

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVI.—No 32

SUNDAY, AUGUST 12, 1906

PRICE TWOPENCE

All compromise with institutions of which your conscience disapproves,—compromises which are usually made for the sake of the general good,—instead of producing the good you expected, inevitably lead you not only to acknowledge the institution you disapprove of, but also to participate in the evil that institution produces.
—TOLSTOY.

Slighting the Almighty.

MISS MARIE CORELLI has launched a new novel from the old slips. We have not read it yet. Perhaps we never shall. But we have read (and criticised) other novels of hers, and we are in no hurry to tackle the new one. To tell the gospel truth, we have a lot of other reading to get through first; some in the way of business, and some in the way of pleasure. Amongst the latter sort is the dear, delightful little "Oxford miniature" edition of Keats, printed on the thinnest India paper, and small enough to go into a waistcoat pocket. We bought it (mad luxury!) just for the joy of reading him again. And until we have savored the last fine line of Keats can we spare time to read all the windy pages of Corelli? Never! Perish the thought! "The music yearning like a god in pain"—ah, if Corelli could write like that it would be another matter. We too would then be amongst her adorers. And a lot of people who are now in the list would then be out of it.

It is only the title, and another item, of Miss Marie Corelli's novel with which we are concerned. The title is *The Treasure of Heaven*. No doubt this sounds more like the title of a sermon than the title of a work of fiction—although the distinction between sermons and fiction is often rather formal that substantial. But we raise no objection on that account; indeed, it is quite in keeping with the titles of former Corelli romances. When the great Hall Caine came out with *The Christian* the great Marie Corelli went one better with *The Master Christian*. There was a beautiful sweet boy in that book, with a strange turn for moralising; and he turned out to be no less a personage than Jesus Christ in disguise. Well now, a lady who could go through a whole book arm in arm, as it were, with Jesus Christ, and pat him on the cheek, and say "Good boy! good boy!" might very well write about the *Treasure of Heaven*, for she must be well acquainted with the establishment and on speaking terms with all its principal officers, including the Boss of Bosses himself. And really, if every little pulpit whipper-snapper can bow his head, close his eyes, and talk to God (we say to God, not with him, for the confabulation is always one-sided), we see no reason why Marie Corelli should be on terms of easy familiarity with her Maker.

What are we driving at, then, in the title of this article? Why this. We think that if *The Treasure of Heaven* must have a portrait it should be the portrait of the Boss. We do not mean a hasty snapshot, such as Moses might have taken as the Lord swept past (*a posteriori*, as the logicians say) that cleft in the rock. We mean a good firm photograph; a full length affair, if possible, with every lineament clear and precise. A portrait like that would be worth having. Some of the old painters introduced God the Father in their pictures. Giotto

himself did so. But those old painters drew from imagination. They had never seen the Boss. But who shall say this of Marie Corelli? She, who is so intimate with the celestial company, might have given us a valuable likeness of the one being who seems to have escaped interviewers and photographers. Instead of doing this, however, she gives us a photograph of—herself. Hitherto she has urged that the public has no concern with an artist's personality. Self-advertisers have been her abhorrence. But she has been photographed like this, and photographed like that, so often against her will, that she was obliged to be photographed again in self-defence. "This is the fair incomparable she." We have it on her own certificate. And all the hosts of Corelli-ites will be able to fall down and worship, feeling that this is no idol, but the very goddess herself.

It is well for the Corelli-ites to have Marie Corelli's photograph. But it ought not to have appeared in *The Treasure of Heaven*. At least, it ought not to have appeared alone. The Almighty should have had a chance. He has not even a look in. It is a great slight on his Omnipotence. The poor Deity may say, "This is your hour." Perhaps he dreams of still worse things to come. He is of the male persuasion, and the modern female agitation against "mere man" may extend itself to the gods. In that case he may be pushed aside to make room for a female divinity. Woman in these days claims to be everything; and when woman makes up her mind it is hard for a son of a woman to say her nay. She cannot be a member of parliament yet, but she can sit upon the throne. And why not upon the throne of thrones? Why should a male deity occupy that post for ever? Why not give the females a turn? We believe there are several ready for the job. Anyhow, there is Miss Marie Corelli—who might arrange the matter with Miss Billington.

But until "the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence" the Almighty should be treated with becoming respect. Certainly he should be treated so by Miss Marie Corelli in a matter of this sort. She has made thousands of pounds by taking his name in vain. She need not take his face in vain too. We suggest that she should give him an opportunity in the second edition of her novel. Her own photograph need not be displaced. His and hers might appear together. But in that case, perhaps, the title of the book should be altered. *We Two* would not be a bad suggestion, only it has already been appropriated by another lady novelist. Or, if the title of Miss Corelli's novel cannot be changed now, it might at least receive an addendum, and could then run as follows: "*The Treasure of Heaven: with Portraits of the two Chief Wardens.*"

Miss Corelli may protest that our remarks are blasphemous. We beg to assure her that they are nothing of the kind. We do not know whether she has read the Bible. We have. And it tells us that Jacob saw God face to face; that God spake unto Moses face to face; and that a number of elders went up a mountain and saw the God of Israel. His face is not mentioned in the third instance, but his feet are—and they must have been nine hundred and ninety-nines. He is therefore solid enough to be photographed, and his portrait would be "the catch of the season."

G. W. FOOTE.

The Religion of Nature.

SEVERAL eulogistic reviews of a book by Mr. E. Kay Robinson, Editor of *The Country Side*, bearing the above title induced me to secure a copy as likely to be a work worth reading. And although not agreeing with the author's conclusions, and hardly anyone could fairly claim that these have been demonstrated, the book is one that *does* repay perusal far more than is usual with such an endeavor to reconcile religious beliefs with our modern knowledge of nature. Mr. Robinson writes of animal life with the zest of a nature lover and the suggestive experience of a keen observer. And however much one may disagree with the position taken up one feels that there is here no professional theologian striving by evasion and suppression and distortion to obtain a verdict on behalf of a creed he may or may not really believe himself, but a man who is sincerely convinced of the truth of the position taken up.

Mr. Robinson's book owes its origin to a question propounded by "A Freethinker," a man "of known ability, a good naturalist," and "whose name, if published, would surprise most of my readers," doubtless one of the numerous band of scientific unbelievers, who for various reasons keep their heresy a secret. The question propounded was how the author could reconcile his religious beliefs with the cruelty and suffering of the animal world. The objection is, of course a common one, and nothing that Mr. Robinson says in reply really removes the objection. Much that he writes corrects exaggerated methods of stating the objection, but this, in my opinion, is all that is accomplished. Mr. Robinson raises a protest against unduly pressing the "human point of view" and for this he may easily find justification. We are all too apt to read our own feelings into animals, not merely qualitatively, but also quantitatively. And this is a statement that holds true not only of man in relation to animals, but also of man in relation to other members of his own species. For even with human beings the degree of pain or suffering is not only conditioned by the nervous system of each individual, but also by the habits and mode of life of each. It would be untrue to assume that the susceptibility to suffering is the same with a savage as with a civilised being; and it is equally unwise to assume that certain people under a given set of conditions experience the same unhappiness that others would feel if suddenly placed in the same environment. Mr. Robinson does well in calling attention to the danger of overvaluing the human aspect of things, but one feels that in doing this he comes near sinning in the opposite direction—if he does not actually do so.

Mr. Robinson's method of meeting the objection stated by "A Freethinker" may be put very briefly, and is as follows. The avoidance of certain injurious influences, he admits, is common to all the animal world, including man. But while this is so, man alone, by the exclusive possession of self-consciousness, experiences unhappiness or suffering "in the human sense of anguish, agony, pain, torment, torture, etc." This can only be experienced provided "one knows what one feels," that is, possesses the power of thinking about one's feelings, and Mr. Robinson holds that there exists no evidence to prove that any animal other than man does this. From this comes the conclusion that "except from the human point of view there is no happiness or unhappiness in the world," and therefore the objection to Theism on the score of the cruelty existing in the animal world loses all its force.

The first remark one has to make on Mr. Robinson's thesis is that there is nothing more dangerous or more misleading than drawing sharp lines of demarcation between different branches of the animal world. The procedure is risky enough when it is concerned with physical structures, but it is still more so when it has to do with less understood psychical processes. A great many animal actions are purely automatic. This may be freely conceded; but many human actions are also automatic, and it is a matter of no

little difficulty to say always what is wholly instinctive and what is partly so. We may also admit that in the case of the sensitive plant, which winces on contact with an injurious substance, we have nothing comparable to the reasoned avoidance of danger by a human being. But between the sensitive plant and a man there is an infinite number of gradations, and it by no means follows that because the plant does not feel pain as humans do, or because the lowest animals have also little or no capacity for pain, that we are to class everything on the level of the plant until we come to man, and then make a sudden departure by the introduction of a new factor of consciousness. It is all a matter of nervous development; and nothing in Mr. Robinson's book makes against the position that consciousness, the power of looking before and after, of learning from individual experience, is as much a growth as is anything else.

Mr. Robinson gives a number of illustrations and explanations in support of his thesis, most of them ingenious, some of them probably correct, but all of them inconclusive. Every animal, he points out, inherits certain instincts leading it to avoid certain things as injurious as well as to follow certain courses that are beneficial. Therefore, when a dog exhibits fear of a whip that was used to chastise him, it only means that the whipping left an imprint on the nerve centres of the dog, and the sight of the whip completes an automatic nervous connection which brings the animal's natural instinct to avoid injury to his body into full activity. Well and good, but what more is there, in kind, that happens in the case of human beings? Greater power enables human beings to effect a nicer discrimination in the direction of who holds the whip, and whether they have recently done anything to deserve a whipping, but this is a difference of degree only, not a difference of kind. Mr. Robinson only believes otherwise because of his assumption that whereas the animal mind resembles a telegraph office under an ordinary master dealing with all messages received in a preregulated manner, the human mind resembles a more important office with a superior official in charge, deciding which shall be given preference and which put in the back-ground. The illustration is far more ingenious than it is warranted.

And none of Mr. Robinson's illustrations, although widely drawn, cover the cases where the inherited nervous mechanism does not enable one to predict what an animal will do; and where, therefore, there occurs new adjustments in harmony with acquired experience. A monkey who on first being given an egg smashes it on the floor and thus loses its contents, but afterwards carefully breaks one end and peels off the shell, presents as good evidence of intelligent adaptation as can be found in a human being. Similar illustrations of other animals might be cited, but a single one is enough to prove that Mr. Robinson's thesis will not bear careful examination.

