of the Incarnation, the Infinite Sacrifice, and the Resurrection," all this brag about receiving direct communications from the Savior of the world, is, to use an Americanism, nothing but bunkum. It is one of the tricks of the clerical trade.

At last, even in the *British Weekly*, the Sermon on the Mount is admitted to be incapable of conversion into practice. A correspondent asserts the "utter impracticability of any universal obedience to such of its exhortations as 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink.'" The Sermon contains several other maxims which

have never been observed. And yet ministers are continually harping on the duty of absolute loyalty to Christ, who is the Lord of consciences and the Sovereign of hearts! Oh the hollow mockery of all such pious talk! Christianity is a dead letter everywhere, except, alas, in the pulpit and the schools."

There was a pictorial advertisement of a certain cocoa in a recent number of a certain newspaper. It contained a testimonial from a Nonconformist minister, and over that a portrait which might be assumed to be the man of God's. This portrait was one of the most extraordinary illustrations we ever saw. The minister, with his great flat face and his goggles, looked like a clerical old owl. And as the readers might infer that the certain cocoa would make you look like the certain Nonconformist minister, it was not a particularly good advertisement of the certain cocoa. But some people and their money are soon parted.

According to the report of the Ecclesiastical Commission there are 3,687 Anglican churches guilty of mixing water with the wine of the Holy Communion. Shocking! Fancy diluting the Blood of Christ in that way! The efficacy of that precious article is seriously threatened, and there will have to be a change. Mixing water with the Communion wine was an unholy practice of some of the heretics of the early Christian Church. The orthodox fashion is to have good port wine, strong enough to make the communicant drunk if he took a fair dose of it.

Some time ago we commented on the summary conclusion of the Rev. John McNeill's religious services at Malta. Those services were Protestant ones, and the Roman Catholic Archbishop objected to such things on the island. Recently a question was asked by Mr. T. L. Corbett in the House of Commons on the subject. The member for Mid Armagh wanted to know whether the British Government had sanctioned the action of the Governor of Malta in that instance. Mr. Churchill gave a general and evasive reply, and when Mr. Corbett pressed for a more definite answer the Under-Secretary for the Colonies said that he had nothing to add, and that what he had said should be clear even to Mr. Corbett's intelligence. This piece of insolence, which is quite in Mr. Churchill's vein when he feels free to indulge it, was promptly challenged by Mr. Balfour, and declared by the Speaker to be provocative and offensive. We have no sympathy whatever with Mr. Corbett's type of Protestantism, but we care very much about religious freedom, and we consider that it ought to be guaranteed in every part of the British Empire. None of the religious sects would give us freedom if they could help it, but we would fight for freedom for all of them, as well as for ourselves.

The Interpreter, a recently-started quarterly magazine of Biblical and theological study, has made a startling discovery. In its last issue it conveys to its readers the invaluable information that "the sexes are distinct in Jesus." Listen, O heaven, and give heed, O earth: the Savior of the world is man and woman as well as God and man. Not only the two natures, but also the two sexes, are joined in him, yet without losing their respective distinctness. Truly, wonders never cease!

A Moravian missionary tells us that the Esquimaux who are not converted to Christianity worship the Spirit of Evil. A vast cavern in the cliffs, in the Far North, is pictured by the popular imagination as the abode of this dread Spirit of Evil. But lately some of the hymns of Mr. Alexander, the revivalist have been translated into the language of the Esquimaux, and now, as the missionary rejoices to say, "there is revival in the air." A revival of what? Of the worship of the Spirit of Evil? A revival always signifies the quickening of the old religion into newness of life. "Tell Mother I'll be there," "The Glory Song," "The old, old Story"—how eminently suitable they must be during a revival of the worship of the Spirit of Evil!

One feels profoundly sorry for the poor, unfortunate Esquimaux. We have made two significant gifts to them—the Gospel to save their souls, and Tea to kill their bodies; and it seems that the Tea does its work much more effectually than the Gospel, the victims of the former being far more numerous than those of the latter.

At Melbourne, the other day, the Congregational Union and the Anglican Synod were discussing simultaneously the great question, "Why Men do not go to Church?" The question itself is an admission that the churches are being deserted. But why? Dr. Bevan, a popular Congregationalist,

put the blame on the Pulpit. The sermon had become an essay and failed to grip. Did it not occur to Dr. Bevan that the real explanation of the growing non-church-going, is the fact that people are getting sick and tired of superstition, and of the men who advocate it as a profession? Men do not go to church because they no longer believe, and they have ceased to believe because they have learned to think for themselves, instead of allowing the parsons to do their thinking for them.

Dr. Horton assures us that the German people are becoming "a negligible quantity" because they have converted Sunday into a day of enjoyment. In the Protestant city of Nuremberg, some months ago, he "attended morning service in the most beautiful church ever dedicated to Protestant worship." "The service was beautiful, and the sermon one of the most inspiring utterances a man could hear from human lips;" but the congregation was small, while later on in the day theatres and beer-halls were crowded and rang with merriment. Of course, the Puritanical divine was shocked beyond measure, and hurried home to warn the British nation against imitating the reckless and soulless Germans. He wants to see societies formed all over the country "for the purpose of consecrating Sunday anew and of instructing the nation in the principles on which we base the duty of preserving the Day of Rest." In this mission he looks for the aid even of the Atheists and the Scientists. He is not very confident of success because he is fully aware that the spirit of the age is dead against him. He cannot help seeing that the Puritans Sunday is doomed, and that church-going religion is rapidly dying out.

