

# THE Freethinker

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*All are right while they seek; none are right when they begin to threaten.*—ALEXANDRE DUMAS (FILS).

## Mr. Keir Hardie Again.

WE have lately had more than one occasion to comment on the strange utterances of Mr. Keir Hardie. Some months ago we dealt with the report of a Sunday address of his in a place of worship, in which he grossly and grievously slandered his dead parents because they were Secularists. Perhaps he did not quite understand the full significance of his language at the time, but when it was pointed out to him he should have made a public apology; and as he did nothing of the kind he must bear the odious responsibility of a deliberate libel on his own father and mother. Only last week we noticed his statement as to the "contemptible" character of "the thin empty braggarts who scoff at religious feeling." We asked whether this was meant for the wicked men who write in the *Freethinker*, or for Mr. Robert Blatchford and the *Clarion* staff. But, on second thoughts, we incline to believe it was only another playful exercise of Mr. Keir Hardie's over his parents' grave. He "owes them one" for having dared to have opinions of their own on the subject of religion, without waiting to see what the genius of the family would do when he arrived at years of discretion; and he appears to be devoting a good deal of time and energy to discharging the debt.

Mr. Keir Hardie has been indulging in "religious feeling" again, and we intend to give him a little more attention; not because we regard him as a person of intrinsic importance, but because he happens to figure before the world as a labor leader, and his words may therefore carry weight without possessing any intellectual authority.

Before we go forward, however, let us go backward. Some fourteen years ago we wrote an article in the *Freethinker* entitled "Keir Hardie on Christ." It was reprinted in the second series of our *Flowers of Freethought*, so we can refer to it easily. We have looked over that old article for the purposes of this one. After such a lapse of time we can read it with a certain detachment. We feel that we have changed somewhat—but Mr. Keir Hardie is the same. The nonsense he talked then he talks now, and we dare say he will talk it to the end of the chapter.

We may venture to quote a few sentences from that old article of ours. After criticising Mr. Keir Hardie's absurd twaddle as to Jesus Christ being "intensely interested in the bodily welfare of those with whom he came into contact as a preparative to their spiritual well-being," and pointing out that the "miracles of healing" and other wonderful works of the Prophet of Nazareth were fairy-tales beyond the range of human possibility, we proceeded as follows:—

"Mr. Keir Hardie is undoubtedly an earnest social reformer. We wish him all success in his efforts to raise the workers and procure for them a just share of the produce of their industry. Some of his methods may be questionable without affecting his sincerity. If we all saw eye to eye there would be no problems to settle. What we object to is the fond imagination that any light upon the labor question, or any actual social problem, can be found in the teachings of Christ. Jesus of Nazareth never taught industry, or forethought, or

any of the robusiter virtues of civilisation. On one occasion he said that his kingdom was not of this world. He might certainly have said so of his teaching."

Every word of that may stand now. And it was a sound appeal with which we ended. We implored Mr. Keir Hardie not to press the new wine of Humanitarianism into the old bottles of Christianity, for he would only break the bottles and lose the wine. That appeal was based on the supposition that he was capable of reason in matters of religion, but if he were a hopeless sentimentalist it was only a waste of breath.

Time has shown that Mr. Keir Hardie is *not* capable of reason in matters of religion, and that he *is* a hopeless sentimentalist.

We wish this gentleman had a sense of humor. It would be his salvation. He is lost without it. And it may be the fault of his nationality. The Scotch have had great humorists; witness Robert Burns and Thomas Carlyle—to say nothing of the sly and graceful irony of David Hume. Certainly it is a libel to say that the Scotch have no humor. Nevertheless it is true that when a Scotchman is without humor he is impenetrable. Which seems to explain Mr. Keir Hardie.

Chatter about Christ remains Mr. Keir Hardie's special weakness. He falls into it even in replying to the Master of Elibank, who has been advising the Liberal party to start a crusade against Socialism. A trap like this was sure to catch the Chairman of the Labor Party in the House of Commons. A practical statesman, with some sense of humor, in Mr. Hardie's position, would have either have left the Master of Elibank to his own party or chaffed him on his sudden alarm. It is obvious to the most common intelligence that if the Labor Party is to succeed in doing anything considerable in the present parliament it must do so by the aid of the Liberals. This is not an important consideration to the apostles of Socialism outside. Their business is propaganda. But the business of Mr. Keir Hardie, as a member of parliament, and the chairman of a group of members, is to promote a particular kind of legislation. Forgetting all this the moment an individual Liberal suggests a challenge to the Socialists, Mr. Keir Hardie flies at him like a bull at a red rag, and says all the nastiest things about Liberalism that he can think of. And he drags in Jesus Christ with all the inevitableness of the famous Mr. Dick in relation to the head of King Charles the First.

Look at the following extract from Mr. Keir Hardie's article:—

"The Master of Elibank is quite right when he says that Socialism and Liberalism are antagonistic forces. Socialism represents the principles taught by Christ, the reign of love and fraternity; Liberalism represents fierce, unscrupulous strife and competition, the aggrandisement of the strong, the robbery of the weak. Between these there can be no truce. The struggle is between God and mammon, and Liberalism has ever been a devotee of mammon."

Mr. Keir Hardie as an apostle of "love and fraternity" rather reminds us of the French Revolutionist, who clutched another Frenchman by the throat, flourished a dagger before his eyes, and exclaimed, "Brotherhood or death!" But be that as it may, the attack on Liberalism is overdone. Surely the Liberalism of a Macaulay, a Grote, a Mill,

a Gladstone, a Bradlaugh, a Morley, is something more than the evil thing which Mr. Hardie depicts. There is really too much of the carved-turnip death's-head about this fancy portrait. That, however, is also by the way. What we wish to emphasise is Mr. Keir Hardie's trick of appropriating Christ and going into partnership with God. It is doubtless a very pleasant trick for the one who plays it. In the first place, it flatters his vanity; in the second place, it enables him to preach instead of arguing. "Me and God" has been called the German Emperor's motto—and there seems to be a good deal in common between the Kaiser and Mr. Keir Hardie.

When we are told that "Socialism represents the principles taught by Christ" we feel inclined to ask for a few illustrative extracts. Whatever social teaching can be found in the Gospels seems to be sheer Communism. Perhaps the honorable gentleman will oblige the world with some of the texts on which he relies. In the meanwhile, we would remind him that his dictum about Socialism being the most orthodox Christianity would hardly be endorsed by many Socialist leaders. Mr. Blatchford, Mr. Hyndman, and Mr. Bernard Shaw—to give three names out of dozens—would probably laugh at it. On the continent the case would be still worse. German and French Socialists would prick up their ears at the very name of Christ. It would remind them of the Dark Ages. Nor are Mr. Hardie's fellow Christians in agreement with him. The Catholic and Protestant Churches would vote him down with overwhelming majorities. Tolstoy himself, at the opposite extreme to the leaders of the Christian Churches, is dead against Mr. Keir Hardie's position. It is commonly supposed that Tolstoy is a Socialist, whereas he is bitterly hostile to Socialism, and says it would be an appalling tyranny. We are not concerned with the truth or falsity of this view; we merely say it is Tolstoy's. What is the use, then, of Mr. Keir Hardie's chatter about Christ? Is it not mere silliness and confusion?

G. W. FOOTE.

### The Salvation Army.

*The Salvation Army and the Public. A Religious, Social, and Financial Study. By John Manson.*

IT may safely be assumed that very few of the general public in this country possess a detailed knowledge of the working of that strange and huge organisation known as the Salvation Army. They know it as a curiously mixed religious and trading concern; they have vague notions concerning the value of its work, on the social side, among the very poor, they see its processions, hear its bands and singing, respond in a more or less amused manner to its persistent collecting, and that is all. How the machinery of this body is worked, or what the machinery is, or how the money is disposed, they know not; indeed, if Mr. Manson's statements are accurate, the people in the Army are, with rare exceptions, in a similar position. To a by no means inconsiderable portion of the public also, the doings of the Salvation Army awaken a certain amount of suspicion, not necessarily suspicion concerning the fiduciary honesty either of its leaders or of the rank and file, but suspicions as to whether a close examination would not show it to be more or less of a failure, if not an imposture. For these reasons, Mr. Manson has performed a public service in supplying those who care to read his work with a good general view of the working of this remarkable organisation.

That it is from many points of view a remarkable organisation, does not admit of question. It is essentially a one man body, with all its possessions of considerably over one million sterling, at the absolute disposal of General Booth. Over its large membership he rules with an almost unquestionable sway. The members of the Army are sworn to absolute obedience, any sign of independence resulting in its possessor being squeezed out. It

possesses a bank of its own, borrowing money from all and sundry, and throwing the payment of the interest on the public. It has its own assurance society, although there is some doubt as to its financial soundness. It engages in trade and practically displaces a man elsewhere for everyone it employs at lower than the usual wages. It runs emigration agencies and pockets the commission therefrom for the greater glory of God. It takes money, given by the public, lends it to itself, at interest, and falls back upon the public to pay the interest it has so arranged for. It is one of the most carefully calculated instruments for collecting money in existence. Its principal energies seem given to this end. Officers are valued for their abilities in this direction, and a constant spur to their efforts is applied inasmuch as the amounts they are allowed to draw are only permitted after a stipulated contribution has been sent to headquarters. Above all, it has succeeded in getting itself taken by the general public at its own salvation, while ever since General Booth paid a visit to the King, the innate flunkeyism of the English character has shown itself in the manner in which officials all over the country have turned out to do the General honor.

The chapters in which Mr. Manson discusses these points are all interesting reading, although a somewhat depressing study in human credulity and gullibility. In what follows I can only quote one or two samples from Mr. Manson's much-needed budget of information concerning the Army and its work. Were the Salvation Army a religious body constituted as are other religious bodies, and appealing for support to its own members, the position of the critic would be different to what it is. But the Salvation Army bases nineteen-twentieths of its appeals for funds, not upon its religious, but upon its social work; and one may fairly test it from that point of view. Religiously the Army would disgust, not only the general public, but a very large number of earnest Christians. Its theology is of the lowest and crudest type, and its standing instructions for the conduct of its officers in the presence of the "unsaved" dying and dead is positively indecent in its disregard of the ordinary courtesies of life. Religiously the Army is, and has been for years, a failure. There are no official figures of either membership or of conversions; but the *Daily News* census showed them to be weaker in proportion than any of the other religious bodies; while one need only note how meeting-places opened for religious uses are abandoned to social work to see how ineffective is the work in this direction.

What the Army lives on, what it obtains its finance on, and what it gets its credit for, is its social labors; and although these are no less a failure than its religious activity, the fact remains unaltered. One or two instances will make this clear. Although the Army publishes no figures as to members, it does publish the number of local corps. But even these showed a steady decrease until the *Darkest England* Social Scheme was launched in 1891. Then the number began to rise. The effect of the booming of this scheme was also shown in the increase of financial resources. In 1889 the Self-Denial Fund yielded, in round figures, £14,000. In 1906 it reached £72,000. In 1890 the property vested in the Army—in other words, in General Booth—was valued at £377,000. In 1904 it was valued at over one million sterling. Now, bearing in mind that in all the appeals for money, in all the circularising done during "Self-Denial Week," almost the whole of the emphasis is laid upon the social work of the Army, it may be safely assumed that the increase shown above resulted from the public belief that it was contributing for social service, and generally getting value for its money.