I do not longer labor this point because even though the theory that human pain and animal pain are distinct in kind were admitted, the "Freethinker's" objection is not really disposed of. Mr. Robinson holds that it is in virtue of an inherited nervous organism that animals wince from "pain," without being conscious of their reason for so doing. Well, but unless it is denied that the nerve tissue of animals is altogether different from the nerve tissue of human beings, it will not be questioned that, for the time at least, the presence of a substance or a condition against which the nervous system of an animal reacts, is the occasion of discomfort. Any one who has watched a dog moaning over a wounded paw, and moaning at intervals even while feeding, will surely admit this. And, if this is admitted, all that Mr. Robinson proves is that, in stating the case against Theism, the argument derived from the existence of pain in the animal world is exaggerated. This may be true, but the argument really rests not upon the quantity of pain, but upon its existence; and, until it can be shown that this does not exist, a "Freethinker's" complaint will stand.

But the argument from animal suffering is only part of a larger one. The complete argument would embrace human suffering. Here there can be no question as to its reality, although Mr. Robinson might have, with nearly as much warranty, lumped in the the lowest types of mankind with the rest of the animal world. Here the defence is a familiar, but useless, one. "The suffering of men is the spur which urges them upwards, the life of every man having a credit balance on the side of happiness." The latter portion of this statement may certainly be questioned. Of the race, as a whole, it is true enough, because the conditions of life, as a whole, and the conditions of general happiness, must ultimately coincide. But natural selection works for the preservation of the species, and only for the preservation of individuals as a means to this end. And, in some individual cases, certainly the balance is not on the side of happiness. With some, the conditions of life become so intolerable that suicide is the result. And, with others, suicide is not resorted to more because of the unreasoning desire to live, developed by natural selection, than from any conscious appreciation of the joys of living.

And it is only in a wide sense—that of using suffering as the equivalent of every form of inconvenience and dissatisfaction—that any truth can be attached to the first portion of the statement quoted. But even here it only holds good of the race, not of individuals. For the dissatisfaction, with existing conditions that lead to improvements in various directions, often means the crushing out of those who are the less fortunately endowed of our species. The end may be a good end for those who survive as the culmination of a process and inherit its benefits. But what of those who have gone before, who have been crushed out, and whose only crime is that they were not better than Nature, or God, made them?

In its narrower form the doctrine is almost entirely false, if not wholly so. Pain does not elevate and purify; it deadens and deteriorates. The tide of life cannot run so swiftly, nor so clearly, in an organism experiencing pain as it would otherwise. That pain lowers and happiness elevates is one of the clearest of physiological truths; and in morals one can see in case after case how characters have gone to wreck and ruin under the influence of long-continued suffering. Many there are who bear pain with surprising fortitude, and who maintain a serenity of temper and sweetness of disposition in the presence of continued suffering. But it is an abuse of language to speak of these qualities as due to suffering. It is simply an evidence that some characters can withstand its influence, as others are proof against alcohol or an infectious disease. Nor can it be held that suffering has a wholly good effect on even those who witness it. With some it may call forth—not create—kindly feelings and beneficent actions, but it just as frequently deadens feeling with others. One of the commonest of experiences is how constant contact with misery and pain habituates one to their presence. It is this truth that lies at the root of the objection to public exhibitions of brutality, to bringing up children habituated to brutal sports, and to the sinister social truth that, by habituation, people may live carelessly under conditions that would drive others, who have been differently situated, to suicide. That pain is a good thing is a piece of mere pulpit rhetoric, and with nothing else to commend it. Were it true, the knowledge and sympathy that leads to the diminution of suffering would be but instruments on the road to barbarism and degradation.

Mr. Robinson's final plea that this use of pain as a spur is God's beneficence working in the world, is, if possible, still more futile. If there is a God, the world is his creation; and therefore God, working in the world, is God working against himself—calling an evil principle into existence, and then claiming credit for limiting the extent of the evil it might cause. And before we can accept this theory one must be in a position to see what purpose even a God could serve by bringing things right in the end that

could not have been as well, or better, served by putting them right at the beginning. Mr. Robinson has written an earnest book and an interesting book; but he has not come within even a reasonable distance of removing "A Freethinker's" objection. But no man need be ashamed of failing to achieve the impossible.

C. COHEN.

Why Christ Has Failed.—II.

(Concluded from p. 484.)

LET us look again at Dr. Forrest's conception of Christ. It is necessary to know exactly what it is, inasmuch as many present-day divines have adopted it. The central, most essential thing in it is the declaration that Christ was neither God nor man exclusively; but a stranger and more incredible thing still in it is the assertion that his divinity was personal, while his humanity was impersonal. He had no human mind, nor will, nor conscience, nor heart; and yet, in spite of the absence of these, and, consequently, of human personality, "to call him man is true." His mind, will, conscience, and heart were divine, and he had a divine personality, so that "to call him God is true"; and yet he was not even God exclusively. To some this may seem highly abstruse, though in reality there is no abstruseness in it at all: it is simply humorous. After carefully elaborating this amusing conception of the "Incarnate One," Dr. Forrest calmly assures us that this marvellously constituted being "never broke through the restrictions of the human nature He had voluntarily assumed." Now, this last statement is of a crucial nature, and we must mark well the word *never* in it. Christ *never* broke through the restrictions, limitations, or conditions of humanity.

We are now ready to proceed. Examine this Christ carefully. He always kept within the limits of humanity. *What, then, was the use of his deity, of which he is said to have been always conscious?* What good did his divine personality do him? As to knowledge he was on an equality with all others of the same station in society, his means of acquiring information being precisely identical with theirs. This is made most emphatic in Dr. Forrest's book. Christ's mental qualities and acquisitions were similar to those of his neighbors, for he *never* broke through the limitations of humanity. And yet—and yet Dr. Forrest has the temerity to tell us that this being thus limited, who *never* broke through his voluntarily assumed restrictions, has presented the world with "the final revelation of religious truth and practice." He has shown the world "what God is, and how we should conceive of Him." After all, then, if this is true, Christ *must* have broken through the restrictions of humanity, and Dr. Forrest's theory of the Incarnation breaks down. But is it true that Christ gave the world a new conception of God and human duty? Let us see.

Dr. Forrest has a long and exceedingly lucid chapter on "Christ's Authority on God"; but he does not point out *what* Christ said about God that had never been said before. Even on the assumption that the Gospels are historical documents, it cannot be contended that Jesus gave birth to a single new idea concerning God. That he called him Father is doubtless true; but Father had been one of the commonest names of the Deity for many centuries, if not millenniums, before his day. Something must be said here which is not found in Dr. Forrest's book. If the Gospels are to be relied upon, Christ claimed that no one could ever know the Father except by believing in him as the only begotten Son; and in making that claim he virtually broke through the restrictions of humanity. No ordinary man would ever dream of making such a preposterous claim.

In this chapter the author takes far too much for granted, and is guilty of great injustice towards people who differ from him, especially towards Atheists. He takes for granted that God is the final

reality, and that for some reason the eyes of Atheists are holden that they cannot see him, the fact being that Atheism is the result of having had the eyes widely opened. Another thing taken for granted by Dr. Forrest is that the sense of moral responsibility would be impossible apart from the belief in God. Does not our friend know that the sense of moral responsibility is much older than the belief in a god? It is true that the ethical instinct has a universal character; but the ethical instinct is strong in people who have no sense of God at all. Here is what our author says:—

"It is this fundamental ethical quality in humanity on which Christ seizes as the organon for gaining the true knowledge of God."

That sentence is in italics to indicate its importance in the author's estimation; but for the life of me I cannot find a single passage in the Gospels which verifies it. Dr. Forrest is truly eloquent when he enlarges on the transcendent value and beauty of the moral sense, and traces its growth and development in human society; but he falls into the common theological error of asserting that man's moral ascent is due to God's active presence in his life. He says:—

"Whence is it that men are thus impelled and constrained along one ascending line of moral effort, drawn on oftentimes in spite of themselves, so that they curb their most eager passions and 'follow the gleam,' yet ever the longer they follow it the path grows easier before them and the joy increases? It is, says Christ, the very presence of God in them. It is He who has made them to be partakers of His own life of blessedness, and the imperatives that urge them upward are the impulses of His Spirit which does not suffer them to be content with anything short of Himself. It is the Father disciplining His children. That is why there is no cessation in the moral ascent. It is the growing discovery of possession of the Infinite."

That may be good modern theology, and the unmistakable stamp of piety is upon it. But it is not fair to make Christ responsible for it, because he never taught it; and besides it is not true to fact. Mankind have not made a steady moral ascent. Morally the world is to-day pretty much what it was two thousand years ago. The ascent has been almost imperceptible. But had there been a perfectly good and loving Heavenly Father "disciplining his children," and revealing and imparting himself to them, humanity would have reached something like perfection long ere this.

And this leads me to the chapter in which "Christ's Authority on Individual Duty" is under discussion. In my opinion this is the most admirable and valuable chapter in the book. I have read it through several times with both pleasure and profit. *But as a vindication of Christ's authority on morals it is a complete failure.* After all said and done, Dr. Forrest is dominated in ethics not by Christ, but by his own common sense. And is not this true of most Christians? Their loyalty to their Lord is merely nominal, a sentiment rather than a literal fact. With due deference I venture to suggest that on this point the author is scarcely fair to Christ. In the first place, he maintains that to regard the Master's words as absolute rules, to be literally observed, is to "misrepresent the real character of Christ's authority in the sphere of conduct." "They are not formal rules," he adds, "but principles." But Christ himself is reported to have laid them down as rules, commandments, obedience to which was the sole test and proof of loyal discipleship. At the close of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is made to say, "Every one which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man," etc., and "Every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man," etc. (Matt. vii. 24-27). There is no ambiguity there. Again: "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love"; "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things I command you"; "These things I command you" (John xv. 10, 14, 17). Nothing is clearer from the record than that Jesus issued commands which his

disciples were to strictly obey. That he himself did not observe all of them does not affect my contention in the least.

In the second place, Dr. Forrest endeavors to explain away all the impossible precepts of his Lord. "Resist not evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also," is doubtless one of such precepts. These words, our author claims, do not express "the whole mind of Christ on the subject." When he himself was struck by the officer of the High Priest, instead of turning the other cheek, he "remonstrated against the insult." To unprejudiced people the plain fact is that the commandment under consideration is a wholly impracticable and absurd one, which no one has ever been able to observe, not even that erratic man of genius, Count Tolstoy. Instead of courageously obeying it, Christians generally quietly ignore it, and go their own way, while Christian teachers content themselves with trying to explain it; and we all know how numerous and contradictory the explanations offered are. Tolstoy is about the only one who takes it as it stands and honestly though vainly attempts to convert it into practice.

