

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!—
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!*

—GEORGE MEREDITH.

God and the Czar.

"Night hath but one red star—Tyrannicide."—SWINBURNE.

HEATHEN Japan is going along splendidly. Holy Russia is in the throes of political and social anarchy. Not even her greatest enemy could think of her at present without a feeling of compassion. Let us hope that she is nearing the darkest hour that precedes the dawn, and that a new nation—strong, prosperous, and self-governed—will arise from the ashes of the wicked and cruel old order of things. The Czar called the Duma together, and dissolved it the moment it tried to be a reality. He has promised to call another Duma next year on a fresh basis, but the people have had enough of his promises. They understand that he is pious, and they know that he is a liar; so they have a double reason for distrusting him. They have learnt to smile at the legend of the Little Father. They realise that all his fatherhood centres in the baby-boy who is to follow him as the Lord of all the Russias. That object is enough for his narrow nature. The welfare of the nation is a mere trifle in comparison. This miserable creature, clinging to his "divine right" in the name of God, is the ghastliest spectacle on this planet. The comedy of it has disappeared. It has been drowned in blood and tears. The laughter has been swallowed up in the groans of dying men and the cries of outraged women.

Dissolving the Duma the Czar elected to rule by mere brute force. He and his minions started a reign of terror. Men were shot down in hundreds, Jews were butchered in thousands, unspeakable atrocities were the order of the day, and the prisons were filled with the leaders of popular opinion. Is it any wonder that violence is being answered by violence? Passionate men are provoked into retaliation. They carry on the war against the aggressive Autocracy without mercy. To kill one of its agents they are willing to sacrifice any number of innocent lives. But that is the nature of war. We know how the Boer children perished in South Africa. Let us not be surprised, then, at the acts of the revolutionists in Russia. The Autocracy declared war on the nation, relying on the Army to keep order with rifles, maxims, and artillery; and the revolutionists conduct the war on their side with knives, pistols, and bombs. Madness, of course, all round! But the primary criminals are those in high places who started the bloody game, and virtually challenged their opponents to follow their lead.

It is shocking to think of M. Stolypin's young daughter and little boy torn by that explosion. Poor children! They are not responsible for the wrongs of Russia. Yet, after all, their sufferings are only an episode in the frightful struggle which is going

on in that unhappy country. We must not let our feelings run away with our reason. One drop must not blind us to the ocean of misery.

Nicholas has kissed and decorated the butchers of his people. But when he heard of the explosion at M. Stolypin's he said that words failed him to express his indignation. His own killings are executions; other people's killings are murders. That is how he looks at the situation. And it seems as though nothing would teach him better in this world. Well, the revolutionists may give him the opportunity of learning the lesson in another world. But we should prefer his being wise in time.

The Czar claims to rule by the grace of God. He is backed up in this by the Holy Church in Russia. God, however, says nothing. He lets people use his name and holds his tongue. Why doesn't he speak? Is he too busy? Has he had no news from Russia lately? What is the reason of his silence? An unmistakable word from him would set everything straight. What a chance! And, if he misses it, what a wasted opportunity!

Can any thinking person look at the state of Russia and still believe in the doctrine of Providence? Cardinal Newman said that his being was full of the idea of God, yet when he looked into the world for evidence of its divine government, it was like looking into a mirror without seeing the reflection of his face. The facts outside gave the lie to the belief within. And this is strikingly the case in Russia to-day. For surely no human father, not even the worst, would allow such quarreling and bloodshed to go on in his own family.

It is alleged by a *Times* correspondent that there is more than a battle between Autocracy and Revolution going on in Russia. According to this writer, the nation is falling into the abyss of bestiality. Hitherto the morality of the people has rested on trust in God and the Czar; all that is ended now, and morality is left without support; the result being a loosening of animal passions and the return of chaos. Very likely there is some truth in this. When morality, or anything else, is erected upon a wrong foundation, and the wrong foundation gives way—as all wrong foundations must in the long run—something unpleasant is bound to happen. There may be terrible ruin for a time, but the right principle will assert itself in the end, and Russia will ultimately find rest on a rational basis of order, which will allow the utmost scope for the spirit of progress.

The whole world is yearning for a fresh departure. The old landmarks are useless. The old principles are inadequate. The social idea must take the place of the religious idea. Men must no longer love and serve God; they must love and serve Humanity. There lies the only possible salvation for modern society. It is not enough to aim at political and social changes; a new spirit is requisite. "Behold, I make all things new," is the true language of an ideal. And the new ideal will have to be taught in Christian countries as it is taught in Japan. It must be impressed upon the minds of children. It must surround the cradle, fill the schoolroom, and inspire all the young lives; it must be fortified by every domestic and public discipline; then it will become the polestar of individual and social existence.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Fate of Faith.

WAS there ever a time when preachers of Christianity were not lamenting the lack of interest in things religious, and prophesying the eclipse of faith in the future? Take up representative theological works of any century, and there is to be found the same phenomenon. Either people will not attend church, or they do not attend sufficiently to religious teaching when they do, or the number of unbelievers is on the increase, and the country is drifting into absolute Atheism. It is a curious spectacle. The all-conquering creed is suffering continuous defeats; people are outgrowing the religion that we are told human nature cannot do without; the impregnable rock is being undermined; an omnipotent deity is being baffled by the creatures he has called into existence. A saving sense of the ridiculous would probably prevent preachers, generation after generation, making claims in one sentence and demolishing them in the next. But then a sense of the ridiculous might also prevent them being preachers; and, as the complaints and the claims are both of a respectable antiquity, tradition operates here, as elsewhere, to lend solemnity to a ridiculous position.

And what a ridiculous position it is! One preacher gains notoriety by castigating the "Smart Set" and informing the world that Christianity is losing its influence over the wealthy classes. Other preachers inform the world that the working-classes are being steadily won from Christianity. Yet others call attention to the growth of unbelief in current literature, while yet others point to the way in which, even within the churches, sceptical views are increasing. And *all* of them assert that Christianity is the only religion that really meets the needs of human nature, that its beneficial influence on human life is as plain as daylight, and that the world acknowledges the supremacy of Jesus. And yet it is losing ground! One has read of children playing with costly gems and treating them as mere ordinary pebbles, but that was before their value was known. Apparently it is only in the case of Christianity that a thing of which the value is universally felt and admitted is treated as an article of little or no value.

Among the recent jeremiads concerning the future of Christianity, there is one by the well-known Father Ignatius. Preaching at Llandudno, the Rev. Father fell into line by drawing a doleful picture of the future of England. The country is rapidly drifting on to "Blank Atheism"—which is, I presume, a special variety of Atheism, and therefore somewhat different to Atheism as understood by readers of this journal. Wales, apparently, is safe, "thanks chiefly to the efforts of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists." It is England only that is in a bad way. There were priests of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church who smoked "long, beastly pipes," and thus showed "the way things were going." The Bishop of London had been fraternising with actors and actresses—another symptom of the times. Other bishops were "preaching poison" in the shape of the Higher Criticism. Sabbath desecration was going on in all directions, and, "to many, Sabbath desecration was the forerunner of the gallows"—probably in the same way that birth is the forerunner of death. No doubt, if Father Ignatius were pressed, he *could* cite cases where people who did not keep the Sabbath in accordance with modern Christian teaching were hung afterwards, although it might be shown, if the preacher was susceptible to argument, that the number sent to the gallows is smaller now than when Sabbatarianism was in full swing. Probably what Father Ignatius meant was that the man who broke the Sabbath deserved hanging, and doubtless many preachers would agree with him in this.

There is something exceedingly ingenuous in Father Ignatius's definition of religion. "To be religious," he says, "is to go to church, to read the Bible, and to keep the Sabbath." I do not agree with the definition, because people may go to church for various

reasons. I have gone myself, and I have heard of others going because of certain feminine allurements; they may also read the Bible without accepting it in a Christian sense. The definition is poor enough, but it is honest—for it is a professional definition. To accept the Bible as the Word of God, to believe in Jesus and in an after life, is not enough, because one might believe these and never enter a church. And what would it benefit the clergy, though the whole world believed, if it never went to church? For people to be religiously useful to the clergy they must go to church and exhibit their piety in the donations. They must read the Bible—in the proper way—and they must keep the Sabbath—that is, they must not indulge in any Sunday occupation that will keep them away from church. This, I repeat, is an honest definition. It really expresses what nineteen out of every twenty of the clergy mean by their anxiety for the religious welfare of the public, and only one in twenty is honest enough to say so. They adopt a more circuitous method. They say that religion does not consist in church-going, that people may be sincere Christians and discard all clergy and all churches, while measuring in their own minds, a man's religious value by his support of this or that organisation. Father Ignatius's definition of religion is worth remembering.

Father Ignatius's lament, with its admission that England is growing less religious, is a phenomenon worthy of a little closer attention. In this country Christianity occupies, and has occupied for fifteen centuries, a peculiarly favorable position. It is the official faith, and the faith that is accepted by the majority of people as a matter of course. Its financial resources are enormous, and its social influence wide and extensive. There is not a single walk in life, not a single branch of public service where, even if a profession of Christianity is not a very evident help, its open rejection is not a serious obstacle to advancement. Directly and indirectly a large army of writers find it to their interest to support its claims, a factor of no small power in these days of universal education. Some deliberately write what they know to be untrue, but the larger number suppress truth so that its presence may not interfere with the marketable value of their wares. In this way current periodical literature and sober historical treatises are "cooked" so that they may not conflict with Christian claims. This procedure is excused on the grounds of "deference to public opinion," or "the public is not ripe for the whole truth to be stated"; but it is a pitiable condition of things at best. In this country there is every possible inducement for a man to remain a Christian, and every possible difficulty placed in his path should he openly and honestly cease to be one. Yet Christianity is admittedly losing ground! Why is this the case?

The answer is partly given in the fact noted at the outset—namely, that the phenomenon is a very old one. People always have been giving up Christianity in some measure, as is shown by the continuous struggle of the great Churches against heresies and against unbelief. The history of the heresies of the Christian Churches is indisputable evidence of the unsuitability of the religion taught. Often the official Church may have been strong enough to suppress the revolt, but the feeling was there, and has over and over again been able to effect some modification of the official teaching. Had the Christian religion been in harmony with tastes, the requirements, or the knowledge of the Western world, heresies would not have been so numerous nor so widespread. But Christianity was, from the first, an alien creed. Indeed, it may be said that neither England, France, Germany, nor any of the Western nations, possess a religion born of the soil, and therefore in complete accordance with the spirit of Western people. The religion these people possess belongs properly to the East. It has been forced upon them, and maintained, more or less, by force all along. And, in truth, the Westerns have never been easy under the infliction. There is nothing in this hemisphere supplying us with such a picture as the East gives us,

of a religious system maintained, generation after generation, with little or no protest against its domination. And, although it may be true that a more intimate acquaintance with the inner life and thought of Eastern peoples might show them to be less immobile and less quiescent than they appear, the general truth in its comparative aspect remains unaffected. The West has had its religion forced upon it, and the unsuitability of the imposed religion is evidenced by the fact that the revolts against it have been continuous and important. Underlying heresies, the Reformation struggle, as well as sectarian differences later, there is to be seen this truth—the people were struggling against the influence of a religion alien to them in spirit, in idea, and in ideal.