But is it? Mr. Manson, after a detailed statement of the facts, has no hesitation in labelling the social experiments of the Army as "a gigantic and costly failure." There is not a single calculation that has been verified, and hardly a promise that has been faithfully carried out. When the *Darkest England*

Scheme was launched it was "carefully calculated" that, with £100,000, the Hadleigh Colony could be set going, and would be speedily self-supporting. The Hadleigh Colony covers 2,000 acres, and should, on Booth's own calculation, support from 6,000 to 9,000 persons. Instead of this number, after fifteen years of trial, there are 250, and the deficit in 1904 was £4,886—enough to feed that number without labor at all. But as the labor of the colonists has a value, it follows, as Mr. Manson says, that "the only persons really supported by that labor are the Salvation Army officials who superintend the operations."

How little General Booth's statements are to be trusted may be seen from his statement that the Colony had received from the Mansion House Committee 400 married men, and "for their labor on the colony these men were supplied with board and lodging and 15s. per week." The facts are that only 219 were sent, the Army received for each man's board and lodgings 10s. 6d. per week, and the men's wives and families received—also from the Mansion House Fund—an average weekly allowance of 13s. 11d. per week. All that the Salvation Army gave the men was 6d. a week for tobacco, stamps, etc. And for this in return it had the men's labor—surely worth more, to say nothing of the profit on the 10s. 6d.—which again went to swell the Army's religious war chest. It is no wonder the Army announced itself ready to take 1,000 men the following year, if only the Mansion House Committee would send them. And when it is noted that on its own account the Army only drafted some 190 persons from its shelters to the Colony during two years, its anxiety to help the unemployed does not appear to be overpowering. It deserves also to be noted that at Hadleigh one person out of every five is either a Salvation Army officer or a member of the permanent staff, kept at the public expense.

One purpose of the *Darkest England* Scheme was the cure of drunkenness among the masses. The Army has one home in which inebriates are taken at a charge of from 25s. to 30s. per week. How this is to cure drunkenness among the submerged tenth it is difficult to see. General Booth is here again a competitor with similar homes, only his institution is financed by the public. Again, it was expressly stipulated in the Trust Deed of 1891 that money raised for social purposes was to be applied to social purposes only. Yet of the money raised in 1904 by Self Denial Week, chiefly on the basis of a social appeal, four-fifths was devoted to the religious work of the Army. There was to be no attempt to force Salvation Army religion upon colony inmates, nor was there to be compulsion to attend religious services. Yet at Hadleigh a large staff of Salvation officials are kept to "reform the men," "salvation" is regarded as an "essential condition of lasting reformation," "we aim at getting our men converted," and in the general orders, "no substantial help" is to be given a man until he shows "proof of the genuineness of his desire for reformation at the penitent form." When it is added that a pauper chargeable to the City of London who was sent to Hadleigh and who declined to attend service every Sunday, was sent away and given into custody for willfully neglecting to maintain himself, it needs little more to show that General Booth is using public funds, subscribed for a totally different purpose, as a means of maintaining, and proselytising for a religious belief of which large numbers, even of Christians, disapprove. In any other cause but that of religion, people would not hesitate to call such a procedure by its proper name.

Another of the factors set forth in 1891 as calculated to help the submerged tenth was emigration. It was to be the concern of the emigration department to send out of the country only such men and women as it had had through its hands and had rendered fit for colonisation, after having raised them from the slums. Having obtained the money, out of £46,563, raised by the *Darkest England* Scheme in 1903, £198 was spent on "passages to Canada, etc.," the expenses of the

department being over £1,000, while among the 1,300 emigrants sent away in April this year there was not a single prison case, not even one person from the Farm Colony. The fact is, the Army appears to have set itself up in the ordinary emigration business—again, with money supplied by the public. In his motor tour in 1905, General Booth treated his audience to an account of thousands of emigrants the Army had taken to Canada. But in view of what has been said, together with the fact that the Army advertises itself as agents for all the shipping lines at usual terms, and taking from the companies the usual commissions, it is difficult to see in what the Army differs from the usual shipping agencies, unless it is that these are not supported by public contributions.

So great and continuous is the emphasis laid by General Booth upon the social work of the Army, that he has had to reassure more than one correspondent that the Army is still primarily a religious body, and that its chief aim is still the capture of souls. This one can quite believe. The only thing that has occurred is that by means of misleading promises and reports, the astute General has induced the public to subsidise a religious organisation of anything but a pleasing type, and on the strength of social work that must be pronounced a failure, utilise funds subscribed for other purposes, to keep going a religious work that is a greater failure still. This is beyond question a clever performance, gullible as the public usually is.

Still the question for the public remains, "Is it worth while?" Mr. Manson shows conclusively that it is not. But even though Mr. Manson's drastic criticism had never been written the failure of the Army would still be pretty clear. In spite of all the trumpeting of the work of the Army, no one can say that in a single district where it has been at work, vice, drunkenness, or crime is less than it was through the Army's efforts. Uninformed Mayors, Lord Mayors, local officials and members of Parliament have praised General Booth's work; and yet had they been asked to give reasons for their praise, it would have been found they were voicing the General's own claims. They could know nothing of the success about which they spoke, and they would know nothing of the failure apparent on careful examination. It is perhaps too much to expect that adequate notice will even now be taken of Mr. Manson's charges against the Army. The General is for the moment popular, and the press is chary of attacking anything that is in favor. For all that, *The Salvation Army and the Public* is a book deserving of careful study, one that calls for notice, not only from the general public, but from the Salvation Army itself.

C. COHEN.

### The Proper Attitude to Death.

IN the *Christian World* for August 23, there is an interesting article dealing with the subject of Death from the pen of a well-known religious writer, the Rev. Henry W. Clark. Mr. Clark is a man of intelligence and common-sense; and in this article he makes an exceedingly ingenious attempt to bring the teachings of "Revelation" as to the right attitude to death into harmony with the deliverances of Reason; but, in spite of the ingenuity, the attempt must be pronounced a failure. And it is a failure because the reconciliation aimed at is in the nature of things impossible. The teaching of "Revelation" forms a direct opposite to that of Reason; and any attempt to harmonise them is of necessity ridiculous. It is a pleasure to state that it is no discredit to Mr. Clark to have failed to accomplish an impossible task. He has turned out as good work as could be expected under the circumstances.

Mr. Clark assures us that the Christians who depreciate "this present life" have completely misunderstood the genius of their own religion. Assuming their "spirit to be sincere (perhaps too large an

assumption)," he says, "one can only declare it to be wholly and absolutely wrong. Certainly it is completely at variance with the essential ideas of religion." A similar statement has frequently been made in the *Christian World*, particularly by the eloquent "J. B." But is the statement true? Take the teaching attributed to Jesus. To him Eternal Life meant everything. Everything worth possessing was heavenly. He exhorted men not to work "for the meat which perisheth but for the meat which abideth unto eternal life" (John vi. 27); not to lay up for themselves treasures upon earth, but to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven (Matt. vi. 19, 20); to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. vi. 33); to sell what they had and give alms, and make for themselves "purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not" (Luke xii. 33). Quotations to the same effect could easily be multiplied. The one duty of disciples was to wait eagerly yet patiently for the coming of their Lord. Because he would come as a thief in the night, at an hour they thought not, they were to keep "their loins girded about and their lights burning." The end of all things was at hand. Jesus said that he had come to give his followers a more abundant life; but the fuller life promised was to be enjoyed in the kingdom of heaven. "The time is fulfilled," he used to say, "and the kingdom of God is at hand."

The same atmosphere pervades the Epistles. Paul lived in daily expectation of the end. Certainly, he was confident that it would come in his own life-time. "We shall not all sleep" (die), he said, "but we shall all be changed" without dying, no doubt, many of us. The resurrection was at the door. The saints were to be crucified unto the world, and the world unto them, because upon the world "are come the ends of the ages." "Demas forsook me," he wrote to Timothy, "having loved this present world." Read specially 1 Thessalonians iv. 13-18. In 1 John ii. 15, we read, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The key-note of this whole Epistle is: "The world passeth away; love it not." Indeed, it is the key-note of the New Testament generally. Our present bodies are vile-bodies, of our humiliation they are. "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be" (Rom. viii. 7).

How anyone can say, in the face of such teaching, that the spirit of other-worldism is "completely at variance with the essential ideas of religion," passes comprehension. Anyone who carefully reads the New Testament, and resolves to shape his life according to it, is bound to regard "this present life" as of no account apart from the life that is to come. He cannot do otherwise, without being guilty of high treason against the Kingdom of God. In and by itself "this present life" is to be held in contempt. Mr. Clark tells us that there are loyal disciples who "declare that this life is not worth many thoughts or many glances," who "repeat with unction that it is only a vapor which endureth for a little while and then vanisheth away," and who "repudiate with emphasis the idea that the affairs of this world are of any particular concern to them." Well, such people are saints after the New Testament pattern, whatever Mr. Clark may say. They are loyal to the Book, and frankly confess that they are but pilgrims and strangers here, as were all their fathers before them.

But let us see how Mr. Clark proceeds to make out that this conception of the present life is "completely at variance with the essential ideas of religion." Abstract arguments are utterly valueless in such a case as this. To say, as Mr. Clark does, that "notwithstanding the apparently holy flavor it may have, this attitude towards life is really dishonoring to God," is to run away from the point. The question at issue is not what is or is not dishonoring to God, as Mr. Clark conceives of him, but what God himself has taught in his own Book. You may believe that the New Testament idea of the present life is "wholly

and absolutely wrong"; but the idea *is* in the New Testament, and it claims to be there as a direct revelation from heaven. Very discreetly Mr. Clark ignores the New Testament altogether, which for a Christian minister is an amazing thing to do. What Mr. Clark gives us is not exegesis, not the true interpretation of "the inspired and infallible Word of God," but a series of pretty paradoxes, all empty of any intelligible meaning. For example:—

"Of course there must be a refusal, on man's part, to identify himself with the things of earth and time, since they come but to pass away—but together with that a renewal of interest, from the spiritual point of view now, in the things of earth and time, and a determination that, although they themselves do not abide, they shall be made to work some moral education which shall abide when they themselves are gone."

That reasoning is fundamentally fallacious. It is a fashion with Christian teachers to assert that the things of earth and time are fleeting; but what do they mean by "the things of earth and time," and by the saying that they do not abide? It is the very opposite that is true. It is not "this present life" that is evanescent, but living human beings. It is not the things of earth and time that fail to abide, but the individuals who have experience of them. The world which St. John declared was passing away in his time is here still, very little the worse for wear. St. James's vapor has not vanished yet. The heavens and the earth which St. Peter declared were "stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment (which even then was knocking at the door) and destruction of ungodly men," are still standing to-day, and seem to be as steadfast as ever.