It is a huge mistake to imagine that Sunday cannot be a genuine day of rest without being devoted to church-attendance and Christian work, only its becoming a day of play and pleasure threatens the occupation of the parsons. That is why they are so desperately fighting for its preservation as a day of solemn worship. A Secular Sunday would rob them of their power and their living. The present united attempt to restore the Lord's Day is simply a manifestation of downright selfishness. But the spirit of progress is in the air, and it is quite safe to prophesy the complete failure of the campaign upon which all the Churches have now entered.

Sir Oliver Lodge is progressing; many would prefer to say that his is retrograding. We will not fight about mere words, the plain, indisputable fact being that Sir Oliver is now at last almost, if not quite, an orthodox theologian. When he began to write on theology in the *Hibbert Journal*, his statements were vague, ambiguous, inconclusive, but certainly not orthodox; but it soon became clear that he was travelling in the direction of orthodoxy. He hob-nobbed with clergymen, frequently figured on religious platforms as a scientist of renown championing the Christian Faith, and now, in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, he appears as a believer in "one Infinite and Eternal Being, a guiding and loving Father, in whom all things consist," in a special revelation of this Supreme Being "through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lived and taught and suffered in Palestine 1900 years ago, and has since been worshiped by the Christian Church as the immortal Son of God, the Savior of the world," in Eternal Life, "the Communion of Saints," and prayer. Then he finishes up by saying: "We repose in the might, majesty, and dominion of the Eternal Goodness." All this is highly interesting; but one would like to know on what authority such stupendous beliefs are cherished. Sir Oliver does not condescend to tell us.

Now, these are a few of the doctrines—first principles of faith he calls them—which Sir Oliver Lodge would include in the curriculum of our State schools. He supplies us with "an imaginary catechism" which, were he a teacher, he would "endeavor to weld into the lessons in an unobtrusive and perhaps imperceptible fashion." That is to say, he would teach children the fundamental doctrines of Christianity by stealth, or clandestinely; and such a procedure he would defend on grounds of justice. This is Jesuitism in all its glory; and it is the quintessence of injustice as well. And fancy calling such a system of religious education *general*, as contrasted with *special*!

Sir Oliver is a sworn enemy of Secular Education. He contends that every child, in a sense, belongs to the State, and that the State has obligations towards it. But, even according to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the State is not a religious institution, and therefore it cannot be regarded as under an obligation to give any child religious training. Furthermore, it is equally a mistake to affirm that there are *ineradicable religious instincts* in the human mind. That there are not is conclusively proved by the fact that there

are thousands upon thousands of people among us who have absolutely no sense of religion. This is an incontrovertible fact; but it could not be a fact if the instincts spoken of by Sir Oliver were "ineradicable."

Sir Oliver admits that "of our own knowledge we are unable to realise the meaning of origination and maintenance"; and the question naturally suggests itself, Of whose knowledge *can* we realise it? The existence of a Supreme Intelligence is unthinkable. As Dean Mansel used to say, an Infinite and Eternal Being is inconceivable; and the Church has always declared that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are alike incomprehensible. A Christian is essentially not a *knower*, but a *believer*. And yet Sir Oliver Lodge speaks of *conceiving* that which "of our own knowledge we are unable to realise." After all, Sir Oliver had better stick to physical science, and leave religion to the clergy.

Mr. J. G. Stuart contributes to the *Northern Echo* a letter emphasising the significance of Mr. Lough's admission that if a teacher under the new Act declined, after a time, to give religious instruction, the authorities "would get rid of him." The editor of the *Echo* pooh-poohs the answer of Mr. Lough (Secretary to the Education Board), and points out that the Act does not require a teacher to give religious instruction as a part of his duties. We are quite aware that this is a portion of the new measure, but are equally convinced that, in the majority of cases, a teacher who did decline to give religious instruction of some sort would soon find himself in an impossible position. And his position would, in all probability, be less pleasant with a Nonconformist majority than with others. For dissenters have no more desire to give non-Christian teachers real freedom of conscience than have other Christians. Their talk of liberty is mere platform cant, or means only liberty for themselves. The whole truth is that, so long as religion is in the schools, tests, official and unofficial, must always be there also. And all who have honestly thought out the problem know this as well as we do.

"Dagonet" of the *Referee*—Mr. G. R. Sims—was once a Radical and a Freethinker. He is not a Radical now, and he poses as a friend of religion, although he takes precious good care not to state what religious doctrines he believes. Last week he led off his "Mustard and Cress" by declaring that, "By a majority of sixteen the Nonconformist Government has banished Religious Instruction from the Schools." This is his way of saying that Clause VI. of the Education Bill was carried by a majority of sixteen—the majority really being forty-seven. Clause VI. does not banish religious instruction from the schools. Religious instruction is set up in the schools by Clause I. It is further set up by Clause IV. All that Clause VI. does is to give parents the right to keep their children away from the religious instruction if they choose. Mr. Sims no doubt knows this as well as we do; but he prefers to misrepresent it—for business reasons; and there is no one as mischievous as a renegade.

The Somerset County Council have passed a by-law making it illegal for anyone to loiter or smoke near a church or chapel during service. In Canada a Government Bill for the better observance of the Lord's Day, one clause of which made it illegal to play cricket, golf, or baseball on Sunday, passed the House of Commons on the 6th inst. Fortunately the Ministry was seized with a passing spasm of sanity, and it was moved to recommit the Bill for the purpose of striking out the clause. This was done; but what a happy place the world would be if only Christians could do exactly as they pleased. A thoroughly Christianised world might really lose all fear of death—it might even regard it as a welcome visitor.

Thomas Beddows, of Kidderminster, was charged with stealing a corkscrew, value 6d., from Christ Church, Hadsowth. The Rev. Percy Jones prosecuted, and the offender was sent to prison, in default, for seven days. "Blessed are the merciful."

