

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Who loveth not the brother at his side,
How can he love a dim dream deified?*
—JAMES THOMSON ("B. V.").

Christian Honesty—and Logic.

HERDER, the great German historian, said that Christian veracity deserved to rank with Panic faith. This was the lesson he derived from a study of ecclesiastical history and religious controversy. The phrase was a fine one, and it stuck. But what a pity it was that a companion phrase was not designed to express the value of Christian logic.

No one should be surprised that dishonesty and stupidity go together. There is a common impression that rogues are very clever, but this is a great mistake. Rogues are sometimes clever in a certain sense, but their cleverness is generally nothing but cunning. The brains that go to the making of a big promoter of shady companies—say a Whitaker Wright—are nothing to the brains that go to the making of a great scientist like Darwin, or a great engineer like Baker, who built the Forth Bridge and dammed the Nile.

The dishonesty of the Christian clergy, and the stupidity of their arguments, will astonish no student of history or of human nature. Clearness of intellect is an indispensable element of moral elevation. A certain veridity of mind is necessary to probity of character. Those who are in a mental muddle are very likely to be in a moral muddle. The men and women who are kind and helpful to those around them (not professionally, or ostentatiously, but in the common course of life) and whom others instinctively rely upon in emergencies and trials, are pretty sure to be persons of superior intellectual power. They may be educated or uneducated—that is an accident, but they perceive and reflect instead of moving in mist and uncertainty. One of the highest virtues is well called *consideration*; consideration for others is the essence of humanity; and the very word implies *thought* as well as *feeling*.

Freethinkers are frequently struck by the fact that Christian controversialists are unable to see the real points of an argument. They often assume that these people are simply dodging the issue. But the truth is that they are generally quite incapable of seeing it. Christian leaders, of course, are sometimes deliberately dishonest; either for business reasons or out of professional pride.

These reflections are a natural introduction to what we have to say this week on the alleged conversion of John Stuart Mill. We dealt last week, in "Acid Drops," with the Bishop of Durham's extraordinary statement that Mill "died a believer," and the still more extraordinary "authority" he alleged. It will be remembered that the Bishop, being challenged, gave the name of the late Dr. Gurney who attended Mill in his last illness, and added: "Intimate friends of my family then resident there were told by him when Mill had passed away that, in his full conviction, Mill died a believer." This is publicly said for the first time thirty-four years after the event! The Bishop did not know Dr. Gurney. The

statement is that Dr. Gurney told certain persons, who told certain members of the Bishop's family, who told the Bishop, who tells the world. Round-about hearsay like this is advanced as decisive evidence—after a lapse of thirty-four years, when all the links, except the Bishop himself, are probably dead! Really it is childish. Yet the Bishop talks solemnly, people listen to him solemnly, and newspapers report him solemnly. The whole thing shows the solemn ineptitude that Christianity engenders—or fosters if it does not produce.

Even a comparatively sober paper like the *Christian World*, came out with the following paragraph:—

"Readers of John Stuart Mill's latest essays know how singularly his mind had mellowed in the Christian sense from the crude, cold scepticism in which he had been brought up from infancy. It was obvious from his own words that he was 'not far from the Kingdom of God.' The Bishop of Durham has recently stated that he knew, on private authority, that Mill died a Christian believer. Pressed for his authority for this statement, Dr. Moule explains that the late Dr. Gurney, of Nice, who attended Mill in his last illness, was the source of his information. Dr. Gurney, who was thoroughly trustworthy, was convinced that Mill died a believer, and said so at the time to intimate friends of Dr. Moule's family then resident in Nice. There is no doubt that John Stuart Mill was of a beautifully Christian spirit—and that is surely the main thing—and it is more than possible that increasing light came to his mind in his last days. That is the most that can fairly be said, for it is hardly wise—on what, after all, is mere hearsay evidence—to imply that Mill came round to the 'orthodox' position."

We pass over the cant about *mellowing*, and *crude*, *cold scepticism*, and *beautifully Christian spirit*. This is only the ordinary assumption of the Christites of their immeasurable superiority to non-Christians; an assumption which is refuted by criminal statistics as well as by common experience. Our point is, that the *Christian World*, while clearly perceiving that Dr. Moule's "evidence" is "mere heresay," does its best, by insinuation and innuendo, to give it a fictitious importance. The Bishop is mildly reproved, and then invited in to tea—with his convert.

The *Christian World* appears to be aware that Mill did not "come round to the orthodox position." The idea that he did so is perfectly absurd to those acquainted with the facts. Dr. Gurney may be dismissed. He said not a word about any change of opinion in the account he wrote of Mill's last hours, which was published in the *Daily News* of May 12, 1873. Mill's step-daughter, Miss Helen Taylor, who was with him at his death, published the manuscripts of his *Autobiography* and the *Three Essays on Religion* without suggesting that they did not represent his final views; and we have Mill's word for it that she was his intellectual helpmate after the death of her mother. Now the *Autobiography* (p. 239) contains this striking passage:—

"I am now convinced, that no great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought. The old opinions in religion, morals, and politics, are so much discredited in the more intellectual minds as to have lost the greater part of their efficacy for good, while they have still life enough in them to be a powerful obstacle to the growing up of any better opinions on those subjects. When the philosophic minds of the world can no longer believe its religion, or

can only believe it with modifications amounting to an essential change of its character, a transitional period commences, of weak convictions, paralysed intellects, and growing laxity of principle, which cannot terminate until a renovation has been effected in the basis of their belief, leading to the evolution of some faith, whether religious or merely human, which they can really believe: and when things are in this state, all thinking or writing which does not tend to promote such a renovation is of very little value beyond the moment."