Again:—

"Whoso rightly learns the lesson of life's change and life's decay and life's swiftly-approaching close, will first lose interest in all the contents of life for what they are *in themselves*—but will then come back to them and clasp them and sound them and hold fast to them, with fresh interest in the opportunity of moral training which they afford. Life is short—not worth troubling much about, then. That may well be the first word. But life is short—then all the more eagerly must its experiences be cared for, and all the more fully must they be lived through, lest there be hidden in them some offer of moral education which the heart may miss. That must be the next word."

Had that passage stood by itself it might have been accepted as embodying thoroughly sound Secularist teaching. Does not Mr. Clark know that moral education is for this world? Whatever ethical qualities individuals acquire and practice are for the benefit of the race; and they persist only in the life of the family. In other words, it is as the result of the brief life of individuals that the human race is able to make any progress at all. What becomes of the individuals when they die we do not know. So far as we are concerned, they have their day and cease to be; and Mr. Clark has received no information that justifies a contrary conclusion.

Mr. Clark has much to say about "consecration to highest ideals," which, he avers, "sets man free from the things of this present life"; but surely the highest human ideals are "things of this present life." They are *products* of this present life, and ought to be employed in its service. Few get from life all that it is capable of giving; and the consequent loss is twofold—a loss to the individuals themselves, and through them, a loss to the race. Mr. Clark misses this most precious truth, because his eye is constantly fixed on death and the imagined second life. That is to say, the life that now is has value, to him only, in so far as it ministers to that which is to come. In opposition to this, Secularism teaches that this present life is to be judged and lived by itself, without any reference whatever to any other. What, if anything, lies on the other side of death is beyond our ken. If there is an after life, we know absolutely nothing about it, and because of this ignorance cannot possibly prepare for it. The condition on which we can prepare for a thing is the possession of some distinct knowledge of what it is.

Now, we know death, not as the door of entrance to another life, but as an event which brings this one

to a period. Christian teachers maintain that death is but an episode in the history of life; but to Scientists it is the terminus at which life comes to a full stop. Consequently death ought not to be an object of fear to us, but rather, an object to be intelligently reckoned with. We are to make our life-plans in full touch with the fact that death is there, lying in ambush, so to speak, ready to spring and seize us when the proper moment arrives. Hamlet shrank from death because his religiously trained conscience had made a coward of him, and was bewildering him with

“—the dread of something after death,—  
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns.”

But the Secularist, whose conscience is an exclusively earthly faculty, does not fear death because of belief in anything after it, but, if at all, because it will rob him of life; and therefore, while instinctively drawing back from it, he takes intelligent account of it, being aware of it as the point beyond which he cannot go.

Now, I ask, is not this the attitude to death which we ought to cultivate? If we cultivate this attitude death will be to us merely an object to be placed as far off as possible, an object to elude as long as we can. Death is a natural event which all living things share; and it ought to come to none except as a wished-for relief. He dies too soon who still desires to live. What, then, is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify health, and to enjoy it to the utmost. Our supreme enemy is disease; and disease is the harvest of ignorance. We cannot break the laws of health; but if we do not know and respect them, they will not fail to break us. The grandest human achievement will be the elimination of disease, the introduction of perfect health. This then is the great quest of life—health; and perfect health of body and mind is the sole condition of happiness. But health can only be gained by means of knowledge, that full knowledge of ourselves which is the only infallible guide to right conduct.

In the light of this principle I can adopt Mr. Clark's language, omitting only two words, when he says: “Life passes soon—it is to be cared for then, not less, but more, only with a care bent on those moral results of it which must be seized upon before the last hour strikes, and it is too late.” The thought of death, if we live in that spirit, will prove a stimulus in the effort to live wisely and well. At present, we are not living the highest life possible, and therefore we die much too soon. We die of disease and not of pure old age; and we begin to grow old at too early a stage. At present, we do the things we like best, largely ignorant of their inevitable effects. In the riper and wiser days coming, when knowledge shall have grown from more to more, we shall like best the things that are best for us; and we shall be satisfied with the length of our days, welcoming death as exhausted Nature's kind deliverer. J. T. LLOYD.

When children succumb to inhospitable conditions of life in this world, religion offers consolation in the assurance that God has called these little ones to join the angelic hosts around his throne; if they live to grow up to continued deprivation, religion exhorts them to be content “in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call” them, thus throwing all the responsibility for the world's misery upon an unknown creator, just as the Mormons are said to justify their peculiar institution by the theory that innumerable souls are waiting to be born that they may glorify God and enjoy him forever, and therefore it is well-pleasing to him for human beings to furnish these spirits with mortal bodies as rapidly as possible.—Elizabeth E. Evans.

If you wish to be considered essential be careful that the wounds you cause be healed only by yourself. Never neglect yourself. On the last day of your life even, your face may become the guiding star of another's life. If you learn to look brightly at life as a whole you will find for the sorrows of the individual the true sympathy that is the true balm.—Mme. Lucandré.

### Acid Drops.

God Almighty should prosecute Father Bernard Vaughan for libel. This Catholic exhorter alleges that the Deity arranged the eruption of Vesuvius and the San Francisco and Chilian earthquakes as a warning against England's great sin of apostasy—that is, keeping aloof from the Catholic Church. Nothing so “blasphemous” as this ever appeared in the *Freethinker*. It represents the Deity as a malicious old imbecile. Fancy the good sense and the good feeling of slaying thousands of people in far distant parts of the world, and destroying millions of pounds' worth of property, just to advertise the Catholic Church in England!

Father Vaughan would have us believe that God Almighty, in dosing the world with eruptions and earthquakes, had a very special eye on the Education Bill for England and Wales. Premier Campbell-Bannerman, Mr. Birrell, and other wicked statesmen are warned that they must desist from “tearing Christ out of the schools.” But how on earth does Christ, being God, let himself be torn out of anywhere? And would it not be a more pointed “warning” if Campbell-Bannerman and Birrell were found dead in their beds, with a celestial label pinned on the breast of their nightshirts, signifying that it was “the act of God”?

General Booth's motor car trip from Inverness to Plymouth occupied 28 days; he covered 1,700 miles, visited 98 towns, addressed 123 meetings, spoke for some 120 hours, and did—what?

General Booth's histrionic visit to the Princetown convict prison, Dartmoor, was effusively reported by the newspapers. The *Daily Chronicle* reporter dropped tears of his own over the tears shed by the convicts under the spell of General Booth's eloquence. But when the service in the prison chapel was over the reporter returned to his normal condition as a journalist on the look-out for news; and the result was the following passage, which is infinitely more valuable than all the rest of the article:—

“While the General was leaving for Plymouth the chief warden was kind enough to show me round the farm, and we had a talk about the prison in general.

“I see a marked difference,” he said, “between the prisoners of to-day and those I saw when I joined the staff twenty years ago. Then I saw men whom no punishment could break, and who gloried in their crimes. Now the men are more amenable to discipline, and more anxious to take advantage of their opportunities.”

“And what do you put this down to?” I asked.

“To education, undoubtedly,” was the reply. “Why, I have known prisoners so ignorant that they could not even tell the number of their own cells. Now it is different. Prisoners are eager to take advantage of the educational benefits we offer. They are all for books.”

The real reformatory influence is not the theatrical work of General Booth but the steady and silent work of education. Ever so many years ago John Ruskin said that the way to empty prisons was to fill schools. This is truer than anything General Booth would ever say if he lived for a thousand years. He is not a thinker—he is a hustler.

The godly *Daily Mail*, whose undeviating veracity is the tenth wonder of the world, lately printed some utterances, which were doubtless considered very important, from the Queen of Italy, President Roosevelt, the Pope, the Queen of Roumania, and the Kaiser. It was a pity that the Czar, and even King (Congo) Leopold, were not pressed into the pious procession. The German Emperor's utterance was a sort of a sermon on “God with us”—and was very characteristic of the imperial preacher. One of his sentences was perfectly ridiculous:—“He who has no faith in God soon loses his courage.” William should explain, on this theory, how it was that Holy Russia was so completely licked by Heathen Japan.

Queen Margherita said some sensible things about women and motherhood. We cannot say the same of what she said about the religious education of girls. Take these sentences:—

“Religious instruction should be the basis of culture, especially for women. Their character will grow with it. A religiously trained girl is always better able to take care of herself than a strong-minded unbeliever. This is true of all circumstances of life. The unbelieving girl is called strong-minded; she is not really strong-souled. Furthermore, she loses the grace of imagination. Her heart is hardened by prosaic experiment such as cannot give her the strength needed in difficulties and sorrows. When the world fails her, as it is sure to do some time, such as she will not be able to trust in a heavenly power. A woman without religion is a flower without perfume. She is an object to be pitied.”

Queen Margherita evidently thinks that the "religious" girl is quite safe, while the "unbelieving" girl is pretty sure to go wrong; but if her Majesty will take the trouble to investigate the matter she will soon find that she is mistaken. Physical, mental, and moral pathologists are fairly well agreed on one point, namely, that criminals and prostitutes are nearly always religious. Talk filth to a prostitute, they say, and she is rather pleased; talk "blasphemy" to her, and she will hate and shun you like the Devil. No, it is not from the ranks of "unbelieving" girls that the "women of the town" are recruited. As to the "unbelieving" girl lacking "imagination," we fancy that her Majesty is somewhat confused. There is imagination *and* imagination. One girl may feed her imagination on the Bible; another girl may feed hers on Shakespeare; and in what way is the latter worse off than the former? Queen Margherita seems to fancy that girls can have imagination imparted to them. They cannot. Imagination is a native faculty. It may be exercised, but not created.

The Rev. Edward Synnott, B.A., of St. Savior's Parish Church, Tollington Park, London, preaching to young men recently, told them that "the light of reason and the beautiful light of Nature are not sufficient." But the statement is absolutely false. Is not every real wrong contrary to reason? Does not reason condemn dishonesty, lying, immorality, selfishness, even the whole long catalogue of social evils? If so, then it follows that if we were true to our own reason we would be free from such offences? The light of reason *is* sufficient if we only follow it. Mr. Synnott's sermon contains many true and beautiful sayings; but his conception of human life is purely theological, and not calculated to be of practical help to thoughtful young men. The world is somewhat larger than Christendom, a fact which divines are so apt to forget.

In a recent volume of sermons is to be found the following criticism of a monistic philosopher: "Let Y be a function of X. The author assumes that if X vanishes, Y must necessarily vanish; but we know that in algebraical functions this is not true." If the philosopher has seen that caustic criticism he must have flung his Monism to the winds, out of very shame.

Last Sunday practically all the Sunday Schools in the English-speaking world discussed the attitude of Jesus to riches as shown in St. Mark x., 17-31; and judging by the Notes on that Lesson which appeared in the religious journals, it is safe to state that the scholars were told that Jesus did not mean what he said, or that his command to sell all and give to the poor applied only to the rich young ruler. That is how the Christian teachers of to-day treat the words of their Lord and Master Jesus Christ! The Church flatters the rich, offers them all her chief seats, defers to them, adorns them with honors, for what she can get out of them; and when she is confronted with her King's unqualified condemnation of them, she lamely excuses herself by saying: "That is to be interpreted *spiritually*, not *literally*." How beautifully convenient!