It was stated in a London police-court the other day that "Pedlar Palmer," ex-champion pugilist, received no less than £25,000 in ten years. Who will say, after this, that we are not a civilised people? And who can doubt the refining influence of Christian teaching and tradition?

We see that the Bishop of London is announced to preach in a church at Turnham Green. It is not often that there is so happy a conjunction between a name and the circumstance.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—July 22, a. and e., Victoria Park; 29, a. and e., Brockwell Park.

A SHIEL writes: "My wife and I both read the *Freethinker* from the very first issue, and have for years now looked forward to its delivery on Thursday night as a sort of event; and what is more, it gets more attractive to us every week on account of the personal element infused into it, and the high class of the articles always being maintained. Our most earnest wish is that you may live long and be able all the time to keep the old flag flying."

J. A. HAINES.—You ask us whether Charles Bradlaugh refused to take the oath when elected to parliament, and add that you would like to see a concise account of the matter in the *Freethinker*. We reply that Charles Bradlaugh did not refuse to take the oath; he merely expressed a natural preference for the affirmation. We went into the whole matter very carefully in our series of articles, a few months ago, on "Lord Randolph Churchill and Charles Bradlaugh," with reference to the portions dealing with the Bradlaugh struggle in Mr. Winston Churchill's biography of his father. We really cannot go into it in detail again now.

D. MAPP writes: "I have enjoyed the *Freethinker* immensely during the last six months; also Mr. Foote's lectures at Manchester. I have been wavering for a dozen years, but Mr. Foote's story that must be retold, the Atheist Shoemaker, settled the matter."

E. FAULKNER.—There was no lecture notice in your envelope, as mentioned; only the cuttings.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. BINDEN.—We do not recall any such expression and question its existence. The best way, however, is to ask your informant for an exact reference. There is really no reason why a person who has a statement thrown at him should be put to the trouble of substantiating it. With regard to your second query, we are, of course, well aware of the tributes paid to Jesus Christ and suggest that the important point about them is: "Are they justifiable?" All else is of very small importance at the side of this.

ALCHEM.—Thanks. See Acid Drops.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote being away both from home and from the office this past week, assistance has been necessary on the *Freethinker*. Mr. Lloyd has contributed a good share of the "Acid Drops," and Mr. Cohen has done the Tuesday's drudgery in seeing the paper through the press—that is to say, in non-technical language, seeing that the pages are all right and the various paragraphs in proper order, etc. Mr. Foote intends to slacken his *Freethinker* work a little during the rest of the summer, as he finds that doing his old big share of the work does not allow of even a pretence to a holiday, of which he really stands in need, for the insomnia trouble has been giving him broad hints of late that his brain must be permitted to take things easier for a while. Fortunately he has good and loyal colleagues who are able and willing to help in an emergency.

A Demonstration in favor of "Secular Education and the State Maintenance of Children" is to be held to-day (July 15) in Trafalgar Square. The speaking is to commence at 3.30, and will be from five platforms—the east, north, and west sides of the Nelson Column, and from two platforms facing the National Gallery. Mr. Foote will speak, as representing the N. S. S., on the question of Secular Education, the other aspect of the subject being outside the scope of the Society's work. The other speakers will include Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., Mr. Will Thorne, M.P., Mr. Pete Curran, Mr. H. M. Hyndman, and three ladies—Mrs. Bridges-Adams, Mrs. Despard, and Miss Bondfield. We should like to see this demonstration a complete success, and trust that our readers will do their best to make it so. It will be, at least, a chance of putting the case for Secular Education before the public.

The new Education Code for 1906 has just been issued. It contains a new subject—Moral Instruction. It says that lessons should be given on such points as courage, truthfulness, cleanliness of mind, body, and speech, the love of fair play, gentleness to the weaker, humanity to animals, temperance, self-denial, love of one's country, and respect for beauty in nature and art. Teachers are advised that the instruction should be illustrated as vividly as possible by stories, poems, quotations, proverbs, and examples drawn from history and biography, and that every effort should be made to stir the moral responsiveness of the child. And it should be "no humdrum repetition of old saws, but a forcible and spirited application of the teacher's own moral knowledge and moral sense." A warning is given against "doing or expressing anything in the least subversive of the authority of religion." But the teaching of morality, in the name of morality, is in itself subversive of religion. So *that's* all right.

The *Athenæum* concludes a review of a reprint of an important old book about Japan by calling it "the beginning and foundation of all true knowledge of the pattern people of the twentieth century." Mark that! The Japanese are the pattern people of the twentieth century; yet they are not Christians, but Heathen, and they have had Secular Education in all their schools for more than thirty years.

We are glad to see another excellent letter by Mr. A. H. Smith in the *Yarmouth Independent* on "The Bribery Poster." Mr. Smith deals less in fine sarcasm this time, he speaks out in a perfectly straightforward manner, and the result is that he is more intelligible to the Yarmouth intellect; for the *Independent* not only admits that Mr. Smith's letter is clever, but recognises at last that the East Anglican Agnostic Association probably did not want to promote bribery. Evidently the Yarmouth intellect is not quite impenetrable, which we were beginning to think it was. Mr. Smith's letter is simply unanswerable. The *Independent* does not attempt to answer it. Our contemporary resorts to that very common fallacy of supposing that it replies to an opponent by reiterating what it said, without the slightest reference to any of his arguments to the contrary. And one fact deserves special mention. Mr. Smith points out that, according to common sense, common morality, and common law, the receiver is worse than the thief, and the briber is worse than the bribee. This very obvious truth the *Independent* pretends not to see. It still reserves all its indignation for the poor man who takes a bribe. It has not one word of indignation for the well-to-do man who offers the bribe. Why is this? There is only one answer. Bribery is so rampant at Yarmouth that even the Liberal papers dare not denounce it. The truth is that they represent the classes who practise it. And the "Bribery Poster" has done at least one service to truth and honesty; it has demonstrated that bribery is universal in the public life of Yarmouth. This may sound odd to some ears, but the first condition of curing a disease is recognising its extent and character.

