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Let us have more science and more sentiment—more knowledge and more conscience—more liberty and more love.—INGERSOLL.

Infallibility.

EVERY man who speaks in the name of God poses as a centre of infallibility. Only he and those who agree with him know and utter the truth, all others being conscious or unconscious liars. The man in the pulpit invariably pretends to represent the Lord, and his final appeal is to the Divine Authority, by the permission and even command of which he speaks. There would be some show of reason in this claim if all preachers delivered the same message, or if there were but one system of theology in the world. The simple truth, however, is that from the very beginning theologians have been notorious fighters. There never was a time when heretics did not exist; and heretics are the people who challenge the opinions of the majority. Orthodoxy represents the majority vote: it is this alone that gives it its authority and its persecuting power. Any one who follows the history of the conflict between Trinitarianism and Arianism, for example, will see how painfully true that statement is. For a long time the Church oscillated between the two, sometimes leaning to the one and sometimes to the other, under the pressure, not of argument, but of purely accidental influence. At Nicæa in 325, Arius was condemned and Athanasius vindicated by means of "a mere snatch vote by a packed jury, since only some 300 bishops were present, whereas the Church contained at least 1,800." That Council was dominated by Constantine; but shortly afterward the Emperor changed his mind, and at the Council of Tyre in 335, Athanasius was deposed from his office and banished. By and by, the Arians were officially pronounced orthodox, and from being the persecuted they became the persecuting party. That, in a nutshell, is the whole history of the Christian Church—a partisan scramble for majority and consequent dominion.

But each theological party, whether on the throne or under a ban, claims to possess and teach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The reader may remember the bitter controversy in which Mr. Spurgeon took so conspicuous a part towards the close of his life. He believed that the majority of Baptist ministers in Great Britain were departing from the hyper-Calvinism of which he had been so brilliant a champion. To him Calvinism was the very truth of God, while the newer theology was a Devil's lie. So he sat in his infallible chair and fired consuming anathemas at his wickedly erring brothers. Poor fellows, they were all on the downgrade, and there was absolutely no hope for them unless they returned to the truth, that is to say, unless they agreed with him on every point; and as a mark of his disapproval and positive condemnation of their heresies he withdrew from the Baptist Union. But the men said to be on the downgrade were as confident of their orthodoxy as Mr. Spurgeon was of his. It is self-

evident that both parties did not hold the truth; and as each was as cocksure as the other it is a fair inference to draw that they were both equally in the dark and equally in error.

The same controversy is going on to-day. The present minister of the City Temple, the Rev. R. J. Campbell, M.A., is violently condemned by many as a theological pervert. In the *Christian* he is denounced as an underminer of the Christian Faith. His attempt to reconstruct theology on idealistic lines is characterised as an act of disloyalty to Christ. His denial of the Fall, of Original Sin, of the expiatory nature of the Atonement, of Endless Punishment, and of the usual doctrine of Forgiveness, show conclusively, we are assured, that the gospel he preaches is not the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. And undoubtedly if Paul, who claimed to be in possession of a special revelation from heaven, and to be the spokesman of the Holy Ghost, was right, and if the Church throughout the ages has been taught and led by that same Spirit, as is alleged, then Mr. Campbell must be wholly wrong. But was Paul right, and has the Church always or ever been the organ or instrument of the Divine Spirit? Mr. Campbell himself does not hesitate to declare that, on some points, at any rate, Paul was in error, and that the Church has seriously gone astray. Of course, if the Bible is "the inspired and infallible Word of God," and if Orthodoxy is a fair deduction from the Bible, the minister of the City Temple is out of court. On the other hand, if the Bible is not "the inspired and infallible Word of God," what test can Mr. Campbell apply to his teaching? By what authority does he preach his particular gospel? He asserts that he is giving expression to God's truth; but how are his hearers and readers to know that it is God's truth? On what ground does he make such a claim?

The other evening, Mr. G. Bernard Shaw delivered a remarkable lecture at the City Temple, in which he enunciated his belief in life as the power whose organs or instruments we are. He knew of nothing beyond or above this power, nor did he recognise any higher duty than that of duly expressing or performing the functions of that power. You may call it God if you like, he said, but I prefer to call it life. Then he ridiculed the idea of a personal and transcendent Deity, and grew merry over the doctrine of personal immortality. The only service known to him was the service of man for man's sake. Mr. Campbell expressed his dissent from Mr. Shaw's teaching, and avowed himself a believer in a transcendent God of love, who is struggling to get himself accurately expressed in human life. Now, who is to decide between these two men? Mr. Shaw does not believe in and will not have on any terms Mr. Campbell's God, or Mr. Campbell's immortality; and clearly the burden of proof rests on Mr. Campbell. The unbeliever has nothing to prove, or yet to disprove; it is the believer that is rightly called upon for proof. Mr. Campbell offered no proof or verification whatever, but simply iterated and reiterated his belief.

Mr. Campbell is nothing if not infallible. All are heretics who do not endorse his dogmas. He smashes up all other dogmas to establish his own. All who differ from him are hopelessly ignorant, and for their "ignorance one can feel only compassion and even a

certain measure of respect." This is egotism in its glory :—

"There is the ignorance of the materialist, who does not know the true meaning of life, and has not realised the true nature of abiding joy. There is the ignorance of the earnest man out of touch with the life of the Church, and who imagines all religion to be identical with reaction, instead of being, as it really is, the expression of the deeper soul of man. You have only to make that kind of man see this larger truth in order to bring him back to the Christ. I would defy any man, be he Christian or Atheist, scientist or pietist, to show that this is not a deeper, wider Gospel, more really worthy to be termed Glad Tidings, than any of the conventional caricatures of truth which pass current to-day in the name of religious faith."

The only comfort the Materialist, the Atheist, or the Unbeliever can expect from Mr. Campbell assumes the form of "compassion and even a certain measure of respect." But in spite of that comfort the poor fellow is in an awfully sad state. The pietist is almost as unfortunate because he adheres to the conventional theology. "For such a man as that," he adds, "I have nothing but respect, he holds the larger creed without knowing it." But it seems that the bulk of the Christians who reject the City Temple theology are "cowards and time-servers"; and because of them Mr. Campbell is led to observe that "there seems to be something in the average religious character tending to disingenuousness." "Religious people," he says, "are often found willing to employ the weapons of slander, misrepresentation, and petty persecution in order to destroy if they can an unpopular doctrine." This sentence is wholly true, as Freethinkers know to their cost, and as Mr. Campbell is finding out in his own case. Finally we come upon the following fiery flood of anger :—

"With all solemnity and deliberation I say these men are liars, like their predecessors in the days of old. Liars, not so much by what they say as by what they do not say. Liars, by trying to ignore, or misrepresent or distort the truth, preaching as though they do not believe it when they do. Liars, because they will not look facts in the face; liars, using the name of God."

Is not Mr. Campbell aware that in the opinion of his brother-ministers who repudiate his teaching, he may deserve to have that extravagant language applied to himself? Does he not also see that Secularists might with equal justice taunt him with being a liar, or with preaching a gospel he does not believe? But that kind of invective is not a weapon *gentlemen* usually employ. At any rate, I am sure that Secularists will not lash Mr. Campbell with the scourge he has thus put in their hands. They will simply ask him to bear in mind that he is only the victim of a vain delusion when he assumes the air of infallibility, and ascribes to all who differ from himself either fathomless ignorance or ineffable wickedness. Much of what he says about human nature is undeniably true; but all he says about God and his relation to the world is the product of his own fancy. He may sincerely believe that it is true; but in reality he is as ignorant of God as the rest of us. What he declares to be "the real Gospel of Jesus," the "eternal truth," is founded, not upon fact, but upon faith. People quite as scholarly, quite as devoted to the truth, quite as capable of judging, and quite as sincere lovers of their fellow-beings as himself, do not see in the teaching attributed to Jesus any message from God, or in Jesus himself any revelation from heaven. In any case, to say of what he believes that "no true man can reject it," or that it "commands intellect, conscience, and heart," without qualification, is to be guilty of high treason against the truth. There are myriads who *do* intelligently reject it, and whose intellect, conscience, and heart it utterly fails to command.

J. T. LLOYD.

Is Death the End?

THE utility of religion, said John Stuart Mill, did not need to be asserted until the arguments for its truth had, in a great measure, ceased to convince. True as

this statement is of religious beliefs in general, it applies with special force to the belief in a life beyond the grave. For, in an increasing measure, religionists rest their case for this belief on its supposed utility either in curbing the passions of men or in satisfying their desires. The clergy see one alleged proof after another breaking down, and they recognise—the cute ones first, the duller ones more slowly—that reliable evidence is not to be met with, and that an appeal to vague and only partly understood feelings represents their strongest and most permanent defence. Not that the appeal to sentiment is, at bottom, of any greater value than the appeal to logic, but people have been in the habit of interpreting their feelings in terms of the current belief in a future life, and there is a greater apparent strength—that is all.

It would not be correct to say that a sermon entitled "Is Death the End?" by Mr. H. C. Wallace, is entirely an appeal to sentiment, yet Mr. Wallace's arguments—much better stated than is usual with the ordinary run of sermons—are really based upon feelings, the meaning of which, must be in dispute whenever one discusses the question of a future life. No one, for example, doubts that people cling to life, that they would willingly prolong life were it possible, that serious-minded people feel how short is the time for the acquisition of knowledge, how little is gained in proportion to what remains unknown, and how wasteful appears the process by which the genius is stricken down and the fool preserved. All these things are admitted; but to parade them as proofs that there is another life in which things are differently arranged is in the highest degree absurd. We have no evidence that in any other direction natural arrangements are produced for the express purpose of satisfying our feelings; on the contrary, our feelings have to adapt themselves to facts, and why not here as well as elsewhere? Moreover, it may be noted that all these may derive a considerable measure of satisfaction once they are regarded from the proper point of view. The curious thing is the manner in which the religionist rules out all other explanations because they conflict with the belief in a future life, and then holds up this as the only theory that offers satisfaction.

Mr. Wallace's sermon, as I have said, is much above the average of such productions, and two admissions may be noted at the outset. The common cry of the clergy is that life only becomes worth living after one is dead. Mr. Wallace, who is not a clergyman, I fancy, insists that this life is worth living whether there is another one or not, and also that the moral law remains what it is, even though one gives up altogether the belief in a future life. He also sees the futility of quoting the resurrection of Jesus as a proof of immortality. "It does not," he says, "help us much to know that someone, altogether different from ourselves, could rise from the dead." A very simple thing to see and to say, but one of those things that not many of the clergy do see, and still fewer of them have the honesty to say.