It is therefore not accidental that, during the whole of their history, the Christian Churches have been out of touch and out of sympathy with all progressive movements and ideas. It was, with them, the play of the instinct of self-preservation, none the less powerful because sometimes unconscious. For progressive ideas belong to the present and the future; Christianity belongs wholly and properly to the past. For a long time, and generally, Christianity, in virtue of its power and position, dominated the situation to such an extent, that even when reforms were accomplished it was under a Christian guise, in the name of Christianity. But every advance made the next step easier; the freer human life became the more possible did it become for ideas and aspirations, born of current knowledge and needs, to express themselves in their true colors. The physical sciences were the first. Here religion has for long been a dead letter. The science of biology has almost, if not quite, run the same course. Sociology and morals, because of their greater complexity and relative backwardness, are last. But the process is at work here, and is evident to all who care to observe it. Father Ignatius is only observing one stage of this development without properly understanding its real import. To him, it is the result of a wicked world against a righteous creed. To others, who see clearer and see further, it is a stage in the development of mankind. And these have the satisfaction of knowing that the wailings of a professional clergy are powerless to permanently affect the result.

C. COHEN.

Turning the Tables.

IN his well-known essay on the "Evils of Popular Ignorance," John Foster, the brilliant writer, asks Atheists if they have explored the whole realm of being, known all that is knowable, and been present everywhere all at once. With all due deference to the great essayist, one is obliged to pronounce his question both irrelevant and absurd. Atheists do not pretend to have traversed the whole Universe, and to know all that is knowable. Their distinguishing grace is humility: they unhesitatingly confess their profound ignorance. They do not dogmatise. They never say, "There is no God," or "There is no future state." They possess no data upon which to indulge in such blank denials. All they affirm is that they are without God, that he has not made himself known to them, and that the facts of existence do not even suggest him to them. Surely, such language is modest enough to satisfy the most fastidious. Indeed, Atheists have too much respect for God even to believe in him. If they believed in God they would have to disbelieve in the Universe, and particularly in human life, because these are not worthy of him; but as they cannot disbelieve in the latter, they are irresistibly driven to unbelief in the former. The Atheistic attitude is thus an eminently respectable one, with no element of unreason attaching to it. Secularists disbelieve in God, not because they know, but because they do not know.

After all, Atheists have their revenge. They can turn the tables upon their enemies. If John Foster were here now they could say to him: "Have you,

dogmatic Christian, explored the whole realm of being, known everything that is knowable, and been everywhere at once?" John Foster would answer, "Your question is the quintessence of impertinence," and they might retort, "But it is your own question returned to you with our best compliments." But if the question in that form smacks of impertinence, there is a form in which it is the very soul of pertinence and relevance. On what ground do Christians say, "God is, and he is love"? On what ground do they affirm a future state of rewards and punishments? On what ground do they believe in the immateriality and indestructibility of the human soul? Take the dogma of immortality as an example. Bishop Butler's argument for it is well known, and it practically comes to this: "We know that our thinking faculties survive, apparently unimpaired, many mighty changes in our physical organism. We may lose the organ of sight, the organ of hearing, the organ of smell, the organ of speech even, and still retain, in full working order, our reflective powers. We may be deprived of all our limbs, and still be able to think as well as ever. Is it not likely, then, that, since we ourselves survive so many changes, we may also survive the greater change called death?" The argument is exceedingly plausible, and many are led captive by it; but there is a radical flaw in it that renders it absolutely worthless. The good bishop was careful not to include the brain among the organs that could be removed without injuring the thinking faculties. But surely it is quite legitimate for Secularists to ask Christian believers this question: "Have you ever seen a man whose thinking faculties remained unimpaired during an attack of brain fever, or after the administration of chloroform, or even during sleep, or a fit of drunkenness?" Never. The existence of an independent, indivisible, and indestructible personal entity called soul is a far-fetched hypothesis, supported by no clear, indisputable evidence. The same remark applies, with equal force, to all supernatural doctrines. Underneath every one of them can justly be written the two simple words, "Not proven." It is true that the poet sings—

"For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven";

but it is also true that such language is not justified by the facts. We can prove, with sufficient certainty, that we, as individuals, are clearly distinguishable from other individuals, that Timothy Dick is not in danger of mistaking himself for Bill Bailey, that truth, and honesty, and love are good, beneficent qualities, and that Nature around us is in a state of perpetual flux; but we cannot prove, even approximately, that there is a God, that Jesus rose from the dead, and that death does not end all for individuals. We know that in twelve hours another day will dawn, because innumerable days lie buried behind us; but we can have no *experience* of to-morrow till it comes, and we may not live to see it. We are justified in believing that this coming night shall be followed by another day, because we have had experience of so many identical successions in the past; but we are not justified in the statement that death shall be followed by another life, because we have not had experience of such a succession in the past. Thus the argument from experience, on which so much stress is laid nowadays, loses its force when the subject of immortality comes up. God is said to be intellectually unknown and unknowable; but does it not follow from his intellectual unknowableness, that he is equally unknown and unknowable to experience? Belief in God does not bring him within the range of experience, because it is belief in the unknown and unknowable. Scientists believe in the universal ether; but they have no knowledge of it, and consequently they neither feel nor experience it.

In taking up this position Secularists are by no means in sympathy with the saying jokingly ascribed to Jowett:—

"I am Master of Balliol College,
And what I do not know is not knowledge."

Quoting Jowett's alleged claim one popular Christian

writer says of it that it "is exactly that implied by much that so-called Agnostics have said and written." Then he adds: "Many go even beyond this extravagant length, maintaining that such things as they, by their senses, cannot apprehend are not only unknowable by others, but *ipso facto* proved to be non-existent." But the popular writer is totally wrong and glaringly unjust. As applied to Haeckel the assertion is preposterous. Nothing is easier than to abuse opponents, charging them with coming to rash and unwarranted conclusions, and characterising their philosophy as the "philosophy of dirt." But, so far as Secularists generally are concerned, such abuse is simply not deserved. It is infamous calumny. Let us calmly consider the facts. Christians claim possession of a knowledge which Secularists do not share. Surely there can be nothing improper, indecent, or insolent in the simple request from the latter to the former, "Prove to us that what you claim to possess is knowledge." But Christian teachers, unable to furnish the requested proof, turn round and insult those who ask for it, saying, "We have an organ of knowledge which you lack, or which, as the result of a wicked life, has become atrophied within you." Insults, however, never serve the cause of truth; and in spite of all the contempt poured upon them, Secularists will continue to contend that the alleged knowledge of Christians is *not* knowledge, but a cluster of unverified and unverifiable beliefs mistaken for knowledge; and this contention also they put forward out of respect for God.

"Out of respect for God?" someone may indignantly and scornfully demand. Yes, friend, out of respect for God. In unguarded moments Christians admit that they would never have known God had he not graciously revealed himself to them. By their own unaided reason they could never have discovered him; but in his infinite goodness he made himself known to their quickened hearts. Very well. But do you not discern in this humble admission a serious reflection on God's character? If what they say is true, God is proved to be a respecter of persons, to be guilty of gross injustice towards a large number of the creatures of his hand, or the children of his heart. If we are all his offspring, is it not inconceivably strange that so many of us are allowed to remain in the wretched state of orphanage? We hold that God could not be God were he guilty of such an unnatural crime. If God existed, he would reveal himself to all alike, or to none. Such a belief we cherish out of respect for God.

Let us look at the argument from experience once more. The writer from whom we have already quoted says of it: "The argument for evangelical Christianity supplied by experience is strong and unanswerable." Then comes this foolish passage:—

"I have studied in Germany for three years, and for quite half that time not more than fifty miles from the university where Haeckel has been for over forty years a professor. I have met and conversed with some of his pupils; but I never heard of any self-denying or any out-of-class efforts made by him for sweetening or bettering life: and the same is true of most, if not all, men of his class. Compare with that the noble, generous, self-denying efforts put forth in Germany by Professors Tholuck, Noander, Ewald, and Franz Delitzsch to bring men to Christ."

Was there ever such a tissue of absurdities and mis-judgments? Professor Haeckel is represented as an ungenerous, ignoble, selfish man, because he has never endeavored to bring men to Christ!! He has "no gospel to offer, no comfort to impart," simply because he has not been able to point poor sinners, lost and ruined by the fall, to the Cross of Calvary for salvation!! Such is the argument for Christianity supplied by experience. This writer tells us that "believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have found Him to be the life of their life, the joy of their heart, their refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," and that in the strength of such glowing experience "they have set agoing all those agencies which aim at making Christ known to the world." Now, what has been the value of such experience to

the world? For close upon two thousand years have Christian disciples boasted of that experience; but how much better is society to-day because of it? Men like Professor Haeckel regard it as a sickly sentiment that soon evaporates, leaving no sediment of good behind it; and we need only consider the present condition of Christendom to realise how true their estimate of it is. We claim, therefore, that the argument from experience, like those from Prophecy and Miracles, has completely broken down.

Thus are the tables turned. Atheism requires no proof, because it is simply the absence of belief; but Theism does, because it affirms the existence of a being who is both invisible and intangible. Christianity is a system of doctrines not one of which is self-evident. Therefore Christians can justly be called upon to supply proof or proofs of its truth. The burden of proof rests, of necessity, on believers, not on unbelievers. At present, Christian apologists are at their wits' end. At one time, they had proofs many, each one of which by itself was all-sufficient. There was the God-inspired and infallible Church, which did nothing except under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of Truth. Then there was the God-inspired and infallible Book, in which God himself was the spokesman. But now history has discredited the Church, and literary criticism the Book; and the apologists say: "Argument we have none, and formal evidences have failed us, and so we can only fall back upon experience, saying, 'It feels so nice to believe fervently, we have such rapture when our faith burns brightly.'" We do not question the sincerity of the emotion, but we do seriously doubt its wholesomeness and utility. Indeed, it is its lack of power on the world that is the strongest argument against it.