The Kingsland Branch is still carrying on its meetings at the corner of Ridley-road under considerable difficulty. The lecturer on Sunday last was Mr. F. Schaller, in place of Mr. W. Ramsey, and his lecture appears to have delighted both the audience and the Branch officials. To-day (Sunday, July 15) the Branch president, Mr. Davey, lectures on Charles Bradlaugh. We hope there will be a good gathering of friends round the platform.

We regret to learn that there has been a recrudescence of Christian hooliganism in Brockwell Park. Fortunately it ended in noise, owing to the platform being well supported by friends. We hope that it will continue to be so. Christians, of a class, are always ready to avail themselves of any opportunity for creating a disturbance, and are equally chary of doing so when they fail to find themselves in an overwhelming majority. Whatever effect a certain reverend gentleman's lectures may have in Brockwell Park, they evidently do not tend to improve the behavior of those who gather round his platform. Quite the contrary.

The annual picnic of the Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. takes place to-day (July 15). The excursion is to Burton Woods, and the tickets are three shillings and sixpence each. Those who intend participating are requested to meet outside Birkenhead landing stage at 2 p.m.

Several newspaper cuttings forwarded to the Editor by correspondents could not be dealt with this week; some of them, however, will be available next week. For the rest we must ask indulgence.

Divorce and the Church.

[A New Chapter in the Fourth Edition (1906) of *A New Catechism*, by M. M. Mangasarian, of Chicago.]

1. Q. State the objections of the church to divorce.
 - A. The church takes the ground that it is God who joins men and women together in wedlock, and that "what God has joined together," no man shall "put asunder."
2. Q. Is that argument sufficient to condemn divorce?
 - A. No. There is no evidence that God "joins people" in marriage. If the mere fact that people marry proves that God joins them together, then, the fact that they also separate ought to prove that God "puts them asunder."
3. Q. What other arguments are there against divorce?
 - A. The church also quotes the authority of Jesus against divorce. Jesus said: "But I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery."
4. Q. What is the force of that argument?
 - A. Instead of prohibiting divorce altogether, Jesus, in the words attributed to him, seems to allow it. He evidently disagrees with the position of the church that the "marriage tie is absolutely indissoluble and can not be severed except by death," for he admits that unfaithfulness is a valid cause for divorce.
5. Q. But does Jesus permit the divorced to marry?
 - A. He has said so little on the subject that his position can not be clearly stated; but in the text just quoted, it seems that, while he is opposed to anyone marrying the divorced woman, he says nothing about any one marrying the divorced man, or his marrying some other woman. It has been said that these words of Jesus only strike at the woman and leave the man free.
6. Q. Is it right, however, for a divorced man to marry while his first wife is still living, or for a divorced wife to marry while her first husband is still living?
 - A. From the standpoint of the Catholic church all such marriages are forbidden, but the same church condemns also all civil and protestant marriages. The church explicitly teaches that the sacrament of marriage can not be celebrated without a priest. According to Catholic doctrine, then, ninety-nine marriages out of every hundred in this country are irreligious unions.
7. Q. But does the law approve of such marriages?
 - A. From the legal point of view any marriage which is contracted with the consent and the knowledge of the courts enjoys the respect as well as the protection of the law.
8. Q. Is there any moral objection to the marriage of the divorced during the lifetime of the former husband or wife?
 - A. Moral considerations are more important than either the ecclesiastical or the legal. A marriage may be sanctioned both by church and law, and still be immoral. An act is right or wrong according to the intention or the motive which inspires it. If the intention is honest, the act is moral, if not, the act is immoral. If the separation between husband and wife is honestly secured, and for ethical reasons, such as will be mentioned later, and a new marriage is honestly contracted, the requirements of the law are satisfied.
9. Q. But suppose it is clearly established that Jesus forbade marriage or divorce, would that settle the question?
 - A. No, the authority of Jesus, a Jewish celibate monk of two thousand years ago, on questions of marriage and divorce is as negligible as his authority on the doctrine of evolution, or on the republican form of government.
10. Q. How are we to know then which institution is helpful and which hurtful to man?
 - A. By the experience of humanity.
11. Q. Has not experience justified Jesus' position on the questions of marriage and divorce?
 - A. It has not. Those periods in history and the countries in which celibacy was extensively practised and divorce absolutely forbidden have been the least advanced morally or intellectually. For over a thousand years civilisation was sacrificed to the life of the desert. To live with wild animals, amid environments of disease and dirt, drove the Europe which had seen the glory of Greece and Rome into bankruptcy. Immorality of the most shameless kind had sapped the vitality of nations, and provoked the invasion of barbarians. To this day, in Catholic countries, where divorce is denied, sexual morality is on a lower level than in protestant countries.
12. Q. Has the Catholic church ever dissolved the marriage tie?
 - A. Yes; by a special dispensation, for a political favor, or for a sum of money, the Pope has not hesitated to dissolve the tie which has been pronounced indissoluble.
13. Q. Is divorce on the increase in modern society?
 - A. It is; and the church has not been able to prevent it, because, in the first place, she takes an unreasonably extreme position against divorce, and because, in the second place, her practice of granting divorces by special dispensation, to people who could purchase them, has laid her open to the charge of insincerity as well as of inconsistency.
14. Q. State now what could be defended as a reasonable attitude toward the question of divorce.
 - A. When marriage has manifestly failed, it is not worth preserving it by compulsion. It would be as wasteful to preserve the body by artificial means after the life has departed, as to preserve the semblance of marriage after its harmony or unity has been broken. No effort or sacrifice should be neglected to keep the unity intact, even as everything should be done to keep the life in the body, but when unity from marriage, or life from the body has departed, separation is inevitable.
15. Q. Name some of the causes which justify divorce, but which the church considers insufficient.
 - A. Cruelty, desertion, insanity, crime, and habitual drunkenness. These justify divorce because they contribute to the degradation of the married and their children. Whenever a relation becomes immoral, it should be terminated. No one has the right to degrade another. No one has the right to make another wretched.
16. Q. Can it be shown that such relations degrade the human race?
 - A. Dr. Maudsley of the Royal College of Physicians clearly indicates the stages of degradation brought about by all compulsory conjugal associations. The first symptoms are a predominance of nervous irritability, a proneness to sudden and uncontrollable outbursts, and a tendency to cerebral congestion. These are followed in the succeeding generations by more serious symptoms, such as a prevailing mood of melancholia, a morbid and gloomy disposition, mental derangement, physical and moral deformities, imbecility, and organic disease.
17. Q. If degrading relations between man and woman preserved by law constitute an evil, are not frequent divorces also a great evil?
 - A. No, the authority of Jesus, a Jewish celibate monk of two thousand years ago, on questions of marriage and divorce is as negligible as his authority on the doctrine of evolution, or on the republican form of government.