Mr. Wallace thinks he has three good arguments in favor of a future life, although, to be fair, it must be stated that he does not regard these as proofs, but only as affording strong indications in favor of immortality. These three arguments are arranged under the headings of human goodness, growth, and greatness, but they are all contained in the sentence that "immortality is necessary in the economy of things." And what Mr. Wallace means by this is that things do not proceed as well here as we should wish them to, and therefore we have reason for assuming that they will proceed more satisfactory elsewhere. Now this, for a Christian Theist, is a most dangerous position to take up. For every Christian believes that the world we are living in, equally with the world it is assumed we shall live in, is God's handiwork. Consequently any plea for a future life based upon the shortcomings of this one is really an impeachment of God's method of administering justice. The plea asserts that faults exist, and assumes, without any reason beyond our desire for a

better state of things, that events will be differently ordered elsewhere. In addition, there is a further difficulty for the Theist to face, not often enough noticed. If man is only here, as Mr. Wallace says in his "school time," then as our natures are fashioned, roughly perhaps, to meet the exigencies of our present environment, either the future life must resemble the present or we shall be as much out of place as a fish on dry land, or a land-living mammal thrown into the sea. And if the future does resemble the present, then it remains to discover what purpose is served by the break of death, that could not be better served by conferring immortality upon man in this life. Of course, there are very good reasons why we are not immortal here, but a recital of these in no wise helps the Christian to surmount the difficulty.

Mr. Wallace asks, "Have all the ages conspired together to produce man that he may be cut down and annihilated?" A question permissible as a piece of rhetoric, but quite out of place as an argument. For the ages have "conspired" to produce man only in the sense that all the ages have conspired to produce a river, a microbe, or an earthquake. Each is as much the result of antecedent and co-operating conditions as the other. The birth of a man is of no more consequence to "all the ages" than is the birth of a tadpole. If we are not certain of anything else we are tolerably certain of this. John Fiske is also quoted as saying that "God is not like a child that builds a house of cards to blow it down again." But John Fiske knows no more about it than I do or than Mr. Wallace does; and to put an absurd opinion into quotation marks does not rob it of its absurdity, it only emphasises it, and sometimes illustrates the absurdity of those who select it. Besides this is exactly what nature is always doing. The growth of every complex organism is more or less like building a house of cards and pulling it down again. Organs are built up only to be remodelled into something different. Nature at large is a constant process of building to destroy and destroying to build. All nature does what Mr. Fiske says God does not do; and if there is a God then nature is only carrying out God's intention.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Wallace should be constantly appealing to unreasoning sentiment under the impression that he is pursuing a scientific argumentation. Our life here, he says, is just a fragment. Admitted, but not in the sense that Mr. Wallace intends. He means it is a fragment of our total personal existence. But this is not true, or at least we have no grounds on which to say it is true. It is a fragment of life as a whole; it is a fragment of the life of the race, and in playing its part as a fragment of a continuously developing whole, fulfills its proper function. We are told that "nothing comes to its fulness here," which is not true; and also that "no man has ever done his best," which is not true either. Things do reach their fulness and men have done their best. What Mr. Wallace means is that we can generally conceive things as better than they are, but then, we do not conceive this as the result of individual effort, but as the result of further racial development operating through the individual. And this view of the case wipes away most of Mr. Wallace's difficulties. He evidently imagines that unless an individual can go on living for ever he has not done his best, and his extinction is waste. But a person has done his best when he has made the most of the opportunities that present themselves. That he feels he might one day do better is only evidence that he feels how much there is to do, and this is the condition of his doing anything at all. A desire for something better is the reply of the organism to unpleasant stimuli. Without this progress would be an impossibility. Nor is the extinction of the individual waste. The work of a man, be he poet, painter, musician, statesman, or aught else, remains imbedded in the experience of the race, providing the stepping stones for after generations, and he who does not live in this manner

confers no benefit upon anyone by continuing to exist in any other.

Mr. Wallace, as I have said, does not believe that in the absence of another life this one would be worthless, only that it would be incomplete. I mentioned above that our natures had been fashioned for life in relation to an earthly environment. It may now be pointed out that one factor in this environment is the factor of death. If Mr. Wallace reflects he will see that all his regrets are based on the fact of death. But conceive death abolished, and with an eternity before each, what need would there be to lament the time it takes to acquire knowledge? All eternity would be before us, and a million years spent on learning the multiplication table would not expose one to the charge of wasting time. And what hold would human affections have upon us if relatives and friends once with us were with us for ever? Love is due to the circumstance of life; it is hallowed and preserved by the fact of death.

It is a fact, we are told, that although we may be thankful for living here, we have a hunger that the present cannot satisfy. I deny that this is so. The present life, other things equal, would satisfy all so long as the desire for life remains. It is not a future life people long for, but the present; some of them translate their feelings into a desire for another life when to live as long as they wish here is seen to be an impossibility. But conceive science matured, and human intelligence so master of natural forces as to preserve all against the attacks of disease and the blows of adversity, prolonging life until the organism is literally and completely worn out, and what desire for a future life would there be then? The truth is that this desire lives upon our weakness, our ignorance, our general helplessness. It translates feelings in accordance with the crude philosophy of a more ignorant age, and appeals to it as decisive evidence against the reasoning of a more enlightened one. That there is no evidence in its favor is becoming increasingly evident; that there is a spurious sentiment in its support may be admitted, but a sentiment that does not rest upon persistent fact is doomed to die out, even though its disappearance may be long delayed.

C. COHEN.

They Are Coming Round!—II.

(Continued from p. 763.)

If we may trust Professor Sayce, the Egyptians never became monotheistic, though one ancient king tried to make them so—by physical force, of course. All monotheistic religions are persecuting. Gods, when many are compelled to act on the principle, "live and let live"; when one God claims to be the only one all others must fly or be expelled. Heavenly rulers are never anything but the shade and echo of earthly kings.

It is interesting to know that there were sceptics in Egypt 4,400 years ago, and probably much earlier. Here are four verses from the "Song of the Harper," and the reader will see that Omar Khayyam was anticipated by this very ancient poet:—

"What is fortune? say the wise.
Vanished are the hearths and homes;
What he does or thinks, who dies,
None to tell us comes.
Have thy heart's desire, be glad,
Use the ointment while you live;
Be in gold and linen clad,
Take what gods may give.
For the day shall come to each
When earth's voices sound no more;
Dead men hear no mourners' speech,
Tears can not restore.
Eat and drink in peace to-day,
When you go your goods remain;
He who fares the last long way,
Comes not back again."

The Book of Job, and the much later Ecclesiastes, echo the sentiments of that poet; and the world

itself is slowly awaking from the idle dream of immortality. Brainless conceit and ignorant self-importance—above all, the greed of priests—will keep it up for generations yet; but it is doomed and must vanish away. Dr. Sayce adds:—

“At a far later date, a treatise was written, in which, under the thinly-veiled form of a fable, the dogmas of the national faith were controverted and overthrown. It takes the form of a dialogue between an Ethiopian Cat—the representative of all that was orthodox and respectable in Egyptian society—and a Jackal, who is made the mouthpiece of heretical unbelief. But it is made clear that the sympathies of the author are with the sceptic.....and it is the cat and not the jackal who is worsted in the argument. In this first controversy between authority and reason, authority thus comes off second best, and just as Epicurus has a predecessor in the author of the ‘Song of the Harper,’ so Voltaire has a predecessor in the author of the dialogue.”

Two interesting points emerge from this—our faith in truth and unbelief in dogma are much more ancient than is generally supposed—far older than Christianity; and further, there is no evidence that those ancient sceptics were murdered or otherwise persecuted, as they certainly would have been if Christian priests had had to deal with them.

Following this record of scepticism are some very liberal sentiments from the learned professor, liberal, though marked by a slight limp here and a halt in another place. He condemns the practice of certain parties who read their own modern ideas into ancient books, and then says, “We can understand the spiritual and abstract only through the help of the material; the words by which we denote them must be drawn, in the first instance, from the world of the senses.” Ah! true, true! And when words become spiritual they are so uncertain, unsteady, so dreamy and vague, that no two persons can ever agree upon their meaning; they exhibit at every turn such a kaleidoscope of ever-changing colors and shapes that the rapt beholders become the more maddened the longer they gaze. Brotherly love turns to bewilderment, fear, hate, malignity; and hence all pious quarrels, persecutions, massacres, and charitable cruelty—the most conspicuous features of Christian history. Divine revelation, all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, and all saintly visions and ecstasies arise from honest words perverted to spiritual uses. And the professor seems to perceive that, for he says, “Thought is impossible without the brain”; and “A religion is necessarily built up on a foundation of metaphor.” Exactly. Remove all that is material from religion, and its God or Gods, its heaven, hell, devils, souls, spirits, are seen to be mere metaphors, that is, words robbed of all definable sense and signifying nothings. It is refreshing to find a pious scholar confessing so much as Dr. Sayce does; and we do our people a wrong if we fail to utilise what he gives us. It is a treat to find our foes echoing what we have been and are ostracised, abused, and persecuted for teaching. How can they attempt our conversion in face of their own confessions and what those confessions imply? Their persecution loses all justification and excuse when they adopt and teach our fundamental doctrines—as this gentleman does. We have all along expected them to do so; and every year more fully realises our anticipations. The future belongs to us, My Friends! and even in the present we have a far more indisputable proprietary than our enemies have ever realised. We may be scattered and apparently feeble compared with the armies that oppose us—the organisations and the blind prejudices that block the world’s advancement; but our power is most potent and our philosophy is the “corrosive sublimate” that is incessantly at work dissolving the false and fatal institutions of religion, and transforming the world into a scene fit for human residence and a proper field for the rational and healthy development of our common nature. Shall we then drop our work when our foes themselves are coming to our assistance and are scattering truths that are most deadly to all that the priest most values? Decidedly not. But I must on.

There is much in Professor Sayce’s Gifford Lectures that I should like to criticise; and it would be quite easy to rip it up or tear it to pieces; but space forbids the attempt. Besides, my object is to select such portions as confirm our own opinions, for I wish to show how much those pious scholars agree with us, in spite of their environment and hereditary prejudices. I am not reviewing his work, but utilising it for the best of purposes, the propagation of Free-thought.