Now, Secularists do not endeavor to bring men to Christ, but they do try to exalt reason and cause its light to shine abroad. They do not believe that those who aim at making Christ known to the world are the only noble, generous, and self-denying people. More noble, generous, and self-denying are they who live for the public weal, whose sublime aim is to bring class to class and man to man in the beautiful bond of natural brotherhood and love, and who rest neither day nor night as long as they can shed the light and warmth of knowledge upon the world. "Walk by faith," exhorts the Christian preacher. "Walk by sight, the sight of thine enlightened intelligence and kindled heart," cries the Secularist lecturer; and his day is on the wax.

J. T. LLOYD.

Another Word for Atheism.

THE readers of the *Freethinker* must, I think, be aware of the fact that Atheism has at length become, if not positively respectable, at least anything but disreputable. Twenty or thirty years ago the word "Atheist" or "Atheism" uttered in public caused a shudder in the hearers; but it is not so to-day, for we have made those words familiar to the public. And if at present they are objected to, as in some quarters they are, the objection is not religious, but purely a matter of fashion. I have never for a moment hesitated to disclose my Atheism in public or in private, and I can say that it is long since I perceived any shudder or much annoyance produced by it in the hearers. On board the *Runic*, during our voyage from Australia, I proclaimed my Atheism times out of number; but no one seems to have expected the ship to sink, or even an extra gale to arise, in consequence. There can be no doubt that all that is called God (including the Devil, of course) is rapidly fading from the popular consciousness; the definite and realistic bugbears of our childhood and youth have become at best but names of nothing definable—mere shapeless and impalpable mists—in fact, mere echoes and reminiscences of a life that has passed for ever. And this is not confined to those who call themselves Freethinkers, etc., it is universal amongst intelligent people.

Still, there is much for us to do. There are armies of men and women yet exploiting the ignorance and the fears of the masses, and spending their lives in ease and affluence as the reward of their iniquity, the "wages of" their shameless "sin." Therefore we must do our level best to clear the mental atmosphere of the people of all mists of superstition until the bright, clear, cloudless sky of Atheism shall become actually universal. When that is so, independence and self-reliance, led and guided by intelligence and science, will be the possession of all, and become the heirloom and inheritance of future man. Then the priestly exploiters and tyrants, the holy cheats and impostors, as well as the honest religious cranks and lunatics, will find it impossible to deceive and swindle by means of dreams, revelations, miracles, or any other pious shams and whimsies. If we love our fellows, if we wish to leave the world better than we found it, we should continue to wage war upon God—that is, to awaken man from his pious slumbers and his holy visions and dreams; to rouse him from his long-continued nightmare, and to leave him under the sway of the actual facts and phenomena of life. Truth, reality, is the deadly poison of all superhuman beings; and we must lose no opportunity of administering that poison.

Just recently Nature is furnishing us with some of her very best Atheistic weapons, and we are guilty of neglect of duty if we fail to wield them. The great mass of mankind cannot be influenced by pure reasoning or abstract intellectuality, but most can grasp and understand the significance of concrete facts, when once their logic is pointed out to them. Who can fail to read the lessons of the *Sirio* disaster? God and saints had been entreated to protect and guide that emigrant ship safely to her destination, and on board were several quacks and arch-quacks to preach the virtues of faith and prayer, of trust in saints and in paltry religious relics, in pastry Christs, holy water, consecrated wine, beads, etc. All in vain! If the ill-fated ship had escaped disaster, priests, God, and the rest of the trumpety crowd would have been awarded the credit thereof, and vocal and concrete thanks (wax candles, etc.) would have been offered to those nonentities for their fancied protection.

Alas! God and saints paid no attention to the cries of the voyagers; or must we say they heard, only to mock and to sport with their unfortunate dupes? The vessel was wrecked; a huge number of innocent people were ruthlessly drowned; and even those who tried to rescue the unfortunate were murdered for their humanity. Well, if the Christian God really does exist, he falsified in this case, as in so many thousands of other cases, all his promises of help and protection to those who pray; he guided the ship and wilfully drove it on the rocks; he mocked the prayers of his victims and drowned them in spite of their piteous cries; he drowned their wives and children before their faces; and he did it all without the shadow of an excuse for his horrid cruelty. Only the most contemptible of pious spaniels or curs can say in such a case, "Not my will, but thine, be done"—"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

"Bill Sikes" dog is the very best "pattern of believers" that I can just for the moment think of. That poor beast had no will of his own; he lived solely for his owner's advantage and glory. And those who can acquiesce in God's horrid treatment of themselves and others, when he is out for sport, must be on the same intellectual and moral plane with that dog.

Take again the fragmentary news from South America. Probably no land is more pious to day than Chili, no city than Valparaiso or Santiago. The former has been half destroyed by earthquakes and fires, the latter seriously damaged by the same agencies. If God has any possession left, it is the earthquake and volcanic forces. Atmospheric electricity and thunder and lightning were long since reft from his wicked hands, the clergy themselves having protected their places of business, *alias* their swindling dens, from his electrical onslaughts. It

must be maddening to him to find his best efforts to amuse his holy self rendered abortive by lightning-rods; and we need not be surprised to find him seeking recreation in droughts, famines, floods, storms, plagues, and especially in earthquakes and in volcanic explosions. Here, My Christian Friend, your blessed God is unchecked and unhampered; and here his fun grows fast and furious. He can kill hundreds by toppling down buildings upon them, his own joss-houses included; he can swallow up his "dearly beloved children" in rents and chasms of the ground; and, better still, he can roast and burn them alive by hundreds in the traps his earthquakes have caught them in—men, women and babies being cooked all together for the sake of the "sweet savor" that enters his blessed nostrils from the burning flesh.

If God exists, all that I am faintly hinting at and indicating is as real as God himself. Let the Theist once fairly and candidly face the facts, and he must "become as one of us, to know good and evil," and to be able to distinguish the one from the other. God cannot exist except in the "dim religious light" of false sentiment and most vicious training. Not man's intelligence or his virtues created, elaborated and maintains God, but his ignorance, his worst fears, his weakness and his vices—these made God, ay, all Gods; and God will remain only so long as man is foolish and vicious enough to require or to fear him.

I should dearly like to meet some able Theist in debate on the God-question; but I fancy the day for that sort of work is past. It is very long since I met with an intellectual man who was ready to break a lance for God. Does such a man exist? If so, I hope to make his acquaintance and to test his ability. The clergy have ceased to defend God or his ark, except by firing random shots from out-of-date blunderbusses and from safe distances. We know their reasons for this. Many of them care no more for God or Devil than we do; others are in a state of doubt and uncertainty; and those most full of faith and the Holy Ghost are so weak intellectually as to be objects of contempt to their fellow cheats. The helpless condition of the enemy should spur us on to secure the fruits of our final victory. All minor differences amongst us should be ignored, and our united strength should be put forth to sweep the theological bugbears for ever away, to beat, damage and discredit the clerical impostors, and to render man intelligent, self-reliant and virtuous.

JOS. SYMES.

Acid Drops.

Christians have always supposed that they were the only people who could do anything worth talking about. They buried learning in the Dark Ages, and when some of it was dug up they said, "See how we preserved it." And that is the way they have been going on ever since. They claim the credit of every bit of progress, though it was won by others, and though they fought against it as long as they could. But of late years they have received a check. The triumph of Japan has attracted attention to that "heathen" country, and it is seen that Christians have little or nothing to teach it, and much to learn of it. Even "heathen" China is waking up—and not at all through the missionaries. It appears that a Constitution is to be introduced gradually, and the education of the people is to be more highly developed. During the past four years no fewer than fifteen Universities have been established in China; and a missionary told a *Daily News* interviewer at Shanghai that this was "one of the most marvellous things in all history." Yes, and it will mean another barrier to Christian propaganda.

Towards the end of September the Salvation Army is going to have a Day of Prayer at Exeter Hall. From morn till night they will instruct Omniscience in what is desirable for this planet. There is also to be a memorial service at the Albert Hall on Monday evening, September 24, for "Our Officers in Heaven." It does not occur to them that any of their departed officers may be in the other place. These pious people seem all sure of heaven for themselves. Hell is for others.

People talk of "sacred music," but there is no such thing. All music is natural and human, though some of it may be devoted to so-called sacred purposes. Mr. Perceval Graves, the author of "Father O' Flynn," in a paper on "British Folk Songs" which he read to the Eisteddfod at Carnarvon, said that, "Instances were frequent of old Welsh love-songs being employed as hymn-tunes, which had now attained such an air of sanctity that to attempt to revert to their original use would be regarded as desecration." Could anything show more clearly the part that religion plays in human affairs? It is the great parasite, and it pretends to be the great benefactor.

The *Daily News* ventured to suggest in a leading article that earthquakes were natural events and neither judgments nor warnings, but some of its pious readers objected to being robbed in this way of the consolations of faith. Letters flowed in from these fossil religionists, one of whom hinted that London was getting so wicked that it might look out for a shaking up "on its own." This correspondent, of course, lived at a safe distance from the doomed metropolis.

"Blessed be ye poor" is one of the best paying businesses. A strong committee has been formed to raise £7,000, with a view to providing a life annuity of £500 to the Rev. Dr. Clifford, which shall also be assured to Mrs. Clifford. The "Cromwell of the Passive Resistance movement" will probably keep out of heaven for many years on that income; for he is still sound in wind and limb—especially wind.

The vicar of Yarmouth, appealing for a silver collection lately, complained that there were 4,000 copper coins on the plates in a recent Sunday collection, which he considered shabby and mean. Jesus Christ said, "the poor ye have always with you." "Yes," says the vicar of Yarmouth; "but don't let them come to my church. I want people with silver shillings in their pockets—not bronze discs, as though I kept slot-machines." Perhaps the reverend gentleman will explain what is the smallest piece of silver that would be acceptable in his offertory. We presume he would turn up his nose at the miniature threepennybit. A four-pennybit is just as bad, besides being scarce; so we must fall back on sixpence. That sum, however, is far too much for people who have to keep a family on a pound a week. They may know, therefore, that they are not wanted at Yarmouth parish church. We hope they will all take the vicar's hint and stay away.

The function of the Church is said to be the "cure of souls." The Church is a spiritual hospital in which diseased spirits are treated and made whole. Who the physician-in-chief is it is difficult to tell. Jesus Christ has the reputation of occupying that position; but if we believe the nurses and other officials of that institution, he is seldom there, for they spend most of their time and energy in coaxing him to come and attend to the work. Evidently he pays but little heed to their urgent appeals; he is either incompetent or neglects his duties; at any rate, no patients are ever discharged as cured. Some leave, it is true, because of lack of confidence in the establishment, or because of the absence of any conscious spiritual disease; but the bulk stay on in the hospital until they are carried off by some physical disease.