Another commandment—"Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away"—is treated in a similar manner, Dr. Forrest explains it thus:—

"Christ had in view those who were destitute of the necessities or elementary comforts of existence, who had no bread to eat, who were faint with thirst, or shivering for lack of clothing; and He forbade His disciples to turn a deaf ear to the appeal of a brother in sore need. His language but repeats, though according to His wont in more vivid and emphatic form, the humane exhortations of the Old Testament. In that age there was no such organised provision made by the community as exists to-day for the homeless or unemployed."

Then follows an eminently clear exposition of the system of philanthropy in practice to-day. With this exposition I have no fault to find; but I must protest against regarding such a system as being in harmony with the commandment of Christ. It is rather in direct antagonism to it. Dr. Forrest's explanations are most ingenious; but they do not succeed in proving that Christ's moral teaching possesses any actual authority, such as is claimed for it.

Dr. Forrest discusses the silence of Christ on the subject of slavery, and justifies it, or, rather, offers an apology for it. He frankly admits, however, that the New Testament does not contain a single word in condemnation of the degrading institution of slavery. I go further and affirm that the New Testament *recognises* the system of slavery, and issues counsels to both slave-owners and slaves. In other words, Christianity *recognised* slavery as one of the institutions of the world to which it had no opposition to offer, although the Pagan Stoics had already "passed the word that all men were equal, and had spoken of brotherhood as well as of the duties of man towards man." The Church also recognised slavery and defended it in the name of God and the Bible. On this ground I unhesitatingly declare that emancipation was not a *Christian* achievement. It was not loyalty to Christ, but an enlightened sense of humanity, that made it obligatory. The conscience that liberated the slaves was a *human* conscience, not a *Christian* one.

Now, is it not undeniable that Christ has failed because he is an utterly impossible being, a being in whom to believe is an irrational act; because his teaching is as impossible as his own existence; and because he made false promises as to the results of his own power on the world? Christendom is now rapidly losing confidence in him, and beginning to rely upon its own natural instincts, and to be guided in its conduct by natural knowledge. A reaction may take place, though this is doubtful; but no reaction will eventuate in the establishment of the *authority* of the Christ of the Gospels, either in morals or even in religion. The religion attributed to him in

the Gospels died in the birth, while as to the religion which to-day bears his name there is nothing like agreement among its champions either as to what it really is, or as what it is expected to do for mankind.

J. T. LLOYD.

Are We Less Religious ?

If we are, let us be thankful! Despite bishops whose dioceses are Nowhere-in-Particular, or eminent clergymen, some of whom do *not* think we are going to the "demnition bow-wows," but are on the road to All-right, we can rejoice that some of them acknowledge the fact that England is less "religious" in their sense, and more common-sense and practical. But there is still more than enough religion left to go round, and a superfluous amount for everyone. And so long as a clerical class and caste is to be supported, so long as the collection has to be taken up, so long as missions require maintenance—especially where they are neither needed nor wanted—there will exist the demand for more Gospel light, more clergy, more churches, more missions. It is Oliver Twist over again. And the Church, like the baby and the soap so much advertised, "won't be happy till he gets it."

But England is awaking to the knowledge that the bow has been bent too long and that freedom has come. If abused by the sharp "smart set," it is well used by the common people. Sunday is becoming more and more a day of true rest, real relief, actual pleasure. Arthur Clennain's mother and her "wrathfully-bound Bible," described by Dickens, have to step down and out. The piety of gloom and misery, and much hypocrisy and cant, is no longer wanted. It is out of place to-day. People cannot, *will not*, stand it. "The sword of the Lord and Gideon" is now very dull and rusty, and decidedly ineffective. The better weapon of ethics—morals—does the work. And we are not to be like "dumb, driven cattle" under clerical goads, or the whips of dogmatism; and the drivers have found it out. Intelligence and independent thought among the people have had their effect on the clergy of all Churches, and on religionists.

The question to ask is not "Are we less religious?" but rather, "Are we more true to right and justice?" If we are seeking the betterment of the social system, if we strive for our personal advance in intelligence, kindness, and goodwill, questions as to creeds and doctrines, who is to give—or take—Orders, who or what has "the Succession," who are religious or not religious, will drop into complete insignificance.

GERALD GREY.

Acid Drops.

The great G. K. Chesterton was turned on to review the cheap edition of Bradlaugh's *Life* in the *Daily News*. The article was lively, in its way—and amusing, in its way; for "G. K. C." is always brisk and paradoxical; but as a criticism of Bradlaugh it was nearly all fudge. The statement that "it is left for the Christian Church to keep his name in honor" is one of those fantastic audacities which are expected from this writer. Of course there is not a bit of truth in it; it is the very reverse of the truth; and that is the precise essence of a Chesterton paradox. You stand on your head, as it were, to get new views of things; but they are, after all, only the old views upside down. The Christian Church does *not* try to keep Bradlaugh's name in honor. It hopes that Bradlaugh will be forgotten. It is the Freethinkers who keep Bradlaugh's name in honor—and Mr. Chesterton pretends not to be aware of their existence; just as he, and the *Daily News* for which he writes, pretend to believe that there is no such journal as the *Freethinker*, and no organised Freethought movement, and no Freethought lecturer left in England. The head-burying, posterior-displaying ostrich is simply not in it with these people.

Mr. Chesterton writes of Bradlaugh's last years in this fashion:—

"He was a good man; he had many enemies and he fought them all with generosity; but his last foes were those of his own household. He went down at last under a rush of revolutionaries; of Cunninghame Graham and John Burns."

This again is all nonsense. Bradlaugh "went down" before nothing. He had become one of the most powerful figures in the Liberal party, he had made a great reputation for himself in the House of Commons, and a great political future would have been his if he had not been arrested by "that fell serjeant death."

Christianity boasts of having been woman's best friend. It is simply brag, of course; for Christianity has always been unjust to woman, and the Bible is one of her worst enemies. Christian missionaries spread the most abominably false and foolish reports of the ill-treatment of women in "heathen" lands; but whenever a candid traveller opens his mouth we learn that the real facts of the case are very different. Sir Herbert Maxwell, for instance, has been writing in *Blackwood* on Montenegro. This is a Christian country, and Christian poets have sung its praises for keeping the Christian flag flying in spite of the Turk. And the Montenegro men are strapping handsome fellows, but the Montenegro women are worn and haggard. The reason is that the men are fighting cocks and the women are beasts of burden. Sir Herbert Maxwell plainly says that "the lot of women in this Christian country is far harder than that of Mussulman wives who are kept in seclusion."

Mr. F. H. Balkwill, in the *Nineteenth Century*, offers a natural explanation of the sacred fire of Israel, which he suggests was a composition of naphtha which Moses learned to prepare from the Egyptian priests. Jehovah went before the Jews as a pillar of light by night and a pillar of cloud by day. Mr. Balkwill suggests that Moses had a large petroleum lamp rigged up, the flame being protected by a circular brass shield. In still weather the dense smoke would ascend as a pillar to some height, and the reflection on the smoke from the flame below would make it appear as a pillar of light in the dark. Elijah used the same stuff in his competition with the priests of Baal. He had water all round his altar, as they had, but he had naphtha floating on it, which they had not—and that was the secret of his "fire from the Lord." How interesting! If other naturalists will go through the Bible in the same way its miracles will all sink to the level of parlor tricks.

Our readers will be interested in the following extract from last week's *Christian World*:—

"Dr. A. C. Dixon, of Boston, who came into controversy with Mr. W. T. Stead in defence of Dr. Torrey's strictures on Ingersoll, has been invited to Dr. Torrey's late pastorate at Chicago-avenue Church, Chicago. Dr. Torrey, in defending his assertions about Ingersoll, endorsed Dr. Dixon's statement, which Mr. Stead described in *The Review of Reviews* as a libel, that Ingersoll was 'paid by the publishers of obscene literature in America to support them in polluting the minds of youth.' A controversy ensued, which has not been publicly terminated. Dr. Torrey resigned the Chicago pastorate in order to be free for evangelistic mission work."

Of course it is perfectly appropriate that Dr. Dixon should succeed Dr. Torrey at Chicago. They are eminently worthy of each other. For the rest, this *Christian World* paragraph deepens our regret that Mr. Stead did not lay the final facts before the readers of his *Review*. We obtained them from America, and we dealt with them in the *Freethinker*, but this did not reach the readers of Mr. Stead's magazine; and the consequence is that the religious press, which will not mention this journal, pretend to believe (although they know better) that the Dixon-Torrey-Ingersoll controversy was not "publicly terminated." We are strongly inclined to reproduce the whole matter from our column in the form of a pamphlet. Nailing down a liar is evidently not enough; he must be kept nailed down.

Mr. Will Crooks has four daughters and a son. Three of them were educated in Board Schools and became communicating members of the Church of England. Two of them were educated in Church Schools and became strong Non-conformists. Some of the religious people, including Mr. Birrell himself, seem to think that there is some principle involved in this. We don't think there is, but if they are right in their conjecture the way to make children become anything in particular would be to educate them in the opposite persuasion. In that case all religious people should go in for Secular Education. We wish they would.

Nonconformist leaders have signed a sort of round robin on Simple Bible Teaching—as it ought to be under the new

Education Bill. They declare that the Bible must be taught as "an authentic and authoritative record of fact and truth." They know it is nothing of the kind. But what does that matter? They want to have the children taught it, for that is necessary to maintain their business as a good going concern.

We repeat that the Nonconformist leaders do not accept the Bible as "an authentic and authoritative record of fact and truth." If that is the real character of the Bible, then every statement it contains is perfectly accurate. In that case there was a first man in the world, some six thousand years ago, and he was made out of dust, and his wife out of one of his ribs; the whole world was covered with a flood that destroyed all life on earth, with the exception of Noah and his menagerie, and all the various races of mankind have evolved from that one family in the course of some four thousand years; Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt, Jacob wrestled all night with God, iron axes swam on water, the sun and the moon stood still to prolong a battle, a prophet took a three days' sea trip in a whale's belly, a serpent talked with a woman, and a she ass with her rider. All these things are true if what these gentlemen say about the Bible is correct. But they do not believe these things. Therefore they do not accept the Bible as "an authentic and authoritative record of fact and truth." And they are hypocrites in declaring that this view of it must be taught to the children in English elementary schools.

The Nonconformist leaders go on to say that nothing should be taught the children "inconsistent with the Apostles' Creed." Yet these are the gentlemen who are always crying out against dogma! Why, there is nothing but dogma in the Apostles' Creed from beginning to end. That document does not contain a single proposition in ethics. It is pure supernaturalism. But, for all that, it is to be the standard of "Simple Bible Teaching" under the control of these noble "unsectarians."