The Egyptian religion is far too large a subject to be described here; but from its huge bulk I may select an item or two in passing, jotting down such notes as may seem necessary as I proceed. The Egyptian appears to have been anything but select or particular as to what he believed. Whatever of religion his fathers passed on to him he took for truth, and never dreamt of calling any part of his creed in question; nor did it occur to him that the mutually contradictory elements of his religion required any reconciling. In this respect he was neither better nor worse than the average Christian, whose creed is fully as false and absurd as any that ever prevailed, although Dr. Sayce assumes its truth and reasonableness both, which shows that he has never studied his own superstition in any independent sense, though he has that of Egypt. Could he be brought to stand outside his own creed as he stands aloof from the Egyptian, he would very soon perceive that both were alike in all essential respects, both of savage origin, both hereditary, and both absolutely false. In fact, as we shall see, very much of his own creed was borrowed or stolen from Egypt, the ancient delusions and metaphors that enslaved the dwellers on the Nile having been worked up afresh to enslave the nations now called Christian. There is no new religion, there has not been any new one since history began. The developed religion of Egypt had come from many sources and from savage and barbarous and semi-civilised tribes; it underwent many changes in the course of time; and there is scarcely one element in Christianity which was not prominent in the Egyptian religion before the Jews were Jews, not to mention the advent of Christians.

I must summarise very briefly what Dr. Sayce gives in detail, not always referring to the particular page I am quoting. The creative Word or Logos was an ancient Egyptian superstition, very ancient indeed before the fourth gospeller used it to bamboozle his deluded readers. The self-grown, or self-existent God was also a dweller on the Nile before the Israelites were a separate tribe; and there too gods were from unrecorded time clothed in flesh, which flesh was “an integral part of the divine essence.” “The Word was made flesh” was far from being a new doctrine when the Judæan Christ incarnated or enfleshed himself in humanity. The Egyptian kings were the incarnation of God the Sun, as the Fourth Gospel represents the Christ to have been—“the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” This superstition dates from earliest Babylonian times, from which people the Egyptians derived it. It can, says Sayce, be traced back to 3,800 years B.C. But in Babylon the gods were in human form, in Egypt bestial. In the Bible we find both; the Gods of Genesis were human only; in other parts of the Bible God had “wings”; and in the New Testament the Holy Ghost is a pigeon, Christ a man, a lamb, and in later times a fish.

My author would like to be able to show that, while the savage was, and is, sensuous and materialistic in his religious conceptions, he and his fellow Christians are quite different; but the task is, of course, infinitely too great for him to perform. Yes, and he is compelled to confess as much. “This sensuous and materialistic conception of the spiritual,” he says (p. 47), “has lingered long in the human mind; indeed, it is questionable whether, as long as we are human, we shall ever shake ourselves wholly free from it.”

The fault, good sir, is not in human nature, but in religion, in which there is nothing beyond the "sensuous, materialistic" elements; and the authors of the Bible practically confess that on every page. God is said to be spirit; but spirit never becomes anything but wind, breath, animal life; and even life is identified with blood. An abstract God does not exist; and it was that overpowering conviction which incarnated the Christ and created the saints of the later churches. And what of your eucharist, supper, or mass? You not only *embody* your God, but you still solemnly eat and drink him! Ay, and you incessantly address your hymns and prayers to his ears and heart, and vainly expect his hand and tongue to be employed on your behalf. An abstract God has never yet been worshipped. Yours is sensuous or nothing. You appear before his face; you house him in your fanes; you make a noise to awaken him; you do your best to enchant or charm him with your magic songs and Sunday pantomimes—mere developments of savage corroborees and pomps barbaric. Why, even your most extreme Quakers, Pietists, and Mystics have never been able to excogitate a non-material God, or to invent a worship that is not wholly sensuous. Your God (or Gods), your worship, your religion, will become non-sensuous what time they cease to be, but not till then. Go to, go to! Your "sanctified" imagination, in its sublimest visions, represents the consummation of your gospel scheme as a resurrection of flesh, bones, blood, skin, hair, and all human elements, and a heaven of gold and jewels, of living water and of food and feeding that shall sustain a fleshly immortality! No more baseless superstition can be named than your proud assumption that your religion is non-materialistic spiritism.

Dr. Sayce clearly perceives that the Egyptian and other Pagan heavens are nothing but duplicates of earth and mundane experiences; but he is stone blind to the patent fact that his own is ditto—nay, not quite stone blind; for at lucid intervals the "scales" of his eyes slip down, and a distressing vision of the truth assails and disquiets his orthodox complacency. But he never parts with his childish assumption that his own religion differs essentially from its own parents. Yet he crowds his pages with incontestible proofs that Christianity is but a later development of Babylonian and Egyptian superstitions, as those were of older savage cults. Professor Sayce may fondly wrap himself in the mantle of Elijah, an ancient Jewish God, or don the seamless tunic of the heaven-descended Son of Mary; but he has as good as told the public that his covering is, after all, but "a goodly Babylonish garment," which one or more Jewish "ole clocs" pulled out of a Pagan ditch, and worked up again "as good as new." True, the fashion has been altered to meet more modern tastes and conditions, but the fabric is identically the same, with here and there a patch of another color borrowed from the produce of more Eastern looms. "The Pied Piper" himself could not have looked more comic than do "Christian" scholars when strutting in the beggarly garments of long-forgotten Pagans, though they do call their antique vestments "the robe of righteousness." Could those Pagans revive and reclaim their own, what sorry objects those "Christians" would appear! Their spiritual nakedness would be complete, for the ancient owners would demand every stitch and thread of their covering.

Still, I owe Dr. Sayce a considerable debt, and must not be too severe upon his weaknesses. An able man floundering in the "Serbonian bog" of Christian superstition is more an object of pity than of scorn; and his case is no worse than mine might be, if the emotional side of my nature were not weaker than the intellectual. I know as well as most, the tremendous force of hereditary superstition; and if I jest with present-day Christian professors, it is because duty compels me to do so. To see Jews and Christians bound hand and foot by transparent falsehoods and the blunders and illusions of their distant predecessors, their brains addled by rabbinic poisons and noxious drugs of priestly con-

coction, were enough to make one weep, if tears were of any avail in such a case. Laughter and jest are infinitely better instruments than groans and sighs and tears for dissipating superstitions and emancipating the slaves of rabbis, priests, and mediums—so my thirty years' experience assures me. When humor and ridicule are founded upon fact and solid argument, when the arrow of wit is tipped with adamantine truth and feathered with the plume of a lively fancy, it goes through the solemn armor of the saint like lightning through the tree it rives.

JOS. SYMES.

(To be continued.)

Bishops Elect.

WHEN Disestablishment takes place Nonconformity will come into its own. It will need no more million guinea funds. It won't try the least to amalgamate the various societies. It disdains privilege, power, monopoly, and trusts. When the present mighty ones are displaced it will have no ambition to replace them from its ranks.

We see it exemplified in several cases, such as by the Pastor who has as much respect for a certain gentleman as any man living (no need to include the dead). It is probably not because he plays golf on Sundays and passed the Licensing Act of 1902, etc. Why did some Nonconformist (what a paradoxical term really!) ministers who upheld the late Boer War retract their opinion lately? Was it because of after-light, or because the Sultan was damned or working men condemned? Was it lack of time or desire, or was the salary of £3,000 being more profitably added to in other directions, that sadly necessitated the discontinuance of a young men's column, etc.? Do they not need help as much as ever? Perhaps, however, there were too many begging letters.

The elections were nearly all over, and the excitement in the country had somewhat subsided. For its many failings and propositions the Unionist party had received an almost unparalleled check, and Liberal and Labor candidates galore had been returned to the new Government, giving it a great majority. The desire to throw off the yoke of apparent tyranny, bondage, and exclusiveness, and the determination to support greater freedom of speech and action, together with more liberal sentiments and amelioration of evils for the majority of those who existed, was rampant, and the protest exhibited itself at the polls. Nonconformity that at one time was part and parcel of Conservatism had gone hand in hand for Liberalism because of the disabilities of the Education Act and the tardiness of Licensing Reform.

The gall and wormwood to Nonconformist ministers, however, was that they hadn't a chance any way, and that the power of the Bishops, as well as their salaries, was increasing, so that theirs was likely—were they fortunate or unlucky enough to have any—to diminish. Consequently pride, among other things, prompted them to assist at political meetings, to open their premises to denunciations of all persons and politics of opposite views. Why shouldn't Nonconformist parsons have power too? They are not the least autocratic when you know them. They disdain power, and all ideas of wanting to become Bishops in principle or practice. Their sentiments are as high as those of the Labor members, who would as soon go to — as become landlords. Veritably! Like Labor and extreme Radical members, they said a certain salary was sufficient; now their wails rise to heaven for increases, in spite of their incomes and luxuries being practically doubled. Precepts as to learning in whatever state we are in therewith to be content, apply to their congregations, not to them. There is no inconsistency; it is simply the march of progress and evolution. Their interests are absorbed in the interests of the people; that is

one of the reasons, too, for the payment of members, as it will only be a charge on the whole.

In one of the provincial constituencies, on the identical day on which the election took place there—which was a mere coincidence—a Nonconformist minister was married. Rich and poor alike had subscribed to the mission of which he was a component—a main—part, down to semstresses and washer-women and men who wore patched shirts. Never again! There were no more than twenty carriages, in order that his deeds may not be known among men; there was a swell service at the chapel, so that humility might possess his soul; the presents numbered two hundred—the missionary debt was another matter, and had no bearing just then; the dresses were sumptuous, and the banquet was held in one of the hotels in the town. The bridegroom couldn't help it, of course; it was the bride's people's business, and they were prominent Nonconformists. He would have put his foot down and said, This is not synonymous with my work; but the overwhelming sense of his own importance precluded it, and "shall not the meek inherit the earth"? This worldliness was not pride or self-advertisement; it was only one of the necessary phases in the nature of a Benedict who exalted Christ and the people, not himself. But the question, What would Jesus do? is not to be applied under all conditions and circumstances.

When one subscribes for the promulgation of a good work one must not look at the intentions or doings of the worker. When one pawns his coat to subscribe to good objects, and in order to increase self-denial funds, it should not concern one how they are administered, nor should one inquire or adjudicate the manner or standard of living of those who administer them. They are not concurrent; besides, it is another story, and "you gave to God." There is no wrong or tyranny, because these holy people are working out our social, moral, and spiritual salvation. Poor, dear, sweet priests. Ah! alas! They are being killed all the day long for our collective welfare, and there is no knowing what they are doing for our political and civil liberty; and all with a single eye to God's and the people's glory. It is bizarre.