- A. Decidedly. The tendency toward laxity in this matter in modern society is a menace to the greatest safeguard of civilisation,—the home.
18. Q. How do you account for this laxity?
- A. It is a protest against the extreme position of the church; and, as in all reactions, the pendulum has swung to the other extreme.
19. Q. Mention some of the causes which have contributed to the increase of divorce in modern society.
- A. Industrial conditions have compelled frequent moving or migration from one country or city to another, this unsettles family life. The mixed population of our great centres is another cause. The freedom of women, her economic independence, and her intellectual progress have also contributed to the increase of divorce. She is too strong to submit to injuries as she did when she was weak. But hasty marriages are responsible for more divorces than anything else.
20. Q. Mention other causes of conjugal unhappiness.
- A. (1) Because at first the married couple fail to understand each other, it must not be inferred hastily that they are not mated. Like life, love grows. Time is an essential element in harmonising dispositions. Affection, like the fruit of trees, requires the long shining of the sun to ripen in. It should not be expected that two individuals, two separate wills, could become really united at once, or immediately after they are pronounced husband and wife.
- (2) Again the impression prevails that there should be no disagreement between married couples at all, and that any friction indicates incompatibility of temper. This is an unwarranted conclusion. It is perfectly natural, and even wholesome, that the course of love should not always run smooth. Misunderstandings arise between parent and child, between friends, and business partners, without necessitating a disruption of relations. Differences of opinion are essential to the formation of sound views. Concession and compromise are indispensable conditions of harmony. To pass by an offence is proof of nobility of nature, says Bacon.
21. Q. Is not the facility with which divorces are secured another cause for matrimonial disharmonies?
- A. Yes. The knowledge that, at any time, and with little trouble a separation may be secured and new conjugal relations formed encourages disrespect for the marriage vows.
22. Q. How can this be prevented?
- A. Uniform and less lax laws can do much to check the abuse, but the moral elevation of society alone can permanently correct the evil?
23. Q. Sum up this chapter on divorce.
- A. "The homes that are worth preserving preserve themselves." "I do not believe that divorce is a menace to the purity and sacredness of the family, but I do believe it is a menace to the infernal brutality which at times makes a hell of the holiest human relations."

What Would You Substitute for the Bible as a Moral Guide?

By R. G. INGERSOLL.

You ask me what I would "substitute for the Bible as a moral guide."

I know that many people regard the Bible as the only moral guide and believe that in that book only can be found the true and perfect standard of morality.

There are many good precepts, many wise sayings, and many good regulations and laws in the Bible, and these are

mingled with bad precepts, with foolish sayings, with absurd rules and cruel laws.

But we must remember that the Bible is a collection of many books written centuries apart, and that it in part represents the growth and tells in part the history of a people. We must also remember that the writers treat of many subjects. Many of these writers have nothing to say about right or wrong, about vice or virtue.

The book of Genesis has nothing about morality. There is not a line in it calculated to shed light on the path of conduct. No one can call that book a moral guide. It is made up of myth and miracle, of tradition and legend.

In Exodus we have an account of the manner in which Jehovah delivered the Jews from Egyptian bondage.

We now know that the Jews were never enslaved by the Egyptians; that the entire story is a fiction. We know this because there is not found in Hebrew a word of Egyptian origin, and there is not found in the language of the Egyptians a word of Hebrew origin. This being so, we know that the Hebrews and Egyptians could not have lived together for hundreds of years.

Certainly Exodus was not written to teach morality. In that book you cannot find one word against human slavery. As a matter of fact, Jehovah was a believer in that institution.

The killing of cattle with disease and hail, the murder of the first-born, so that in every house was death, because the king refused to let the Hebrews go, certainly was not moral; it was fiendish. The writer of that book regarded all the people of Egypt, their children, their flocks and herds, as the property of Pharaoh, and these people and these cattle were killed, not because they had done anything wrong, but simply for the purpose of punishing the king. Is it possible to get any morality out of this history?

All the laws found in Exodus, including the Ten Commandments, so far as they are really good and sensible, were at that time in force among all the peoples of the world.

Murder is, and always was, a crime, and always will be, as long as a majority of people object to being murdered.

Industry always has been and always will be the enemy of laziness.

The nature of man is such that he admires the teller of truth and despises the liar. Among all tribes, among all people, truth telling has been considered a virtue and false swearing or false speaking a vice.