The Apostles' Creed, these gentlemen say, "represent the general consent of Christendom on the fundamental facts of the Christian religion." And, as such, it is to be forced, if they have their way, into the public schools which are supported out of rates and taxes paid by "infidels" as well as by Christians. And on this principle the Atheists, if they had the majority—which they seem likely to have some day—would be justified in having Atheism taught in the public schools at the expense of those who disbelieve and detest it. Evidently the Nonconformists are calculating on perpetual sunshine. They have overlooked the possibility of a rainy day.

A last word on this matter. The very name of the Apostles' Creed is an imposture. The Apostles never heard of it. It was not in existence until hundreds of years after their time. And the Nonconformist leaders know this as well as we do. But they go on calling this silly document the Apostles' Creed because the bulk of the laity know no better.

There has been a rumpus on the London County Council. The Book of Daniel got excluded from the syllabus of Bible instruction for the Council's day schools. This roused the indignation of Mr. Straus. "Is it," he asked, "because Daniel is the personification of the democracy, the representative of the people, the man who declared he desired to worship in his own way?" Mr. Straus was discreetly silent about the lions. But it might have occurred to him that the Education Committee may have considered the "Daniel in the lions' den" story as too "thin" for London school-children who had been to the Zoo. This consideration does not appear to have arisen in the debate. Several attempts were made to frame an amendment that would bring Daniel into the syllabus, and eventually the feat was accomplished by Mr. Edward Smith. On a show of hands it was carried; but Mr. Graham Wallas moved that the whole matter be referred back to the committee, and protested against the light way in which the subject was being handled. Finally the matter was referred back to the committee, and we suppose another report will be brought up in due course. Meanwhile we are moved to call for "Three cheers for Daniel!" And "Three cheers for the lions!" What would the picture be without them?

Dr. Clifford is a Nonconformist who does not believe in State help; but like other Nonconformists takes all he can get and asks for more. Some time ago he appealed against a decision of the authorities that as his chapel was not used exclusively for religious purposes it must pay rates like other buildings. Having lost the appeal, Dr. Clifford now works up a deputation of ratepayers to the Paddington Borough

Council, praying for the remission of the rates of Westbourne Park Chapel. Now here is a plain question for Dr. Clifford to answer. If the Council remits the rates on his chapel, will not that amount have to be contributed from the pockets of the ratepayers of Paddington? This being so, is not Dr. Clifford asking the Council to legally compel the rest of the people to pay towards the maintenance of his place of worship? And what is the substantial difference between this and Church rates? We await a reply from this paladin of the Nonconformist Conscience.

Father Vaughan is still busy with the smart set. The result is that his church is crowded to suffocation with fashionably dressed women, and there is a procession of hansoms and motor cars outside. The Reverend Father has a good eye for business. There is nothing to draw a fashionable congregation like a smart attack on the follies of fashionable people. They enjoy the experience of being preached at, without feeling a bit the worse for the experience. And as the preacher is boomed, the church is filled, the sinners are happy, the collections are larger, and everybody is satisfied.

The pulpit and the religious press have been rejoicing, of late, over the alleged fact that recent scientific discoveries have undermined the conceptions of Nature which were prevalent some twenty or thirty years ago. The reign of such men as Tyndall and Huxley is over, and Religion has Science now on its side, we were confidently told, chiefly on the authority of articles and speeches by Sir Oliver Lodge. But Professor Ray Lankester flatly contradicts the assertion. In his brilliant address at York, delivered from the Chair of the British Association, this distinguished savant, while heartily welcoming and glorying in the wonderful discoveries of the last twenty-five years, maintains that the conceptions to which they have led the modern physicist in regard to the character of the supposed unbreakable body, the chemical atom, "are not destructive of our present conceptions, but rather elaborations and developments of the simpler views." "The conclusions of Darwin," he says, "as to the origin of species by the survival of selected races in the struggle for existence are more firmly established than ever." He declares that all attempts to "seriously tamper with essential parts of the fabric as Darwin left it" have undoubtedly failed.

Professor Ray Lankester abhors mysticism, and the address contains a sly fling at the "enthusiasts who have been eagerly collecting ghost stories and records of human illusions and fancy." He makes fun of the metaphysicians who have invented and circulated premature theories in regard to X-rays and radium, as if these discoveries were "so inconsistent with previous knowledge as to shake the foundations of Science, and justify a belief in any and every absurdity and unrestrained fancy." The address bristles with bright sallies and humorous digs at irresponsible visionaries and unbalanced dreamers. Its real value to Freethinkers, however, lies in its eloquent insistence on the "continuity and healthy evolution of Science."

The Rev. David Smith, in his Correspondence Column, in the *British Weekly* for August 2, makes an important admission, namely, that "Jesus was not simply or chiefly an ethical teacher." Then morality is *not* the chief feature of religion. Mr. Smith is quite right. But why do some divines persist in asserting that religion *is* morality? Christianity concerns itself supremely about another world, and the way of getting ready for it. Christ's mission was to save his people from their sins; and sins are offences against God, not against man, or society.

Mr. Smith believes in future punishment. He says that Jesus predicted it, and made specific declarations concerning it. "Whatever deduction may be necessary," he contends, "on the score of Jewish imagery, these declarations remain unspeakably awful." But what is it that gets punished in hell-fire? *Unbelief in Christ*. Immorality, uncharitableness, swindling, cruelty, dishonesty, murder—these are not to be punished unless *unbelief* is in conjunction with them. If the worst man that ever lived believes in Christ when the death-rattle is in his throat, he escapes punishment and inherits eternal bliss. Religion is *not* morality; it is deliverance from the consequences of immorality as the reward of faith in Christ. "Through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). No, he who teaches that is not simply or chiefly a *moral* teacher—he is simply and altogether an *immoral* teacher.

Dr. Robertson Nicholl says he can see *Jesus crowned*. Where? In his own imagination? Certainly, Jesus is not

and never has been, crowned on earth; and we have no knowledge of any other sphere. Dr. Nicoll is a mystic, and glories in it; and mysticism is a system that "gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

The Rev. Dr. Inge, vicar of All Saints', Knightsbridge, is a miraculous believer. Most divines assert that the evidences of Christianity are overwhelmingly strong and convincing; but Dr. Inge is above and independent of all evidences. So was St. Paul. That great apostle "appears to have been content with the glorified, heavenly Christ, of whose spiritual presence in the Church and in his own soul he was so very certain. He seems to have been willing even to forget the historical facts of the Savior's life." Most divines are everlastingly hunting up the evidences, the proofs, and putting them in martial array. Fools! The faith that is worth anything despises historical facts, and soars aloft among the unseen and eternal verities. You imagine "that the faith of the people is being affected by the differences with regard to the historical evidences of Christianity." But you are mistaken. It is only you, "the theologians, who persist in looking back—the people are looking forward." Dr. Inge is both right and wrong; right in saying that Christians believe without evidence; but wrong in thinking that the people practice such a faith. The simple truth is that the bulk of the people, as Dr. Horton says, have no faith at all, *because of the utter lack of evidence.*

In a remarkable sermon delivered at Hawarden on the occasion of the dedication of the Memorial to Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone, the Bishop of Stepney related that when Mr. Gladstone was asked, "What is the greatest need of the century?" the famous statesman replied, "The sense of sin." Then the Bishop truthfully observed: "Unless there is the sense of sin, the whole edifice of redeeming grace, the home of so many deep and high expectations of the human race, dissolves into a dream." A more pertinent remark was never made. But the sense of sin, like the belief in God, is purely artificial. The child is first taught to believe in God, and then to regard himself as a sinner. But Principal Forsyth tells us that "the sense of sin has died down for a time." Why? Because the belief in God has died down; and both are disappearing because there is no ascertainable reality behind them, because they have to be laboriously and painfully acquired by a long course of unnatural and unwholesome education. And with these two, as the Bishop reminds us, vanishes the whole edifice of the Christian religion.

The worst of it is that when Secularists denounce the terms *sin* and *sinner* they are charged by Christians with repudiating morality, or with championing all the vices. But the charge is utterly false. Sin is an exclusively *theological* or *religious* word, and when employed to characterise an ethical or social misdeed, it inevitably connects the misdeed with God as the object against whom it has been done, with the disastrous result that morality gets to be looked upon as ethereal, other-worldly, unreal, and stereotyped.

It is amazing how many people there are whose intellect has been drugged into silence and chronic non-resistance, and whose faith seems perfectly firm though resting on a perilously shaky foundation. The Rev. Dr. Wayland Hoyt, of Philadelphia, U.S.A., whose pulpit performances are in such requisition in London during the holiday season, evidently belongs to that incomprehensible class. In a sermon delivered the other Sunday evening in the Abbey-road Baptist Chapel, St. John's Wood, he made the astounding announcement that Christ's answer to the penitent thief's prayer, on the Cross, had chased away for ever all the doubts that once troubled him as to the value of prayer, his Lord's Deity, and the life immortal, and that it was his unshakable conviction that a reverent study of this scripture (Luke xxiii. 42, 43) would perform the same gracious miracle for all others similarly tried. How beautifully simple, and yet how unfathomably wonderful! Why should there be any doubt left in the world when it can be so easily and effectually cured by a faithful application of a single text?

At the same time, however, what if the story of the penitent thief be only a legend? It is only found in Luke. Matthew and Mark not only do not tell it, but seem to imply that there could be no truth whatever in it. They speak of the two thieves as joining the crowd in reviling and cursing Jesus (Matt. xxvii. 44; Mark xv. 32). John merely mentions that they crucified Jesus, "and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst" (John xix. 18). Had one of the thieves repented and been converted, as related by Luke, it is inconceivable, absolutely incredible, that Matthew, Mark, and John should have omitted to chronicle so momentous an event. The probability, there-

fore, is that the penitent thief is a myth, and that Dr. Hoyt's doubts were laid in the dust by a bit of fiction.

It takes one's breath away to think that three of the most vital doctrines of Christianity are made to hang on such a doubtful incident. The efficacy of prayer, the Divinity of Christ, and the world to come are given absolute reality for such men as Dr. Hoyt by the legendary answer of a mythical Savior to the legendary prayer of an equally mythical thief.

But that is by no means all. Dr. Hoyt was honest enough to admit that the efficacy of prayer, the Divinity of Christ, and the world to come cannot be proved by argument and experience. "I can pick holes in the best argument for these doctrines ever framed," exclaimed the preacher. According to him, a prayerful consideration of that one text in Luke would make religious doubt an utter impossibility to all. Alas, such is the silly stuff that goes down with unthinking Christian congregations; and, fortunately, such is the stuff that drives thousands of thoughtful people to open infidelity.