Anyone who could read that passage, and then listen to chatter about Mill's dying a believer, is past praying for.

We will now take the testimony of Professor Bain—Mill's old friend and collaborator, who wrote a book upon him in 1882:—

"We may call his aspirations and hopes for a bright future to the race, a religion of humanity. To hold up an ideal that involves no contradictions to our knowledge, to inspire and elate the mind, oppressed by the dulness and hardships of the present life,—will be accepted by many as comfort of the spiritual kind, the real analogue of religion. And something of this effect is undoubtedly produced by Mill's later writings. With all this, however, the fact remains, that in everything characteristic of the creed of Christendom, he was a thorough-going negationist. He admitted, neither its truth nor its utility."

We are not discussing, mark, whether Mill had any leanings towards a modified Theism. Dr. Moule says he died "a believer"—and unless he means a believer in Christianity he is only juggling with words. Professor Bain says that he admitted neither the truth nor the utility of Christianity. Dr. Moule had no knowledge of Mill; Professor Bain knew him intimately. Which is likely to be right? We leave sensible and candid persons to answer that question for themselves.

G. W. FOOTE.

Fighting Against Fate.

EIGHTEEN Scotch clergymen—seventeen of them Presbyterians—have combined in the production of a recently-issued book on "Creed Revision in Scotland." These eighteen gentlemen, who doubtless represent a large number of others—cleric and lay—assert that the Westminster Confession is no longer possible to educated believers, and that the time has come when a restatement in terms of present knowledge and feeling is necessary. Those who properly appreciate the nature of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and to whom are known the men who were responsible for its production, and who know also the history of religion in Scotland, will likewise appreciate the significance of the result. It is at once fresh evidence of the break-up of Christianity and of the power with which modern civilisation is pressing on all religious beliefs. It is, indeed, from the last point of view only that the subject is of interest to outsiders. The mere revision of a creed is important only to those who, for various reasons, feel bound to perpetuate a dogmatic creed of some kind, and who are therefore faced with the problem of finding out what is the minimum of reason that will make the maximum of faith acceptable to the general public. To those who take a wider and a more human view, its interest lies in its being symptomatic of the revolt of reason against supernaturalism in general.

What is it that is responsible for this revolt against the Westminster Confession? As a creed it is a fairly logical production, and it cites numerous portions of the Bible in its support. The men who compiled it were among the keenest theologians of their day, and were certainly far superior to the horde of mediocrities who now man the Christian Churches. The knowledge possessed by the men of the seventeenth century on the subject-matter of the creed was precisely as much as that possessed by the eighteen Scotch clerics. No more and no less.

Nothing has been added; it was impossible to take anything away. What, then, is responsible for the change? The contributors to the volume would probably reply, "Christian feeling." But Christian feeling was there all along, and was, indeed, responsible for the perpetuation of the Confession. Christian feeling could hardly be the instructed as well as the instructor. Christian training, tradition, and education have all been in one direction—that of preventing any departure from stereotyped forms.

The force really responsible for this call for revision is the same that is making for the disintegration of all religious beliefs, and that is, in a word, the increasing pressure of civilised knowledge and feeling upon uncivilised beliefs. An official change of belief is never initiated from within—it is forced from without; and the liberalising tendencies within the Churches is in exact proportion to the effective pressure from outside. The proof of this is seen in the fact that even educated Christians have for years rejected all that is now objected to in the Confession, while outside these is the much larger public to whom it is all meaningless babble or stupid savagery. What the clergy realise in such cases is that they are too far behind the times, and that beneath their modern dress the public perceive the mediæval miracle-worker, and even beyond that the primitive medicine-man. The creeds in such cases play the part of rudimentary organs, and remind the public of their origin—an origin the clergy are only too anxious to hide. It is not, then, Christian feeling that makes for a humanising of religious formulas, but non-Christian civilised humanity that operates upon Christian belief. Humanity advances in spite of the creeds, and the whole effort of religious reformers is to bring their religion up to the contemporary standard of civilisation—which it never quite succeeds in reaching.

This not only gives us the real reason of these revisions; it also supplies us with the key to many of the heresies of the Christian Church and nearly all the modifications of Christian doctrine that have occurred. Properly, Christianity belongs to the East. Its whole spirit and temper is Eastern, and but for a combination of accidental circumstances would never have secured a dominant influence over the Western world. But its influence has never been complete; that is to say, it has never dominated the Western intelligence and spirit as Buddhism has the Eastern, or even as Mohammedanism has dominated its followers. Forced upon an alien population, its subjects have been generally more or less in revolt against it, and, even though outwardly and even consciously submissive, have changed and modified its teaching, much as the millions of China have seized and assimilated its conquerors. Thus what are called the corruptions of Christian teaching are more often than not the modifications necessary for its existence in a Western environment. Genuine Christianity never has existed, and never could exist, out of the East; and the proof of this is that every Church in Europe represents a compromise between what the East has given and what the West demands. Roman Catholic and Evangelical Dissenter are alike in this—each is "corrupting" Christianity so as to bring it into a closer working agreement with the Western temper. The "New Theology" crusade is only another illustration of the same truth. Living at a time when theological questions are losing interest for the mass of the people, and when social problems are assuming increasing importance, the promoters of this movement proclaim that doctrines are of no importance whatever, and that the truest Christianity is that exhibited in a life wisely spent in social service. It is one more added to the list of Christian "corruptions," which are nothing more than the modifications necessary to secure survival.