Now the author of *Pro Christo et Ecclesia* argues that all the bodily diseases from which Christians suffer "are due, not to necessity or to God, but to the lack of faith in the Church at large." And according to the New Testament he is quite right. But Dr. Grant, of Glasgow, explains the New Testament away, and urges the Church "to teach a nobler fear than the fear of bodily injury, and a better salvation than the so-called 'salvation of the body.'" The fact however is, that the Church possesses no healing power whatever. In no respects are its members healthier, either bodily or mentally, than outsiders. On the market "saints" and "sinners" are not distinguishable; or if sometimes they are, the advantage is usually with the "sinners."

Canon Newbolt continues his opposition to the Education Bill, his main contention being that there is no such thing as undenominational religion. He is quite right. Undenominational religion is a contradiction in terms. There is no Christianity common to all the Churches. What may be common to a few Nonconformist sects is repudiated by the Church of England. "Simple Bible Teaching" is a deliberate misnomer: there is and can be no such thing.

Canon Newbolt regards Baptismal Regeneration and the Laying-on of Hands as Biblical doctrines. To him they are fundamental doctrines; and without them you can only have

a terribly mutilated Christianity. Addressing the baptised the Canon said: "In your baptism God took away the guilt and taint of original sin, and He gave you strength of will and power to resist, but He did more. He not only strengthened your will, but He spiritualised those hereditary tendencies in all their complexity." Canon Newbolt finds that dogma in the New Testament, and he believes that if it be left out of the religious curriculum of the schools, the children will receive a distorted idea as to the true nature of Christianity. Then the Church of England rejects doctrines which the Catholic Church treats as parts of fundamental Christianity. The existence of these divergent views as to what is essential to Christianity shows what an awful farce the teaching of religion in day schools must be.

As a matter of fact no sect in Christendom accepts the whole of New Testament Christianity. An individual here and there does, and as a result the law, every now and then, swoops down upon him and claps him into prison, his only crime being—*taking God at his word*. To believe the whole Bible to the extent of putting it into practice is illegal in Christian England; and yet certain portions of the volume must be taught in Government schools! How laughably funny it all is, and yet what a heart-breaking spectacle it presents!

Canon Newbolt warns us against being "wiser than God." The simple fact, however, is that all men think themselves "wiser than God"—on some points. There are whole verses in the New Testament which Canon Newbolt himself utterly ignores. Why? Because he deems himself "wiser than God." If the Bible is the Word of God, as the Canon assures his audience at St. Paul's, why does he deliberately disregard positive injunctions contained in it, and live in rebellion against the Divine Will? The talk about the wisdom of God, even on Canon Newbolt's part, is pure cant, devoid of all real meaning.

Five thousand superstitious Swiss-Italian peasants fled from the Val Vedasca. During a storm they declare they saw an angel in the clouds pointing a finger at the valley, so they concluded it was doomed, and cleared out of it as rapidly as Lot cleared out of Sodom. No doubt they will creep back to their orchards, gardens, and fields when they find the destroying angel has flown to another locality.

A party of burglars took a professional tour in Essex on a motor-car. They ransacked the parish church at Leigh, and drank some of the sacramental wine. What effect the "Blood of Christ" had upon them is unknown. We don't suppose it will make them too pious to take another tour.

The *British Congregationalist* is of opinion that "the Institutional Church is simply the result of a sane and earnest effort to meet the needs of the people." We agree; but that is only a specious method of stating a disagreeable fact—namely, that as a purely "spiritual" organisation the Church is proving a gigantic failure. Whitefield's Tabernacle and Bloomsbury Baptist Chapel, for example, had fallen upon evil days, and were quite unable to hold their own, being white elephants on the hands of their proprietors. As a last resort, they were institutionalised; or, to be more accurate, they were secularised; and now they are splendid successes. In all such churches religion is only a department among a lot of other departments, introduced to ensure financial success.

The *British Congregationalist* is delightfully frank in its admissions. It admits that "under modern conditions there is no longer any question that the Church is bound to cater for the physical and intellectual, as well as for the spiritual, life of many of her sons and daughters." It also admits that, as long as the Church keeps spirituality in view as the chief end of her being, "she need not be too scrupulous about the means." This is the motto: "Catch the people, and keep the people, and don't be too particular as to how you do it." What has happened to the eternal, ever-present, and all-powerful Christ, the only true Head of the Church? Where is the Holy Spirit, "fountain of life and love," with his "blessed unction from above," whose "quickening powers" were once believed to be all-sufficient—what has become of him? After all, there is some hope for Secularism.

According to the Rev. H. W. Clarke, in the *Christian World* for August 23, a Christian has two homes—a nominal one on earth and a real one in heaven, and so he lives in two different worlds at one and the same time. That is why a Christian, as a rule, makes such a poor citizen of this world. He attempts too much. The consequence is that if the saint

prosper the man suffers loss; or that if heaven's interests are duly attended to earthly affairs are neglected. The better way is to confine one's attention to one world at a time—not to think about death at all, but to concentrate upon this life.

"Kissing the Book" was the heading of a leaderette in a recent number of the *Daily News*, in which our pious contemporary not only advocated the abolition of the practice of slobbering the Bible, but also suggested that the oath should be abolished altogether. Look at these sentences:—

"When a witness goes into the box, it is necessary that some definite legal form should be observed whereby the subsequent evidence shall be made subject to the law of perjury. Such a form may be made perfectly simple, and need not involve any reference to religious considerations, which in many instances cannot be said to have weighed much with the persons who present themselves for examination by the Court. It is the possibility of subsequent prosecution for perjury which should be impressed upon witnesses, and more frequent warnings from the Bench might perhaps prove an advantage."

This is a confession that "religious considerations" do not secure truth in the witness-box, and that the fear of punishment for perjury is likely to be more effective. In other words, the religious sanction of morality is all moonshine, and it is only the social sanction of morality that is real; which is precisely what we have been saying in the *Free-thinker* for a quarter of a century.

Charles Bradlaugh, the Atheist, carried a Bill through the House of Commons to enable Christians to obey Jesus Christ when he said "Swear not at all." That was nearly twenty years ago. Now the Christians are beginning to think that they ought to go a step further voluntarily, and abolish the very possibility of swearing. Of course that is entirely a matter for themselves. Freethinkers affirm; it is the Christians who swear; and as soon as they are ashamed of it the law can be altered so as to make affirmation the universal practice.

A hundred years ago there was a strong feeling against the oath amongst the reformers. Bentham, who was really an Atheist, always declared that the oath promoted perjury. Coleridge, who was a Radical and something of a Sceptic in his younger days, denounced the oath most vigorously in his "Fears in Solitude," written during the alarm of an invasion in April, 1798. Here is a striking passage:—

"Oh! blasphemous! the book of life is made
A superstitious instrument, on which
We gabble o'er the oaths we mean to break;
For all must swear—all and in every place,
College and wharf, council and justice-court;
All, all must swear, the briber and the bribed,
Merchant and lawyer, senator and priest,
The rich, the poor, the old man and the young;
All, all make up one scheme of perjury.
That faith doth reel; the very name of God
Sounds like a juggler's charm."

Long before Coleridge the master-mind of Shakespeare had put a glorious protest against the oath into the mouth of Brutus in *Julius Caesar*. It is one of the finest passages in that magnificent play, and of course modern actors omit it on the stage, so great is their reverence for the Master.

One part of that noble speech of Brutus' must be sweet reading for those who believe in the virtue of the oath, and especially to its clerical defenders:—

"Swear priests, and cowards, and men cautious,
Old feeble carrions, and such suffering souls
That welcome wrongs; unto bad causes swear
Such creatures as men doubt."

Heavens! how Shakespeare could write! One is more amazed every time one quotes him. "Old feeble carrions"—the phrase dropped easily from his magical pen, but let anyone who is a judge of writing think of the wonderful intensity of expression in those three simple words. Other men, even the greatest, seem only half awake in comparison with him. And look how he gives "priests" the place of honor in the catalogue of infamy. It is enough to make a Freethinker smile in the midst of a bereavement.

Robert Burns, by the way, had a vicious cut at the "priests" in *Tam O'Shanter*. In the original manuscript of that splendid poem there were four lines which friends persuaded him to cut out. They occurred in the list of awful things seen by Tam on the holy table in Kirk-Alloway:—

"Three lawyers' tongues turn'd inside out,
Wi' lies seam'd, like a beggar's clout;
And priests' hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk."

Nice reading for "priests"!

As Browning says, there is "no end to learning." Something new turns up every day. The Rev. J. G. James, D.Lit., M.A., Pastor-elect of Christ Church, Enfield, informs us that, on the whole, *silence* is the best answer to most prayers. People are mistaken when they say that any prayers are left unanswered. Silence is the answer to most of them. We congratulate Dr. James on his all but orthodoxy. He is quite right as far as he goes. If he went a little further he would doubtless say that silence is the answer to all prayers except those that are answered by the people who make them. God has maintained an unbroken silence throughout all the ages.

And yet even Dr. James, standing on the verge of orthodoxy, lapses occasionally into drivelling twaddle. Fancy his offering the following as an argument for personal immortality: "It is one of the commonplaces of our childhood's morals that 'kind words can never die.' No good conduct can die. There is no limit nor termination to what is morally and spiritually good." Kind words and good conduct deepen and give permanence to the character; and, of course, man and his character are coeval. Dr. James does well to add that "this may not amount to proof for those who are unbelievers in personal immortality." It is not even the shadow of proof for anybody in his senses. Emerson, a great believer in the permanence of all good, made fun of *personal immortality*.

Availing himself of the Lord's permission, Mr. Evan Roberts went to Llandrindod Wells, and held services there; but evidently the Lord did not go with him. It was only at one meeting, and for a few minutes, that the old Evan Roberts seemed to have come back. The game is up—for the present.

Rev. E. Cornwall Jones has been preaching at King-street Congregational Church, Great Yarmouth, on the decadence of Sunday. He complained of the holiday makers who flowed into the town from East London and enjoyed themselves in a manner that was "reckless of the religious susceptibilities of the residents." But what an absurdity this is! The pious portion of the residents—who, by the way, are only a small minority—are quite at liberty to go to the House of God; and what business is it of theirs if the holiday crowd prefer the sands and the sea? Do they imagine that people travel all the way from London to Yarmouth and back just to attend divine service? Londoners can get all they want in that line at home.