After all, a change of dynasties may only mean the same process inversely—that is to say, merely a change of gown, not of personality.

Why should we be collectively gulled and mulcted in this political dodge for power and place? Because self-interest must be lost in the interest of the race.

Men may come and men may go, but truth goes on for ever, and must prevail. The people, not the individual, must reign. And so far, what?

WILLIAM CAGAR.

AMBITION AND GREAT MEN.

We exaggerate the ambition of Great Men; we mistake what the nature of it is. Great Men are not ambitious in that sense; he is a small poor man that is ambitious so. Examine the man who lives in misery because he does not shine above other men; who goes about producing himself, pruriently anxious about his gifts and claims; struggling to force everybody, as it were begging everybody for God's sake, to acknowledge him a great man, and set him over the heads of men! Such a creature is among the wretchedest sights seen under the sun. A *great* man? A poor, morbid, prurient, empty man; fitter for the ward of a hospital than for a throne among men. I advise you to keep out of his way. He cannot walk on quiet paths; unless you will look at him, wonder at him, write paragraphs about him, he cannot live. It is the *emptiness* of the man, not his greatness. Because there is nothing in himself, he hungers and thirsts that you would find something in him. In good truth, I believe no great man, not so much as a genuine man who had health and real substance in him of whatever magnitude, was ever much tormented in this way.—*Thomas Carlyle*.

In the church to look at farces oft I linger of a morning,
In the theatre sit at evening, from the sermon taking warning.
—*Heine*.

Acid Drops.

"The Lord of Hosts be with you and give you victory." Thus the Norwich Radical Association telegraphed to the Liberal candidate on the day of the Huddersfield election. The Lord of Hosts *was* with him. He is always on the side of the biggest crowd—or the biggest battalions, as Napoleon put it in military language.

There ought to be some humor in human affairs. The men, and the women too, seem to have taken themselves with wonderful seriousness at Huddersfield. It was reserved for the lads to contribute the fun. A number of them, armed with sticks and a banner, hustled the crowd in the streets on election day. Their banner bore the inscription, "Votes for Boys." Those jolly youngsters will become solemn men in time—and some will go to church and some to chapel—in short, they will be spoiled.

There is a terrible chortling in the political world over very small victories. Mr. Arthur Sherwell, the Liberal candidate, certainly won the seat, and that counts for everything on a division in the House of Commons. But just let us look at the election figures for a moment. Mr. Sherwell polled 5,762 votes; Mr. Williams, the Labor candidate, polled 5,422 votes; and Mr. Foster Fraser, the Conservative candidate, polled 4,844 votes. Now what does this mean? The Conservative candidate polled 498 less than one third of the total number of votes, which was 16,028. Those 498 were distributed amongst the other two candidates, the Liberal getting 420 and the Labor 78. It follows, therefore, that the difference between the Liberal and Labor polls was less than 1 per cent. It also follows that the successful candidate polled 36 per cent of the electors, and that 64 per cent really voted against him. That is how he "represents" Huddersfield. Actually—not technically—he represents a trifle over a third of the constituency.

Now our object in stating these facts is not at all political. Mr. Sherwell having won the seat in these circumstances, it will be declared that Huddersfield has endorsed the Liberal policy on the Education Bill. Well, it hasn't. Mr. Sherwell's 5,762 votes may be reckoned in favor of the Government policy, but 4,844 of them are cancelled by Mr. Fraser's votes against it. The balance left is 818. But against that you have the Labor vote of 5,442. All that number of electors voted for this plank in Mr. Williams's program: "Education.—Moral Instruction, but no Religious Teaching." What nonsense it is for the Liberal leaders to say after this that the policy of Secular Education has no strength of support in the country. That is our point.

It is understood that Hell is proud of the Devil. The Belgian Premier says that the Belgian nation "feel a legitimate pride" in what Leopold has done in the Congo.

A contingent of the "Holy Ghost and Us" Society, consisting of the Rev. Frank Sandford, its leader, and Charles Holland, who is supposed to be a reincarnation of Moses, embarked on board the *Rebecca Cowell* to sail from Boston to Palestine. She is now reported to be missing. We hope the "Us" have not gone to the bottom. It would be very awkward if the H. G. went down with them.

"I'm coming home to you love." This is what the Rev. C. F. Aked says to his Liverpool congregation. But will he stay with the object of his deathless affection? We fancy not. The Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, New York, which he has been called to, is full of big pots and millionaires, and Standard Oil Rockefeller is one of them. The salary is described as "enormous." But money will not weigh with Mr. Aked. Oh dear no! He will decide on very different grounds. Of course! Yet we can all guess his decision. He already says that he was born on the wrong side of the Atlantic, and that it has been the dream of his life to become an American citizen. No doubt he will follow the dream.

Mr. Hall Caine says that if Mr. Aked goes to New York "it will enormously increase his personal position in the world." Fancy! Mr. Aked's "Master" had his personal position in the world increased by being shifted a few feet—from the bottom to the top of a cross.

The Samaritans who came to England hoping to sell an old scroll of the Pentateuch do not appear to have been successful. They want £5,000 for it, and neither Jew nor Gentile will shell out the money. The British Museum—

one of John Bull's starved though splendid institutions—couldn't find £5,000 for anything; not even for the two stone slabs that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai containing the ten commandments "written with the finger of God." This Samaritan scroll is claimed to be a thousand years old, and to be a copy of the original manuscript written by Abishua, son of Phineas, the grandson of Aaron. All this is gravely set forth in a long article in the *Tribune*. But students of the subject know that the Five Books of Moses were not in existence until many centuries afterwards. They do not belong to the earliest of Old Testament books, although they are printed first, but to the later ones.

The following paragraph is taken from a newspaper report of a recent London County Council meeting:—

"Mr. Hubbard presented a petition, signed by practically all the clergy and ministers in the neighborhood, asking the Council not to grant a theatre and music-hall licence to the new Brixton Theatre."

No wonder Mr. H. A. Jones, the playwright, said in his lecture the other day at Boston that the great cause of the poverty of the drama in modern England was the puritanism of religion. For our part, we go a step further, and accuse the men of God of the most sordid professional jealousy. They look upon theatres and music-halls as formidable rivals to churches and chapels; and in the name of the Lord they demand trade protection.

A Mahatma—not an "All-Round-My-Hat-ma"—who resides in Bloomsbury, is reported to have his reception room crowded with persons seeking advice and counsel. "Are you prepared," he asked one interviewer, "to give absolute devotion to me?" "No," was the reply, "not to you, but I am to the truth." "Ah!" said the Mahatma, "that is not sufficient, you must give yourself up to me, myself, with all your mind and heart, for I am the truth." But it didn't come off. Sometimes it does come off—and pays.

According to a Laffan telegram from New York, a fiendish murder has been committed at Sullivan, Indiana. James Hoole, a miner, was seized by three fellow-miners, and put to death by slow torture. Two of them held him down whilst the third cut strips of flesh off his body. Yet the country in which this happened, and in which thousands of murders occur every year, subscribes millions of dollars for the conversion of the "heathen."

The humbug of Christianity is flagrant in America. The whites and the blacks are both Christians, yet their common Christianity has no power to allay the bitter race hatred between them. The *Church Standard*, a paper published at Philadelphia, admits "the complete obliteration of religious sympathy between the white and black people." Such is the practice of the people who are always boasting that it was the great Apostle of Christianity who declared that God had made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth.

The fact of the matter is that the Apostles' Creed has outlived its time, and the modern conception of what Christianity is stands in outspoken antagonism to several leading teachings of this Creed. Take the single statement concerning Christ's miraculous birth from the Virgin Mary. It is undeniable that at least one-half of the theological professors and docents in the Protestant faculties of the German universities deny this doctrine *in toto*.—*Frankfurter Zeitung*.

The little maid was told that if she was so naughty she would not go to heaven. "Oh, well," she sighed, "I've been to two theatres and a party and a circus. I can't expect to go everywhere."

Mr. Rufus Isaacs, M.P., speaking at the annual meeting of the Reading Liberal Association, said that so long as he could get religious education which was not denominational in schools he should vote against secular education, but if he had to choose between denominational education at the expense of the public, or secular education, then he would, although he regretted it, have to vote for secular. As long as he has to vote for it his regrets don't matter to anyone but himself. But is not the gentleman's attitude rather contemptible? As long as he and his friends can get a profitable injustice he is not going to vote for justice; he is only going to vote for justice when the profit of the injustice accrues to the enemy.

On the evening of Mr. Rufus Isaacs' speech a presentation was made to Mr. Hickmott, who recently retired from the

secretaryship of the Association. It took the form of a cheque for £250, a marble clock, and an illuminated address. We wonder if this is the Mr. Hickmott we used to know many years ago as a Secularist.

Miss Salt, addressing the Aldershot Women's Liberal Association, said that—"They would be surprised to know that Bible-folding was numbered amongst the sweated industries, but she was glad to say it was now being diminished." Perhaps so. But that is no credit to the Bible Societies. They paid the women folders starvation wages as long as they could, and only improved under the pressure of indignant public opinion.

Streams of Gladness contains another foolish article by Henry Varley, ex-butcher and revivalist—and first-class bigot. We notice an editorial announcement that, largely in consequence of this ill-educated and ill-conditioned person's articles, the paper will appear in the new year as *The Vanguard*. "New machinery," the editor says, "has been laid in at our works, our staff increased, and (D.V.) we expect to set out with our January number with a circulation of 5,000." Laying in new machinery to print 5,000 copies of a paper smaller than the *Freethinker* once a month is a joke that will be appreciated by those who know anything of the printing trade.

Henry Varley keeps going for the Rev. R. J. Campbell, of the City Temple. Henry Varley is a Christian. Mr. Campbell isn't. Henry Varley says so—and he ought to know.

Henry Varley has great powers of belief. That is because he has such a slender stock of information. He confesses to believing that "the fall of man took place in the garden of Eden." This, he says, is "neither poetry, nor allegory, but solid historic fact." "It is written," he says—and that ends it. And if there were not so many credulous fools about it would end Henry Varley too.