The curious thing is, that it is not more generally recognised how hopeless these devices are. In the very nature of the case none of them can be permanent. To bring Christianity into a working harmony with modern opinion, at no matter what sacrifice of

honesty, may be a very important task for those whose interests are locked up with its perpetuation, but what of those who are not in this position? One would expect a recognition here that it is impossible for Christian theology to be ever anything more than a drag upon modern thought. By its very nature it belongs to the past, and is bound to fight against change as long as it is possible to do so. It is no mere accident that, historically, Christianity has been antagonistic to reform, and has allied itself with the narrowest conservatism in both Church and State. It was a simple expression of the instinct of self-preservation, powerful with both organisms and corporations. New developments demanded new modifications as a condition of adaptations, but these adaptations never have represented, and never will represent, more than the smallest possible concessions to contemporary life. Something is surrendered, but much is retained; and what is retained is a guarantee that ere long there will be substantially the same fight all over again. The revisions and modifications in religious teaching never, therefore, represent anything in advance of the age, are never even abreast the best thought of the day. The most advanced theologian in Britain is only echoing in apologetic tones much that has been commonplace with really advanced thinkers for a century or more, and which educated people have been conversant with for a couple of generations. And, even now, the really important questions have not been touched. For these are not questions as to the nature of Christ or the relation of God to man, but whether or not the matter has been settled by what we know of the development of the God idea from the fancies of the primitive savage, and what is the place of the Christian myth in the history of comparative mythology. All the rest is a purely domestic quarrel among Christians—interesting enough to them, but of no importance to anyone else.

In a famous passage, Gibbon speculates as to what might have happened had Charles Martel, instead of beating back the Mohammedan forces in the eighth century, been beaten by them. Had this happened, St. Paul's might have been a Mohammedan Mosque, and the worship of Allah would have been dominant at Oxford and Cambridge. All this, and more, might have happened, but it by no means follows that European nations would now resemble an Eastern country where the faith of the Prophet is supreme. Mohammedanism would have been subjected to exactly the same forces that have been brought to bear upon Christianity, and with much the same result. Beliefs, like organisms, are subject to the operation of Natural Selection, and any belief that is destructive of the welfare of a race is either modified or crushed out. A race, in short, operates on any institution that is introduced, much as our organism does with food. It selects, assimilates, and rejects. And this is determined by forces quite beyond the control of any individual or combination of individuals.

And where beliefs or institutions are not injurious enough to give scope to the play of Natural Selection, Social Selection operates. Beliefs are then modified, not solely on account of their survival value, but because they fall short of certain social ideals. It is gradually realised that certain beliefs are not only destitute of social value, but tend to obstruct useful work in others. A system that has no principle of its own that can be applied to social life, and can only, at best, follow where others lead and re-echo their opinions, is doomed to lose its hold on the public favor. Whether it will lose its hold quickly or slowly will be determined by the complexity of its ramifications in society, and by the intelligence of the general public. But when a religion finds itself compelled to place in the background its distinctively religious teaching, and rest its claims upon a social gospel that did not originate with it, and which is tolerably common to all, its disappearance is only a question of time.

C. COHEN.

The New School Catechism for Scotland.

A LITTLE straw shows which way the wind blows. Events, in themselves insignificant, often betoken the actuality of mighty changes. Scotland is just now rejoicing over the birth of a new theological catechism intended for use in her public schools. But the appearance of this work marks the dawning of a new epoch in Scottish history. It clearly indicates that the people are losing touch with the hard, cruel Calvinism which held them in slavish subjection for nigh three hundred years. It shows, further, that even Scotland is gradually getting sick and tired of other-worldism. Compared with the Shorter Catechism, this one is mildness itself. In the latter, there are only 64 questions, as against 107 in the former. The new catechism omits the famous questions, "What is the chief end of man?" and "What is effectual calling?" The questions dealing with the metaphysical mysteries of the Godhead and with the Creation have also disappeared. Caledonian Freethinkers will be in glad agreement with the *Scotsman*, when it declares that the very circumstances under which this catechism came into existence prove that "Scotland has been formally and authoritatively divorced from the Shorter Catechism and its archaic Calvinism, on which, by the inspiration of John Knox, her children have been, as is ironically said, nourished for two centuries and a half." The *Scotsman* is extremely severe on the parish school as at present constituted. It says:—

"The Prime Minister himself has spoken professedly with deep affection of the parish school, which in childhood is still associated with the dark mysteries of a document handed down, musty and encrusted, through the long generations. To-day, that school is, in almost every part of Scotland, permeated with the gloom of an unintelligible doctrine, which is the same now as it was in the stern eighteenth century days, when the 'Men' found recreation in the darkest brooding of an unhappy mind. To-morrow, if the School Boards are as progressive as the Churches, the chains of the past will be struck for ever from the childhood of Scotland; every school where religion is taught may be lit up with the simple teaching of Christianity—or at least with teaching a great deal more simple than many ever hoped to see—instead of being darkened with forbidding formulae, suggestive of a condition of beatification so unattractive and incomprehensible as to be plainly undesirable to the juvenile imagination."