The love of parents for children is natural, and this love is found among all the animals that live. So the love of children for parents is natural, and was not and cannot be created by law. Love does not spring from a sense of duty, nor does it bow in obedience to commands.

So men and women are not virtuous because of anything in books or creeds.

All the Ten Commandments that are good were old, were the result of experience. The commandments that were original with Jehovah were foolish.

The worship of "any other God" could not have been worse than the worship of Jehovah, and nothing could have been more absurd than the sacredness of the Sabbath.

If commandments had been given against slavery and polygamy, against wars of invasion and extermination, against religious persecution in all its forms, so that the world could be free, so that the brain might be developed and the heart civilised, that we might with propriety call such commandments a moral guide.

Before we can truthfully say that the Ten Commandments constitute a moral guide, we must add and subtract. We must throw away some, and write others in their places.

The commandments that have a known application here, in this world, and treat of human obligations are good, the others have no basis in fact, or experience.

Many of the regulations found in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are good. Many are absurd and cruel.

The entire ceremonial of worship is insane.

Most of the punishment for violations of laws are unphilosophic and brutal. . . . The fact is that the Pentateuch upholds nearly all crimes, and to call it a moral guide is as absurd as to say that it is merciful or true.

Nothing of a moral nature can be found in Joshua or Judges. These books are filled with crimes, with massacres and murders. They are about the same as the real history of the Apache Indians.

The story of Ruth is not particularly moral.

In first and second Samuel there is not one word calculated to develop the brain or conscience.

Jehovah murdered seventy thousand Jews because David took a census of the people. David, according to the account, was the guilty one, but only the innocent were killed.

In first and second Kings can be found nothing of ethical value. All the kings who refused to obey the priests were denounced, and all the crowned wretches who assisted the priests were declared to be the favorites of Jehovah. In

these books there cannot be found one word in favor of liberty.

There are some good Psalms, and there are some that are infamous. Most of these Psalms are selfish. Many of them are passionate appeals for revenge.

The story of Job shocks the heart of every good man. In this book there is some poetry, some pathos, and some philosophy, but the story of this drama called Job, is heartless to the last degree. The children of Job are murdered to settle a little wager between God and the Devil. Afterward, Job having remained firm, other children are given in the place of the murdered ones. Nothing, however, is done for the children who were murdered.

The book of Esther is utterly absurd, and the only redeeming feature in the book is that the name of Jehovah is not mentioned.

I like the Song of Solomon because it tells of human love, and that is something I can understand. That book, in my judgment, is worth all the ones that go before it, and is a far better moral guide.

There are some wise and merciful Proverbs. Some are selfish and some are flat and commonplace.

I like the book of Ecclesiastes because there you find some sense, some poetry, and some philosophy. Take away the interpolations and it is a good book.

Of course there is nothing in Nehemiah or Ezra to make men better, nothing in Jeremiah or Lamentations calculated to lessen vice, and only a few passages in Isaiah that can be used in a good cause.

In Ezekiel and Daniel we find only ravings of the insane.

In some of the minor prophets there is now and then a good verse, now and then an elevated thought.

You can by selecting passages from different books, make a very good creed, and by selecting passages from different books, you can make a very bad creed.

The trouble is that the spirit of the Old Testament, its disposition, its temperament, is bad, selfish and cruel. The most fiendish things are commanded, commended and applauded.

The stories that are told of Joseph, of Elisha, of Daniel and Gideon, and of many others, are hideous; hellish.

On the whole, the Old Testament cannot be considered a moral guide.

Jehovah was not a moral God. He had all the vices and he lacked all the virtues. He generally carried out his threats, but he never faithfully kept a promise.

At the same time, we must remember that the Old Testament is a natural production, that it was written by savages who were slowly crawling toward the light. We must give them credit for the noble things they said, and we must be charitable enough to excuse their faults and even their crimes.

I know that many Christians regard the Old Testament as the foundation and the New as the superstructure, and while many admit that there are faults and mistakes in the Old Testament, they insist that the New is the flower and perfect fruit.

I admit that there are many good things in the New Testament, and if we take from that book the dogmas of eternal pain, of infinite revenge, of the atonement, of human sacrifice, of the necessity of shedding blood; if we throw away the doctrine of non-resistance, of loving enemies, the idea that prosperity is the result of wickedness, that poverty is a preparation for Paradise, if we throw all these away and take the good, sensible passages, applicable to conduct, then we can make a fairly good moral guide—narrow, but moral.

Of course, many important things would be left out. You would have nothing about human rights, nothing in favor of the family, nothing for education, nothing for investigation, for thought and reason, but still you would have a fairly good moral guide.

On the other hand, if you would take the foolish passages, the extreme ones, you could make a creed that would satisfy an insane asylum.

If you take the cruel passages, the verses that inculcate eternal hatred, verses that writhe and hiss like serpents, you can make a creed that would shock the heart of a hyena.

It may be that no book contains better passages than the New Testament, but certainly no book contains worse.

Below the blossom of love you find the thorn of hatred; on the lips that kiss, you find the poison of the cobra.

The Bible is not a moral guide.

Any man who follows faithfully all its teachings is an enemy of society and will probably end his days in a prison or an asylum.

What is morality?

In this world we need certain things. We have many wants. We are exposed to many dangers. We need food, fuel, raiment and shelter, and besides these wants, there is, what may be called, the hunger of the mind.

We are conditioned beings, and our happiness depends upon conditions. There are certain things that diminish,

certain things that increase, well-being. There are certain things that destroy and there are others that preserve.

Happiness, including its highest forms, is after all the only good, and everything, the result of which is to produce or secure happiness, is good, that is to say, moral. Everything that destroys or diminishes well-being is bad, that is to say, immoral. In other words, all that is good is moral, and all that is bad is immoral.