"The probability," Henry Varley says, "is that Adam was from fifty to eighty years old before Eve was formed and created." No wonder Eve called him "Old man." But, after all, Henry Varley is not as entertaining as Saint Augustine. That gentleman thought that Adam was born thirty years old. This is beyond the reach of the Protestant champion's fancy.

Adam and Varley would look well in a museum—stuffed. We regret that Adam is missing; but Varley will be available in due season.

"Should Choirs be Abolished" was the heading of a column in the *Sunday Chronicle*, written by "A Church Organist." According to this writer no professional cathedral vocalist has an atom of respect for the services or the clergy. They speak of the men of God with "bitter and withering expressions of scorn." "You are more severe than G. W. Foote," he said to one of them lately. "We know 'em better," was the reply.

A South African subscriber of ours received a written copy, evidently by a lady, of "An endless chain prayer." It was just a few lines of usual silly supplication, addressed to Jesus, and ending "Amen." The recipient was asked to send copies of it to nine other persons, who would perhaps send it to nine other persons each, and in that way it would go round the world. Finally, we suppose, Jesus would hear; which implies that he is very deaf. But he cured others of deafness, we are told—and why can't he cure himself?

"Major" Linacre, of the Salvation Army, having charge of its social operations in Scotland, says he has received requests from substantial applicants for good wives, who can be trusted to look after homes and husbands conscientiously. After that there is no need to ask "stands Scotland where it did?" A hundred years ago—witness the poems of Robert Burns—Scottish men never thought of doing their wooing by proxy. They enjoyed doing it themselves. They wouldn't have handed it over to anybody else then—not even to a Major in the Blood-and-Fire Army.

General Booth is said to be contemplating an appeal for £1,000,000 for operations in Rhodesia. Why not make him Chancellor of the Exchequer and give him a free hand? He would then be in his glory—for a time. When he got used to it he would sigh for more exchequers.

Mr. John Japp, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, was not elected as a religionist. But he evidently fancies he was. He presided at General Booth's meeting in the Hippodrome, and heartily welcomed him in the name of the city. This was a gross impertinence. Mr. Japp can do as he likes. The Lord Mayor of Liverpool should remember his representative capacity.

In the course of that Hippodrome lecture or sermon—or whatever it was—General Booth expressed sympathy for the criminal classes, but he said he would deal sharply with the irreclaimable. He would place them on a convict island, with no other paper to read than the *War Cry*. That ought to settle them.

Ophelia Synder, a Salvation lass, shot three people in New York, including a physician named Berhoff, who was taken to the hospital in a dying condition. She said that Berhoff had stolen some of her ideas. We should have thought that impossible. Are Salvationists a different species in America?

"Controversy has convinced me," the Rev. R. J. Campbell says, "that the only practical solution is secular education, with facilities for religious instruction; full public control; and no tests for teachers." Mr. Campbell is progressing favorably. In time, perhaps, he will drop the "facilities," too.

Emperor William has been saying that a drowning sailor has but a moment in which to think of three things nearest and dearest to him; first, home—second, God—third, the Kaiser. William was always modest.

"I know," the Kaiser says, "that I can always, everywhere and at every time, depend upon my young bluejackets." Does he mean that the old ones know him too well?

Mr. Haldane goes on preaching. Why doesn't he leave the War Office and fill a pulpit? "Unless a man was capable," he has just said, "of having kindled in him the sacred flame of religion he would not be a great leader." No doubt Mr. Haldane has the "sacred flame." Few think him "a great leader."

Mrs. Eddy, the head of the Christian Scientists, is never going to die. Perhaps not. But it is a thousand to one she will have a funeral.

Rev. T. Phillips, a Bloomsbury Free Churchman, has been saying that the patron saint of England used to be St. George—and now is Sandow. Not a bad exchange. Sandow is probably stronger and certainly cleaner than St. George.

Rev. J. B. Johnstone, of Falkirk, says that the museums and libraries in London and other great towns are used as convenient places for lads and lasses to court in. Well, they must court somewhere. They do it in church. And if the Rev. J. B. Johnstone has never noticed it he is too good for this world.

The landlord of the "Angel and Royal Hotel" at Grantham has to pay forty shillings yearly for a sermon to be delivered in the parish church against drunkenness. We dare say he shells out cheerfully for such a cheap advertisement of his business.

The ignorance of college students of Biblical literature is "universal, profound, and complete," according to Professor William Lyon Phelps, who occupies a chair in English at Yale University. Professor Phelps says that "if all the undergraduates in America should be placed in one room and tested by a common examination on the supposedly familiar stories of the Old Testament—I mean on such instances as Adam, Eve, and the Garden of Eden, Noah, Samson, David, and Goliath, Moses and Pharaoh—the results would be a magnificent contribution to American humor." He inquired of one fine specimen of American manhood what he thought Shakespeare meant by the phrase "Here feel we not the penalty of Adam," and the specimen replied: "It was the mark put on Adam for having slain his brother." If appointed a committee of one to regulate college examinations in English, the professor declares that he would "erase every list of books that has thus far been

tried or suggested," and would "confine the examination wholly to the Authorised Version of the Bible." We agree with Professor Phelps that young men should be made acquainted with the contents of the Bible. Their ignorance of it, which is not our fault, is probably the first cause of their believing it to be true and inspired.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

An examination of the actual facts at once destroys in the most merciless manner all belief in a preordained harmony of the inner and external world.—*Helmholtz*.

How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end, and are ordered by a humane intelligence! It is the most utter falsehood, and a crime against the human race.—*Richard Jeffries*.

LACONICS.

Difficulties are but doors of delight.
It is better to right wrongs than to revenge them.
The lazy man always is proud of his patience.
No great work was ever done before a mirror.
Only a mercerised religion needs to wear a label.

—*Unity*.

Death of Mr. Stewart Ross.

MR. W. STEWART ROSS, editor of the *Agnostic Journal*, died on Friday, November 30, and the funeral takes place on Thursday, December 6, at Brookwood Cemetery, Woking; the special train leaving the Necropolis Company's Station, Westminster Bridge-road, at 11.30 a.m.

The family have asked me to attend the funeral and speak a few words at the graveside, and I have agreed to do so.

I only knew Mr. Ross very distantly, he was not exactly a personal friend of mine, and he was never connected with the Freethought movement which I have the honor to represent. Both his strength and his weakness marked him out as a solitary campaigner. He never could have worked with a party, and a party never could have worked with him. There was something in him of an old Covenanter born out of due season. But I am not called upon to write an analysis of his character, and perhaps I am not qualified for the task. What I am really concerned to say is this; that while he betrayed leanings from time to time towards a certain supernaturalism, or at least a certain mysticism, he never wavered in his bold and trenchant opposition to Christianity. For a quarter of a century he attacked the popular superstition with relentless vigor. Naturally I leave it to others to estimate his powers as a writer. Anything I might say on that point might easily be open to misunderstanding. But I am bound to say that he fought a long and gallant battle against the hateful enemy of liberty and progress that Voltaire had in mind when he cried "Crush the Infamous!" He gave the main energies of his life to that effort. Whatever else may be said of him, no one can rob him of that praise. And I fancy that he would have been well satisfied to know that his tomb might honestly bear the inscription, "Here lies a soldier of Freethought." That he was from first to last. And as soldiers of Freethought are so few in this country he has earned the distinction that will mark him in the minds of many by whom it is an honor to be remembered.

G. W. FOOTE.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, December 9, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.: 7.30., "Mr. Bernard Shaw on Darwin, Shakespeare, and God."

December 16, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

- C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 9, Glasgow; 16, Belfast.
- MR. SYMES'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—December 9, Leicester; 15, Bedlington; 16, Newcastle; 17, Hetton; 18, Spennymoor.
- THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £6 16s. Since received: R. Chapman 1s., W. Appleby 2s. 6d., T. Grosset 8d., Mrs. E. Adams 1s., R. Lloyd 2s., W. Malcolm 10d., James Neate 2s. 6d., J. Baker 6d., W. Mackay 1s., West Ham Branch 5s., David Watt 2s. 6d.
- GUY A. ALDRED.—Pleased to hear that your twenty-nine Monday evening Freethought lectures have been so well reported in the *Islington Gazette*. Never mind the threats of obscure, irresponsible Christians.
- R. J. HENDERSON is "glad to hear that Mr. Bonte's pamphlet is going well. I have some," he adds, "and give them away." This correspondent is thanked for cuttings.
- R. J. CALLOW writes that she is "delighted with the *Freethinker*." We are glad to hear it. Thousands of people would be delighted with it if it were introduced to them. Will our readers help in this matter? They can do so very easily, by placing the paper in other hands when they have done with it, by taking an extra copy for systematic distribution, and by sending us names and addresses of persons who might become regular subscribers after receiving from us six consecutive weekly copies gratis and post-free. We shall be happy to forward the paper to any number of addresses.
- F. JOYNER.—Pleased to have your cheerful letter from the "ends of the earth." Thanks for good wishes.
- OLD SUBSCRIBER (South Africa).—See "Acid Drops."
- J. MCCARTHY writes:—"I wrote you last year asking you to forward the *Freethinker* to two of my friends free of charge. I am glad to say they take it regularly now, and attend all the lectures at All Saints, Manchester."
- T. H. ELSTON.—We have found room, but Tuesday morning is very late for such things. All we should receive on Tuesday is what could not possibly be sent before. We hope Branch secretaries will note this, and act accordingly.
- W. BINDON.—You shouldn't waste even halfpenny postcards.
- J. PARTRIDGE.—Glad to hear Mr. Symes had "good audiences" and such a "very warm reception" at Birmingham; also that, by the kindness of Miss Baker, he was able to spend a few hours with your committee at her house on the Saturday.
- FRENCH FREETHINKER IN LIVERPOOL.—Pleased to have your good opinion of the *Freethinker*, and not surprised that you do not see eye to eye with us in regard to the Separation Law. How is it that so many French Freethinkers, who are clear-minded and tolerant in other respects, are unable to put themselves for a moment at the Catholic's point of view? Had you done that you would have perceived the absurdity of suggesting that a public building, like a state church, might be used for a Freethought meeting in the afternoon and a Catholic service in the evening.
- G. VIGGARS.—We were not present at "George Eliot's" funeral. An open letter to the reverend gentleman you refer to would be paying him too much honor. He is not important enough. Thanks for your good wishes. We hope you will be able to bring off the contemplated debate at Crewe.
- R. JONES.—We understand that the cause of death was paralysis. It had been creeping upon him for years.
- J. W. PEARCE.—Glad to know the *Freethinker* is "the best treat you get."
- W. P. M.—Thanks for the *Christian Commonwealth* report of Mr. Shaw's discourse at the City Temple. It will be a help to us in our lecture at Queen's Hall this evening (Dec. 9).
- G. WOODWARD.—Will answer in a day or two.
- HAROLD ELLIOT.—It was not necessary in your case. Thanks.
- TAFFY.—Pleased to have your letter. Papers shall be sent.
- C. VERNIGH.—Don't ask who are most likely to be right. Form an opinion of your own.
- R. H. ROSETTI.—Acknowledged as from the Branch, which we suppose is right. Glad to hear Mr. Cohen had such a good audience at Forest Gate.
- GERALD GREY.—Your good wishes are cordially reciprocated.
- A. B.—Yes, the Mr. Ball who gave such valuable help to us in the matter of the *Bible Handbook* is the same Mr. Ball who wrote the scientific book you refer to.
- E. MOORCROFT.—Shall be considered.
- W. ROWLAND.—Sorry we have no means of tracing. Wholesale agents buy copies of the *Freethinker*, and we can't tell where they send them. But, of course, your efforts to promote our circulation must have done good.