Now, while giving the School Catechism full credit for its numerous omissions as well as for its softening of many of the austerities of the Shorter Catechism, one cannot help being considerably surprised at the audacity of its framers in even thinking that such a document deserves to be endowed from the rates. There are denominations represented on the committee which originally stood boldly on the principle of voluntarism. The United Presbyterian Church, now incorporated in the United Free, zealously maintained that the legitimate functions of the State are of an exclusively secular character. The Rev. Dr. Hutton has devoted his long life to a vigorous interpretation and defence of that eminently reasonable position. That principle is now, alas, utterly forsaken and forgotten by all. Furthermore, the Free Church and the Catholic Church are expected to quietly acquiesce in a scheme of religious instruction in the preparation of which they have taken no part, and with the terms of which they may be in total or partial disagreement. Then, also, there are Jews and Secularists not a few in Scotland, of whose existence the framers of this catechism took no cognisance. Is it fair and just to compel such people to pay for the teaching of a religion which their intellect rejects? They are offered the privilege of withdrawing their children when the catechism is being taught; but that is a doubtful privilege, at best. Such withdrawal is a species of atrocious cruelty, to which no children should ever be subjected. To the Catholic, the Jew, and the Secularist this catechism is, for various reasons, objectionable. For one thing, it penalises every creed in the

land except the Christian. There is scarcely anything in it with which the Jew can conscientiously agree, the Secularist repudiates the whole of it as pernicious superstition, and to a Catholic, who has truly bowed the knee to Rome, it is a deplorable perversion of revealed truth. And yet these non-subscribing people are as genuine citizens of Great Britain as any members of the Reformed Churches. On what ground, then, can it be thought a righteous act to compel them to pay for the teaching of this catechism, or any other, in government schools?

I have said that there are significant omissions in the School Catechism. There is less theology in it than in the Shorter Catechism; but it is not less theological, nor is it more reasonable. It omits all references to the Fall of Man; but it treats of the human race as if there were no such thing as Science in the world. Take the very first question:—

"Q. Who created the heavens and the earth?"

A. God created the heavens and the earth and all that is therein."

The existence of God and the act of creation are assumed without the slightest evidence. The most eminent scientists of the day scout the idea of creation. Even Sir Oliver Lodge and Principal Lloyd Morgan vehemently oppose it. And yet this Catechism speaks of creation as a thing known to have literally taken place. The act was performed by God, who is declared to be "a spirit, infinite, eternal, and almighty, most holy, just, and wise, most merciful and loving." This "God shows his love for us by creating and preserving us, and by the mercies he bestows upon us every day"! This is reckless dogmatism. Does God show his love for us by creating parasitic protozoa to torment and destroy us? Does he show his love for us by sending floods and earthquakes and volcanic eruptions and shipwrecks and railway accidents to kill us by the score, the hundred, and the thousand? Does he ever preserve us from burning when we fall into the fire, or from drowning when we slip into the water, or from dying when we swallow poison?

Take two other questions:—

"Q. How has God shown the exceeding greatness of his love?"

A. God has shown the exceeding greatness of his love by giving his only begotten Son for our salvation.

Q. Who is the only begotten Son of God?

A. The only begotten Son of God is the Lord Jesus Christ, who from all eternity was with God and was Good, and who became our Savior."

This is called "a simple catechism," but it is supremely difficult to perceive where the simplicity comes in. To take a subtle Alexandrian speculation about the Logos and treat it as if it were a historical fact is surely to transgress all the laws of simplicity. Here is another proof of the exceeding simplicity of the catechism:—

"Q. How did the Lord Jesus Christ become our Savior?"

A. To become our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ laid aside his glory, humbled himself, was born of the Virgin Mary, lived on earth a perfect life, died for our sins upon the cross, was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us."

Is that "simple"? Is it believable? Is it intelligible even to the profoundest scholar? Why, there are popular ministers in the Scottish Reformed Churches to whom half of it is pure legend. From many Christian pulpits the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection are treated as fairy tales, which no sane person can mistake for facts.

Here is more simplicity:—

"Q. What is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

A. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is believing in him as able and willing to save us, and relying upon him alone for salvation."

Of course, nobody ever dreams of living up to that definition of faith *except in relation to the world to come*. To be saved socially, economically, and morally, one must rely alone upon one's own exertions and the ready help of loving comrades. As far as

this world is concerned, one must have faith in oneself or be lost. But this catechism makes no reference to the inestimable value of self-reliance, fortitude, and sympathy. It contains not a word in praise of manliness. Even when it touches upon our daily work in this world it must introduce a foreign and degrading element. Listen:—

"Q. How ought we to do our daily work?"

A. We ought to do our daily work diligently, faithfully, and cheerfully, as under the eye of our Heavenly Father."

"As under the eye of our Heavenly Father" is a clause that completely spoils an otherwise sensible passage. That sentiment is calculated to breed nothing but miserable cowards. As under the eye of the almighty and omnipresent Divine Policeman! Then daily work becomes daily drudgery, which would never be undertaken were it not for the hope of reward or for the fear of punishment. We should rather be trained to do our daily work diligently, faithfully, and cheerfully, not as under anybody's eye, but because it is alone by so doing that we can use our life to the best advantage, or because that is the only way in which we can most effectually fulfil ourselves.

After all, this catechism is not an improvement upon the one it is designed to supersede in the schools. The *Scotsman* says that it softens the austerities of theology, but what is the use of softening the austerities of theology as long as the cruel austerities of life remain? One thing is absolutely undeniable: if God is love, he is not almighty, or, if he is almighty, it would be sheer mockery to call him love. As Shelley said, if an almighty God made and rules the Universe we are bound to characterise him as an Almighty Fiend. This catechism, ignoring the facts of Nature, and the awful realities of animal and human life, calls the deity at once "almighty," and "most merciful and loving," as if Omnipotence and Benevolence could coexist in the maker and ruler of such a world as ours. The very idea of bringing children up on such a self-annihilating heresy is intolerable. Calvinism is infinitely nearer the truth of things, with all its austerities, than this namby-pamby, backboneless evangelicalism. If we must have catechisms in our day-schools, let them be catechisms prepared on purely scientific lines, embodying high ethical principles deduced from ethical experience, and calculated to touch the emotions of the catechumens through and by means of their intelligence.

J. T. LLOYD.

Annual Conference of the National Secular Society.

(Concluded from p. 333.)