The Coadjutor Bishop of Springfield, Illinois—once familiarly known as Father Osborne, S.S.J.E.—deplores the gross religious ignorance of people in the Central States of the Union. "The ignorance about religion," he says, "is so profound, that at a social gathering, when the name of Pontius Pilate was mentioned, not a single person present knew who he was." How inexpressibly sad! This deplorable state of things is accounted for largely by the fact that "though the secular education is good, no word of religion is ever heard in the schools." But what about the Churches and their clergy? What about the Bishop himself? Instead of preaching for the Cowly Society in England, he ought to be telling the people in the Central States who Pontius Pilate was. It would be a pity for anyone to die in ignorance of so eminently religious a fact.

The Rev. Dr. Purves, of Belfast, calls Pontius Pilate "that victim of vacillation, whose fatal fault of moral weakness hurried him from one false step to another, till he was finally hurled down the slope of complete treachery to principle." Several times did Jesus throw in his way the opportunity of saving himself; but, like many a sinner since, poor Pilate allowed the gracious chances to slip away unimproved, and was lost. Very little is known about Pilate; but that little is utterly inconsistent with the conduct ascribed to him in the Gospels. The fact is that the account of the trial of Jesus in the Gospels is wholly unhistorical; and scholars, such as Professor Woodhouse, of the University of Sydney, are coming to the conclusion that, "upon the whole, we must refuse to subscribe to that unfavorable verdict which has been passed upon Pilate, on the strength of evidence derived from hostile sources, whether Jewish or Christian."

Professor Woodhouse, in his article on "Pilate" in the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, goes the length of stating that Pilate's "ten years' tenure of office is evidence of the general success of his administration." The Professor says further that "the peculiar misfortune of Pilate, that he was connected with the tragedy of Jesus, has resulted in all treatment of his career being merely a search for evidence in support of a foregone conclusion." Mr. M. A. Canney, M.A., in his article on "Roman Empire," makes critical observations to the same effect. He does not hesitate to say that "writings, such as the Gospels and the Acts, are especially liable to be influenced by bias or tendency." Thus, even according to Christian scholars, Dr. Purves, in his estimate of Pilate, gives us only a miserable caricature, based upon theological prejudice and narrow-mindedness.

Equally extravagant are the descriptions of Jesus indulged in by Dr. Purves. "No, Pilate," he exclaims, referring to the washing of hands, "it cannot be. This Jesus, by a strange conjunction, is at your bar. But you and Rome are on your trial before One who is the only infallible Judge of systems and of men." Again: "In a moment he was face to face with Jesus—the judge of Judæa, with the Judge of all the earth." Then the preacher appeals to his hearers to decide what they will do with Jesus, and warns them that in the next world it will be too late. "In that day of reversals," he winds up, "it will be, not what shall we do with Jesus, but what shall Jesus do with us." Such is the pulpit trick. The supreme appeal is made, not to history, not to reason and knowledge, but to falsely excited emotion, and superstitious hopes and fears. And the day for that sort of foolery is really gone forever.

The theologians, pressed by Science, are everlastingly shifting their ground and reframing their argument. A few years ago, the argument from Prophecy was all-decisive for

the apologist. But literary criticism came and shattered it. Many still remember with what withering scorn Arnold denounced it; and for a time it was abandoned. But now it is undergoing reconstruction; and the Rev. E. A. Edgehill, M.A., has written a large book, entitled *The Evidential Value of Prophecy*, to tell us what it is like at the present time. Well, the argument from Prophecy has shifted from *details to principles*, from *letter to spirit*, from isolated predictions to Prophecy as a whole. As a specimen, take the following sentence from a review of the work: "Prophecy, in the view of our Lord, is not fulfilled in Him literally, but in spirit." What will be the next absurdity taken up and championed?

That Mr. Edgehill's exposition of Prophecy is absurd needs no proof. Briefly stated it comes to this: In every event in the history of the people of God is to be seen "something of the Divine purpose and the Divine will realising itself in the life of man." In other words, the whole history of the Israelites was a Divine tuition, the object of which was to qualify the people for the apprehension of Christ when he came. Was ever a more ridiculous claim put forth? The alleged Divine education and preparation of the Jews for the apprehension of Christ turned out a total failure; for the people thus trained during so many centuries did not apprehend him, but denounced him as an impostor. "He came unto his own," says one Gospel, "and they that were his own received him not." The new argument from Prophecy is as invalid as the old, and must be given up.

The venerable Dr. Cuyler, of America, is still commending Christ to an unheeding world. Christ hath need of us, he asserts. He owns us; "we do not even own ourselves 'in fee simple.'" He owns all mankind, having bought them with his precious atoning blood. The Father has given all things into his hands. But surely Dr. Cuyler, good man as he is, must be aware that he is talking pure nonsense. If Christ has supreme ownership of all things, and if all power and authority are his, is it not passing strange that he has never claimed his own yet? Is the Devil, after all, more powerful and more successful than he? Why does he allow such countless myriads of the people for whose redemption he died, and of whom he hath such dire need, to go down to destruction? If Dr. Cuyler's doctrine were true there would be no need to be still harping on it.

The Rev. Mr. Macdonald, of Swinton Parish Church, informs us that among the "marks of essential religion" are *resistance and self-reliance*. This is a decided improvement upon the teaching of Christ, in which *non-resistance and entire dependence on God* are two of the marks of essential religion. *Resistance and self-reliance* are two of the marks of essential secularism.

In his speech on the second reading of the Education Bill, the Archbishop of Canterbury said at least one true thing. He pointed out that in every controversy of a wide spread character during the past hundred years, the difficulty has turned on the religious question. Nonconformists had asked whether a projected measure would increase the power of the Church, and the Church had asked whether it would hinder the Church discharging its responsibilities to the people. Nonconformists would vary the wording of the last sentence, but we note it as containing the plain truth that all the Churches have ever been fighting for is sectarian supremacy. That is as far as their real interest in education goes. All the rest is mere pretence and electioneering humbug.

Meanwhile we would commend to all and sundry Professor Ray Lankester's complaint, in his address to the British Association, of the little interest taken in scientific research, and the manner in which it is financially starved in this country. But what else can one expect? The scientist has to fight the whole dead weight of Christian tradition. He is dealing with a people who are still taught surreptitiously, as their ancestors were taught openly, that science is a more or less dangerous, that robs life of its ideals and belittles mankind. Tradition tells in sociology as elsewhere, and Christian influences will have to be considerably weaker than they are before science receives its proper recognition, and the scientist his due honor.

The *Times* leader writer, in noticing Professor Lankester's address, bursts forth with, "There is no end to the Universe of God; behold also there is no beginning." With no end and no beginning, one wonders where God comes in, or on what ground he can claim ownership. It sounds as though the writer really meant to say, "Behold there is nothing for God to do in the Universe, and no room for him to do it."

Mr. E. Kay Robinson, whose book *The Religion of Nature* is noticed elsewhere, has in the preface to that work a remark worth recording. His father entrusted him to the care of a Scotch clergyman, who duly administered to the child moral exhortations and warnings of a thoroughly orthodox character. The result was that at the age of five his mind was filled with ideas of the end of the world and of unending torment. His nerves were reduced to such a state that on seeing, for the first time, a wild duck flying, he mistook it for a bird flying backwards, and therefore as a sign that the world was coming to an end. He describes how he ran upstairs and hid under the bed in terror, and remarks, "Such is the state of nerves to which too much religion of the frightening kind can reduce a child of five." We seriously commend the testimony to those advocates of religious education who prophesy terrible things should children be deprived of religious instruction. The harm done in the past in this direction by religion is not to be exactly calculated, although it may be easily imagined.

A sufferer from long sermons suggests that the sermons of certain ministers should be recorded on a Gramophone, and then the preacher made to listen to it. It is a capital idea, only torture is not permitted in English law. Perhaps if people believed more they would find sermons less tiring. The cry for short sermons is only an indication that people go to church from motives other than religious ones, and are only too delighted to be liberated and allowed to spend their time in a more congenial manner. Still preachers are very accommodating, and if they find that the size of the collection increases as that of the sermon decreases, it does not require great power of prophecy to say in which direction sermons will run in the future.

Filthy lips, in every respect, kiss the Word of God in our various law courts. To follow some of them on the job must be very disgusting. No wonder that Sir Thomas Snagge, at the Northampton County Court the other day, said that he was not surprised at a witness objecting to "kiss the book." His honor declared that the practice of kissing the dirty book (we suppose this meant the outside only) was a most insanitary and objectionable formality, and ought to be abolished. He hoped to live to see the day when kissing the dirty leather cover of a book would not only be not required but absolutely prohibited by law, and he appealed to doctors throughout the country to back him up in his protest. We wish his honor would protest against the oath altogether. It is in every way a relic of barbarism.

In all probability there is not a judge on the bench who places extra reliance on a witness's evidence because he has prefaced it with a "Swelp me God." And ordinary experience proves that some of the most robust liars are those who call on their God to back them up. They are citing a witness who cannot be served with summons or subjected to cross-examination.

The Rev. C. H. Kelly, ex-president of the Wesleyan Conference, pays a wonderfully high compliment to God by assuring a Nottingham congregation that he is not "a monk, nor anything like that wretched creature," but "a ruler dwelling in the midst of his people." And God's knowledge, too, is most comprehensive. He actually knows the ballot-boxes as well as the church-roll. He knows King Edward VII., President Roosevelt, the Czar of Russia; "and oh! matter for thankfulness! He knows that wretched, unspeakable Turk, the Sultan, as well as He knows who is Pope of Rome, or who is Archbishop of Canterbury, or who is President of the Wesleyan Conference. He knows them all and what they are doing. He knows the affairs of the lands, of the States, as well as He knows the affairs of the Church." *Prodigious!* Does God know the ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference? Did he also hear Mr. Kelly's glowing tribute to his inexhaustible knowledge? How profoundly grateful he must have felt!

Referring to Sunday, a minister pathetically exclaims: "Friends, God requires the *whole day*, and not a mere fragment of it. Every second of this holy day belongs to God, and we must not trespass upon His crown-rights." Ineffable is the presumption behind such an utterance. If there be a God, he is the most inconsistent and self-contradictory of beings. On Sabbath observance he issues one instruction to the Jew, another, totally different in every respect, to the Catholic, and another, of a contrary character, to the Protestant. And even to different Branches of the Protestant Church he gives irreconcilable orders. The only legitimate inference from such a chaotic state of things is that there is no God in the business at all. The Sabbath is a human institution, which the churches have appropriated and managed in their own respective ways, and for their own respective benefit and profit, God's connection with it being only nominal.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

G. J.—We did not say that the King's speeches were written for him; we said that we understood that they were written for him—as you will see by referring to the "Acid Drop" again. There are certain "open secrets" which are obviously incapable of positive demonstration. But that the King's speeches can be written for him is beyond dispute. His speech from the throne at the opening of parliament is known to be the work of the Cabinet in general and of the Prime Minister in particular.