Paul says that in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Commenting on that phrase, the Rev. D. H. S. Cranage, M.A., F.S.A., says: "As God He knew everything, and yet as Man He was willing to learn from the beginning, glad to hear and to ask questions." Hats off in honor of Mr. Cranage's sublime faith! Behold the Christ—two individuals, quite distinct, in one body, the one all-knowing from eternity, the other obliged to learn everything from the beginning; the one all-powerful, holding the Universe in the hollow of his hand, the other weak and frail, and dependent on charity for his daily bread! To all but blind believers such language is beneath contempt. It is its own ample refutation.

Mr. Cranage admits that "the man of to-day almost resents Christ being brought into his life at all," because "there seems to be no affinity between the two." Well, credit must be given to the man of to-day for being at least sensible. How can anybody, in possession of his wits, believe that two distinct individuals, the one infinite and the other finite, the one divine and the other human, ever lived together in one body?

Mr. Cranage makes another strange admission. He says that "Christ was meek and tender, and that his followers should be the same." But the followers of this meek and lowly One cannot *always* literally follow him nowadays, else "war, even a righteous war, would be wrong, and also the administration of justice." On the spiritual side of life Christ's utterances are to be taken *literally*, and all his commandments to be absolutely obeyed; but on the physical side, or the social side, his language must be explained, and

mostly explained away! And yet clergymen wonder that the man of to-day ignores the teaching of the pulpit, and turns his back upon the Church.

A few years ago, the Rev. Professor Bartlet, of Mansfield College, Oxford, published a pamphlet, entitled, *How and Why the Gospel Won Europe*. It now turns out, either that the Gospel never did win Europe, or that, having won it, it lost it again, for the Topic of the Christian Endeavor Societies for to-day is worded thus: EUROPE FOR CHRIST: MISSION WORK ON THE CONTINENT. Of course, these Endeavorers imagine that the Catholic Church is a disguised enemy of Christ, and that it is only by means of what they call Evangelical Protestantism that Christ can conquer Europe, as, forsooth, he has conquered Great Britain and the United States of America!

Providence is a slow coach. In the *Christian Commonwealth* we read that "the wheels of the Universe had been grinding away for centuries to bring the Great Physician to that particular place where blind Bartimæus sat begging on that particular day" (Luke xviii. 35-43). Poor wheels! The Universe is too big for quick movements. The Great Physician, "who has never lost a case yet," ought to have appeared millions of years earlier, and made mankind whole at the very start, and so prevented the sad prevalence everywhere of disease and premature death.

Well, the Great Physician *did* at last appear. He entered a sin-sick world two thousand years ago, and the world is as sin-sick to-day as ever. What has he been doing all this time? Has he run short of drugs, or have they lost their efficacy? Why have the wounds of the people not been healed?

Clever Christians sometimes ask stupid infidels which was first—the egg or the hen; and the stupid Infidel settles the clever Christian by asking which egg and which hen he means? Of course the clever Christian doesn't know that a stupid Infidel called Rabelais put a similar question hundreds of years ago; and that, although he was jocular, he was only half joking—one-half his book being fun and the other half wisdom; not wisdom according to the clever Christian standard, of course, but wisdom according to the stupid Infidel standard. *Qui feut premier, soif ou beuverye?*—Which was first, thirst or drinking? It all depends on which thirst and which drinking you mean.

Cardinal Newman wrote a very subtle *Grammar of Assent*, which we suppose is hardly known to the Rev. C. Ensor Walters, who wrote to the *Daily News* recently with respect to the misfortunes of the West London Mission. This Mission used to carry on its Sunday work at St. James's Hall, which has disappeared; and is now holding its meetings at Exeter Hall, which is incommensurable and out of the way. Mr. Walters hopes, therefore, that the Wesleyan Methodist Church will find suitable quarters for the Mission. "We anticipate that time," he says, "with confidence, hope, and prayer." What a sad declension of certainty! First, the reverend gentleman is *confident*, then he merely *hopes*, and finally he only *prays*. This is not the ascent of a rocket. It is the fall of the stick.

If the West London Mission is driven to depend on prayer its case must be hopeless. When people say "God help you" they mean it is all up with you.

The Rev. J. Ossian Davies assures us that no order is "so large as to defy an Omnipotent God." True; but so far as this world is concerned, the Omnipotent God is conspicuous only by his absence and inactivity. Mr. Davies says that the Omnipotent God entered Europe, for the purpose of redeeming it, 1000 years ago. Then Europe has been more omnipotent than the Omnipotent God. "Nothing even in defiant Europe is too hard for the Lord," adds Mr. Davies. But what about the admitted defiance? Does the Lord love to be defied? Or has Europe's defiance proved too hard for him?

Mr. Davies talks the most arrant nonsense conceivable. He has the audacity to say that "Christ is advancing even in Russia." By whom is Christ represented in Russia at this moment? By the bomb-throwers, or by the Czar and his uncles? The most devout Christians in Russia are the cruel tyrants. The Czar is nothing if not pious. But where the Omnipotent God comes in is more than any mortal can see.

The Rev. Dr. Thomas, of Toronto, who is holding the fort at Bloomsbury Baptist Chapel, is of the true evangelical

type. People who are not born again are incapable of doing any good, either for themselves or others. Outwardly, they may appear all right, but inwardly, they are corrupt to the very core. Until a man accepts Christ as his Savior and Lord, he is under condemnation, however noble and benevolent his life may be. That sort of nonsense may go down with the evangelical zealots at Bloomsbury Chapel; but in reality it is doing more to spread Atheism in the land than all else.

To a young man of twenty, whose mother has just died at the early age of forty-six, and whose father may pass away any moment of heart disease, and who in consequence doubts the love of God, the Rev. David Smith, in his Correspondence Column in the *British Weekly*, offers the following consolation: "When you accepted Christ as the Lord of your life and the Disposer of your destiny, God did not promise you immunity from sorrow. He entered into no sort of bargain with you at all. Then you are not the only sufferer in the world. Thousands are much worse off than you. Furthermore, your dear mother has fallen asleep in Jesus. She is not lost. She has been called away to better service in the Father's house." Is there, can there be, any better service for a mother than that of caring for her growing children? Any god who can take her away from this noble ministry is essentially cruel, no matter what Mr. Smith may say to the contrary.

This young man of twenty is the eldest of seven children. They are already motherless, and may become fatherless at any moment; and the young man cannot account for all this trouble if a God of love is on the throne of the Universe. As a matter of fact nobody can account for it. The facts of life are such as to make it impossible to believe in the sovereignty of a God of love. The only real consolation comes from endeavoring to make the best of the troubles that befall us. Natural law will have its way, be the consequences what they may. Every death, however sad, is the result of the sovereignty of the laws of life. We must take things as they come, and turn them to the best account, for no god ever interferes.

Attention is called by a *Daily News* correspondent to a statement made some time ago by the Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan to the effect that "the Churches as a whole did not know the Bible," and that "the great majority of Christian men and women were woefully ignorant of its true and systematic contents." We have been saying this ourselves for thirty years, and we are glad to see it is dawning upon the Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan. But we should advise him, from his own point of view, not to make Christians too well acquainted with the contents of the Bible—for that is the way to manufacture Freethinkers. If he is bent, however, on doing it, we shall be happy to supply him with a quantity of our *Bible Handbook* at trade price. It would promote a good understanding of the Bible far better than anything he could say himself.

Dr. Campbell Morgan's dogmatism is giving serious offence to many progressive divines in America just now. But Dr. Morgan's dogmatism has the merit of being thoroughly logical. He says and believes that the Bible is the Word of God; and consequently, he has no hesitation in repudiating and denouncing the conclusions of the Higher Critics. One cannot but admire a man who has the courage to be consistent. His faith may be utterly irrational, but it is not illogical. It may be a house built upon the sand, but it is self-consistent. As a believer, Mr. Morgan's chief fault is that he does not believe enough. There are some things in the Bible which even his faith boggles at.

The Lancashire Asylums Board has passed a strong resolution in favor of drastic remedies against the spread of insanity. Mr. Harold Jackson, in moving it, said that—

"our asylums were now conducted on humane lines, yet lunacy was increasing. Fifty or sixty years ago the insane received harsh treatment, and were often neglected. Consequently many died early, and few, if any, were discharged as cured to propagate their species. Nowadays things were different. Under healthy conditions, careful attention, and wholesome food, many were cured and turned out into the world free to spread and propagate mental disease. Lunatics were more prolific than sane people. Our asylums had simply become places where the insane were doctored up and enabled to propagate their species in the outside world. The best qualities of mankind were transmitted from parent to offspring; so also were the weaker. Fifty to seventy per cent. of lunacy was due to heredity, and the majority of cured patients' offspring went to swell the ranks of the criminal, vagrant, and inebriate classes."

This is one of the most terrible blots on our civilisation, and we believe it is responsible for the cruder forms of religious revival.

Theoretically the Pope is infallible. On this point the Church, guided by the Holy Ghost, has recorded her affirmative verdict. In his recent Encyclical, however, his Holiness has seriously departed from the truth, and the *Aurora* coolly declares that the "Holy Father has been caught in the act of lying." The *Church Times* maintains that the Pope's "character is above suspicion," and that no one in his senses would dream of accusing him of falsehood. But somebody has lied, and as the Pope cannot lie, the falsehood must be laid at someone else's door; and on all hands the Papal Secretary of State is held responsible. Cardinal Merry del Val, they say, must have submitted to Pius X. a "cooked" account of the French bishops' vote. The simple truth is that the Church is doing her utmost to convince the world how utterly ridiculous her claim to infallibility really is, and that by the present tactics she is actually undermining her own foundations.

The *Church Times* aptly dubs Dr. Clifford "a past master in the art of eluding his adversary." It is next to impossible to "pin him down to a point in controversy." The Bishop of Southwark, however, seems to have succeeded, according to our contemporary, in accomplishing that apparently impossible task. The bishop's contention is that no true Liberal, which Dr. Clifford claims to be, can advocate the throwing of Cowper-Templeism, which is now a denomination, on the rates. But Dr. Clifford *does* advocate it, and "in doing so, he is neither the Liberal he professes to be, nor the consistent passive resister he desires to be thought." Of course, he is neither; but then Dr. Clifford snaps his fingers at consistency and laughs logic to scorn. Argument he disdains; and when he does condescend to argue, he at once begins to "flounder like a double Dutchman in a continent of mud."

The *British Congregationalist* has just given the game away. In a well-written article it confesses that "for better or worse, it has become very manifest that the main factor of success in a Congregational Church is the personality of the preacher." A truer observation was never made. The only strange thing about it is its being made by a religious journalist. It is entirely out of place in a newspaper which believes that the Church is indwelt by the Holy Ghost and is the channel through which the omnipotent love of the Eternal Christ is to redeem the world. That New Testament doctrine is now however, obsolete, the Church now depending mainly, for its success, on the personality of the preacher.