AFTER the election of President (recorded last week) came the election of Vice-Presidents. The following were nominated by the Executive for re-election:—

J. G. Bartram, J. Barry, Victor Charbonnel, H. Cowell, R. Chapman, C. Cohen, W. W. Collins, F. A. Davies, W. Davey, R. G. Fathers, Leon Furnémont, T. Gorniot, John Grange, R. Johnson, W. Leat, G. B. H. McCluskey, J. Neate, R. T. Nichols, J. Partridge, S. M. Peacock, C. Pegg, Mrs. M. E. Pegg, C. G. Quinton, J. H. Ridgway, Thomas Robertson, Victor Roger, F. Schaller, W. H. Spivey, Charles Steptoe, S. Samuels, S. R. Thompson, W. B. Thompson, T. J. Thurlow, John H. Turnbull, E. M. Vance, Frederick Wood, W. H. Wood, G. White.

These were re-elected unanimously. The following were nominated by the Executive for election:—

Messrs. J. T. Lloyd, W. T. Pitt (Birmingham), G. Roleffs (Liverpool), H. Silverstein (London), G. Scott (Glasgow), James McGlashan (Glasgow).

The President wished to say a special word on the case of Mr. J. T. Lloyd. It had been suggested before that Mr. Lloyd should be made a Vice-President, but it was against the rule of practice to elect anyone until he had been a member of the Society for at least three years. Of course, they were all glad to welcome Mr. Lloyd. He had proved himself to me made of the best metal, and they were proud of him. This resolution being carried, the Manchester Branch proposed the addition of Mr. J. G. Dobson and Mr.

S. L. Hurd to the list of Vice-Presidents. The President seconded both of them, and they were elected unanimously.

Mrs. Bolt (Birmingham) moved the suspension of the standing orders so that the name of Mrs. Fathers (Birmingham) might be added to the list of Vice-Presidents. Agreed. Messrs. Saville (Kingsland) and Farmer (Woolwich) were elected auditors for the forthcoming year. Miss Vance, on behalf of the sub-committee, presented a report *re* selection of a badge for the Society. There having been found no general desire on the part of the members that a badge should be devised and worn, it was moved, and carried, that the Conference proceed to the next business.

Mr. C. Pegg (Manchester) then moved Motion 9 clause (a) :—

"That an Organising Lecturer be appointed by the N. S. S. Executive, for the further promotion of the Society's propaganda, especially in the provinces."

He said many attempts had been made to provide the Society with an organising lecturer, but the need for one still remained. Much expense was incurred, and time spent in lecturers travelling long journeys, much of which might be saved if a lecturer could spend a little time in a district, make himself conversant with its needs, and so help to strengthen local organisation. The matter, he thought, was so important, that he ventured to make a personal appeal to the President to do his best to bring the matter to a successful issue. It seemed to be a question of funds, but this might be got over by an appeal through the *Freethinker*, to which the party would doubtless respond. The motion was supported by Mr. Chapman (South Shields) and Mr. Gallagher (Camberwell), both of whom thought there were men in the party who were fitted for the work if only the money could be raised. Messrs. Cowell (Kingsland) and Roleffs (Liverpool) also supported the motion, which was opposed by Messrs. Thurlow and Anderson, who thought it would have a tendency to weaken rather than strengthen local effort. Branches might do much to keep local propaganda persistent without any such assistance.

On the suggestion of the President, clauses (a) and (b) were amalgamated so as to read "That this Conference recommends the appointment of a travelling and organising lecturer." He also said that, in his opinion, the difficulty was not one of money but of men. Those at present engaged had their hands full. They were content to do the work, taking soldier's pay when it was there, and cheerfully going without when it was not. If the man for the work could be found, he would undertake to see that money was forthcoming. The motion, as amended, was then put to the meeting and carried.

Motion 10—

"That the Executive should resume the Organising of Out-door Demonstrations"—

was carried after a brief discussion.

Motion 11—

"That this Conference is of opinion that the time has arrived for the N. S. S. Executive to urge upon the London County Council the desirability and need of the People's Parks being made more recreative on Sundays by allowing all such games as are allowed on week-days, and under the same rules and regulations"—

was moved by Mr. Lazarick in a brief speech. Point and humor was added to the discussion by a speech from a park constable, who said that in his experience the practice of games on Sunday led to much better behavior in the parks, and to much less work for those whose duty it was to maintain order. At present, the police found it more difficult to maintain, while the picture of a lively constable chasing youngsters who had broken the regulations by playing games was not a very dignified one. After a few more comments from members, the motion was carried unanimously.

Motion 12—

"That the Society's Report, together with the List of Officials, Principles, and Objects, be published annually in a separate form"—

was moved by Mr. Charlton, and carried, with the suggestion that the Report should be edited so as to exclude anything of a purely domestic nature.

Motion 13—

"That it be an instruction to the N. S. S. General Secretary to append to the Minutes of each Conference any correspondence resulting from its resolutions; and that such Correspondence be taken, at the President's discretion, in connection with the Minutes at the ensuing Conference"—

was moved by Mr. Thurlow, who thought that members of the Society should be placed in complete possession of all correspondence resulting from the resolution of the Conference.

In moving Motion 14—

"That the Conference decide whether and how the N. S. S. shall be represented at the International Free-thought Congress to be held at Buda-Pest on September 8-11, in the present year"—

the President read a letter received from M. Leon Furnémont, wishing the Congress success, and saying how much Continental Freethinkers valued the co-operation of the N. S. S. They would consider it a great honor to see that Society represented at the forthcoming Congress at Buda-Pest in September next. The President said the Executive felt that this was a matter that should be left entirely to the Conference, and in accordance with this resolution he refrained from expressing any opinion. After some discussion, it was finally moved by Mr. Anderson—"That the National Secular Society be represented as far as possible at the International Freethought Congress at Buda-Pest, and that the details of the representation be left in the hands of the Executive." This was carried unanimously.