A. J. WILKINS.—Thanks for your cordial good wishes.

COLUMBUS.—The subject is rather hackneyed, and needs exceptionally clever treatment to make it interesting nowadays.

W. W. MEDLEY.—Not without merit, but hardly up to our standard. If it is your first effort, you need not be surprised to find it a long way off perfection.

F. S.—Thanks for the marked paper. We printed a long paragraph some weeks ago on the projected Keats-Shelley memorial at Rome. The paragraph in the *Manchester Guardian* does not carry the matter any further. We will try to get hold of something more detailed. The other marked item is amusing, and will be useful.

JAMES HOLT.—Too late for this number, owing to the Bank Holiday interruption of business, but we will deal with it next week. Pleased to have your thanks for "hundreds of weekly treats."

G. ROLEFFS.—Cuttings received with thanks.

J. BROUGH.—Send whenever the spirit moves.

E. SPENCER.—Our pages were filled up by Tuesday morning, but the cutting may still be useful.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Sabbatarianism has received another blow at Hastings. Saturday, July 28, was fixed by the Mayor and Corporation for taking a poll of the municipal and parliamentary electors of the borough as to whether the Tramways' Company should be allowed to run cars on Sundays. Two-thirds of the electors recorded their votes, the result being as follows:—

For Sunday trams	4,109
Against	2,689

There was a majority in favor of Sunday cars in nine out of the ten wards. Hastings is ceasing to be the miserable place that it once was on the blessed Sabbath.

Mr. John T. Lloyd lectures at Failsworth to-day (Aug. 12). The occasion is the annual gathering of the Secular Sunday-School there, which is one of the institutions of the town. There will be vocal music by the scholars and instrumental music by an admirable local band. Mr. Lloyd's lectures are afternoon and evening. No doubt there will be a big muster, in spite of the tropical weather.

"Under the heading of 'A Royal Commission on the Clergy,' there is a most timely and amusing skit in the *Freethinker*. It is written by Mr. C. Cohen, one of the shining lights of the active, advanced agnostic party—the leader of which, since

the death of Bradlaugh (if not, indeed, since some considerable period prior to that event) has been Mr. G. W. Foote. Mr. Foote is a man of brilliant parts, both as a writer and an orator, and had he selected a less unfashionable calling, the world would have heard more of him. We hope shortly to publish from his pen the *Freethinker's View of the Education controversy*; for, of course, *Freethinkers* have views, just like all other rate and tax-payers. We reproduce portions of Mr. Cohen's article in another column."—*John Bull*.

Meeting Mr. Symes.

I ANNOUNCED last week that Mr. Joseph Symes was expected to arrive at Tilbury Dock, on board the White Star liner *Runic*, on Sunday, August 5. I also announced that I should try to meet the ship and welcome him as he set foot again on his native shores. My wife decided (as Mrs. Symes and Miss Symes were coming with him) that she might as well join me in the welcome. We learnt by telegram from Plymouth on the Saturday that the *Runic* would arrive at Tilbury Dock about one o'clock the next day. Now, the next day, being Sunday, and in England, and still more in Essex, was an unfortunate day for travelling. We found that the only train that would take us to Tilbury before one o'clock started from where we live at nine in the morning. It was that or nothing, so we went by it. We arrived at Tilbury before ten, and waited about the Dock till a good deal past two before we could shake hands with Mr. Symes and his wife and daughter. Finally, after getting a meal, we managed to dodge about the county of Essex and get home again by half-past seven. Had we waited for a direct train back from Tilbury we should not have got home for another two hours. Altogether we put ten and a half hours into that little expedition. But we did not regret it, although we had only a few minutes with Mr. Symes at the finish. For my part, I should never have forgiven myself if I had not been there to meet him after such a long voyage and such a long absence from England. Nor would I have missed the pleasure of grasping his hand as he stepped once more on English soil.

Miss Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, was spending the week-end with a friend at Grays, which is only a few miles from Tilbury. She had little travelling, therefore, but she had her share of waiting about. The *Runic* was out in the river a good while before she could enter the Dock, and when she did start to come in it was tedious work getting the big ship along. She progressed by inches. I was able to hail Mr. Symes from the outer wharf an hour before he landed. He took off his hat and shouted "Hurrah!" and I bawled up some friendly words to him as he looked down from the upper deck. He was looking extremely well, and did not appear to have altered very much in the twenty-three years. This view was strengthened when I stood close to him on *terra firma*. His grip was strong, his voice was clear, and his body was bolt upright. Adversities have not bowed him down, anyway; and he seems as cheerful as ever. The unsubduable one! I expect he will look very much the same when he says "Come in!" as Death taps at his door.

As it was impossible for me to go up to London, and inconvenient for Miss Vance to do so, it was lucky that Mr. Livingstone Anderson was also there to meet Mr. Symes. Mr. Anderson kindly undertook to see the little party of three up to London, and into temporary hotel accommodation.

I had a good long chat with Mr. Symes on Tuesday morning, and before it was over the long interval of twenty-three years seemed to have disappeared.

It is too early yet to say anything about Mr. Symes's plans. Whatever happens he will be in the old country for some time, and Branches that wish to have a visit from him should communicate with him direct. His address will be at the *Freethinker* office until he has settled down.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Modern Savonarola.

IT may seem somewhat late in the day to comment upon the sermons of Father Vaughan, which have recently been furnishing a temporary fillip of interest to conversation in jaded Society circles, and incidentally supplying copy for the newspapers. These latter have long since turned their attention to something else; but the methods of the ordinary newspaper are not the methods of the *Freethinker*, and in these columns the fervid utterances of Father Vaughan may still legitimately serve as a peg whereon to hang a few reflections.

As our readers may have gathered from various sources, the Rev. Bernard Vaughan—who is well and favorably known in Roman Catholic circles—has been waxing eloquent in his denunciation of the “sins” of London fashionable society. Our definition of sins that really matter might not agree with the Catholic Church’s conception thereof. We do not, for instance, appreciate the gravity of missing Mass on Sunday or of indulging in butcher-meat on Friday. But we are quite prepared to admit that the misdeeds and shortcomings of what is called Society deserve to the full the castigation administered by the eloquent priest before-mentioned. Whether such ebullitions of clerical wrath are likely to serve any good purpose or lead to any tangible reform in the vicinity of Mayfair is entirely another question, and a question that the earnest student of human nature will not be disposed to answer offhand in the affirmative.

Considerably more value would attach to the oratory of Father Vaughan if it embodied any indication that he has the ghost of an idea as to the real cause or causes of the evils which honeycomb society, and if he evinced any notion of a practicable remedy for those evils. (We refer at the moment to society in general and including the upper ten, not alone to that section of society which gets itself spelt with a capital S.) Father Vaughan, however, being an individual whose mental vision is obscured by phantasms of the other world, and whose judgment is warped by belief in an after-death readjustment of the balance between good and evil, his deliverances must regretfully be described as sheer rhetorical futility.

We are not surprised to learn that the sermons of Father Vaughan have created an evanescent flutter in the dovecotes of the Smart Set. But we are pretty certain that at the close of his sermons—and when any other similar course of sermons comes to an end—things remain very much as they were. An odd individual here and there may be touched by the appeals of the preacher, may feel the stirrings of remorse, and may spontaneously form a more or less durable resolution of amendment of life. And that is so far to the good. But Father Vaughan is blind indeed if he does not see that the prevalent social conditions can manufacture candidates for the pit much faster than he and all his like can rescue them. How does he propose to deal with these conditions? He is like a physician who obstinately persists in prescribing a drug that has been proven ineffective. For the disease that afflicts society he would administer further doses of the remedy that has so lamentably failed—Christianity.

That Father Vaughan has drawn high-class audiences (we use the word “audiences” advisedly) to listen to his fulminations almost goes without saying. Society (with a capital S this time) dearly loves a sensation, and despite the fact that some “delightful Jezabel” threatened him with the knife (whether she meant her tongue or some less lethal weapon we know not), we make bold to say the very people he anathematizes to-day would cheerfully entertain him to dinner and lionise him to-morrow. Bless you! they know the value of such clerical outpourings of verbal froth. And it is so easy when listening to sermons such as those of Father Vaughan to console oneself with the reflection that there are other people whom the cap fits much better. Time

and again we have sat in Roman Catholic chapels while a presumably God-inspired priest or mission-preacher emptied the vials of his wrath on the drunkard, the gambler, and the debauchee; but we never heard that all the pulpit eloquence had brought about the bankruptcy of a single local publican, or bookmaker, or brothel-keeper. The habits of half a lifetime are seldom more than transiently affected by mere preaching. Your physician of the soul is battling with the maladies of society very seldom sees beyond effects to causes. Hence is his diagnosis faulty, and his cure of souls so frequently barren of satisfactory results.

Father Vaughan has been moved to indignation at the spectacle afforded by the divorce courts, and is also wroth because this country is falling into line with other civilised nations in the matter of limiting the birth-rate. Now at the very outset one is naturally inclined to question the competence of a celibate priest to dogmatise on such a problem as what should constitute the proper sexual relationship between men and women. To our thinking, the very existence in our midst of a large body of men and women vowed to celibacy and virginity respectively, as are the priests and nuns of the Church of Rome, is as striking an indication of an unhealthy moral condition in society as any excess in the direction of incontinence can possibly be. We confidently appeal to both physiology and psychology in support of this position. It seems to us one of those cases where extremes meet. And we do not scruple to say that the Roman Catholic priest has less moral authority than any other specific class in the community for lecturing us on sexual morality.

Apart from that point, however, we are at a loss to appreciate the gravamen of the average clerical criticism of the divorce court. We acknowledge, as we have before acknowledged in these columns, that the revelations afforded by the divorce court of the conditions under which innumerable married couples live are sordid and pitiful in the extreme; but will any one whose mind is not obsessed by theology and supernaturalism maintain that the cause of morality could possibly be served by refusing the average couple who gravitate to the divorce court legal release from their marital shackles? The Roman Catholic Church opposes divorce ostensibly on moral grounds, with a backing of Scripture authority. But these people—the story of whose wretched life furnishes such welcome material for the columns of the sensational press—are already living in an immoral condition. And however unsatisfactory the operation of the divorce court may at times be, it at least affords many ill-mated and unhappy couples an opportunity to so adjust their relationship with each other and with their fellow-creatures as to approximate somewhat to living in a moral condition. No one who glances at the painful record of connubial infelicity daily unfolded before our judges will deny the necessity for divorce. Even the Catholic Church allows separation. Where she makes the mistake is in imagining that, given the need for separation, men and women who have been once married ever could or would consent to forego the right to make new alliances where a fresh prospect of happiness offers. Nature is more powerful than any priest-made law.