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

J. BROUGH.—We are obliged.

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FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers the first of his two special lectures at the Queen's (Minor) Hall this evening (Dec. 9). His subject will be "Mr. Bernard Shaw on Darwin, Shakespeare, and God." Mr. Foote, on such a subject, ought to be entertaining. Freethinkers should make the lecture known amongst their friends and acquaintances.

Mr. Foote had capital audiences on Sunday in the Co-operative Hall, Newcastle-on-Tyne—the largest Freethought meetings that have been seen in that city for a great many years. Friends were present from several places on the Tyneside, including Mr. Peacock, of South Shields, who presided at the evening lecture. Mr. Foote was in first-rate form, and his lectures were much applauded. Plenty of questions were asked after both, but there was no formal opposition. Reference having been made to the partial restrictions sought to be placed by the local authorities on the use of licensed buildings by the Secularists, Mr. Johnson, chairman of the Independent Labor Party, rose after the evening meeting and declared that he and his colleagues were with the Secularists in their just demand, and would support it to the full extent of their power. This announcement was enthusiastically cheered.

The Newcastle *Daily Chronicle* gave a good report of Mr. Foote's evening lecture on "The Lords and the Education Bill" and noted the "large attendance."

London Freethinkers will note that their Annual Dinner, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, is fixed for Tuesday evening, January 8, at the Holborn Restaurant. Mr. Foote will preside, and will be supported by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Symes, Davies, Heaford, and other well-known speakers. The tickets are 4s., and can be had of the N. S. S. secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow to-day (Dec. 9) and lectures twice in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street. No doubt he will have his usual good meetings and hearty reception. Mr. Cohen will be lecturing in the district after the Glasgow lectures.

Northumbrians consider they have a special claim to Mr. Symes, as it was in their county that he was stationed as a Wesleyan minister, and it was in the Nelson-street Lecture Hall, Newcastle, where he gave his first lecture for Freethought after leaving the Wesleyan Body. As the date of that lecture was December 17, 1876, the local Secularists, in order to celebrate this thirtieth anniversary, have arranged for Mr. Symes to lecture in the Palace Theatre on December 16, on his "Thirty Years of Storm and Struggle for Freethought." Although quite ready to allow the local Socialists to charge for admission on Sunday to this Theatre, the Town Improvement Committee (the licensing authority) has drawn the line at the Secularists, so that a collection will be the only means available to raise the very large expenses entailed. It is confidently hoped, therefore, that the local friends of Freethought will rise to the occasion and turn up in force, and, at the same time, generously disposed.

It is intended to hold a Reception in Mr. Symes's honor in the afternoon preceding this lecture in the Cordwainers' Hall, Nelson-street. Already a large number of Mr. Symes's old friends from the outlying villages have expressed their desire to be present at this function. Anyone requiring tickets for the Tea and Reception (One Shilling) should apply to Mr. T. H. Elstob, 24 Woodbine-road, Gosforth, who will give them all information.

Not many are left of the late Progressive majority on the Camberwell Council. One of them is Mr. A. B. Moss, who has just been fighting the battle of the *Freethinker*. The new committee of the "Dulwich Library" soon raised an objection to this journal's being allowed to be upon that Library table. The matter came up for discussion on the main committee on Monday evening, November 26. The chairman of the Dulwich Library, in bringing up the recommendation of exclusion, described the *Freethinker* as a "a dirty publication—one calculated to corrupt the morals of the young." Mr. Moss challenged that description, and declared that if the gentleman would "put that down on paper" he would be prosecuted for libel. This had the effect of damping the gentleman's slanderous enthusiasm. The description was withdrawn, and a discussion took place on the merits of the question. Mr. Moss argued that if the *Freethinker* were excluded from the Library table the books of Darwin, Spencer, and Haeckel should be turned off the Library shelves. He himself, though a Freethinker, had voted in favor of all kinds of religious books being admitted to the Library. Why should the other side be less tolerant? He warned the committee that if the recommendation were carried he would bring the matter before the full Council, and that would give the *Freethinker* a fine advertisement. An excellent speech in favor of the retention of this journal was also made by a Church clergyman, and another by a Roman Catholic; and in the end, after a very animated debate, the recommendation of exclusion was defeated. Of course the Dulwich Library is in the "aristocratic" part of Camberwell—and the editor of the *Freethinker* doesn't belong to the Peerage, although the paper itself is aristocratic, in the sense that it is far superior to the common run of commercial enterprises that are dignified with the name of "the free press" of England. With regard to Mr. Moss, we have to thank him—not for the first time—for his bold and effective defence of our right to the ordinary privileges of citizenship.

Justice has the following notice of Mr. Cohen's "Salvation Army" pamphlet:—"This useful little pamphlet is a reprint from the *Freethinker*, exposing the methods that General Booth adopts to deceive the public in order to get subscriptions. It plainly shows that the Salvation Army as a religious body is a hollow mockery, and that his social schemes are really started as a source of revenue for the army. The pamphlet is for free distribution, and the secretaries of S.D.F. branches requiring copies can obtain them by applying to W. A. Vaughan, Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C. Subscriptions are solicited from those interested in the distribution of the booklet."

The North London Branch held a highly successful social evening on Thursday, Nov. 30, at the Branch meeting-place, 23 Seven Sisters-road, N. The first of a series of debates will be opened on Thursday, Dec. 13, at 8.30 p.m., by Mr. H. B. Samuels, on "The Necessity of Socialism." It is intended to carry on these debates on the third Thursday in each month until April. All N.S.S. members are welcome at these meetings, and those having an axe to grind are invited to apply to the Secretary, at the above address, for vacant dates.

At the National Liberal Federation's recent demonstration against the Lords' mangling of the Education Bill it was admitted by the *Tribune* descriptive reporter that the sentence in Mr. Thomas Burt's speech which "evoked the greatest enthusiasm" was the one in which he said: "I gave one vote against the Government on this Bill—for I voted in favor of secular education." This was greeted with "repeated cheering." A similar declaration by Colonel Herbert, a Welsh member and a fervid Catholic, was applauded to the echo. "Like Mr. Burt," he said, "I voted for the secular system, because I wished to see children of all creeds brought up together, and taught the common virtues which make men holy and nations great." Colonel Herbert "spoke haltingly and with hesitancy," and yet it was his of all the speeches that "made the most profound impression." Why? Because the man who speaks in the name of the ideal stands on a higher plane than the cleverest advocates of expediency, and even party political assemblies feel this in spite of themselves.

Mr. A. H. D. Acland, President of the Federation, roused the meeting more than once, but the *Daily News* admitted that "One of the most sustained outbreaks of cheering came with his reference to the secular solution."

"Towards Secularism" was a big headline over the *Daily News* report of the Congregational Union special meeting at the City Temple. "It was quite clear," the reporter said, "that the feeling of the assembly was running strongly in favor of the 'secular solution.'" The following is from the report of the President's speech—the Rev. J. H. Jowett:—

"He had hoped the gulfs between Christians were not so wide as once they were, but they were now told there was no common ground, no common creed or faith below denominationalism. Very well—that altered the entire field of vision and made all organised efforts for Christian unity a vain mockery. But the country would not much longer tolerate education being the cockpit of contending sects. National education and religious instruction would be permanently divorced. (Cheers.) Let the Bishops open their eyes and stop their madcap progress, or they would find that what they feared had actually come to pass. (Loud cheers.)"

In a leading article the morning after that meeting the *Daily News* itself said:—

"The religious difficulty is by way of solving itself. The secular solution increasingly commends itself to the country at large. That was apparent in the current of feeling at both the remarkable meetings yesterday. At Caxton Hall men of as opposite types as Mr. Thomas Burt, Nonconformist, and Colonel Ivor Herbert, Welshman and Catholic, declared in plain terms for secular education."

This is a welcome declaration from such a quarter. But why is Mr. Thomas Burt called a "Nonconformist"? Will the *Daily News* be good enough to tell us what Nonconformist Church he belongs to?

For a reason best known to itself, the *Daily Chronicle* burked all those references to secular education, and the applause which greeted them. Was it afraid? That also shows that the chances of "the secular solution" are becoming serious.

We have had so many hard things said about us by Christians that it is quite refreshing to hear something soft from one of them. Imagine our astonishment at receiving a sheet of verses called *Stanza and Jingle and Socialist Recitations*, with the following inscription opposite the title-page: "To G. W. Foote Esq.—A man—whose courage is worthy of the land that gave Nelson to the world; who has used the great English language in a way that no one has equalled for lucidity, and whom only William Cobbett has approached; who, an Atheist, and a lord among Atheists, has the sincere regard and respect of a Christian—THE AUTHOR." This is very extravagant praise, of course; but it may be set off against a lot of extravagant abuse. The man who wrote it must have some good in him, and for that reason, at least, some of our readers may like to get a copy of his little collection of verses. His name is Oliver Silversmith, the publisher is Abel Heywood & Son, Manchester, and the price is threepence. The author's Preface shows that he wields a smart satiric pen; and a satirist who can satirise himself is a sweet-natured person. Looking at the felicitous last verse of the comic "Song of the Sub." (Editor), and then at the serious and solemn "Two Paths," we incline to think that Mr. Silversmith has the possibility of doing really good work, if he will only take the trouble to do himself justice.

LIBERTY.