According to Mr. Jones, the modern Sunday is meretricious. "Man," he said, "could not grow unless he had leisure to think, to pray, and to look up." Suppose, for the sake of argument, that this is true. What then? Can't a man think without going to church? Is the church a place, nowadays, where any real thinking is done, from one year's end to another? As for praying, if a man *must* pray, can't he do it as well in a train as in church? Is there not plenty of time for it on the journey to Yarmouth? And as for looking up, surely a man could lie on his back on Yarmouth sands and look up at a much more glorious and inspiring spectacle than he could behold in any place of worship. The blue dome of heaven, diversified with great billowy summer clouds, is far grander than the dome of St. Paul's or St. Peter's; and King-street Congregational Church isn't worth mentioning in the comparison.

"In France," the Rev. Mr. Jones said, "there was a growing feeling of sympathy with Sunday closing, and the movement was spreading there at a time when it was threatened in England. Why? Because serious people in France realised the disaster that flowed from an unhallowed Sunday." Could any preacher talk more foolishly? Fancy the men in power in France to-day being concerned about a hallowed Sunday! All they are concerned about is a proper weekly rest for the workers. This is provided for in the Bill lately carried by the French Government. Every employe in the country must have one day's rest in seven. It need not be Sunday. Some workers cannot possibly rest on Sunday if it is to be of any use to those who do rest on Sunday. But it is sufficient if they rest some other day; and this is secured to them by the new French law—for which the Rev. Mr. Jones appears to be completely ignorant.

Immediately after that piece of foolishness, the Rev. Mr. Jones declared that, "The institution of Sunday was primal; it dated from the Creation." Good God! We thought that even Congregational ministers had done talking about the Creation. Mr. Jones is a clerical Rip Van Winkle, and we suppose it is the result of living at Yarmouth. There never was any Creation. Omnipotence never worked six days and

rested on the seventh. The God of Nature, if such a being exist, must be capable of perpetual motion. Infinite energy cannot be impaired, much less exhausted. No, the Sunday does not date from Creation. It was borrowed by the Jews from the Babylonians. They borrowed the name as well as the thing—the Sabbath. And the story of the day's dating from Jehovah's rest after six-days' labor of creation, is simply a Hebrew romance.

Mr. Jones wound up by imploring Englishmen to "bring back the old English Sunday." He might as well ask them to bring back the mastodon. The age of miracles is past.

At last Bishop Gore has spoken words of wisdom on the education question. He rightly holds that to endow and establish undenominational religion would be the height of injustice. He says: "The State must, we contend, either pay impartially for all kinds of religious teaching, preferred by the parents of the scholars, or pay for none." That is to say, unless the State treats all religious sects impartially, granting special favors to none, let the arms of its educational justice embrace all citizens alike by excluding religion, the great bone of contention, from all its schools. The justice Dr. Gore wants is partial, but if he cannot get it, he pleads for universal justice.

The Rev. Professor James Denny, D.D., is a great star in the firmament of Presbyterianism. The light that radiates from him is the pure light of orthodoxy. To him Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the living God, or God himself tabernacling in human flesh. And yet, orthodox as he is, on the theological side, he is not prepared, on the practical side, to yield unqualified obedience to his King. In the *British Weekly* for August 23, he admits that "every one has felt the difficulty of interpreting the Sermon on the Mount." Then he vehemently repudiates the literal interpretation of it, and puts in a strong plea for the use of common sense in dealing with it. In other words, Christ did not mean what he is reported to have said, and the people who think he did are fools.

The Rev. Dr. Newton H. Marshall, of the New Barnet Baptist Church, is a young divine of German culture, scholarly, eloquent, and dogmatic. He declared the other Sunday that Christ solves the riddle of the Universe. Who is Christ? Listen: "A tremendous personality throned upon space, controlling time, whom God has thus exalted! Has anybody ever seen him? No. Has anybody ever heard his voice? No. Does he exist? Nobody knows. And yet this unseen, unheard, unknown, *imagined* being solves the riddle of the Universe. What all poets, philosophers, and scientists have failed to do, "this tremendous personality throned on space, controlling time," has actually done. And yet he who thus solves the riddle is himself the greatest of all riddles, which the theologians claim to read in a thousand different ways.

Does Dr. Marshall know Christ at first hand? He does not. He merely repeats what he finds written down in Paul's Epistles. Did Paul know him? He did not. He was only a theological speculator. Paul's Christ was not identical with Jesus of Nazareth. But does it not stand to reason that the riddle of the Universe *cannot* be unravelled by a being who is only the creation of philosophy?

Dr. Marshall is altogether *too* credulous, *too* dogmatic. He asserts that a mother's love, which reclaims an erring son, is the love of Christ. In Great Britain there are thousands of non-Christian mothers—does Dr. Marshall mean to tell us that these mothers do not love their children, or that their love is incapable of reclaiming the erring?

Dr. Marshall speaks like a hopeless slave of prejudice, or a blind partisan, who flatly refuses to face the facts of life. Most children are liable to go astray when they face the world. Many are restored to the right path by a mother's love, or some other beneficent influence. There are a few, however, who are irrecoverable. No Gospel appeal, no Christ's love, no all-pervading Spirit of Holiness, can touch them. These are cases in which Dr. Marshall's "tremendous personality, throned on space, controlling time," ought to make bare his omnipotent arm of love, and accomplish the great redemption. But these are the very instances, with which human love and sympathy cannot deal, in which Christ's love is impotent. And there are millions of such cases in our own country alone. How does Dr. Marshall account for this strange fact, on the assumption that "this tremendous personality, throned on space, controlling time," really exists?

Commenting on Mr. Balfour's bazaar-opening speech at Dunbar, the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* said that he had "voiced the protest of the great inarticulate mass of people who are left cold by the efforts of philanthropic moralists to open their eyes to their iniquity by showing them funny pictures interlarded with scriptural texts, and the death-rate of drunkards on a magic-lantern screen." Our Cottonopolis contemporary was especially severe on the pious ladies who give concerts to poor people, and regale them with vile renderings of comic songs; and suggested that if Heaven did not attract the sinners the comic songs would only be wasted.

Mr. Keir Hardie has just turned fifty. We thought he was older, for he looks it. But this may be due to the precocity of his early days. The *Daily News* reproduced some of his reminiscences under the heading of "After Fifty Strenuous Years." So he began "strenuing" in his infancy. No wonder he is so preternaturally serious now.

Our readers will recollect how we took Mr. Keir Hardie to task some months ago for insulting his own father and mother because they were Secularists. He has a good word, however, for "Uncle Willie" who used to kneel down and pray by his old armchair. (Of course it was an *old* one; a *new* one would have spoiled the picture.) Uncle Willie "left an impress" on his nephew "that can never fade." "How contemptible," the nephew says, "the thin empty braggarts who scoff at religious feeling seem when compared with him as he lives in my memory." This may be meant for the wicked men who write in the *Freethinker*. Or is it meant for Mr. Robert Blatchford and the *Clarion* men?

"Braggarts" is distinctly good. Mr. Keir Hardie has done as much bragging in his time as any man we know. A good many people think him "empty" enough, and would regard "thin" as a pretty accurate description of all he ever wrote or said.

Mr. Keir Hardie doesn't "scoff at religious feeling." He revels in it. And what elevation of soul it gives him! Just look at this splendid outburst of eloquence, with which he concludes "In the Light of Fifty Years":—

"Not until my life's work found me and stripped me bare of the past and absorbed me into itself did life take on any real meaning for me. Now I know its main secret. He who would find his life must lose it in others. One day I may, perhaps, write a book on this. But there! I have just entered my fifty-first year. And so one more pipe and then to bed."

What a noble climax! I have just entered my fifty-first year. I! Keir Hardie! Fancy! Stands Scotland where it did? So one more pipe and then to bed. Think of me thus, dear reader. How human I am, after all. Even I smoke—even I sleep. Let us pray!

The Bishop of Southwark is generous enough to admit that the great Pagan systems are worthy of our respect, because they have "moulded the lives of countless millions, and have produced their own heroes and saints," but he is also narrow-minded and prejudiced enough to claim that "Christians have to confront these systems with hostility." His generosity springs from his reason, and his bigotry is the outcome of his blind faith in the Bible. Because the Bible says that "there is none other name (than Christ's) under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved," this prelate asserts that Christianity is "the one revelation from above, supreme and sovereign, given once for all." His faith contradicts his reason and distorts his judgment.

But the Bishop of Southwark by no means stands alone. He is loyally supported by the Bishops of London, St. Albans, St. Andrews, and Stepney. According to the last-named dignitary, "missions are the very life of the Church." Such is the overweening conceit of Christian ministers. Heathenism is good enough in its way, but "no one who has really known it has doubted the power of evil working in it." Well, can anyone who really knows Christianity doubt the power of evil that has always been working in it? The Bishops, of course, sagaciously ignore Christian history. The people, however, are not so blind as their leaders suppose, for, according to the *Church Times*, "it cannot be doubted that there is something lacking to missionary motive in the present day." The "something lacking" is faith in the Divine origin and nature of Christianity. Even the Church is being invaded by a subtle spirit of unbelief.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 9, Queen's Hall, London; 23, Stratford Town Hall; 30, Manchester.
October 7, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—September 2. m. and a., Brockwell Park. 9. a., Brockwell Park; e., Queen's Hall. 16, Victoria Park. 23. m., Woolwich. 30. a., Victoria Park; e., Stratford Town Hall.

C. MASSON.—Sent as requested. Glad to hear you "enjoy the *Freethinker* much and do your best to circulate it in your neighborhood."

R. J. HENDERSON.—Thanks for your interesting letter. Pleased to know you appreciated our "Acid Drops" on Atheism and the French Revolution.

E. J. PANKHURST.—Why should we trouble about the "members and speakers of the N. S. S.," without names or addresses, who have found Christ and made a sort of father confessor of such a person as Mr. George Wise? There are more Branches of the N. S. S. in London alone than this foolish Mr. Wise says there are in the whole of Great Britain. But we don't intend to bother about his silliness. Are you not taking him too seriously?

C. F. S. BARKER congratulates us on the *Freethinker* of August 19, and says that our article on Religion and Ethics "should be circulated by the thousand." "I trust," this correspondent adds, "that you will long be spared to conduct your valuable and most excellent journal."