Motion 15—

"That this Conference records its satisfaction at the failure of the Birrell Education Bill, which would have deliberately established Simple Bible Teaching—that is, Nonconformist religion—in the Elementary Schools of England and Wales; and that this Conference hopes, as a matter of principle, that the new M'Kenna Bill will meet with a similar fate, seeing that it is merely another move in the ecclesiastical war between the Nonconformists and the Church of England, and seeks the same object as the Birrell Education Bill by means of a more hypocritical policy"—

was moved by Mr. C. Cohen. He said that, much to his surprise, some exception had been taken to this resolution on the grounds of its being of a political character. He was surprised at that, although it was obvious that some of the questions in which Secularists were interested, as Secularists, could not avoid trenching on political grounds. All we could do was to see that politics, as politics, were excluded from the business of the Conference. In this question, we were all deeply concerned as Secularists, and we should be untrue to our principles if we refrained from expressing any opinion on the Bill now before the country. And so far as we were concerned, both parties, Churchmen and Nonconformists, were equally objectionable. The present Bill of Mr. M'Kenna's, like that of Mr. Birrell's, aimed at one thing only—to satisfy the Nonconformists. We had to resist the State establishment of Bible teaching in the schools as well as definite religious instruction. There was no real principle involved in either of these measures. One had failed, and deserved to fail, and as Freethinkers, we could only hope for the failure of the other.

Mr. Chapman thought the motion rather too political in color, but would support it, although he would prefer to see it remodelled. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Gallagher supported the resolution, and said they did not see how we could avoid trenching on politics in such cases where freedom could only be gained by political action. The President thought people must have curious eyesight who could discover politics in the motion before the Conference. He had carefully read Mr. Birrell's Bill, and defied anyone to find anything about education in it. It was a Bill to establish Bible teaching in State schools. That was all. We had to frustrate Christians using political machinery for religious purposes. The motion was then put to the Conference and carried unanimously.

Mr. G. W. Foote next moved Motion 16—

"That this Conference hails with delight the formation of the Secular Education League, heartily approves of its Manifesto, rejoices at the number of distinguished public men and women who have consented to join the General Council, and trusts that the League will be enthusiastically supported by Freethinkers throughout Great Britain."

In moving this, he gave the Conference a brief account of the history of the League, and of his own share in its formation and working, as representing the N. S. S. There had been some little difficulties in the earlier stages of the movement, but these were now overcome, and he hoped finally so. The League had a great future, and he trusted that all Secularists would strengthen it by joining.

On behalf of the Executive, the President formally moved Motion 17—

"That Freethinkers in all parts of the country should be prepared to take an active part in repelling the attack on such Sunday Freedom as now exists by the proposed combination of all the Churches for this particular object"—

and called upon Mr. Elstob (Newcastle) to second. Mr. Elstob presumed that he was called upon because, in Newcastle, they had just come out of a successful fight with the

bigots. Great efforts were being made there and in other parts of the country to get up public meetings—packed ones, if possible—and so point to these as a reason for getting new legislation in favor of Sunday observance. This last object was not avowed publicly, but from privately circulated documents that had come into his possession, he knew this to be the case. In Newcastle, the Town's Meeting called, instead of being a happy, family gathering, was spoiled by the united action of the Liberal bodies in the town, who succeeded in passing a resolution of an anti-Sabbatarian character. He thought the information might be useful to people all over the country.

Mr. R. Chapman thought the meeting should know that it was quite owing to Mr. Elstob's initiative and energy that this result was brought about.

Motion 18—

"That this Conference express a profound hope that the approaching Peace Congress will not waste time and energy in fruitless discussion of impossible projects, but will concentrate its efforts on strengthening and extending the policy of arbitration in international disputes, as the only feasible method of minimising the danger of war"—

after a few words of criticism by Messrs. Anderson and Chapman, was carried unanimously.

Mr. W. Heaford obtained leave to move a resolution on the Ferrer case. He gave a brief history of it; produced some of Ferrer's publications, which were all of a scientific and dignified character; and called on English Freethinkers to back up the protest of their French brethren against the shocking treatment of a man whose only crime was his being obnoxious to Clericalism in Spain. Mr. Heaford's resolution was seconded, carried unanimously, and ordered to be sent to the proper quarters.

A few parting words from the President closed the Conference.

C. C.

THE CLOSE OF THE 1907 CONFERENCE.

At the conclusion of the Sunday morning sitting, the creature comforts of the delegates and some of the London members, numbering upwards of sixty, were looked after at the Ship Restaurant, Charing-cross. As usual, barely half that number had given notice of their intention to be present, but all were supplied with a substantial and quickly-served luncheon, and returned to the afternoon meeting like giants refreshed.

On Monday morning, the provincial delegates and several members of the London Executive, with the General Secretary, assembled at the Chandos Hall at 10.30 for a drive; two large brakes were speedily filled, and a start was made *via* the Strand, St. Paul's, and the Mansion House for the Tower. But, alas, the particularly cold and cheerless weather had warned the London holiday-maker to remain near home, the crowded entrances there whispered hours of waiting, and it was decided to turn westward by way of the Embankment, Westminster Cathedral, Hyde Park, and the Albert Hall, where more than one humorous incident in connection with the Torrey-Alexander revival was related, and highly appreciated. Continuing through Hammersmith and Chiswick, a stoppage was made for the benefit of the horses and drivers, and the party proceeded to Kew Bridge and through Bushey Park, where the splendid avenue of chestnut-trees, now in full bloom, delighted our provincial friends, and fully compensated them for the cold wind and absence of sun. A final stop was made at Hampton Court for refreshment, and, after a short ramble, the return journey was made, stopping only for an excellent tea and shelter from a heavy rain. Arriving at Chandos Hall shortly after 8 p.m., it was found that the London friends had already commenced a previously-arranged concert, which later on developed into a dance until the time arrived for most of our country delegates to make tracks for midnight trains home. And so concluded the 1907 Conference.