What then is, or can be called, a moral guide? The shortest possible answer is one word: Intelligence.

We want the experience of mankind, the true history of the race. We want the history of intellectual development, of the growth of the ethical, of the idea of justice, of conscience, of charity, of self-denial. We want to know the paths and roads that have been travelled by the human mind.

These facts in general, these histories in outline, the results reached, the conclusions formed, the principles evolved, taken together, would form the best conceivable moral guide.

We cannot depend on what are called "inspired books," or the religions of the world. These religions are based on the supernatural, and according to them we are under obligation to worship and obey some supernatural being, or beings. All these religions are inconsistent with intellectual liberty. They are the enemies of thought, of investigation, of mental honesty. They destroy the manliness of man. They promise eternal rewards for belief, for credulity, for what they call faith.

This is not only absurd, but it is immoral.

These religions teach the slave virtues. They make inanimate things holy, and falsehoods sacred. They create artificial crimes. To eat meat on Friday, to enjoy yourself on Sunday, to eat on fast-days, to be happy in Lent, to dispute a priest, to ask for evidence, to deny a creed, to express your sincere thought, all these acts are sins, crimes against some god. To give your honest opinion about Jehovah, Mohammed or Christ, is far worse than to maliciously slander your neighbor. To question or doubt miracles, is far worse than to deny known facts. Only the obedient, the credulous, the cringers, the kneelers, the meek, the unquestioning, the true believers, are regarded as moral, as virtuous. It is not enough to be honest, generous and useful; not enough to be governed by evidence, by facts. In addition to this, you must believe. These things are the foes of morality. They subvert all natural conceptions of virtue.

All "inspired books," teaching that what the supernatural commands is right, and right because commanded, and that what the supernatural prohibits is wrong, and wrong because prohibited, are absurdly unphilosophic.

And all "inspired books," teaching that only those who obey the commands of the supernatural are, or can be, truly virtuous, and that unquestioning faith will be rewarded with eternal joy, are grossly immoral.

Again I say: Intelligence is the only moral guide.

Why I am NOT an Agnostic.

An Agnostic is one who is in doubt concerning the existence of God. But to be candid, I am compelled to say that I am no more in doubt concerning such an hypothesis than I am in doubt concerning devils, dragons and other chimeras. An infinite good being is precisely as great an impossibility as an infinite bad being, a heaven as absolutely impossible as a hell. I not only believe but I know there is no God—simply because I do not know there is one. Neither does anyone else know that there is one. No one has ever proved it, no one does now or ever can prove it. God himself—if there were one—has not proved and does not now prove it. There is absolutely no evidence directly or indirectly, no logic, reason, sense, or analogy to prove it. If there were a God I would know it, because I have anxiously sought. But I have sought in vain. And if the Theist insists that I would not know God then I in turn insist that for like reasons no one else has known or now knows God. And what I cannot know, what nobody else can know and no one has ever known, is, of course, unknowable, and therefore we should not believe it. Therefore my honest denial and fearless assertion, "There is no God," is tantamount to absolute proof that there is no such being. Upon those affirming devolves the proof. Should one say, "There is a Devil," it is not necessary that we should explore the world and sweep etherial space with our telescopes in search of his satanic majesty. Oh, no. We simply say, "No, there is no Devil," and this denial is equivalent to proof that such a being does not exist. Those affirming must do the searching, produce the evidence, and submit it to the world or their bald assertion falls to the ground as so much nonsense. But the God idea positively conflicts with all that we know directly or indirectly. When closely analysed and considered in the

light of modern science, it becomes a nursery tale, and the time is near at hand when millions of our best men and women will stand aghast at the thought that at one time they actually entertained the notion.

Like Ingersoll I have subjected my belief to the full scope of Freethought, the methods of science and closest reasoning. The freedom of thought and the right of expressing such thought, vouchsafed to us by the genius of our glorious republic, has led me on, even beyond Mr. Ingersoll's Agnosticism, beyond the conservative, perhaps beyond the equivocating, "I don't know," beyond Spencer's "Unknowable," beyond the compromising attitude of an unbeliever, to the more aggressive one of an outspoken Atheist and Materialist. An absolutely authoritative and infallible gospel once questioned, once subjected to human tests and reason, once doubted in its minutest detail, there is no stopping place until the goal of Atheism and Materialism is reached. Furthermore, if God is a thinking, living reality he must be an organic, breathing being or he cannot possibly be a God and all it implies.

But now the problem stares us in the face—and which the church must solve or Atheism will soon take its place—how can an organic, limited, living God be a God and all it implies and at the same time occupy the relation of creator and ruler of an unlimited universe? How can the limited be related to the unlimited as a controlling power? It is all childish talk about an "infinite God" when we know of only one infinite reality and that is the universe. It is likewise absurd to talk about a God being here and everywhere when the universe monopolises every point of space. Unless the Church can intelligently solve the problem how a God with a brain can be infinite or how a God without a brain can be a God, it will be but a few years before it will come to an ignoble end.

Therefore I am not an Agnostic. The God idea—in spite of its hoary traditions and venerable associations—never having been duly established by logic, science and reason, and being utterly unthinkable and, when properly analysed, childish and absurd. I do not put my reasonable unbelief on a par with an unreasonable belief and say "I don't know," but insist that upon those affirming devolves the proof, and unless the idea can be logically demonstrated as consistent with truth and sense, my fearless and simple denial absolutely proves and establishes the fact, startling though it be to the unthinking millions that there is no God! And the world will be infinitely better without one.

—Anonymous, "Liberal Review" (Chicago).

Correspondence.