The fiery mountains answer each other;
Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone;
The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round winter's throne,
When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.

From a single cloud the lightning flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around;
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
An hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
Is bellowing underground.

But keener thy gaze than the lightning's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanoes; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.

From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapor and blast
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet, thy dawning is cast,—
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
In the van of the morning light.

—Shelley.

Books for Children.

Life and Manners. A Volume of Stories suitable for the Moral Instruction of Children. By F. J. Gould. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co. 2s. 6d. net.

The Children's Plutarch. "Plutarch's Lives" told in Simple Language: with an Index which adapts the Stories to the Purpose of Moral Instruction. By F. J. Gould. With Six full-page Illustrations by Walter Crane. London: Watts & Co.

WHILE the Churches are fighting bitterly over the religious education of the children in our elementary schools the Education Department has taken a great step towards secular moral instruction. "Moral instruction," the 1906 Code says, "should form an important part of every elementary school curriculum." It recommends that this instruction "should be direct, systematic, and graduated," and declares that it should be "on such points as courage; truthfulness; cleanliness of mind, body, and speech; the love of fair play; gentleness to the weaker; humanity to animals; temperance, self-denial, love of one's country, and respect for beauty in nature and in art." This is in keeping with a statement made by Mr. Birrell in the House of Commons on May 28 of the present year. The right honorable gentleman said that he attached considerable importance to teaching children the elements of morality, and hoped to do something to encourage it. "I am persuaded," he said, "that, rationally conducted, it can be made a very live and very real thing. I do not think for a moment that morality can only be taught upon a theological basis. I am quite sure that it can be taught, with spirit and with force, apart from such basis." This is an astonishing utterance for a Minister of Education in his place in parliament. It challenges the pretensions of the squabbling Churches, which all claim that their religion is essential to morality. It also makes light of a similar pretension which Mr. Birrell has involved in his own Education Bill. For if morality can be taught with spirit and force apart altogether from theology, there is really no moral objection to the policy of complete Secular Education.

Proceeding upon the lines of the Code of Regulations for Public Elementary Schools for 1906, and of Mr. Birrell's striking declaration in the House of Commons, Mr. F. J. Gould has produced what I have no hesitation in calling these two beautiful books, which should be of great assistance to school-teachers in giving moral instruction to their pupils, and of great interest and utility to children themselves who are old enough to understand them.

In the Introduction to *Life and Manners*, which is the more important of these two volumes, Mr. Gould raises the question "whether, in relating a legend, the teacher may or may not legitimately dispel the illusion by suggesting that the story is not true." He admits that others may not, and that some do not, answer the question as he does. "But my own opinion," he says, "is emphatic. I do not hesitate to convey to the children a hint as to the unhistoric character of a story, even in the very process of vigorous narration. I have followed this practice hundreds of times, and have never observed any consequent abatement of interest." "I maintain," Mr. Gould concludes, "that it is preferable to be frank. We gain intellectually, and lose nothing artistically."

Mr. Gould would probably admit that there is a special difficulty with regard to the Bible. Even so candid a Higher Critic as Canon Driver thinks that children should be allowed to consider all Bible stories as true, and taught the actual truth when they grow older. This policy is the one likely to prevail. For the Bible is not as other books. It is primarily a book of religion; it is called Holy; it is treated as the Word of God; and all the Protestant Churches directly, and the Catholic Church indirectly, are founded upon the theory of its divine inspiration. It appears to me that while the Bible itself is kept in the nation's schools it will never be treated rationally. It might be so, if it were bodily kept out of

the school, and the teacher were allowed to refer to any of its better-known stories by way of illustration. I will add that to use the Bible as a text-book of moral instruction seems to me utterly irreconcilable with the express language, as well as the vital spirit, of the Education Code. And I wish the Churches could understand this.

With respect to the moral aim of the stories that are to be told children in the schools, I am at one with Mr. Gould. But a prosy teacher would probably do more harm than good. Adults do not like being preached at; neither do children. Mr. Gould says that the moral teaching "must be perfectly definite in its aim." But if you make this too obvious to the child you are likely to miss your aim altogether. Tell a child some heroic story, and you see the good you have done by what should be sufficient signs; the flushed cheeks, the kindled eyes, the quickened breath, show that you have touched the springs of sympathy and imagination, without which all moral instruction is as dry, bitter, and useless as Dead-Sea fruit. Go farther than this, and the child's individuality may be roused against you; for what well-conditioned child is going tamely to be saddled and bitted, and ridden round the arena by a moral prig, with a free use of the "ethical" spur? Mr. Gould, I am sure, would be one of the first to admit this. He allows already that "it is in some cases even a fatal mistake to formulate the 'lesson.'" Should the "lesson" ever be formulated at all at the end of a fine story? That is the point. And it is really worth considering. There are plenty of moral lessons in Shakespeare, but they are never formulated, they are always implicated.

Let me take an illustration from Mr. Gould's own story—a true one—of a brave girl who was alone in the house with her mother, who was very ill. Her dress caught on fire while she was cooking at the stove; she would not call out for help, lest it should alarm her mother, and make her worse; and in trying to quench the flames herself she received mortal injuries. She was taken to the hospital, and Mr. Gould ends his narrative as follows:—

"In an hour she was dead.

Brave girl; for her mother's sake she gave up her own life.

Brave soul, how noble was the silence in which she bore the pain!"

Now I do not like criticising anything in this beautiful book, on which Mr. Gould has expended such a labor of love; yet I venture to suggest that this ending might be improved by cutting away the moral reflections. It would then run thus:—

"In an hour she was dead.

For her mother's sake she had given up her own life."

That she had borne her pain in silence was already known. The great thought that she had given up her life for her mother's sake might have been left in the child's mind to shine by its own light.

For the rest, I joyfully welcome this book. It is full of grand, beautiful, and pathetic stories; of noble and exalted ethics; and of fine and delicate expression. Useful as it may be to teachers giving moral instruction in schools, I think it would be even more useful in the homes of England. I should rejoice to know that a million homes had a well-thumbed copy of it. What a contrast it is to the namby-pamby stuff so often dished up for children by ladies and gentlemen—particularly ladies—who seem to think that all they have to do in writing for them is to be as sentimental and silly as possible. Mr. Gould's book has stuff in it. I cordially commend it to Secularists for use in their own families. It is well-printed and well-bound, and the price is extremely moderate.

Eleven years ago, reviewing a book of Mr. Gould's called *Tales from the Bible*, I observed that, from the secular standpoint, a child had far better read Rollin than the Hebrew scriptures. "Above all," I said, "let him read Plutarch, who, historically and humanly, is worth all the Bible writers put together." That observation of mine, I understand, was the germ of the *Children's Plutarch*. Mr. Gould takes the best

heroic stories out of that grand old biographer, and tells them afresh in vivid and simple but always dignified language. A normally constituted boy should revel in this book, and I really do not see why girls should not enjoy it too.

Mr. Walter Crane's illustrations do not appear to me to be worthy of Mr. Gould's text. Mr. Crane's genius is decorative. His anatomy leaves much to be desired.

One word in conclusion. I have often been asked to recommend good secular books for young people. Henceforth I can always recommend these two by Mr. Gould. They deserve more praise than I can give them.

G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence.

MR. COHEN'S CRUSOE.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

"I think I have made it plain how I regard the man upon a desert island. It is quite true that a man in such a position would still retain all the feelings associated with the current morality, for the simple reason that his nature has been fashioned by it. But that under such conditions he could be called moral or immoral I quite fail to see. Mr. Reid says, he will continue to live and, therefore, physical morality is of importance. Important to him in view of this desire, I grant, but if he shortens his life by his conduct, I quite fail to see why he should be called immoral."

SIR,—There is an elision in the last sentence which in essence is presumably understood, but when stated definitely considerably modifies or intensifies the position of Mr. Cohen's Crusoe. The monarch of all he surveys is understood to abdicate his control knowingly, willingly, and unresistingly. Of course, there can be no such thing as morality without knowledge of its opposite; so that, indeed, this elision is bound to be understood, which puts Robinson's morality in another and different category. Mr. Cohen's Crusoe's morality is then measured by his control, and his control in turn is the standard of his morality, which is in no way consequent upon his relation to man Friday, but a duty he owes to himself.

Robinson, if he was an honest man to start with, would not rob poor Friday because he had control over him, though such things have been done. But then we are taking Robinson to be an honest man; in which case, whether he dwelt on a desert island or lived in a bank, he would still be Robinson, and Mr. Cohen's Crusoe's honesty would still be the measure of Mr. Cohen's Crusoe.....

"Timon.—The man is honest.
Old Athenian.—Therefore he will be Timon."
—Act I., scene 1.

If a man be honest (I use the term in the generic sense—that is, true to himself)—he will be governed by honesty, just as he is governed by one of honesty's factors, the multiplication table. Morality is not governed solely by fellowship or social intercourse; if it were, the churches and chapels would be full of rigidly righteous, honest men, and no Diogenes would be required in the mart or judge on the bench. The law does not mirror society, but is only an ideal of what society ought to be; and, although the ideal is not very exalted, yet the law employs thousands and tens of thousands of men to keep society within that modest law. True morality is a standard of the mind amongst minds, perfectly independent of cotemporary minds or any particular time, and the law in elemental acts takes it for granted that all sane men know right from wrong. We are conversant with such expressions as "something to live for," "nothing to live for"; and in the silly season, society takes alternate sides, just as fickle fortune has dealt her favors, in deciding the momentous question, "Is life worth living?" But the question is perennial, for they never carry it to a division; though some poor fellow, madder than the rest, carries the agitation so far that reason loses her seat. Of course, extremes of fortune may make a man an "object," as Mr. Cohen says; but then he would, under these circumstances, be less an "object" on a desert island than he would be in Mayfair, whose social influence could be only said to be forming his morality in a stoical sense. Most men move in society without any mental reservation as to how this man or that man is disposed towards them: their conduct and demeanor is guided by what they owe to themselves; that is the standard they have fixed in their own minds, and the bigger the man the firmer adherent he is to his own standard. Indeed, if the mind be the man, what man ever found "himself" in society? In one sense, every man in reality is a Crusoe; every man lives upon a desert island; for every man is heir, not of the present, but the deserted past. How

strikingly Shakespeare has drawn this characteristic of a noble mind in his Timon of Athens! Society in Athens dubbed Timon the man-hater. Not so Alcibiades, who could appreciate Timon's loyalty to the standard of humanity he had fixed in his own mind, and who, when Timon's death is told him—Timon, "who scorned the droplets which from niggard nature fell"—thus "apostrophises his shade" in his everlasting mansion upon the beached verge of the salt flood:—

".....Rich conceit
Taught thee to make vast Neptune weep for aye
On thy low grave, on faults forgiven.
Dead is noble Timon."