E. M. V.

Acid Drops.

Sir Oliver Lodge's Catechism for "kids"—"small children" he calls them—is a portentous document. It is enough to turn any decent child's stomach. One would think that its object was to train up a generation of young prigs. Fancy a boy, who ought to be spinning a top, or a girl, who ought to be wheeling about a doll in a toy perambulator, being asked: "What are you?" and taught to answer, "I am a living being on the earth, with a body ascended from animals and a spirit descended from God"! Sir Oliver Lodge may understand electrons. He does not understand children. And we should be very sorry if they understood him.

The dreadful Catechism goes on with its pedantic questions and priggish answers until the "small child" is asked "What is meant by the life eternal?" The answer is appalling: "It means the highest kind of life possible. We may begin to enter upon it now, but it does not cease when we abandon our earthly bodies; development and progress can continue for ever." Surely a "kid" who could talk in that way ought to be under medical treatment.

Sir Oliver Lodge would be a sensible man if it were not for his "religion." He has it badly. When he launched that Catechism of his, before the British Child Study Association, he said that "The teacher was teaching religion when trying to form habits of cleanliness, punctuality, and courtesy, to teach children to make animals happy, to take care of their gardens, to exercise self-control in country lanes and parks, and to appreciate the beauty of music, poetry, and art." These are excellent things, but to call them *religion* is an abuse of language. They are morals, manners, and aesthetics. They can all be named without an outrage on the dictionary.

It is evident that the Rev. Dr. Torrey has "obscenity" upon the brain. He saw it in Thomas Paine, he saw it in Colonel Ingersoll, and he sees it in every "infidel"—that is, every person who does not think as he does. He sees obscenity everywhere, because he carries it about in his own mind. The soul-savers who are always talking about certain human vices are generally dirty-minded men. They have a favorite topic of conversation. If they did not speak about it at missions they would speak about it in worse places. They must speak about it somewhere.

Directly the Rev. Dr. Torrey was asked a question by Mr. Norman Murray, a Montreal Freethinker, he "saw blue." "David was a better man than you," he blurted out, "but there is hope for you, even though you were arrested for selling obscene literature on the street." This soul-saver, with the painful face of a moral inquisitor, has but one note in his slander song—"Obscenity! obscenity! obscenity!" It is so like the man. He is the very embodiment of monotonous common-place—with a dash of nastiness and a dash of malice; about the most objectionable compound in this world—and that he is a Christian soul-saver is just natural.

For once, the Rev. Dr. Torrey caught a Tartar. He forgot that Mr. Norman Murray was not dead, but alive; and was, moreover, a citizen of Montreal, where his slanderer was only a guest. Hence all the trouble he was put to, hence the embargo laid upon his mission money by a Court order, and hence the eating of the leek, which he had to do in public. No doubt he is saying, with ancient Pistol, "All hell shall stir for this." But we daresay he will be a little more careful in future. For bullies are always cowards.

The *Christian World* notices the Montreal incident under the heading of "Dr. Torrey Worried." The blackguardly soul-saver, replying to a man who asked him a question, said "you were arrested for selling obscene literature on the streets." It was a falsehood, and the man started an action for slander, which took the regular course under Canadian law. And the *Christian World*, which has not a word of sympathy for the slandered Freethinker, refers to the slanderer as "worried." Yet the *Christian World* is one of the most decently conducted Christian papers. What, then, must the rest be?

Here are some figures of the Torrey mission at Montreal. "Two thousand inquirers," the *Christian World* says, "were registered during the eighty-four meetings, of whom 880 were adherents of Presbyterian churches, 745 Methodists, 365 Anglican, 25 Roman Catholic, and 4 Jews." No less than 1,965 "inquirers," therefore, already belonged to Christian churches. We lump the 4 Jews with the balance, and the total is 35 independent inquirers. Whether they will find as well as seek we don't know. We take them as "inquirers." And now let us see the cost. According to the *Christian World*, "Dr. Torrey received all his expenses and £200." Devilish good pay for a month's "disinterested" labors! But that is not our point. We leave the "expenses" on one side. We take the £200 clear profit made by Dr. Torrey; we divide it by the number of independent inquirers, and the result is nearly £6 apiece. If an "inquirer" costs that, what is the price of a convert?

In spite of the fact that Jesus Christ not only drank wine, but produced it, the New York Young Women's Christian Temperance Union (we pause to take breath!) is getting up a black list of novels in which the heroes drink, or in which

drinking parties are described. They ought to begin, of course, with the New Testament; but it appears that they have started with Dickens. Wicked man! He is the first "awful example." There will be others. And when the list is completed it will be sent round to all librarians with the demand that the novels on this Index Prohibitorium shall be excluded from libraries used by the young. Such is the intemperance of Christian Temperance! It is a pity these young women haven't affairs of their own to mind instead of poking their noses into other people's business. We wish them husbands and babies.