"A NATIONAL SCANDAL" AND THE REMEDY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—That is a first-rate article of yours in the *Freethinker*, dealing with our peculiar judges and politicians; and it ought to be circulated broadcast. I hope we may look forward to having a pamphlet upon the subject from your able pen; and were a fund raised for that purpose it should, and I believe would, meet with a generous and ready response. I well recollect your splendid defence of George Senior, to whose case I am glad to find you have again drawn attention by coupling it to the more recent one of James Cook. But it is a rare reflection on Christian charity that there should be maintained upon this matter in the churches a silence like unto that of the grave, and that it remains for an Atheist to teach the Christian another lesson in tolerance. How these unblushing and unbelieving "believers" can summon the requisite audacity to go canting up and down the earth preaching "Let brotherly love continue," etc., surpasses me. Continue, indeed! Christian "brotherly love" has first to begin. The "brotherly love" business is indeed in a flourishing state when Christians must be protected from Christians by Freethinkers.

I note you have appealed to Mr. Gladstone, the Home Secretary—"a Christian, and the son of a Christian"—and also to "Cromwell" Clifford, likewise a Christian and the son of another Christian; and it is to be hoped that you will see that these gentlemen have your remarks thrust under their pious noses. Especially ought the Doctor not to escape, since it is he who is so loudly trumpeted as the Christian Nonconformist General, whose "War" Office is at present situated at Westminster. Indeed, a copy of the *Freethinker* should be in the hands of every member in the House and of every judge in the kingdom; and if we had anything like a free press, instead of the fettered thing that does service for it, that article of yours would appear on the front page of every journal throughout the length and breadth of the land.

I think you will succeed in bringing blushes to the cheeks of Judge Bigham and "General" Clifford. But the end you

are striving to effect will hardly be brought about by that alone, as none knows better than yourself. These men can in this way be made to feel; but to make them fear, other lines must be proceeded upon. There must be the general voice of public clamor. But to strike the decisive blow at this brutal system of organised hypocrisy requires money; and this there should be no difficulty in raising. The occasion is a great one, and you are the man to meet it. I am confident that you could write such a pamphlet that would send the hot blood to the cheeks of a generous-hearted public whose principal misfortune is lack of imagination. They are kindly enough disposed, but they do not think. But they would rise to the occasion if they were ROUSED, and there is no man to do that like yourself.

ERNEST PACK.

ROWDYISM AT BROCKWELL PARK.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Will you allow me, through the pages of the *Freethinker*, to impress upon Freethinkers living in South London the necessity of supporting the Secular platform in Brockwell Park? Last Sunday afternoon, towards the end of my lecture, the entire congregation of a certain reverend gentleman, who need not be named, marched over to our meeting, and, by means of all kinds of vocal exercises, made all future discussion of the matter in hand impossible.

Fortunately, the audience which I had already accumulated was too large to make physical violence successful; but this may not always be the case.

The position of affairs appearing somewhat critical, I stayed to preside at the evening meeting to be addressed by Mr. Edwin, when several Christian gentlemen approached me and expressed their utter abhorrence of the methods adopted by their fellow-Christians in the afternoon.

The fact that the Camberwell Branch can hold large and orderly meetings in this Park until the reverend gentleman's meeting breaks up, shows that it is not anything which the Freethought speaker says, but simply organised opposition, which creates the disorder.

F. A. DAVIES.

HIS CONUNDRUM.

The young man had been invited to attend a church social, and when he arrived he found that it was a "Conundrum Party," and that each person was expected to propound at least one conundrum of his own devising.

When his turn came he asked to be excused until later in the evening, saying that he must have time to think up a good one. So he was passed over until the very last, when the master of ceremonies asked him if he were ready.

"I am," he said. "Why is this conundrum like the first meal you eat on your first trip across the ocean?"

And when everybody said they would give it up he said that was the answer.—*The Sunday Magazine*.

THEN IT RAINED.

The lands were parched and dry. The grass had withered and the tall corn stalks bowed their sun-browned heads and seemed to cry for moisture. The river beds showed signs of dust and the streams and springs were unmarked by even a drop of water. The farmers were in despair. The clouds refused to sprinkle their precious drops of rain on the land and rapidly the crops were becoming ruined. Rainmakers were employed without success. Every effort was seemingly exhausted when relief came and the rain fell. The village church had given a picnic.—*Puck*.

MARKED IMPROVEMENT.

A devout old Methodist complained of feeling poorly, and the doctor advised him to try a hot toddy, but the old man objected on account of the bad example set before his family. "That is easy," said the doctor; "just call for the hot water, saying that you wish to shave, and keep the other ingredients in your own possession." The next day a neighbor inquired how the elder was getting along. "He seems to be feeling much better," said his wife. "He shaved three times last night and twice this morning."

CORNER IN FIRES.

"Do you believe there is such a thing as hell fire?" asked the reporter.

"I should say not," replied the mine owner. "Excuse me for a moment. I want to order another advance of 50 cents a ton in the price of coal."

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): F. A. Davies, 3.15, "Miss Billington and the Bible"; 6.30, "Are We Downhearted?"

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Rushcroft-road, Brixton, 11.30, James Rowney; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6, James Rowney.

CLAPHAM COMMON: 3, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "The Higher Criticism and the New Test."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, W. Davey, "Leaves from the Life of C. Bradlaugh."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): Andrew Allison, 3.15, "God and His Book"; 6.30, "God's Champion."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, Mr. Rosetti, "The Bible and Modern Science."

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): Annual Picnic to Burton Woods. Wagonettes leave Woodside (Birkenhead) Ferry at 2.

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, a Lecture.

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (76 Joicey-terrace): 3.30, H. Johnston, "Conscience."

OUTDOOR.

WIGAN BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Square): 11, 3, and 7, H. Percy Ward. Tuesday, July 17, at 7.45, "Has Man a Free Will?"

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