DROPLET.

Thanksgiving Day.

By MARK TWAIN.

EVERY year, every person in America concentrates all his thought upon one thing—the catalogueing of his reasons for being thankful to the Deity for the blessings conferred upon him and upon the human race during the expiring twelve months.

This is well, and as it should be; but it is too one-sided. No one ever seems to think of the Deity's side of it; apparently no one concerns himself to inquire how much or how little he had to be thankful for during the same period; apparently no one has good feeling enough to wish he might have a Thanksgiving Day too. There is nothing right about this.

Do you suppose everything has gone to his satisfaction during this year? Do you believe he is as sweepingly thankful as our nation is going to be, as indicated by the enthusiasm which will appear in the papers on the thirtieth of November from the pens of the distinguished persons appointed to phrase its thankfulness on that day?

We may be unstintedly thankful, but can that be really the case with him? If he had a voice how would he regard the year's results in Russia? What would he be thankful for there? The servants of that government in patriotic obedience to its commands, have lately killed and wounded 50,000 Jews by unusual and unpleasant methods, butchering the men and women with knife and bayonet, flinging them out of windows, saturating them with kerosene and setting fire to them, shutting them up in cellars and smothering them with smoke, drenching children with boiling water, tearing other children asunder by the methods of the Middle Ages. Doubtless the most that he can be thankful for is that the carnage and the suffering are not as bad as they might be.

He will have noticed that life insurance in New York has gone tolerably rotten, and that the widow and the orphan have had a sorrowful time of it at the hands of their chosen protectors. Doubtless the most that he is thankful for is that the rottenness and the robberies have not been absolutely complete.

He has noticed that the political smell ascending from New York, Philadelphia, and sixty or seventy other municipalities has been modified a little—temporarily—and is doubtless thankful for that transient reprieve.

He has observed that King Leopold's destruction of innocent life in the Congo is not as great this year as it was last by as much as 100,000 victims, because of the diminishing material. He has also noticed that America and the other great Powers—accessories before the fact and responsible for these murders, especially America—are properly thankful on our Thanksgiving Day and have been for nineteen previous Thanksgiving Days, and without doubt he is himself thankful that matters in the Congo are not as irretrievably bad as they might be, and that some of the natives are still left alive.

One is justified in fearing that the Deity's Thanksgiving Day is not as rosy as ours will appear when the thanksgiving sentiments blossom out in the journals, and that if he, now voiceless, should utter a sentiment, it would be tinged with a pathetic regret.—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

If we lie down in the grave, the whole man a piece of broken machinery, to moulder with the clods of the valley, be it so; at least there is an end of pain, care, woes, and wants. If that part of us called mind does survive the apparent destruction of the man—away with old-wife prejudices and tales. Every age and every nation has had a different set of stories; and as the many are always weak, of consequence they have often, perhaps always, been deceived.—*Robert Burns*.

In the history of mankind wisdom occupies only a footnote.—*W. R. Paterson* ("Benjamin Swift").

Christmas Cruelties.

The Humanitarian League earnestly appeals to all humane persons at this Christmas season to do their utmost toward lessening the many sufferings needlessly inflicted on the lower animals under the plea of ministering to human fellowship and enjoyment.

Some of the commonest barbarisms of this great annual British religious festival are too familiar to us all to need more than a bare mention.

First among these is the Cattle Show, held conveniently at Christmas-time to fall in with the abnormal demand for meat—the Cattle Show, where royalty and the aristocracy unite in contesting with the farmer the glory of producing the pig or ox which can carry the greatest amount of unwholesome fat. Next, the overladen shops of the butcher and poulterer, piled up with the mangled bodies of slaughtered creatures, and festooned overhead with strings of singing-birds; the prize ox driven through the streets, decorated for sacrifice with ribbons and colored flowers, or exhibited at the local butcher's for the delectation of his lady customers, who go to gaze and select the particular part they would like to bespeak for their own tables.

The story of the vaunted roast beef so much in evidence at this season, is indeed harrowing. If any evidence is required of the carelessness and cruelty of the manner in which our slaughter-houses are conducted, it can be found in the report of the Admiralty Committee published last year. From this we learn that the slaughtermen are "made up of all kinds of people," that they have no proper training, that they are often "full of beer" when at their work, that the appliances are inefficient, and there is no proper supervision. It reveals, in short, a perfectly disgraceful condition of things. In the hurry of the specially "beefy" season all the horrors are naturally accentuated.

The process of flaying alive, and even of dismembering animals before the breath has left their bodies, is far from uncommon in private slaughter-houses. A horrible case of cruelty to a bullock was investigated by the magistrates at Newcastle-on-Tyne, an inspector of the R.S.P.C.A. having caught a slaughterman in the act of skinning the animal before it was dead. The man did not deny this charge, but merely said that it was done to save time, and jauntily offered to pay any fine imposed.

If you make inquiries you will find that a large proportion of the flesh, palmed off on the poor as "English killed" meat, is foreign. As a proof of this, one of the principal butchers in a cattle port lately confessed that not ten English beasts had been killed there in one week to supply its flesh-eating population of 250,000. Yet the beasts that supply the shops are mostly killed on English soil, after the protracted miseries of a sea passage more or less long and torturing.

It is not till the transit of live cattle by sea is altogether stopped that horrors will cease. If a poor bullock gets seasick he frequently dies; if he is even weaker than his unhappy comrades, and lies down after two days and nights of balancing on sloppy boards and tossing about, he is trampled under the others' hoofs, and squeezed by their huge bodies or suffocated by the pressure and foulness. The law forbids that cattle should be carried otherwise than in pens, of a fixed size and strong make, with proper footholds to avert slipping, if possible; while not more than four animals are allowed for each pen, or five if they are small. But what are such precautions to meet the pitching of a vessel in a storm at sea?—and they even are frequently disregarded. Through the livelong night, in one part of the world or another, scenes such as these described are enacted for the supposed profit of mankind.

The one fact that stands out clearly at this season is the strange incongruity of the whole proceeding. Were our object to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Darkness, we know no way more appropriate than by that great wail of anguish beginning weeks beforehand on the plains of America and other far-distant lands, gathering in its progress fresh increments from all sides, and converging to these cities of England, which we call centres of civilisation.

Those who are willing to read and distribute literature on the subject are requested to write to the Secretary of the Humanitarian League, 53 Chancery-lane, London, for free copies of a pamphlet on "Christmas Cruelties."

[CONTRIBUTED].

The Lord hath ordained that ye worship none but Him; and kindness to your parents, whether one or both of them attain old age with thee: then say not to them "Fie!" neither reproach them; but speak to them generous words, And droop the wing of humility to them out of compassion, and say, "Lord, have compassion on them, like as they fostered me when I was little."—Mohammed.

MEANING OF WAR.

What, speaking in quite unofficial language, is the net-purport and upshot of war? To my own knowledge, for example, there dwell and toil, in the British village of Dumdrudge, usually some five hundred souls. From these, by certain "Natural Enemies" of the French, there are successively selected, during the French war, say thirty able-bodied men; Dumdrudge, at her own expense, has suckled and nursed them; she has, not without difficulty and sorrow, fed them up to manhood, and even trained them to crafts, so that one can weave, another build, another hammer, and the weakest can stand under thirty stone avoirdupois. Nevertheless, amid much weeping and swearing, they are selected; all dressed in red; and shipped away at the public charges, some two thousand miles, or say only to the South of Spain; and fed there till wanted. And now to that same spot in the South of Spain, are thirty similar French artisans, from a French Dumdrudge, in like manner wending; till at length, after infinite effort, the two parties come into actual juxtaposition; and Thirty stands fronting Thirty, each with a gun in his hand. Straightway the word "Fire!" is given; and they blow the souls out of one another; and in place of sixty brisk, useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses, which it must bury and anew shed tears for. Had these men any quarrel? Busy as the Devil is, not the smallest! They lived far enough apart; were the entirest strangers; nay, in so wide a Universe, there was even, unconsciously, by commerce, some mutual helpfulness between them. How then? Simpleton! their Governors had fallen out; and instead of shooting one another, had the cunning to make these poor blockheads shoot.—Carlyle, "Sartor Resartus."

LIBERTY.

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

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

—John Hay.

My heart is sad, and with misgiving
I ponder o'er the ancient day,
When this poor world was fit to live in,
And calmly sped the time away.

Now all seems changed which once was cherished,
The world is filled with care and dread;
As if the Lord in Heaven had perished,
And down below the Devil were dead.

But care of all hath so bereft us,
So little pleasure life doth give;
That were not some faint Love still left us,
No more I'd wish on earth to live.

—Heine (Leland's translation).

Can you tell me why a sectarian turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalise the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful: but still your children of sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril snuffing putrescence, and a foot spurning filth.—Robert Burns.

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 (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Mr. Bernard Shaw on Darwin, Shakespeare, and God."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N.S.S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 7.30, Conversazione for Members and Friends.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (23 Seven Sisters-road, N): Thursday, Dec. 13, at 8.30, Debate, "The Necessity for Socialism"; opener, H. B. Samuels.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Liberal Hall, Broadway, Forest Gate): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "What Must I Do to be Saved?"

COUNTRY.

FAIRFORTH SECULAR SUNDAY SCHOOL (Pole-lane): 6.30, Oldham Concertina Band.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen, 12 noon, "Christianity, Freethought, and Woman's Rights"; 6.30, "Some Barbarisms of Civilisation."

GLASGOW RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (319 Sauchiehall-street): Wednesday, Dec. 12, at 8, David Ross, "Free-will."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Milton Hall, Daulby-street): Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner, 3, "A Study in Hells"; 7, "The New India."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, W. C. Schweizer, "Do We Require a Substitute for Christianity?"

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Dec. 13, at 8, Councillor J. W. Johnston, "Blatchford's 'Bottom Dog.'"

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, Octagon): 7, E. E. Lowe, F.L.S., "Hereditry." With lantern illustrations.

PORTH BRANCH N.S.S. (N.S.S. Room, Town Hall): 6.30, Owen Simons, "Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?"

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Captain Duncan's Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Branch Meeting.

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