Moreover, the laws that at present govern the relationship between the sexes are not in themselves immutable any more than any other of the many restrictions we agree to impose upon ourselves and our fellow-subjects for the good of the general body. Society itself must ever claim and exercise the right to readjust the sexual relationship as, and when, the well-being of the race demands it. It is idle of any Church to attempt to maintain the contrary. True morality is concerned with the welfare of human beings here, and nowhere else. This the people at large are slowly but steadily learning to recognise as a fact. Even the Churches are driven nowadays by dire necessity to make a show of demonstrating that religion has some connection with the affairs of this world and is not solely intended as a preparation for

the next. The latter view once prevailed very extensively, and its gradual subordination to the more material conception is a distinct triumph for Secularism. After all, however much the Supernaturalist may ban Utilitarianism, in the ultimate resort the preservation of any institution depends upon its utility. And the institution of marriage in its present form and with its present written and unwritten laws and customs will subsist just so long as its advantages appear to the majority to outweigh its disadvantages. Just so long and no longer.

Then as to the limitation of the birth-rate. It scarcely lies in the mouth of any sworn celibate to reproach those of the laity who refuse to accept without reservation the Biblical counsel to "increase and multiply, and fill the earth." There are more ways than one of limiting the birth-rate; and if the priest chooses one way and the layman chooses another, who shall say which is the more guilty of the two in the eyes of God? That is, supposing God to be interested in the census returns, which is doubtful, to say the least. Seriously speaking, it is too late a week for any priest to attempt to check the modern tendency towards matrimonial prudence in the matter of offspring by thundering in God's name "Thou shalt not do this" or "Thou shalt not do that." Nor will any sensible couple be deterred from regulating their conduct as reason and prudence dictate by obsolescent threats of eternal punishment. Let Father Vaughan or any other priestly censor of morals show in what way a reduction in the birth-rate and a limitation of the family is inimical to morality. Were we disposed to run the risk of appearing to jest we might urge that as the Roman Catholic moral ideal is to have no children at all, the married couples that boast the smallest families must necessarily approach most closely to that ideal. But, as we have already indicated, the average priest is temperamentally and by training hopelessly incompetent to deal in a sensible and logical fashion with the problems raised in connection with the marital relationship.

Father Vaughan, from the standpoint of the theologian, stigmatises the prudential check upon population as immoral. The truth is—though religious people are reluctant to admit it—that no action is moral or immoral *per se*. An action is moral or immoral in virtue of its consequences. And some of our clerical moralists seem vastly troubled lest human knowledge and discovery, by obviating the usual consequences of certain actions, should thereby remove such actions from the category of the immoral to the category of the moral. When will the religionist learn that the moral code is born of human experience, and that human experience forms a sounder basis for morality than the artificial supernatural one so much in favor with our priestly mentors?

In closing, it might be pointed out to Father Vaughan and his brethren that, notwithstanding the millions of sermons that have been hurled at the heads of the "vicious" wealthy classes from Roman Catholic pulpits during the last thousand years, there is to-day no more staunch upholder of the system that has produced and still perpetuates the evils so vigorously reprobated than the Church of Rome herself. Her expressed sympathy for the poor has been unbounded, but she has left the poor as she found them—poor. She has taken care that the reputed reference of Christ to the permanence of poverty in our midst should not be falsified with her assistance. And she forms one of the strongest existing bulwarks between the iniquitous rich and those who would deal with them in a drastic and comprehensive fashion.

G. SCOTT.

For want of general cultivation how greatly individual excellence is crippled. Of what avail, for example, is it for any one of us to have surmounted any social terror, or any superstition, while his neighbors lie sunk in it? His conduct in reference to them becomes a constant care and burden.—*Helps.*

The Martyrdom of Hypatia; OR, THE DEATH OF THE CLASSICAL WORLD.

An Address at Chicago by M. M. MANGASARIAN.

OUR subject this morning takes us to the city of Alexandria, one of the greatest intellectual centres in the days when Athens and Rome still ruled the world. The capital of Egypt received its name from the man who conceived and executed its design—Alexander the Great. Under the Ptolemies, a line of Greek kings, Alexandria soon sprang into eminence, and, accumulating culture and wealth, became the most powerful metropolis of the Orient. Serving as the port of Europe, it attracted the lucrative trade of India and Arabia. Its markets were enriched with the gorgeous silks and fabrics from the bazaars of the Orient. Wealth brought leisure, and it, in turn, the arts. It became, in time, the home of a wonderful library and schools of philosophy, representing all the phases and the most delicate shades of thought. At one time it was the general belief that the mantle of Athens had fallen upon the shoulders of Alexandria.

But there was a stubborn and superstitious Oriental constituency in the city which would not blend with the foreign element—namely, the Greeks and the Romans. This antagonism between the Egyptian born and the children of Hellas and Rome, who were Alexandrians only by adoption, was frequently the occasion of street riots, feuds, massacres, and civil wars.

In or about the year 400 A.D., Alexandria, which is to-day a third-rate Mohammedan town, enjoyed a population of 600,000 inhabitants. The city proper comprehended a circumference of fifteen miles. It enjoyed the distinction of being quite free from the curse of poverty. No beggars could be seen loitering in its streets. No one was idle, and work brought good wages. Such was the demand for labor that even the lame and the blind found suitable occupation. The Alexandrians understood the manufacture of papyrus, a kind of vegetable paper used extensively by the authors, and they knew how to blow glass and weave linen.

After its magnificent library, whose shelves supported a freight more precious than beaten gold perhaps the most stupendous edifice in the town was the temple of Serapis. It is said that the builders of the famous temple of Eddessa boasted that they had succeeded in creating something which future generations would compare with the temple of Serapis in Alexandria. This ought to suggest an idea of the vastness and beauty of the Alexandrian Serapis, and the high esteem in which it was held. Historians and connoisseurs claim it was one of the grandest monuments of Pagan civilisation, second only to the temple of Jupiter in Rome, and to the inimitable Parthenon in Athens, which latter is certainly the best gem earth ever wore upon her zone.

The Serapis temple was built upon an artificial hill, the ascent to which was by a hundred steps. It was not one building, but a vast body of buildings, all grouped about a central one of vaster dimensions, rising on pillars of huge magnitude and graceful proportions. Some critics have advanced the idea that the builders of this masterpiece intended to make it a composite structure, combining the diverse elements of Egyptian and Greek art into a harmonious whole. The Serapion was regarded by the ancients as marking the reconciliation between the architects of the pyramids and the creators of the Athenian Acropolis. It represented to their minds the blending of the massive in Egyptian art with the grace and the loveliness of the Hellenic.

But the greatest attraction of this temple, was the god, Serapis himself, within the vaulted building. It is difficult for us to form an idea of his enormous proportions. He filled the house with his presence. He stretched his arms and took hold of the two walls, the

one on his right and the other on his left. The artist had conceived, also, the idea of making the body of the god as all-embracing as his arms. He fused together all the then known metals—gold, silver, copper, iron, tin, lead—to create a substance fit to represent a god. He inlaid this multifarious composition with the rarest gems—the most costly stones which the markets of the world offered. He polished them all until the colossal statue shone like a huge sapphire. Its exquisite tints and shades are said to have provoked the jealousy of the azure skies. For a crown, the god wore on his head a bushel, symbol of plentiful harvests. At his side, in silence, stood a three-headed animal with the forepart of a lion, a wolf, and a dog. The lion was meant to represent the present; the rapacious wolf symbolised the past—the devoured past; while the dog, the faithful, friendly animal, stood for the future. Wound around the body of the god was a mammoth serpent, which, after its many turns and twists, returned to rest his head on the hand of the god. The sinuous serpent was meant to personate Time, whose mysterious birthplace, or birthday, has yet to be discovered.

Serapis, whose statue adorned the temple, was once the most popular god in the Orient. He was believed to be the source of the Nile, whose breasts he swelled until they poured their wealth upon the surrounding soil. As long as his eye remained open, the sun would shine, and the land would produce, and women would give birth. But if he should close his eye, life would become as a sere and sapless leaf. But Serapis was a stranger in Egypt. He was not an African by birth, but was imported from Sinope, on the Euxine. When he first made his appearance in the land of the Nile, the people—the Alexandrians, especially—rose up *en masse* and protested vehemently against the introduction of a foreign deity. Did they not have Osiris, the great god of their ancestors, and Isis, his consort—the divine woman with her infant, Horus, sitting upon her knees? Why, then, should a strange god be admitted to the throne or to the bed of Osiris and Isis? Did they not have their holy trinity, Osiris, Isis, and Horus—father, mother, and child—the best trinity ever conceived? But Ptolemy was king, and his will prevailed. He told them that Osiris had, in a dream, commanded him to accept Serapis as a new and well-beloved god, and he did not wish to do anything contrary to his dream.

In all this do we not see a similarity to the story about Jesus, and how his friends compelled solitary Jehovah to accept him as his son, and to share with him the honors of divinity? We know how the people objected at first to Jesus, precisely as the Alexandrians did to Serapis, and how, finally, through dreams and miracles, Jesus, the new god, grew to be even more popular than the old one.

When Christianity gained the upper hand in Alexandria, it set its mind from the start upon destroying two of the principal monuments of its powerful rival, Paganism—the library and the temple of Serapis. Let me at this juncture remind you that Alexandria, at a very early period, became one of the foremost strongholds of the Christian religion. Of the five capitals of the new faith—Jerusalem, Constantinople, Carthage, Alexandria, Rome—Alexandria at one time led Constantinople, and was not second even to Rome. What was said about Christianity being essentially an Asiatic philosophy is confirmed, it seems to me, by this additional fact, that out of five of its greatest centres four were in the Orient. It felt more at home in Asia and Africa than in Europe. A still stronger confirmation of the affinity between Asia and Christianity is in the fact that as soon as the Roman Empire became Christian it shifted its capital from Europe to Asia, from Rome to Constantinople. The first Christian emperor, Constantine, impelled, as it were, by the logic of his new religion, left Rome to take up his residence on the Bosphorus, which washed the shores of the continent that had cradled Christianity. For a ruler who coveted absolute power, who feared democracy, who hated liberty and who preferred the stagnation of

thought to the movement of ideas, who desired slaves for subjects, Asia was the more suitable place. Without wishing to offend anyone, I must say that Christianity was more favorable than Paganism, and the Orient was better fitted to be the home of political and religious absolutism than the occident. Christianity, as the religion of meekness and obedience, had irresistible attractions for Constantine. He not only embraced it, but he went to dwell as close to where its cradle had swung as he could.