R. SOUTHWARD.—We once wrote an article on "Who Killed Christ?"—the very title you mention. That number of the *Freethinker* is not in print now, but the article is included in the first series of our *Flowers of Freethought*. The subject is also dealt with in our pamphlet, *Was Jesus Insane?* The brass-plate you refer to as having the death sentence of Jesus engraved on it is rubbish. It was in his biography of Lord Bentinck that Disraeli, afterwards Lord Beaconsfield, said that Judas deserved a statue. The same idea was advanced by De Quincey.

J. D. STEPHENS.—Thanks; see paragraph.

G. CROOKSON.—(1) We don't remember the Bradlaugh-Hyndman debate being published in a separate form. You might ascertain positively by writing to A. Bonner, Took's-court, London, E.C.

(2) We have often explained that it seems to us wiser to keep the policy of the *Freethinker* simple. We have views on many subjects, including the one you mention, but would it be prudent to air them in this journal? Generally speaking, we hold that by getting people to think on the one subject they are least likely to think on if left to themselves, we are helping them to think on other subjects likewise. And it is only thinking that really avails. The immeasurable claptrap of the political and social parties helps nobody but the enterprising spokesmen.

E. MOOREHEAD.—You must count always on Christian craft in such matters. "This correspondence must now close" is a well-known trick of editors to favor a particular side. For the rest, be thankful if you see a little progress being made. Glad to have your good opinion of the *Freethinker*.

B. HURFORD.—You take no "liberty" in writing to us. We are always pleased to hear from the "saints." There are many, like yourself, who heard of this journal by accident, and found, on reading it, that it was just the paper they wanted. That is a reason why its friends should always be trying to introduce it to their acquaintances. We note the kind words with which you conclude. Pray give our respects to your wife. We are always delighted to hear of women, especially wives and mothers, becoming Freethinkers.

J. BROUGH.—Thanks for cuttings.

J. BRYCE.—Glad you still find the *Freethinker* "a constant stimulant."

K. M. SCHWEIZER.—We saw your resolution in the *Clarion*. Is it not rather late to send it now to the *Freethinker*? For the rest, we never care to write on any matter unless we are sure of the facts, and in this case we are not sure of them. We understood that a more or less authoritative statement was to be issued by M. Furnémont, secretary of the International Freethought Federation, but we have not seen it yet.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We have written you about the proposed date for another meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall.

R. SMART.—Sent as requested.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for your welcome cuttings.

LOCAL FREETHINKER (Kilsyth).—We cannot undertake to write letters in reply to others in local newspapers. You must see on reflection that we could not possibly have time for such additional work. The letter you enclose, written by an anonymous Christian, calls the *Freethinker* "a source of moral pollution" and a "sewage pipe"—and his arguments are worthy of his manners. The silliness he writes about Christianity and hospitals is easily corrected by a reference to the article on "Hospitals" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. As to Christmas and Easter, they were both Pagan festivals long before Christianity was born or thought of. Sunday simply means the Sun's Day, and was the legal day of rest in the Roman Empire before the Christian era.

C. W. STYRING.—May be useful next week.

G. ROLEFFS.—Tuesday mornings is too late for cuttings, but some may serve hereafter.

C. E. N.—We do not remember such a sentence in Spencer's writings, but the author of the Synthetic Philosophy taught that the mystery of the universe is unfathomable—by religion as well as by science.

J. J.—Sorry we cannot give our opinion of Tennyson in a few lines.

H. W. MATTHEW.—Glad you are distributing twelve copies of *From Fiction to Fact*. The distribution of this pamphlet is bound to do a great deal of good. We hope the "saints" will put willing hands to this work.

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.

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

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

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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.

London Freethinkers should rally in strong force at the Queen's (Minor) Hall next Sunday evening (Sept. 9), when a "reception" will be given to Mr. Joseph Symes, who has returned home to England after an absence of twenty-three years, during which time he has sturdily upheld the Freethought flag in Australia. Mr. Foote will take the chair as President of the National Secular Society and introduce Mr. Symes to the meeting, to most of whom, of course, the veteran will be personally unknown. Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd will also be upon the platform and will share in welcoming Mr. Symes back to the old country. The speeches of these three gentlemen will be brief, and the platform will then be given up entirely to the guest of the evening, who will acknowledge the greeting and speak for an hour or so on "My Twenty Years' Freethought Fight in Australia."

There will be "free admission" at this Queen's Hall meeting, but the free seats will necessarily be very limited. The other seats will be charged for in the usual way, and tickets for them can be had at the pay-box in the lobby at the foot of the stairs. Of course it will be Mr. Symes's "house," and we hope it will be a very good one, for our old friend and colleague has returned to England as poor as he left it; which is exactly what we expected in view of the difficulties and even dangers that we know he has encountered. All his wealth consists in a large fund of energy and cheerfulness.

Freethinkers in the West Ham district, and in far East London generally, will remember the new course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures in Stratford Town Hall on September 16, 23, and 30, by Messrs. Foote, Cohen, and Lloyd. As on former occasions there will be free admission to all parts of the hall, with a collection in aid of the expenses, which are heavier than some imagine, as a good deal has to be spent on advertising.

The North London N. S. S. Branch is arranging for a Freethought demonstration at Parliament Hill Fields (near Highgate-road entrance) on Sunday afternoon, September 23. A list of speakers will be announced next week.

Mr. J. M. Robertson, who is now M.P. for the Tyneside, is evidently not dropping his Freethought work. We are glad to see that he is lecturing next Sunday (Sept. 9) for the Liverpool N. S. S. Branch in the Milton Hall, Daulby-street. His afternoon subject is "Education and Religion," and his evening subject "Julian the Apostate." Mr. Robertson is a man of great ability and many accomplishments, and we hope to hear that the hall was crowded at both meetings. The "saints" should advertise Mr. Robertson's visit amongst their friends and acquaintances.

"Atrocious Blasphemy" in big letters right across the top of the page attracted our eye in last week's *John Bull*.

Underneath was a reprint of that Sunderland prospectus of "Jesus and Company, Limited." At the bottom of the page we saw a special line all by itself: "What would be said if the *Freethinker* published such a thing?" Ay, what? The Christians were always able to beat us hollow at blasphemy; in fact, we might say that they gave us "twelve months" for poaching on their preserves.

Mr. Bottomley doesn't mind mentioning the *Freethinker*. He is unconventional. Heaps of other journalists wouldn't mention it for their lives. They are afraid of its very name—and still more of its contents. It doesn't do to advertise a paper in which able men write what they think. People might run after it.

One of our readers at Aberystwyth has received the following letter from Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son's head office in London:—"We beg to say we have instructed our clerk at Aberystwyth to take any order you may wish to give as to the supply of the *Freethinker*. The restriction you refer to has now been removed and there should be no further difficulty." We hope this means that the boycott of the *Freethinker*, as far as Messrs. Smith & Son are concerned, has ceased all over the kingdom. Should any of our readers experience difficulty in getting the *Freethinker* through any of Messrs. Smith & Son's agencies, we trust they will write to headquarters and refer to this Aberystwyth letter if necessary.

There are still some old-fashioned wholesale houses that keep up the boycott of the *Freethinker*. No doubt they will all be civilised in time, but bigotry dies hard, especially when it is not very expensive.

Viscount Hayashi, who has been such a successful Japanese ambassador in London, has gone back to his native land. According to Mr. T. P. O'Connor's paper, *P. T. O.*, Viscount Hayashi completed a translation of Machiavelli's *Prince* into Japanese before leaving England, and "one of his most successful books in Japan is his translation of Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*." What an eye-opener for British Christians!

Religion, Morals, and Revelation.

It is the fashion or common practice amongst religious people to ascribe to religion paramount importance in the moulding and developing of human character alike in the individual and in the nation. That is to say, both as regards nations and individuals the religionist is convinced—or at any rate asserts—that their ethical and moral standing depends upon their religion or lack of religion. The religionist conveniently ignores all the other elements that go to build up the individual and the national character. He declines to recognise that, while the influence of religious belief on human history cannot be denied, religion is only one of innumerable factors which, taken together, are responsible for the existing ethical status and the *morale* of any given individual or nation. It has often been remarked that morals are pretty much a question of geographical location. And this saying does not merely mean that the distinction between what is moral and what is immoral conduct is a varying one in the different countries. Though that is a true and very obvious deduction from a survey of the moral tone and moral condition of the several countries of the world. But there is a deeper meaning still. For the geographical situation of a country has a direct and easily traceable effect on its moral development. A land-locked country with scanty means of communication within itself and with the outside world must necessarily compare unfavorably in point of both intellectual and moral progress with a state that can boast of a large sea-board and extensive facilities for intercommunication. Then, while to some extent the civil and political history of a nation may reflect the national character, no sociologist will deny that the national character, from which springs the moral code of a nation, is largely moulded by that nation's civil and political vicissitudes, which, in turn, are in great part determined as to their nature by geographical conditions. The factors which go to the

building up of a nation's morality are much more numerous than the believer in the inseparable connection between religion and morality will admit. The very food and drink we consume have an important bearing on this matter, despite the opinion of the sciolist who quotes Matthew xv. ii., as though that settled the question.

It is true that while asserting with marvellous unanimity the necessity of religion if morality is to be conserved, religionists are not agreed as to which form of religion yields the best ethical and moral results. In this country, of course, the palm of excellence is accorded to Christianity. It is natural that people who are at least nominally Christian, and who have been told from infancy the Christian religion is the only true one, should consider Christianity the most admirable form of religion. They would doubtless feel constrained to forsake Christianity if they thought otherwise. But it is not noticeable that the adherents of other religions are altogether unanimous in recognising the transcending merits of Christianity. Nor are Christians themselves—it is scarcely necessary to emphasise so notorious a fact—of one mind as to which brand of Christianity should be preferred. The Roman Catholic swears by *his* Church and his pope, and all the other Christian sects are each confident that their particular petty little conception of truth and ethics and morality is of divine origin and that their's is the only safe road on which to travel heavenward. Or if perchance they admit the possibility of heaven being reached by some other avenue than the one they have provided or selected, each yet maintains that their's is the only reliable brand of salvation.

The Christian sects differ on many points, as we well know. They all agree on one point. They all say that Christianity is the only true form of religion—the full and final revelation of God to mankind. Though it is difficult to perceive why revelation should be supposed to have come to an abrupt close nineteen hundred years ago. When we consider the long period of the gestation of Christianity—when we regard the vast expanse of time during which, as religious people allege, God was slowly revealing his will to mankind and gradually bringing them to a knowledge of the truth, cautiously preparing the human mind for the fuller comprehension of his purpose—how can believers in God dare assert or assume that all has been consummated and that in the realm of faith and morals we have no more to learn.