The Rev. Professor Orr, of Glasgow, has come out like a valiant knight in defence of the Bible. But why is it that the Bible *requires* to be defended? Does not this necessity of defending it prove that it is open to attack? Professor Orr has nothing new to say on the subject, and much of what he does say is repudiated by the majority of present day Christian scholars, who are, to say the least, as competent to judge as himself. The Bible as literature, the Bible as history, Professor Orr pronounces perfect, immeasurably superior to the very best among Pagan sacred writings; but this pronouncement of the United Free Church Professor is largely contradicted by other professors' in his own college, and by a mighty host in British, Continental, and American universities and theological seminaries. To non-Christian scholars some Pagan scriptures are, in some respects, superior to the Bible, but no sacred writings whatever are of super-human origin.

Professor Orr indulges in the usual sneer at Voltaire; but it is the sneer of blinded prejudice and culpable ignorance combined. "The Bible, which he (Voltaire) did his best to destroy, holds on its career of conquest in the world," exclaims the Professor. But that is pure rant, empty rhetoric, with no truth at the back of it. Voltaire *did* destroy the Bible, in the only sense in which he *wished* to destroy it. His arguments against its plenary inspirations are to-day being freely employed by the Higher Criticism within the Churches themselves. Professor Orr belongs to a rapidly dwindling minority. Voltaire's prophecy has been virtually fulfilled.

Unwittingly Professor Orr contradicts himself. After a glowing tribute to the "unconquerable vitality" of the Bible, after tracing back the social and humanitarian movements which were the distinction of the past century—our prison reforms, our charity and rescue institutions, our temperance movements, our peace movements—to their springs "in the high mountain-levels of the Bible's teaching," and after asserting that the Bible has ever been on the march to universal triumph—after all this, he speaks of "the unconcealed Agnosticism and deeper than Agnosticism, the Pessimism, under the depressing weight of which our modern age groans." That is to say, "the Bible

holds on its career of conquest in the world"; but the people no longer believe in it. Our modern age groans under the depressing weight Agnosticism. It is a tragic sort of victory the Bible has won.

What a lot of Rip Van Winkles there are in the world. "An Exciseman" writes a letter to the *Daily News* on "Kissing the Book," and points out that "the affirmation, under the Evidence Amendment Act of 1870, can at present be substituted by Quakers, Agnostics, and those who conscientiously object to taking the usual oath." This antediluvian information was duly printed by our pious contemporary. The truth is, that Bradlaugh's "Oaths Act" (1888) superseded all previous legislation, by making oath or affirmation optional, not merely for witnesses, but for jurymen, members of parliament, public officials, and all other civilians required to be sworn.

Mr. John Thornton, the Leeds magistrates' clerk, told an *Evening Post* interviewer that a witness who desires to make affirmation instead of taking the oath "must first of all state his objection to the ordinary kissing of the book." But this is hardly correct. Under the Oaths Act any person can *claim* to affirm instead of swearing. True, if he is asked "on what ground"—which is seldom done now—he must state either that he has no religious belief or that the taking of an oath is against his religious belief. Mr. Richards, the Assistant Clerk to the Magistrates, told the interviewer that "he did not place much value on the effect of the oath on the average witness"—that is to say, we presume, the more or less ready and fluent liar. "If you ask me," Mr. Richards said, "I don't believe that the practice of kissing the book has the slightest effect as the test of truth on ninety-nine witnesses out of a hundred who get into the box to give evidence." Good old oath!

Mr. Hudson, chief clerk in the Leeds County Court, recalled a story of an elderly short-sighted solicitor in the neighborhood, who, having repeated to the client in front of his desk the words as to the truth of his affidavit, added solemnly, "Kiss the book," at the same time passing over to the deponent a copy of *Whitaker's Almanack*. We have heard of several Ready Reckoners being used for years as New Testaments—and God never said anything, and the business of the court went on as usual.

Pastor R. May, of the Great Arthur-street Mission, Whitecross-street, got a capital advertisement in the press lately. It consisted in the announcement that he had addressed a "crowd" of poor devils, who had "fallen into the abyss," on the text—"Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven," and that two hundred of them had endorsed six pious resolutions he drew up. Such resolutions, of course, would not fill the poor devils' bellies—nor oven their heads; but there was a certain amount of truth in the first one, although it was not exactly intended. It ran as follows:—"That the question of poverty and lack of employment is partly a religious question." Quite so. There would be less poverty and lack of employment if the twenty millions a year spent on the gospel of free salvation were spent on rational and productive industry. Of course, it might be argued that if this were done the professional men of God, and the amateur men of God, like Reuben May, would all be thrown out of work and reduced to starvation—or the necessity of earning an honest livelihood. But such men do not require the same measure of sympathy as ordinary sufferers. They are the Lord's servants, and he should look after them; and, if the worst came to the worst, heaven is their home, and it would be no great hardship if they went there.

Rev. Beverley Smelt, aged 71, of the Vicarage, Brantingham, Brough, Yorks, who died a little while ago, left estate which has been valued at £13,134. The reverend gentleman left it behind because he could not take it with him. It would be wicked to suggest that the money would melt where he is now located.

Rev. Canon Thomas Sherlock Nelson, of St. Peter's Rectory, Lincoln, left estate valued at £74,000. How has he managed to get through the needle's eye? £74,000 makes a pretty big hump.

The curate of Menai Bridge Church requested a lady visitor to leave the edifice last Sunday because she had on no head-gear. Poor man of God! Why should he trouble about women's heads? Why not look after his own?

Catholics say that the confessional is never abused, but they are deceived or deceiving in this matter. Cases appear occasionally in the newspapers. These, of course, are bad cases, and there must be many less heinous cases that never

see the light of publicity. French journals have been reporting the case of the Abbé Cassan, who is charged with causing the death of a girl at his vicarage. A search in his rooms revealed five hundred love letters from sixty different women in the parish, and he admits that he carried on love-making in the confessional. It is an old story—"The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair."

"My sainted mother, and Hugh Price Hughes, both now in heaven," said the Rev. Trevor H. Davies, the newly appointed missionary of the West London Mission, on Sunday morning. The way these people book places in heaven is amusing. They are so sure of having reserved seat tickets. How astonished some of them must be to wake out of the sleep of death—in the wrong place!

Considering the mighty opinion Christians have everywhere of themselves, and how they always boast that they are the only progressive people on this planet, it is interesting to note the difference between the course of affairs in Russia and in China. Frightful bloodshed and barbarity attend the effort to introduce a Parliament in Russia. In China the emperor (or empress) sends a number of travelling commissioners to study the public affairs of Western countries, and on the basis of their report he (or she) promises the people constitutional government as soon as possible. Now that China has intercourse with other nations, the ruler frankly admits that her "laws and political system have become antiquated." So we shall probably see the new birth of China without any of the throes that mark such an event in Christian nations.

A Polish witness in Germany stated the other day his belief that Polish was the language spoken by Christ and his Apostles, and was certainly the language spoken in heaven. Welsh is also said to be the language spoken in heaven, so is Basque, so is High Dutch, and so is Hebrew. We shall all know for certain when we get there. Meanwhile the problem can wait.

Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, founder and head of Christian Science, has been badly frightened by a pair of bolting horses which were presented to her by an admirer. Fortunately the lady's coachman got them under control before serious mischief was done. But the shock was a bad one, and the horses have gone back to the donor. Christian Science doesn't seem much use in emergencies.

An American preacher now in England told a London congregation the other Sunday that "if God is an Eternal Being, and if God is love, then the love of God is nothing less than an eternal thing." Quite true—a truism, in fact. Then he added; "If God be universal and in communication with every human soul, then, when you bring these things together, it yields the truth that the eternal love of God extends eternally to every saint and sinner of the human race." Fully granted. "There is no other issue, be it true that God is love." Another truism. But what calamitous "ifs" to play with! The preacher from America was quite right *if*— We can only ask, "If there is balm in Gilead, if there is a physician there, why is the wound of the daughter of my people not healed?" And all the ages of human history mockingly repeat—"if—if—why?"

Mrs. Eliza Bishop, of Hayward's Heath, failed to get her husband's breakfast in time for him to attend early morning service; so he knocked her about with a rolling pin, and taught her in other pious ways how dangerous it was to cross a Christian bent on going to the house of God. Unfortunately the magistrates took a worldly view of the case and granted Mrs. Bishop a separation order.

The *Sunderland Echo* prints a long and eulogistic account of the Rev. Walter H. Armstrong, who has just settled down in that part of the Lord's vineyard. Mr. Armstrong is stated to be "a preacher who graduated in Hyde Park," and to have had immense success in fighting the Secularists. "It was no small tribute to his utterances," we read, "to have pitted against him such doughty champions in debate as Messrs. Foote and Watts. The debates with these gentlemen were carefully reported and circulated; and there are few documents in his possession that he prizes more than these records." How very odd it is that we don't remember to have heard of this infidel-slayer before! We invite the *Sunderland Echo* to inquire of its "ministerial contributor" when and where Mr. Armstrong ever debated with either Mr. Foote or Mr. Watts, and in what publications the debate was reported. That will do for this week. More, perhaps, in our next.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

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

October 7, Glasgow.

**To Correspondents.**

R. CARPENTER.—We have not forgotten Mr. Robertson's *History of Freethought*, but we have not felt like tackling it during the holidays, and we wish to review it at some length. We shall take it in hand very shortly. We have also a number of other books to deal with, and "Book Chat" must be revived.

W. B.—Any musician will tell you there is really no such thing as sacred music. Music is natural and human, just like language, but may be applied to all sorts of purposes. Sacred music—except as meaning music devoted to religious themes—is as absurd as sacred language. Please observe, for the rest, that we cannot carry on controversies in this column.

J. B. BANNATYNE.—Pleased to hear "Acid Drops" are "so much appreciated" by yourself and others.

M. TREVILLION.—See obituary notice in another column. Your mother's name stirs up old memories.

G. W.—If you really want to know what Darwin's mature opinions were, and what was the course of his religious development, you will find all the material in our pamphlet entitled *Darwin on God*.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your well-selected cuttings.

J. WILSON.—Freethinkers must expect plenty of injustice from the newspapers. Not the suppression, but the insertion, of your letter would have been astonishing.

E. A. DAVIES.—Thanks. See paragraph.

W. W. HILL.—Cuttings should be up to date.

KINGSLAND GREEN BRANCH SECRETARY announces that the *Freethinker* can be had of Larkin, Bradbury-street.

H. B. SAMUELS, who speaks at the Marble Arch, Hyde Park, every Sunday at 11.30 would like to hear from a "saint" in the neighborhood who would attend at 1 o'clock with a parcel of *Freethinkers* for sale, as there is generally a good demand for them.

J. BROUGH.—Thanks for good wishes. We note what you say about the understanding between the Liberal and Labor parties in Manchester.

L. PORTER.—Thanks for copy of M. Furnémont's circular. It is surprising that he did not send copies to the *Freethinker* or to the National Secular Society. His attitude is quite unintelligible. We will deal with the whole matter next week.