It is not the fault of Christianity that the Asiatic is servile, but the fault of the Asiatic that Christianity is so supple and submissive. It is not so much religion that makes the character of a people, but the people who determine the character of their religion. Religion is only the *resumé* of the national ideas, thoughts, and character. Religion is nothing but an expression. It is not, for instance, the word or the language which creates the idea, but the idea which provokes the word into existence. In the same way religion is only the language of a people's idea. And yet a man's religion or philosophy, while it is but the product of his own mind, exerts a reflex influence upon his character. The child influences the parent, of whom it is the offspring; language affects thought, of which, originally, it was but the tool. So it is with religion. The Christian religion, as soon as it got into power, turned the world about. It struck at the Roman Empire, and, grabbing everything it could lay its hands on—the sceptre, the sword, the imperial diadem, the throne—it walked away with them to Asia. We could never ask for a more eloquent defence of the position that Christianity is Asiatic than is found in this historic transfer of the seat of power from Europe to Asia, from Rome to Constantinople.

Now, naturally enough, a religion which combats the culture and traditions of European life in Europe, will not tolerate them in Asia. Do we understand this point? If it seeks to down European thought in Europe, how much more will it seek to expel it from Asia? If it persecutes Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca in Europe, it cannot, of course, tolerate them in Asia. Christianity tried to destroy all the monuments of Paganism in Rome, in free and proud Rome, could it, then, leave them standing in Alexandria, in Constantinople, or in Antioch? On the contrary, in Asia, which is her proper home, the seat of her power, and with the Emperor imported to Constantinople, Christianity became more aggressive against Paganism and civilisation than even in Europe? Religion, like everything else, is consistent as long as it is young and virile, and Christianity in the early centuries was both young and virile, and therefore, logical. Changing slightly the great words of Shakespeare, we might say:—

“There is a logic (in the evolution of man) which shapes our ends
Rough hew them as we may.”

We wonder sometimes that a Japanese gentleman or an Arab, or a Siamese, who has never mingled with Europeans or Americans, should think as we do or exhibit the polite manners of occidental races. There are those who refuse to believe that a Pagan living three thousand years ago could possess the very virtues which we prize to-day. The sectarian who believes that only people of the size and calibre of his creed can be good, is at a loss to explain the universality of culture and virtue. This is explained by his inability to perceive that there is a logic in the development of the human being which brings about the same results the world over—before Christ and after. Let us appreciate this truth. How can a Moslem or a Jew or a Pagan be as good as a Christian? There is a logic in the culture of man which leads all evolution, all progress, to the same summit. If only Mohammedanism or Christianity or Judaism is true as a divine revelation, then there can be no virtue outside these religions. But history contradicts so sweeping a conclusion. There is a logic, we repeat, in the culture of the mind,

which makes a Trajan, though a Pagan, as sweet and sane a soul as Washington, who was born in a Christian era, and a Chinese, Confucius, as noble and independent as a French, Voltaire. I say there is a logic in the evolution of man, before which all sectarian pretences and conceits are like chaff for the wind to sport with. And we cannot be really large-minded, nor can we read history and philosophy aright until we appreciate the power of the logic which shapes our ends, "rough hew them as we may."

(To be continued.)

A Word About Education.

By R. G. INGERSOLL.

The end of life—the object of life—is happiness. Nothing can be better than that—nothing higher. In order to be really happy, man must be in harmony with his surroundings, with the conditions of well-being. In order to know these surroundings, he must be educated, and education is of value only as it contributes to the well-being of man, and only that is education which increases the power of man to gratify his real wants—wants of body and of mind.

The educated man knows the necessity of finding out the facts in nature, the relations between himself and his fellow-men, between himself and the world, to the end that he may take advantage of these facts and relations for the benefit of himself and others. He knows that a man may understand Latin and Greek, Hebrew and Sanscrit, and be as ignorant of the great facts and forces in nature as a native of Central Africa.

The educated man knows something that he can use, not only for the benefit of himself, but for the benefit of others. Every skilled mechanic, every good farmer, every man who knows some of the real facts in nature that touch him, is to that extent an educated man. The skilled mechanic and the intelligent farmer may not be what we call "scholars," and what we call scholars may not be educated men.

Man is in constant need. He must protect himself from cold and heat, from sun and storm. He needs food and raiment for the body, and he needs what we call art for the development and gratification of his brain. Beginning with what are called the necessities of life, he rises to what are known as the luxuries, and the luxuries become necessities, and above luxuries he rises to the highest wants of the soul.

The man who is fitted to take care of himself, in the conditions he may be placed, is, in a very important sense, an educated man. The savage who understands the habits of animals, who is a good hunter and fisher, is a man of education, taking into consideration his circumstances. The graduate of a university who cannot take care of himself—no matter how much he may have studied—is not an educated man.

In our time, an educated man, whether a mechanic, a farmer, or one who follows a profession, should know something about what the world has discovered. He should have an idea of the outlines of the sciences. He should have read a little, at least, of the best that has been written. He should know something of mechanics, a little about politics, commerce and metaphysics; and in addition to all this, he should know how to make something. His hands should be educated, so that he can, if necessary, supply his own wants by supplying the wants of others.

There are mental misers—men who gather learning all their lives and keep it to themselves. They are worse than hoarders of gold, because when they die their learning dies with them, while the metal miser is compelled to leave his gold for others.

The first duty of man is to support himself—to see to it that he does not become a burden. His next duty is to help others if he has a surplus, and if he really believes they deserve to be helped.

It is not necessary to have what is called a university education in order to be useful or to be happy, any more than it is necessary to be rich, to be happy. Great wealth is a great burden, and to have more than you can use, is to care for more than you want. The happiest are those who are prosperous, and who by reasonable endeavor can supply their reasonable wants and have a little surplus year by year for the winter of their lives.

So, it is no use to learn thousands and thousands of useless facts, or to fill the brain with unspoken tongues. This is burdening yourself with more than you can use. The best way is to learn the useful.

We all know that men in moderate circumstances can have just as comfortable houses as the richest, just as comfortable clothing, just as good food. They can see just as

fine paintings, just as marvellous statues, and they can hear just as good music. They can attend the same theatres and the same operas. They can enjoy the same sunshine, and above all, can love and be loved just as well as kings and millionaires.

So the conclusion of the whole matter is, that he is educated who knows how to take care of himself; and that the happy man is the successful man, and that it is only a burden to have more than you want, or to learn those things that you cannot use.

National Secular Society.

REPORT of monthly Executive meeting held at the offices on Thursday, August 2nd.

The President Mr. G. W. Foote in the chair. There were also present, Messrs. J. Barry, H. Cowell, F. A. Davies, W. Davey, W. Leat, Dr. Nichols, J. Neate, F. Schaller, S. Samuels, H. Silverstien, T. J. Thurlow, and the Secretary.

This being the first meeting after the Annual Conference, the first business was the election of the following officers for the year:—

General Secretary: E. M. Vance. *Monthly Auditors:* Messrs. S. Samuels and W. Leat. *Benevolent Fund Committee:* Messrs. V. Roger, S. Samuels, F. Wood and W. Leat.

New members were received for Mountain Ash Branch, 5; Porth, 2; Parent Society, 1.

The President was asked to write a letter to be translated and read at the Congress of the International Federation of Freethinkers at Buenos Aries, by the National Secular Society's delegate Mons. Gicca. The visit of our old and highly esteemed Vice-President, Mr. Joseph Symes, was discussed. It was decided that he should be met on his arrival by the Secretary; the President having already intimated his intention of meeting Mr. Symes, and it was formally resolved that a public reception should be arranged in his honor at the earliest possible date, the arrangements being left in the President's hands.

The meeting then closed.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

WHY BILL QUIT CHURCH.

Old Bill Shiftless, who was converted a few weeks ago, now threatens to backslide. But it will surprise no one, for that is regular with him. Bill says it is not his fault he hasn't stuck, but that church members would not give him a chance. He says he thought the brothers in the church always helped one another. He went to several of them and wanted to borrow a sum of money to get his spring work on the farm started, but all of them turned him down. "Instead of helping me get a start," says Bill, "they wanted me to give something towards paying the fat preacher's salary. He has a good job and doesn't need my money. There is nothing in being religious." Bill also says there are too many hypocrites in the church to suit him. He says he knows half the members go there just because they think it will help them in their business. One of them sells coal to the church, and another sells the preacher his groceries. "I never could be a hypocrite," says Bill, "and that is why I am going to quit church. I've made up my mind that a fellow can be a good man without going there every Sunday. No more of it for me."—*Bert Walker.*

RELIGION NO EXCUSE.

A certain theatrical manager of Chicago tells of an Irish policeman in that city possessing Dogberry-like traits.

On one occasion, at midnight, the custodian of the law overhauled a sleep-walker who was promenading a principal thoroughfare clad only in his night robes. When the officer had awakened the unfortunate man, placed him under arrest, and was hustling him off to the station, the sleep-walker exclaimed with indignation:

"Surely you are not going to lock me up?"

"Surest thing you know!" airily responded the bluecoat.

"Why, man, I can't be held responsible for the predicament you find me in! I am a somnambulist!"

"Sure, it makes no difference what church ye belong to," sharply returned the officer; "ye can't parade the streets of Chicago in your nighty!"—*Harper's Weekly.*

SOCIOLOGY AND DIET.

The Children of Israel were longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt.

"Er—have you read the Neill-Reynolds report?" asked Moses carelessly.

Thus craftily did he manage to keep them contented with a more or less vegetarian diet.—*New York Sun.*

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): Mr. HOWELL-SMITH, B.A., 3.15, "The Evolution of Man and the World"; 6.15, "The Case for Atheism."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Rushcroft-road (side of Brixton Theatre), Brixton-road, 11.30, Ernest Edwin; Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, F. A. Davies.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, W. Gregory, "Resurrection."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): James Rowney, 3.15, "Some Teachings of Jesus"; 6.30, "Christianity: a Gospel of Confusion, Hate, and Despair."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "A Trial of Theism."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch): Debate, H. B. Samuels and J. G. Lawson, "Is There a God?"

COUNTRY.

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): Annual Services. J. T. Lloyd, 2.45, "Is the World Getting Better?" 6.30, "Does Secularism Safeguard Morality?" Hymns, etc., by the Choir, assisted by the Failsworth String Band.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Danby-street): 7, W. C. Schweizer, "The Boyish Miracles of Jesus: How they are Confirmed by the Gospels of Early Christian Churches."

MOUNTAIN ASH BRANCH N. S. S. (Glyde's Restaurant, Commercial-street): 6, G. Garrett, "Christianity and Woman."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (9 Langley-terrace, Annfield Plain): 3.30, "Why I am an Atheist."

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