According to the modern Christian who endeavors to amalgamate the findings of science with his religious beliefs the universe—or at least this globe we call ours—has been slowly prepared by the wisdom of God—slowly prepared throughout infinite ages—for Christ, in whom the promise of the ages has been fulfilled. But the world having waited so long on God for what it *does* know of his divine will and purpose (and that is very little we fear), the odds are that it has a good deal longer to wait before everything has been revealed. Were there such a thing as divine revelation at all it should seem only reasonable to suppose that such revelation must be gradual and progressive and can never come to an end until we possess all truth. And we are still a long way off the knowledge of all truth. Personally, if we believed in divine revelation we would infer that God is daily unfolding his truth to the world. In no other way could we reconcile the idea of revelation with the fact that we are daily discovering new truths. But we have left belief in divine revelation far behind. We do not for a moment believe that God ever revealed anything to humanity—not even in the domain of morals, which is God's last preserve in the view of the religionist. Religionists would have us believe that we could not know what is right or what is wrong were it not that God has told us. But we do not believe God ever told anybody that murder, or lust, or hatred, or revenge, is wrong, any more than we believe God told man that fire burns, or water drowns, or that if he falls over a precipice he will be killed. Man has found out, and is finding

out, the one set of facts as he has found out the other, through centuries of painful experience and at a terrible cost of human suffering as regards the moral set. Belief in revelation is unnecessary because there is no necessity for postulating revelation to account for anything we know. If any Christian or any religionist can mention anything, anything that man knows, anything that has not been discovered by man himself—whether it be on the moral plane or on the material matters not—anything that could not be found out and has not been found out by man for himself, then it will be time to think there is something in the claim for revelation. Failing such instance being forthcoming we may take leave to say as regards divine revelation that, in the celebrated phrase of Laplace, we have no need of such an hypothesis.

The world has suffered much from the folly of religion in one form or another, and this country has had its share in the general suffering. All supernatural religion is folly. As Mr. Weller, Senior, of immortal memory, might have said, "All religion is vanity." And the particular "vanity" of this country in the religious line is Christianity. The Christian is absurdly vain and prejudiced about his religion. His religion, of course, has been divinely revealed. They all say that. It is a most remarkable and indeed highly significant circumstance that no religion thinks fit to depend upon its intrinsic worth, upon its beauty, or upon its inherent truth to commend it to the acceptance of humanity. Every sect of any importance that we are aware of has attempted to foist itself on mankind as emanating from God, and all priests have claimed to be the representatives of God. Yet it should seem that the only form of religion that can survive, that can lay any claim to be called a *true* religion—if any form of religion can be true—must be a religion that puts forward no supernatural pretensions whatever, makes no claim to divine origin, but is content to commend itself to the allegiance of mankind by reason of its truth, by reason of its beauty, by reason of its intrinsic worth. Christianity is not a world-religion, never has been a world-religion, and one may safely prophesy will never be a world-religion, precisely because it fails in these particulars, because it cannot pass this test, because it must needs pretend to an unverifiable divine authority in order to obtain credence.

That no revelation was necessary in the case of the Buddhist religion, in the case of the Chinese religion, in the case of Mohammedan religion, in the case of the Egyptian religion, in the case of the Persian religion, in the case of the Babylonian religion—that no divine revelation was necessary in the case of any one of these the Christian is quite ready to admit. And so with all other religions save his own. The absurdity of the pretensions of all these religions is quite apparent to him. He smiles at their alleged miracles and at the claims put forward in their behalf by the respective hierophants of each. The Roman Catholic who reverently accepts all the myths and legends that have woven themselves into his Church's history evinces strong incredulity if a Mussulman comes along and asks him to believe that the Koran was written with a quill plucked from the wing of the Archangel Gabriel. Yet the adherents of each of the religions above mentioned were (or are, as the case may be) just as confident in their beliefs as the Christian is in his, and with just as much—or as little—reason.

What the Christian utterly fails to perceive is that the dogmas, doctrines, and miracles of Christianity will no more stand critical analysis than will those of any of the other religions he repudiates in such scornful and superior fashion, and to which he attaches the epithet false. Broadly speaking, the mental attitude of the average Christian may be expressed thus:—He does not believe in Christianity because it is true, he believes Christianity is true because it happens to be his religion. The average Christian does not really reject other religions because they are false, although he *calls* them false; he rejects them because they are alien to him and to his

nationality, because, in fact, to use a vulgarism, he was not born that way. He never dreams of regarding Christianity—we were about to say in the coldly impartial light he sheds on all other forms of supernaturalism, but that would not be putting the matter correctly. For the believer in one religion never *can* regard other religions impartially, any more than he can regard his own without bias. And in considering Christianity it seems absolutely impossible for a Christian to divest himself of bias and be neutral for five minutes on end. Thus what is fanaticism in the adherent of another religion becomes commendable, or at least excusable, zeal when a Christian is involved; and what would be superstitious worship of inanimate objects in the member of an alien creed becomes in a fellow-worshiper merely a due reverence for sacred things. So do we allow ourselves to be hocused as we go through life, and thus do we delight in throwing dust in our own eyes.

There is no evidence for the miraculous and the supernatural in Christianity that will stand examination. In this respect Christianity is absolutely on all-fours with any other of the religions of the past. And if it be urged that the number of intelligent people who have accepted Christianity is presumptive evidence in its favor, the reply is that while such a fact may imply that the Christian religion has some superiority over its predecessors, it constitutes no evidence of the *truth* of Christianity. Not so many generations ago some of the best educated and most learned Christians believed in such things as the divine right of kings, and the burning of old women for witchcraft, things which even moderately educated Christians to-day have the grace to be ashamed of. As we have said, the acceptance of Christianity by educated people may be held to indicate its superiority in some respects to the religions it has supplanted. Only that and nothing more. On the other hand, it is not to be gainsaid that the more a man knows and the greater his intelligence the less his faith. The faith of the modern educated Christian is but the emasculated shadow of what faith was in the "days of faith."

G. SCOTT.

The Great Designer.—I.

"The whole of the prevalent metaphysics of the present century is one tissue of suborned evidence in favor of religion."—JOHN STUART MILL, *Three Essays on Religion*.

"The human organism, and its organs, which apologists declare to be so perfect, are even, in the most perfect examples of it, full of flaws and weaknesses. They all suggest the work of an artist, who, if tried by any standard of perfection, has invariably fallen short of it—helplessly or perversely failed; the work of an architect whose houses are, in some respects, commodious and beautiful, but are all vitiated by some inexcusable fault of structure—houses with poisonous drains, or dry rot in their timbers. These defects, which have always, in a sense, been obvious, have been emphasised and elucidated by the discoveries of modern science.—W. H. MALLOCK, *Fortnightly Review*, July, 1902.

FRANCIS HENRY EGERTON, eighth Earl of Bridgewater, was undoubtedly on the best of terms with God. The Lord had given him wealth, land, a title, and had prolonged his life to seventy-three years that his days might be long in the land to enjoy them. The old Earl, looking round on all these favors—and perhaps reflecting that he must, in the natural course of things, soon be summoned to the celestial Levee—thought he would like to do something for God. So, four years before he died, he made a will, leaving £8,000 at the disposal of the President of the Royal Society, to be expended in writing and publishing works on the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. The President divided the sum into eight parts, and eight works were published, known as the Bridgewater Treatises. Whether the old Earl escaped the fate of all rich men as illustrated by the case of Dives, and the Lord—in consideration of services rendered—made an exception in his case, we do not know. Anyhow, the works, which had a great vogue at the time they were published, fell into disrepute with the advent of Darwinism, which explained the so-called design in Nature

as the outcome of Natural Selection, acting through the law of the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence. The works are now quite obsolete. As Professor Bain caustically remarked:—

"The obvious drawback to the value of the Treatises lay in their being special pleadings, backed by a fee of a thousand pounds to each writer for maintaining one side. If a similar fee had been given to eight equally able writers to present the other side, the argument from design would have been far more satisfactorily sifted than by the purely metaphysical criticism of Kant."*

But that is not the theological way; the theologian likes to have the pulpit to himself when he discourses on God.

One has only to pick up a newspaper to be confronted with advertisements of cures for diseases of the stomach, for constipation, for the liver, for the kidneys; there must be an immense quantity of such medicine sold to enable the proprietors to keep up such expensive advertisements, year after year, in so many papers. If to the vast number of such sufferers we add those treated by medical men in private practice, and those by the public hospitals, we can form some idea of the enormous amount of suffering caused by disease in these islands alone.

Moreover, as Mr. Mallock points out, "For every human being that comes to maturity and thrives, numbers, in consequence of no fault of their own, never come to maturity at all, or, if they do, are broken before their time—broken inevitably, and cast into Nature's rubbish-heap."† It is related of Beau Nash that one morning a visitor met his valet coming downstairs carrying a tray full of neckties. "These are our failures," observed the great man. In a similar manner these broken human beings, which never arrive at maturity, may be described as God's failures. Sir Charles Lyell states that "one-fourth of the human race die in early infancy."‡ Here is bungling with a vengeance! Why, a mechanic who spoils a fourth part of his work would be dismissed as utterly incompetent. "Oh! but," says the theologian, "you must not talk like that about God; it is very dreadful. These things are the result of sin; the parents have sinned and the children's teeth are set on edge, or they are the results of ignorance or improper feeding." If this were true it would not save God's character, for it is not in accordance with civilised ideas to punish children with death for the sins or the ignorance of their parents.

As a matter of fact, the real cause of this terrible mortality is the fact that man, in his development from animal ancestors, has brought along with him many organs which, although they may have been indispensable to the ancestors he derived them from, are quite unnecessary to man, and are often the cause of great suffering, frequently ending in death. Dr. Bland Sutton—who has made a special study of this branch of disease, and who is a recognised authority on the subject—in his work on *Evolution and Disease*, gives many instances of disease and death caused in this manner. For instance:—

"The transformation of a piece of intestine into a central nervous system has had the effect of rendering vestigial structures which not unfrequently behave in a manner pernicious to the individual. For instance, the development of a spinal column to protect the cord is an outcome of this transformation, and the various defects in the development of the cord and column, if serious, are incompatible with life. These defects, known collectively as *spina bifida*, are of such frequent occurrence that in a recent careful scientific report upon this subject it appears that in England alone six hundred and forty-seven deaths occurred in 1882 from this malformation, of which six hundred and fifteen were in children under one year of age" (p. 75).

Behold! one of the mysterious dispensations of Providence, by which children are born with a spinal cord, but without a spinal column to support and

protect it; thus being condemned to death on the threshold of life. What a loving Heavenly Father!