J. TULLIN.—Many thanks. See "Acid Drops."

J. G. BARTRAM.—Inserted, though rather late. We note your suggestion as to Mr. Mangasarian's article, which merits all your praises.

F. H.—The reception to Mr. Symes at Queen's Hall is timed to start at 7.30 p.m. Glad to hear there will be at least one visitor from Wales present.

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THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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**Sugar Plums.**

We hope the heat-wave will have abated by this evening (Sept. 9), when the welcome will be given to Mr. Joseph Symes at the Queen's (Minor) Hall. The doors will be open at 7 o'clock, and the chair will be taken at 7.30 by Mr. G. W. Foote, as President of the National Secular Society, who will introduce the veteran to the new generation of Freethinkers. It has already been announced that brief speeches of welcome will then be delivered by Mr. C. Cohen and Mr. J. T. Lloyd. We are now able to announce that further

brief speeches of welcome will be contributed by Mr. Victor Roger, representing what may be called the "laymen," and Mr. Harry Snell, representing the definitely Freethought view amongst the Ethicists. Mr. Symes will respond and address the meeting for an hour or so on "My Twenty Years' Freethought Fight in Australia." There should be a big rally of London "saints" on this occasion. We trust to see the hall crowded. Of course there will be "free admission," but the "free" seats will be very few and at the back. Other seats will be paid for as usual at Queen's Hall.

West Ham and district "saints" will, of course, have made a special note of the Sunday evening Freethought lectures that have been arranged for September 16, 23, and 30 in the Stratford Town Hall. Mr. Cohen leads off, Mr. Foote takes the second lecture, and Mr. Lloyd the last. The printed advertising is in the hands of Miss Vance, as secretary of the Secular Society, Ltd., with the assistance of the local N. S. S. Branch. All seats at these meetings will be free, with a collection in aid of the expenses.

N. S. S. Branches desiring to hear Mr. Symes lecture should communicate with him as early as possible. Letters addressed to our office will find him for the present. We shall print a list of his fixtures next week.

Mr. J. M. Robertson lectures for the Liverpool N. S. S. Branch in the Milton Hall, Daulby-street, to-day (Sept. 9), both afternoon and evening. We hope the local "saints" have advertised the meetings thoroughly amongst their friends and acquaintances. Mr. Robertson ought to have crowded meetings and an enthusiastic reception.

The *Yarmouth Mercury* published a capital letter from the pen of Mr. J. W. de Caux in reply to the Sabbatarian sermon of the Rev. Cornwall Jones, which was criticised in our last week's "Acid Drops." Courteous, but forcible and well-written, the veteran's letter is calculated to do much good to the cause of Freethought. Mr. Jones will probably not reply. He would be nowhere in a public discussion on the points he has raised with Mr. de Caux—and we daresay he knows it.

The "dramatic artists" of Paris have for four years had a Trade Union, which numbers two thousand members. They are strongly in favor of the Seventh Day Rest Bill, but they know that people want to go to theatre on Sunday, so they demand that theatres should be closed on Wednesday or Friday, and this arrangement is favored by the play-going public. Some day or other, when Puritanism and Sabbatarianism are less active, we shall have a similar arrangement in London.

Lord Hugh Cecil's honest advice to Churchmen to adopt the policy of Passive Resistance if the Nonconformist Education Bill is carried into law, naturally does not meet the approval of the Venerable Archdeacon Sinclair, who warns his fellow Churchmen against it. "In my opinion," he says, "that could have but one result. Sickened by finding nothing but an impasse on one side, and an equal impasse on the other, the desire of the Liberal party for religious education would be greatly weakened. Then would come the hour for the secularists, who are strong and united, and the knot would be cut in a way that would satisfy neither Churchmen nor Nonconformists." Exactly. And the hour for the secularists will strike.

M. Emile Ollivier, who was Napoleon the Third's prime minister when the war broke out in 1870, is now nearly ninety years of age. He was undoubtedly a man of brilliant parts, though he made a sad mistake on that tragic occasion. In some things he may be mistaken still, but we quite agree with one passage of his letter to the *Gaulois* on the Pope's encyclical:—

"Let the Government cast off the remaining shackles of the old connection between Church and State; have done with these 'associations culturelles,' these hybrid creations, oppressive, equivocal, incoherent, unworkable; make over the places of worship to the Bishops; do not subject the clergy to special legislation, leave them amenable to the ordinary laws of the Republic, laws which every citizen is bound to obey; give us real separation, complete separation—the kind of thing our Catholic brethren have in Italy, in Switzerland, in the United States."

This is on the same lines as our own leading article a fortnight ago.

A man's giving in alms one piece of silver in his lifetime is better for him than giving one hundred when about to die.—*Mohammed.*

## The Great Designer.—II.

(Concluded from p. 557.)

OUR bodies are half-full of glands, vessels, viscera, and organs, for the purpose of converting heterogeneous food into blood. To an unsophisticated mind, it would seem that a wise and benevolent, to say nothing of a decent, God, might have designed the human frame without putting several yards of viscera in it—the small intestine is twenty feet long—with its accompanying irksome and repulsive functions.

Moreover, it is now known that a large part of this complicated apparatus is not only useless, but harmful; and the knife of the surgeon has been requisitioned to remedy the Great Designer's sanitary arrangements. Professor Metchnikoff, the famous bacteriologist, tells us that:—

"In the legacy acquired by man from his animal ancestors there occur not only rudimentary organs that are useless or harmful, but fully developed organs equally useless. The large intestine must be regarded as one of the organs possessed by man, and yet harmful to his health and life. The large intestine is the reservoir of the waste of the digestive processes, and this waste stagnates long enough to putrefy. The products of putrefaction are harmful. When fecal matter is allowed to remain in the intestines, as in cases of constipation, a common complaint, certain products are absorbed by the organism, and produce poisoning, often of a very serious nature."<sup>\*</sup>

This is due to the absorption into the system of poisonous substances produced by the microbes which infest the large intestine, and may be the cause of an attack of acne or other skin diseases. "In fine," says the Professor, "the presence of a large intestine in the human body is the cause of a series of misfortunes. The organ is the seat of many grave diseases, among which dysentery is notable. In some tropical climates dysentery is a serious scourge.....Malignant tumours seem to display a predilection for this region of the digestive tract" (p. 74).

When the slight young journalists indulge the readers of the halfpenny press with visions of a time coming when we shall take our nourishment in tabloid form, and carry a four-course dinner, condensed, in our waistcoat pocket, they are writing out of the fulness of their ignorance. A person attempting to live by such means would soon die of blood poisoning, dysentery, or some kindred disease. It is impossible for man to take his nourishment in the most perfect form. Says Professor Metchnikoff:—

"If he were only to eat substances that could be almost completely absorbed, the large intestine would be unable to empty itself, and serious complications would be produced. A satisfactory system of diet has to make allowance for this, and, in consequence of the structure of the alimentary canal, has to include in the food bulky and indigestible materials such as vegetables."

Moreover, the fact that the large intestine is a useless organ is not based upon mere supposition; the Professor gives instances where the large intestine has been removed with beneficial results. Of one case he says: "The fact that a human being was capable of carrying on an apparently normal life for thirty years in the absence of a large intestine is good proof that the organ in question is not necessary to man, although it has not yet become rudimentary" (p. 70).

The fact is, man's body, as Professor Garrison remarks in his very able lecture on *The Absence of Design in Nature*, "has been built up on the piece-upon-piece and patch-upon-patch plan, and hence is far more complex, in many respects, than it might have been had it been directly planned by an all-wise architect, or even by a good physiologist."

Consider the process of digestion. What multitudes suffer from indigestion. How many people can boast of possessing a stomach in perfect working

order? Relatively, not many. The cause is to be found in the roundabout and senseless arrangements for turning food into nourishment. Says Professor Garrison:—

"In the mouth food meets saliva, an *alkaline* liquid having a tendency to convert starch into sugar; but this process is hardly begun before the food reaches the stomach, where it meets an *acid* liquid—the gastric juice—which effectually destroys the alkalinity of the saliva which had been swallowed, and thus at once and for ever prevents its action. Even the ptyaline, the ferment principle of the saliva, is destroyed by the action of the gastric juice. After leaving the stomach food encounters two *alkaline* liquids—the bile and pancreatic juice, the latter secretion being simply *saliva again*. Here, digestion begun but not completed in the stomach, is arrested, and the kind which began in the mouth is again set up. Such an arrangement is not justified by any principles of chemistry or of economy with which we are acquainted."<sup>\*</sup>

Like the large intestine, we could very well dispense with the stomach altogether. In cases where the stomach has been hopelessly eaten into by cancer, surgeons have, as a last resort, removed the stomach altogether, sewing the inlet to the outlet of the stomach, the food tract then making one continuous tube. "The results of such operations were favorable, to the extent that the patients survived and were able to absorb sufficient nourishment. They had to eat rather more frequently, and performed the processes of digestion by means of the secretions of the small intestine and pancreas."<sup>†</sup> Although it is not so useless as the large intestine, yet, from the liability of the stomach to the attack of cancer, Professor Metchnikoff concludes that it is an organ "that the human body would do well to be rid of," and remarks that "the small intestine is the only part of the digestive tract that is indispensable, and it is attacked to a much smaller extent."

Each step in the evolution of man has been attended with unspeakable pain and suffering to multitudes of human beings. It is doubtful if any human being has ever been born who has not suffered in some way or another from this cause. For instance, who has not suffered pain from the teeth in some form or another? This arises from the fact that the jaws and teeth are in a state of evolution now. Compare the head of primitive man, as represented by the Neanderthal or Spy skulls, with the skull of the average European of to-day. It will at once be seen that the modern man has gained a greater capacity of brain, at the expense of the protruding and massive jaws of his primitive ancestors. "Yes," says the modern apologist, who, having got the worst of the fight with Darwinism, are now pretending that evolution is God's divine plan; "that shows the finger of God working out the tiger and the ape." Of course it shows nothing of the kind. It has all come about in a natural way, and science explains how it has happened.

Primitive man, living upon rough and coarse food, such as wild plants and raw flesh, had need of all his teeth, supplemented by a powerful jaw, to obtain sufficient nourishment. But as he learned to cultivate plants that are easily digested, and to prepare his food in a manner more easy to assimilate, he no longer required such a formidable masticating apparatus. And, as it is a law of nature that the less work an organ of the body has to perform the more it tends to atrophy, so the jaws have contracted to the size we see in the European of to-day. So far, well and good; but the matter does not end there.

As the jaws have contracted, less room is left for the teeth; sometimes they are so crowded that children have to be taken to the dentist's to have some of them extracted, to enable the others to attain their full development; if not attended to they become crooked and uneven. Moreover, this atrophy has gone so far that the wisdom teeth are now altogether useless; the loss of them, says Metchnikoff, is "to be regarded as an advantage." They do not

\* *The Nature of Man*, pp. 72-73.

\* *The Absence of Design in Nature*, pp. 7-8.

† Metchnikoff, *The Nature of Man*, p. 74.

usually appear before the age of eighteen; sometimes they are delayed until the thirtieth year, and have even made their appearance in extreme old age—being in at the death, so to speak. To Sir Oliver Lodge, who assures us that "God undoubtedly has a sense of humor," we make a present of this point as confirming his assertion. The wisdom teeth are more liable to injury and more subject to caries, frequently beginning to decay as soon as they arrive; and, as they are situated near the main branch of the facial nerves, they cause acute suffering. "The membrane surrounding them is specially subject to small lesions by which the infection spreads to adjacent parts. Inflammatory conditions frequently arise from these teeth, and tumors, caries of the jawbone, and even diffused suppuration leading to death, may be sequelæ of wounds of the wisdom teeth."\* Metchnikoff states that death has been caused through meningitis, abscess of the brain, and cancerous tumors, all having their origin in the wisdom teeth.

The whole process of dentition from beginning to end is clumsy, cruel, and inefficient. The teeth begin to appear soon after birth, and for two or three years they continue to cut the swollen and tender gums. If the child survives this critical period of its life it will shortly begin to lose the teeth so painfully acquired, to make room for the so-called permanent ones; these, in their turn, being an endless source of trouble to multitudes of people until the dentist has relieved them by extraction. The present writer has seen an otherwise healthy girl who had lost every one of her permanent teeth through decay before she was fourteen years of age. As Professor Garrison remarks, "As a matter of fact, the dentist furnishes us the only strictly reliable and permanent teeth we ever have."†

Another great step in the evolution of man was taken when he assumed the upright position; but for this it is doubtful whether the human race would ever have gained the ascendancy over their animal relatives. When he assumed this position he was able to see and avoid his enemies from afar, by means of his increased height; he was also free to use his hands for defence, or for the capture of his prey. "It is the first step that counts" says the French proverb, and when *genus homo* had taken the first steps without using his hands he was on the road towards civilisation. This was a great achievement, but it has caused, and is causing, untold suffering to myriads of the human race.

"Original sin," it has been humorously said, 'consisted in man's attempting to walk on his hind legs.' Man does walk on his hind legs, and his skeleton has adjusted itself to that position. But his organs have by no means properly adjusted themselves. One of the most distressing of diseases arises chiefly from the fact that the valves in certain veins are still adjusted to suit an animal walking on all-fours, and are absent where they are most wanted."‡

Not only is the upright position the cause of varicose veins, but it is the cause of that very common and painful complaint, Hernia. The weight of the soft and heavy intestines, and other organs of the body, is thrown in a downward direction, instead of hanging from the waist, as they do among four-footed animals. The consequence is, that the enclosing envelope is sometimes unable to bear the strain, and the intestines burst through, causing a rupture. The prevalence of prolapsus among women is due to the same cause, and adds another terror to the pains of motherhood. It is a most distressing complaint, and is seldom cured, except by a very serious operation, which consists in removing a large and important organ from the body.

The human eye is often pointed to as a masterpiece of the Great Designer. George Jacob Holyoake sarcastically observed:—

"The Natural Theologian praises the divine contrivance which has given man two eyes. They would

have been equally rapturous had he had four, so that he could have looked east, west, north, and south at the same time..... Again, if man, like Polyphemus, had had but one eye given him, then Dr. Paley would have proved it impossible that he could ever have seen at all with two: or, if he had, that he would see double."\*

Professor Garrison tells us that the eye "is very far from perfection," as the number of people wearing spectacles is sufficient to show. Astigmatism is present in a greater or lesser degree in the case of every human eye. The cornea and crystalline lens are not truly centered on the optical axis of the eye. The aqueous and vitreous humors of the eye are not uniformly transparent. Long sight and short sight are caused by defective arrangement of the interior of the eye. After citing these defects, he concludes that "All these difficulties are practically overcome or avoided in even the cheapest photographic cameras in the market, and yet no one has ever claimed that the camera had a miraculous origin, or that the wonderful design manifest in its mechanism proves its designer to have been a god."†

And this verdict of Garrison's, strong as it is, is endorsed by two of the greatest natural scientists of our time, Professor Tyndall and Helmholtz. Tyndall says:—

"A long list of indictments might indeed be brought against the eye—its opacity, its want of symmetry, its lack of achromatism, its absolute blindness, in part. All these, taken together, caused Helmholtz to say that, if any optician sent him an instrument so full of defects, he would be justified in sending it back with the severest censure."‡

No one was better qualified to pass judgment upon the eye than Helmholtz, as before he invented the ophthalmoscope no one had ever seen the living retina at work.

Professor Garrison shows that the ear and the throat are as imperfect as the eye. The modern apologist drops the six days of creation, and now tells us that evolution is God's method of creation; that God has arranged matters so that, through the law of evolution, man will ultimately attain to perfection; that each man will be a perfect tin Jesus in himself, both morally and physically.

It has been my lot to be told—to the accompaniment of a warning forefinger—that "The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small"; and evidentially my informant looked forward with pleasurable anticipation to seeing me being put through the mill by the divine Miller. Well, if God is responsible for the "evolutionary mill," there can be no doubt about the slowness of the grinding. For consider: If man can be traced back to the miocene—as many scientists believe—then he has existed from a million to a million and a half years upon the earth; and yet we find him with large, useless, and harmful organs, which show no signs of atrophy, but to all appearance are good for another two or three million years, providing that the human race has not been refrigerated off the face of the earth, by the same process that has been at work on the moon before that time has elapsed.

Professor Huxley once declared that "It is as impossible to my mind to suppose that the evolutionary process was set going with full foreknowledge of the result and yet with benevolent intention, as it is to imagine that the intention was malevolent."§ But then Huxley was an Agnostic, and did not know whether there was a God or not—although doubtless he gave a pretty shrewd guess; and if you do not know whether there is a God or not, it is hardly worth while bothering about what his intentions are. But a man who believes that there is a God must have an opinion as to whether he is benevolent or not. We have no belief in a God; but to our mind a "full foreknowledge" by its supposed Author of the suffering and pain engendered by the evolutionary process is quite incompatible with "benevolent in-

\* Metchnikoff, *The Nature of Man*, p. 65.

† *The Absence of Design in Nature*, p. 7.

‡ Miss A. Bodington, *Westminster Review*, April, 1893.

\* *The Trial of Theism*, p. 19.

† *The Absence of Design in Nature*, p. 6.

‡ *On Light*, p. 8.

§ *Essays on Controverted Questions*, p. 50; 1892.

tion." Those who object to "malevolent intention" may accept the solution offered by the dervish to *Candide*, in Voltaire's incomparable satire. *Candide* objected that there was a horrible amount of evil on the earth. "What signifies," says the dervish, "whether there is evil or good? When His Highness sends a ship to Egypt, does he trouble whether the rats aboard are comfortable or not?" Such a God might meet the requirements of philosophy, but, for obvious reasons, would be quite useless for a religious purpose.

In a future article we will—with the Editor's permission—consider the question of whether the world was designed with a view to man's habitation.

W. MANN.

## A Sermon on Summer.

BY THE REV. OBADIAH ROUSER.

*Dearly Beloved*,—The weather is excessively warm to-day, or, as some profane persons might say, damnably hot. My thermometer registered ninety degrees in the shade at noon, and no doubt it would have shown a higher temperature in the sun, if I had been imprudent enough to place it there or view it in that position. Your pastor, beloved, is no longer slim as in the days of his curacy, when he played cricket with the men and lawn-tennis with the ladies; when he rowed his skiff under a broiling sun without any preternatural perspiration; when he stretched himself out for a snooze in a shady spot without the torturing consciousness that his nose offered a spacious pasturage to a multitude of flies. No, beloved, your pastor is no longer slim; he has lost the slenderness of youth, and scoffers even assert that he is fat; yea, they have been heard to say that he resembleth a bull of Bashan or the great Leviathan himself. Nevertheless, I thank God for the change, even though it affordeth mirth to these wanton wits, who neither revere the Lord nor his holy ministers. Blessed be the Almighty! for he hath permitted me to wax fat, yet without kicking. And blessed be ye, O beloved ones! for your unailing bounty hath sustained me, yea, and edified me, so that I am become the envy of my brethren, and the weightiest divine in all this part of his Majesty's kingdom.

Yes, beloved, the summer is undoubtedly come at last, after much anxious expectation. The sun darteth his fierce rays through the blue sky, and there is often not a single cloud as big as your pocket-handkerchief. Men's hearts fail because of the heat; they groan, they puff, they break forth into an agony and bloody sweat, they are as limp as a wet rag. And your pastor quaketh and shuddereth like jelly. The Lord trieth him sore.

Beloved, as I sat in my study last night in my dressing-gown, sipping iced claret through a straw, and smoking one of those mild cigarettes prescribed by Dr. Easy for my asthma, and presented to me by the kind and considerate Lady Providence, I wondered what I should take as the subject of my sermon this evening. For nearly two hours I had cudgelled my poor brains in vain, and the unwonted exertion had nearly exhausted my strength. I had not an idea; my head was as empty as a drum. In a fever of anxiety I tossed off a tumbler of claret, and, at the same moment, I sought the Lord in prayer. My petition was answered in the twinkling of an eye. Something, as it were the divine voice within me, whispered, "Summer," and I knew that was to be my text. Oh these answers to prayer! How they comfort and establish the faithful! How they confound and overwhelm the infidel! Luminous traces of the divine presence, they prepare us for that happy time when we shall see the Master face to face, when we shall behold him with even more fulness than he granted to his servant Moses in the cliff of the rock.

Summer, then, beloved, is the subject of my sermon. And the first reflection that occurs to me is this—What a testimony it is to the faithfulness of God! You will remember that when Noah descended from the top of Mount Ararat he "builded an altar unto the Lord," although holy writ, silent on this as on so many other matters pertaining to the faith, omits to inform us whence he procured his materials. On that miraculous altar he burnt a prime selection of clean beasts and fowl; and the Lord, who was always carnivorous, as is abundantly proved by his rejection of Cain's vegetables and his acceptance of Abel's meat, heartily relished the savory smell. In that placable mood which naturally follows the gratification of appetite, he vowed never to curse and swear any more, or to kill all the world at a single blow; and in his divine mercy he added the promise that, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." Now, beloved, has not this promise been punctually

kept? It is true that we sometimes get abominably bad harvests, but who remembers a time when we had none at all? And all we receive is a pure mercy, for the Lord might righteously withhold his hand and starve us all. But, bless and praise his holy name, he never does. He is a merciful God, slow to anger, and of great compassion. He remembereth our needs, and feedeth us though we have little faith; as you know right well, beloved, and as I know perhaps better than yourselves. Yes, we always get some kind of harvest; and do we not always get some proportion of day and night? True, at midsummer, day almost swallows the night, and at midwinter night almost swallows the day; and in very foggy weather we can scarcely tell where the one ends and the other begins. But the alternation of day and night is still a fact. No sceptic can dispute it. It is too much even for *him*. And, beloved, is not the succession of seasons also a fact, which the sceptic is equally unable to explain away? We know that the seasons, in a country like ours, often get a little mixed; but they disengage themselves frequently enough to remind us of God's promise, to prove to us his unchangeableness, and to show that he is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Yes, spring is a fact, autumn is a fact, winter is a fact, and summer is a fact. The infidel preacher at the Hall of Science cannot doubt that, for last Sunday evening, when my church was nearly empty, two ladies were carried out of his crowded meeting, overcome with the excessive heat. No, they cannot deny it. I defy all the sceptics in the world. I challenge the whole army of infidels. Their puny darts of argument are utterly powerless against the invulnerable shield of heavenly wisdom. All nature cries aloud, There is a God! and the head of every faithful child of God reverberates the sound. While seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, day and night, and summer and winter continue, the wretched unbeliever is constantly baffled by the fulfilment of God's promise to Noah. And thus, beloved, this hot weather, which puts us all into the melting mood, is a proof of God's existence quite beyond the reach of Atheistic logic; and it is no less a proof of God's eternal faithfulness. See, now, how the Almighty is always preaching to us. You were ready to curse this intense heat, which breeds cholera and other fatal plagues; but lo! it is a blessing in disguise. Some of you, in that rebellious state of mind might have been seduced into infidelity. Now, however, you are safe. You see a sovereign proof of the existence of deity, and you know that to say *Summer* is to say *God*. Hallelujah!