"Paley said he took his stand on man's anatomy; he could have taken no worse stand," says a very capable lady biologist.* As she points out:—

"Instead of being a creature faultlessly planned for his high position—or if faulty, showing signs of a fall from perfection—anatomy and physiology show innumerable signs of man's gradual evolution from lower forms.....The appendix vermiformis, made classical by Darwin, is one only of these vestigial relics, and not a week passes without some sad tale of agonising pain and death from the persistence of structures now utterly useless to man, but actively mischievous. Only in the pages of a medical journal would it be possible to give even a brief outline of the shapes of disease and death caused either by the vestiges of useless structures or by some arrest of the evolutionary process. The man who should now cite the example of the watch as proving the existence of the watchmaker would have to cite the example of a watch full of awkward unnecessary structures, tending to throw it utterly out of gear or to stop its motions altogether."

Dr. Lydekker, the biologist, writing an article in the July number of *Knowledge* on "Some Rudimentary Structures," confesses that he suffered "from an *embarras du richesses* in attempting to select instances to form the subject of an article" for that journal. He observes that the widely-spread disease *appendicitis* takes its name from the *appendix vermiformis*, where it arises; and cites Dr. Aveling, who says of this organ:—

"It is, to man, useless. Nay, it is worse than useless. It is, at times, a special death-dealer. Small, hard bodies, as the seeds of fruits, entering the appendix, cause inflammation and death. In the animals lower than man, this organ is of great size and functional importance. That of the orang-utan is long and convoluted." *The Students' Darwin*, p. 282.

Dr. Bland Sutton, in his lectures on "Evolution in Pathology," enumerates no less than six obsolete canals belonging to the alimentary canal alone, all of which are apt to give rise to congenital tumours, frequently fatal to life. Miss Bodington also observes that all mammals possess, during their embryonic life, three sets of kidneys; the first set cease, very early in foetal life, to act as kidneys and constitute the uterus and Fallopian tubes. The second set of kidneys also act for a time as kidneys, and then become the ducts of the generative organs in the male. In the female they have no later functions, but their atrophied remains persist, and give rise to various forms of cystic disease. The third set of kidneys are, of course, the permanent ones. Miss Bodington observes of this arrangement:—

"The argument for design is utterly put out of court by the awkwardness of the whole plan, and the disease and suffering caused in mammalian females by the ovaries having no original connection with the Fallopian tubes and uterus, and by the survival of useless and dangerous rudimentary organs."‡

John Stuart Mill, noticing the clumsy contrivance for the continuance of life, observes that "no human being ever comes into the world but another human being is literally stretched on the rack for hours or days, not unfrequently issuing in death."†

In fact, the whole of the plan for the reproduction or continuance of the human race could only have been designed by a malignant and bestial character.§ The passions by which the renewal of the race is achieved are those we possess in common with the lower animals; and it is the aim and aspiration of civilised people to suppress and extinguish these

* Miss Alice Bodington, *Westminster Review*, April, 1893.

† *Studies in Evolution and Biology*, p. 109.

‡ *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 18. 1904.

§ Mr. Call, of whom Mr. McLaren has given such an interesting account, declares: "The entire organisation of the animal world, with its radical division into two complimentary sexes, indicates a deliberate purpose on the part of the Creator to subject the nobler portion of it to conditions which violate all decorum. all the inherent or acquired delicacy of feeling on the part of man or woman. Only the insane delight, the pungent sting of sexual desire, inseparable from our brute-like physical constitution, would induce the male to attempt, or the female to submit, to the violent desecration of personal sanctities. (*Final Causes*, p. 47.)

* *Contemporary Review*, April, 1877.

† *Fortnightly Review*, July, 1902.

‡ *Antiquity of Man*, p. 545, ed. 1873.

passions and appetites. Here the Great Designer displays a sardonic humor; for, when humanity has succeeded in stamping out these baser appetites and passions, the human race will be extinguished with them. For our part, we do not for a moment think that humanity will ever rid itself of these elemental passions. The Christian Church waged incessant war against them for more than fifteen hundred years; it established monasteries and convents to keep men and women "unspotted from the world"; but, instead of crucifying the "lusts of the flesh," the net result was to inflame them, and the last state was a thousand times worse than the first, as anyone may see by a perusal of Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*.

But enough of this subject. To deal with the common diseases, pains, and penalties attached to motherhood would require, not a magazine article, but a treatise.

W. MANN.

(To be continued.)

FAITH AND CREDULITY.

Faith and Credulity are the same thing with different names. When a man has plenty of faith he is ready to believe anything. However fantastic it may be, however childish, he accepts it with gaping wonder. His imagination is not necessarily strong, but it is easily excited. Macaulay held that savages have stronger imaginations than civilised men, and that as the reason develops the imagination decays. But, in our opinion, he was mistaken. The imagination does not wither under the growth of reason; on the contrary, it flourishes more strongly. It is, however, disciplined by reason, and guided by knowledge; and it only appears to be weaker because the relation between it and other faculties has changed. The imagination of the savage seems powerful because his other faculties are weak. In the absence of knowledge it cuts the most astonishing capers, just as a bird would if it were suddenly deprived of sight. Now the savage is a mental child, and the ignorant and thoughtless are mental savages. They credit the absurdest stories, and indulge in the most ridiculous speculations. When religion ministers to their weakness, as it always does, they gravely discuss the most pious puerilities. Indeed, the history of religious thought—that is, of the infantile vagaries of the human mind—is full of puerilities. There is hardly an absurdity which learned divines have not debated as seriously as scientists discuss the nebular hypothesis or the evolution theory. They have argued how many angels could dance on the point of a needle; whether Adam had a navel; whether ghosts and demons could cohabit with women; whether animals could sin; and what was to be done with a rat that devoured a holy wafer. We believe the decision of the last weighty problem, after long debate, was that the rat, having the body of Christ in its body, was sanctified, and that it had to be eaten by the priest, by which means the second person of the Trinity was saved from destruction.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."

The manufacture of sins is so easy a manufacture, that I am convinced men could readily be persuaded that it was wicked to use the left leg as much as the right; whole congregations would only permit themselves to hop; and would consider that, when they walked in the ordinary fashion, they were committing a deadly sin.—Helps.

Spartans, stoics, heroes, saints, and gods use a short and positive speech. They are never off their centres. As soon as they swell and paint and find truth not enough for them, softening of the brain has already begun.—Emerson.

Whoso comforteth a woman who has lost her child will be covered with a garment in Paradise.—Mohammed.

There is a strange analogy between the fertility of error and the fertility of the lowest organisms in Nature. Not the highest, but the lowest organisms are the most prolific. Ephemeroidea propagate in millions. So, too, in the region of human opinion. The history of mankind teaches us that whereas the breeding power of Error is immense, Truth and Justice increase with intolerable delay.—W. R. Paterson ("Benjamin Swift").

Systems save trouble—the trouble of thinking.—Helps.

LIBERTY.

What man is there so bold that he should say:
 "Thus and thus only would I have the sea?"
 For whether lying calm and beautiful,
 Clasp the earth in love, and throwing back
 The smile of heaven from waves of amethyst;
 Or whether, freshened by the busy winds,
 It bears the trade and navies of the world
 To ends of use and stern activity;
 Or whether, lashed by tempests, it gives way
 To elemental fury, howls and roars
 At all its rocky barriers, in wild lust
 Of ruin drinks the blood of living things,
 And strews its wrecks o'er leagues of desolate shore—
 Always it is the sea, and all bowed down
 Before its vast and varied majesty.

And so in vain will timorous men essay
 To set the metes and bounds of liberty,
 For freedom is its own eternal law;
 It makes its own conditions, and in storm
 Or calm alike fulfills the unerring will.
 Let us not then despise it when it lies
 Still as a sleeping lion, while a swarm
 Of gnat-like evils hover around its head;
 Nor doubt it when in mad, disjointed times
 It shakes the torch of terror, and its cry
 Shrills o'er the quaking earth, and in the flame
 Of riot and war we see its awful form
 Rise by the scaffold, where the crimson axe
 Rings down its grooves the knell of shuddering kings,
 For always in thine eyes, O Liberty,
 Shines that high light whereby the world is saved,
 And, though thou slay us, we will trust in thee.

—John Hay.

The Sensual and the Dark rebel in vain,
 Slaves by their own compulsion! In mad game
 They burst their manacles and wear the name
 Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain!
 O Liberty! with profitless endeavor
 Have I pursued thee, many a weary hour;
 But thou nor swell'st the victor's strain, nor ever
 Didst breathe thy soul in forms of human power.
 Alike from all, howe'er they praise thee
 (Nor prayer, nor boastful name delays thee)

Thou speedest on thy subtle pinions,
 The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the waves!
 And there I felt thee!—on that sea-cliff's verge,
 Whose pines, scarce travelled by the breeze above,
 Had made one murmur with the distant surge!
 Yes, while I stood and gazed, my temples bare,
 And shot my being through earth, sea, and air,
 Possessing all things with intensest love,
 O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there.

—Coleridge.

THE WORDS HE COULD NOT HEAR.

Mine was a nature that needed sun
 As the flowers need it, I
 Could have wrought good things had there been but one
 To smile and to bid me try.
 But they kept their words—they were busy, all,
 With their own affairs—until
 My blood seemed touched with a tinct of gall
 And my heart with an icy chill.

I died one night, and they came, next day,
 The ones who had scemed so cold,
 And wept as they wreathed my lifeless clay
 And my many ways extolled.
 And I thought, as I lay on my silent bier,
 "They are fools to waste on me
 The words that a dead man cannot hear
 And the wreaths that he cannot see!"

—Success Magazine.

THE BIBLE SAID SO.

One of our citizens, who occasionally wipes dishes for his better-half, became tired of his job and work. Not feeling disposed to lose his help, she brought out the Bible to convince him of his error, and read as follows from 2 Kings xxi: "And will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down." It is needless to say that the aforesaid gentleman is still wiping dishes for his better-half.

—Progressive-Examiner (Orleans, Ind.)

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): W. J. Ramsey, "What think ye of Christ?"

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Brockwell Park, 11.30, Ernest Edwin; 3.15 and 6, C. Cohen.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "Christian Necessity of Atonement and the Nature of it."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill, Hampstead): 3.30, H. B. Samuels, "The Bible and its Critics."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, H. S. Wishart, "Christianity v. Atheism."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch): 11.30, H. B. Samuels.

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, Guy Aldred.

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): 7, C. F. S. Barker, "Not Guilty: A Plea for the Bottom Dog."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, "A Freethinker's Attitude towards the Bible."

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