Beloved, it is in no wise below the dignity of the pulpit to introduce, after this magnificent reflection, a few references of a lighter character. Let me then remark that, as many people are in doubt whether to remain indoors or to go out in this sultry heat, it is well to inquire what assistance on this subject can be obtained from the Divine Word. I speak with submission, but it appears to me indubitable that staying indoors at this time of the year is a pernicious fault if not a deadly sin. "He that gathereth in summer is a wise son," saith the sage author of the Book of Proverbs; and how can we gather anything unless we go where it is to be found? Let us further recollect that Eglon, the fat king of Moab, was sitting in a summer parlor when he met his death at the hand of Ehud, a fate which he might have avoided if he had taken his corpulence into the open air, where his attendants might have watched him and preserved him from all danger. We should also remember that Abraham "sat in the tent door in the heat of the day," when the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre. Had he kept within his tent he would probably never have seen the Lord, whom no man hath ever seen, never have talked with him face to face (cheek by jowl, as a wicked infidel expresses it) as a man talketh with his friend, never have washed God's feet, never have stood the Almighty a good dinner. What is worse still, he would have had no son Isaac as the child of his old age, and thus our Blessed Savior would never have been born for want of a progenitor. Oh, what a terrible reflection! All our prospects through eternity depended that afternoon on Abraham's sitting on the right side of a piece of canvas. Dearly beloved, let me beseech you to take warning from this event. At least, be out of doors in the heat of the day, so that you may descry the Lord if he should pass by; yea, and also in the cool of the day, for he walketh then likewise, as is shown by the inspired story of the Fall.

There are some people, beloved, who appear to disregard the weather. They affect surprise when their neighbors complain of the heat in summer or the cold in winter. What exasperating serenity do these persons exhibit! Surely it must have been characters of this description that composed the Church of Laodicea, of which the Holy Spirit so sweetly and elegantly declared that "because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Only a little less pitiable is the state of those whose blood is congealed with age, who are cool in the brightest sun, and positively shiver when the sun goes down. Yet there is a

remedy for these; and may the elder members of my flock listen devoutly while I expound it. I turn first to the royal author of *Ecclesiastes*, who saith, "If two lie together then they have heat." Ah, beloved, that is only the threshold of my discovery, the first line of my recipe. I now turn to the beautiful and instructive story of David's old age, as recorded in the first chapter of the first Book of Kings. When this brave King of the Jews, this royal man after God's own heart, drew near his end, he suffered greatly from ague or some such disorder. They piled bed-clothes upon him, blanket after blanket, and rug on rug, but his poor old limbs still trembled with cold. In this extremity his wise physicians prescribed a bed-fellow to be taken nightly, and Abishag the Shunamite, the loveliest damsel in all the coasts of Israel, was selected for the purpose. A profane poet—no other, I believe, than that arch-fiend, Lord Byron—has ridiculed this exquisite story, which contains some of the noblest morality ever inculcated. He hints that David took this "fair young damsel as a blister." What shocking levity! What awful depravity! No, David clasped her to his withered bosom with paternal fondness; and she lay in his bed, not as a blister, but as a warming-pan or a hot-water bottle. And the reason, beloved, is obvious to common sense. Warming-pans and hot-water bottles, however well charged and preserved, get colder and colder through the long hours of an old man's night; but a fair young maiden keeps warm till the morning, and needs no replenishing. Beloved, this is how you must regard the subject; and if any of you should follow David's regimen, you will of course take the prescription in a righteous and godly spirit.

My time, beloved, is drawing to a close, for how can a pastor of my proportions preach a long sermon in such weather? Yet I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without reminding you of the awful significance of a hot summer. There is not the least doubt in my mind that the Lord occasionally permits the heat to become almost intolerable on earth in order to remind us, not only of that great day when, as the holy apostle St. Peter declareth, "the elements shall melt with a fervent heat," but also of that still greater eternity, in which, unless we make our peace with God, we shall lie panting and writhing in the fire of hell. Beloved, let me implore you to profit by this merciful intimation. Lay the lesson to heart. Do not be led astray by sceptical suggestions. You have, doubtless, heard some wretched infidels assert that there is no hell at all. Oh, the horrible thought! I venture to maintain, in scornful defiance of these impious wretches, that a universe without a hell would be not only absurd, but (I say it with reverence) an imputation on the Almighty's benignity. It must be clear to the dullest intelligence that hell is necessary to complete the divine scheme of redemption. Without a hell, I should like to know what our Lord would have to save us from; and without a hell, I should like to know how people are to be warned from the snares of infidelity. These very sceptics belie their own principles. Their whole conversation is larded with saving clauses, which testify to their secret belief in the holy verities they outwardly reject. Do they not frequently say, "It is devilish hot," or "It is hellish hot"? And what are these expressions, I ask, but implicit admissions that there *is* a Devil, and that there *is* a hell? Yes, blessed be God, out of the mouths of infidels and sceptics, and scoffers and scorners, the truth of our holy religion is confirmed, and they themselves are "compelled to give in evidence" against themselves.

Furthermore, beloved, it is necessary that you should guard against the evil suspicion that every seat in hell is by this time occupied. There is room enough and to spare. Yes, as Holy Scripture saith, "hell and destruction are never full." There was, however, a time when the capacity of the nether pit was nearly exhausted; but God, in his divine mercy, increased its dimensions; and thus the holy prophet Isaiah was able to say that "Hell hath enlarged herself."

Yes, beloved, there *is* a hell, and the heat we now complain of is only a mild foretaste of its consuming fire. Earthly thermometers are useless in hell; they are incapable of registering the temperature, which infinitely exceeds our worst experiences even in tropical countries. And there will be no mitigations of its fierceness for ever, no iced claret, no lemon squash, nor even a milk and soda! Nay, beloved, you will cry in vain for a drop of water, as Dives did in one of our Lord's most tender and consoling parables. Ah, beloved, be advised in time. Shun the fate of that ancient sinner. If you do not, you must bear the responsibility, for my hands are clean. I have discharged my duty by warning you to flee from the wrath to come. I admonish you now, perhaps for the last time, to beware of the day when, instead of saying "It is damned hot," you may be damned and hot with a vengeance, and without a chance of cooling off.

Now may the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, be with you and remain with you always. Amen.

—G. W. Foote, "Comic Sermons and other Fantasias."

THE BALLAD OF THE DYING THIEF.

Silently stood the Nurse,  
The Priest sat grim and lean,  
And a man that battled for breath to curse,  
Lay stretched on the bed between.

The air with rosemary  
Was sweet as a forest dell,  
But the chamber echoed with ribaldry,  
Like the noisome gates of hell.

"Repent? By God, not I!  
His bastard—seek his sight?  
Nay! Hold me up till—till I win to the Pit,  
For I sup with the Devil to-night."

"Repent? Is mine the fault?  
The son of a thief by a pimp!  
If he builded me crooked and halt,  
Say, whose is the blame if I limp?"

The Nurse put wine to his lips,  
And the Priest held up his head,  
While he prayed to God that the Devil's grips  
Might be loosed ere the man was dead.

"Pray not for my soul, O Fool!  
But bury me under the sod. [tool,  
When He fashioned my soul He slipt with his  
But what have I done to God?"

If I've rifled the rich man's till,  
And stolen my brother's wife,  
Is there no balance beyond the bill  
When I pay with these pains—and my life?"

The ivy tapped the pane,  
The ghostly mists peered in,  
And the death-damp studded his face like rain,  
And trickled down his chin.

"I'd liever burn with my kind of old  
Than sing His host beside.  
That for His harps and His crowns of gold!  
And he spat on the wall and died.

Silently knelt the Nurse,  
The Priest sat grim and lean, [curse,  
And the Thing that had battled for breath to  
Lay still on the bed between.

—The Crisis.

The nature of God, immortality, the being of the soul and its connection with the body, are eternal problems, wherein the philosophers are unable to give us any further knowledge.—Goethe.

How intense is the loneliness for the most part of any man who endeavors to think—like the Nilo wandering on through a desert country, with no tributary streams to cheer and aid it, and to be lost in sympathy with its main current.—Helps.

If as much care were taken to perpetuate a race of fine men as is done to prevent the mixture of ignoble blood in horses and dogs, the genealogy of everyone would be written on his face and displayed in his manners.—Voltaire.

Obituary.

WE have to record the death of Mrs. Louisa Trevellion in her eighty-fifth year. She was the widow of the late William Trevellion, one of the band of Freethinkers who gathered round Bradlaugh at the opening of the Hall of Science in Old-street. Mrs. Trevellion, who survived her husband some twelve years, died on August 29. The cremation took place at Golder's Green on September 4, without any ceremony, according to her written request. She bore her long illness with the greatest courage and patience, and her last thoughts were for others. She was a loving mother and a faithful friend. She was also a staunch Secularist, and a reader of the *Freethinker* to the very end.

WITH much regret I record the death of Henry Peacock, aged 21 years, after a lingering illness extending over two years. Interment took place at Heaton Cemetery on Sunday, September 2. Mr. Mitchell read the Secular Burial Service in an impressive manner to a large number of friends. Deceased was the son of Mr. John Peacock, one of the oldest members of the Newcastle Branch. Great sympathy is felt by all friends for Mr. Peacock and family in their sad bereavement.—J. G. BARTRAM.

**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.**

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL: 7.30, Reception to Mr. Joseph Symes.

**OUTDOOR.**

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.30, James Rowney.

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Dalston): 11.30, Mr. Fletcher, "Science and Religion."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (The Grove, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "The Atonement."

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

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, F. A. Davies.

**COUNTRY.**

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): John M. Robertson, M.P., 3, "Religion and Education"; 7, "Julian the Apostate."

MOUNTAIN ASH BRANCH N. S. S. (Glyde's Restaurant, Commercial-street): 6, T. Bennett, "Simple Bible Teaching: A Lesson to Nonconformists."

PORTH BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Room, Town Hall): 6.30, "Secularism and Christianity."

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