A travelling Scot, of the Presbyterian variety, asked a Yankee if the Scotsmen in his locality still kept the Sabbath. "Oh yes," he replied, "they keep the Sabbath—and anything else they can lay hands on." They seem to be much the same in Canada. According to Sir Wilfrid Laurier—in his speech to the London Gaelic Society—the prayer of the Scot in that country is, "Lord, I do not ask for riches, but tell me where they are." Sir Wilfrid Laurier added that if he were not of French descent he "would be a Scotchman." Very likely.

Godliness is profitable. So says the old book. And many people find it so—or make it so. General Booth, for instance, rejoices that he was "led to make a clean-cut separation from the world" and to "renounce the pursuit of its fame, its pleasures, and its wealth." "God in His great mercy," says the shrewd old showman, "has been pleased to give me a thousand-fold more of the things I laid down for his sake." Hallelujah!

Rev. W. Talbot Rice, Vicar of Swansea, writes to the *South Wales Daily Post* explaining that the town in which he preaches the Gospel is in a sad, if not a terrible, situation. "The Town Council as an Education Authority," he says, "has elected to teach an agnostic syllabus of morality instead of teaching the Bible in the provided schools of the town." He hints at the dreadful things that must follow from this "Godless syllabus" of "Godless morality"—and calls upon "those who believe in God and the Christian religion to declare themselves." It appears that the Vicar has turned Jeremiah because the Town Council refused, by 19 votes to 9, to rescind its resolution in favor of moral instruction without theology or the Bible in the provided schools. We hope the reverend gentleman will get over his present attack of clerical fever. We also hope the Town Council will go on teaching "Godless morality."

Rev. F. C. Spurr, talking to a *Daily News* representative on Empire Day, said that "the boys and girls of London are falling into vices that were unknown among them a few years ago." Lads from thirteen to eighteen smoke cigarettes, gamble, and drink, and frequent low-class entertainments; and apparently girls are just as bad as far as they have the chance. Mr. Spurr says that "both the State and the Churches ought to do something more." We agree with him. The Churches have insisted on religious teaching in the public schools; and what is the result? All those ill-conditioned boys and girls have been dosed with Catechisms and Bible teaching. What they have not been dosed with is sensible morality. It is the business of the State to provide that necessary article. That is what the State should do. What the Churches should do is equally simple. They should abandon the business they have so dreadfully muddled; quit the schools, and leave moral instruction to properly qualified laymen.

It is admitted that the Irish clergy were the chief moving agents in the rejection of Mr. Birrell's Bill. What they dreaded, and determined to prevent, was the control of education by the State. Mr. John Redmond and the other Irish leaders had to go with the stream. The priest is still omnipotent in Irish politics. We say this without expressing any opinion as to the merits of the Bill which has been rejected.

The story of the Crucifixion has produced a strange result in China. In the Peng Lo district, a hundred miles or so up the river from Hong Kong, a woman's stepson struck her in a quarrel. A family council was called, and the culprit was burnt to death. When the authorities heard of it they arrested the woman and discussed how she should be punished. Eventually, a picture of the Crucifixion was procured from a Christian convert; a copy of the Cross was made, and the woman nailed to it in orthodox fashion. She lingered some five hours, amid the jeers and missiles of the spectators. We daresay this case will not appear in the missionary reports.

A laborer at Berwick quarreled with his wife over the baptism of their baby. He was a Protestant and she a Catholic. The difference ended in a brutal assault, and the Protestant side of the dispute is now doing two months' hard labor. Meanwhile, in all probability, the helpless infant will be baptised in the wrong Church—and perhaps lose its chance of singing the Glory Song in the New Jerusalem. What a world we live in!

Look on this picture—and on this! They happened to appear side by side in two different columns of a morning newspaper. A poor woman at Walthamstow committed suicide, after telling the relieving officer that she would do it. Apart from one day's charring a week, for which she received 2s., she spent her time in making boys' serge knickers. She got 9d. per dozen pairs, finding her own thread, and this enabled her to earn the magnificent sum of 1s. 8d. a week. No wonder the poor woman went where there is less work to do! And now for the other picture. The royal family, the members of the Cabinet, and the grandees of Spain, all met to see the King invest his baby with the Cross of Pelayo; and a deputation handed the King 1,000 doubloons (equal to £600), which he acknowledged in the name of the infant. Here you have money showered upon a mowling and puking babe, while the mother of a family, in spite of hard work, is driven to suicide by sheer destitution. Such is Christian civilisation!

The Bishop of Hereford thinks it necessary to say that gambling at bridge and attending race meetings are out of keeping with a clergyman's profession. What will he think it necessary to say next?

"The Bible is the secret of England's greatness." This pious legend used to be printed at the bottom of a picture in which Queen Victoria was presenting a kneeling black potentate with a copy of "the blessed book." It was devoutly believed that this was a picture of a real incident. But it was nothing of the kind. The story was officially contradicted by the Queen's secretary. Yet the phrase passed into common use in religious circles. "The Bible is the secret of England's greatness."

This pious phrase is now taking a fresh turn. Queen Victoria is dead, and, like most dead sovereigns, she is becoming forgotten. It is necessary, therefore, to find another *living* authority for the saying; and the *Daily News* has found it in the person of the British ambassador at Washington. Reviewing a new book by Mr. Joseph McCabe, our contemporary says: "It will take something more than Mr. McCabe has given us here to shake our faith in Mr. Bryce's dictum that 'the Bible is the source of England's greatness.'" Everything hangs now on Mr. Bryce. "He knows, he knows!" Yes, but *why*? Mr. Bryce is not everybody. There are others. How did *he* become Sir Oracle? Is everyone who dissents from him a barking dog? Let us have a little sense. Mr. Bryce's *dictum* is, after all, only Mr. Bryce's *opinion*. Its value depends upon the evidence on which it rests. And what is that evidence? We are not told. We are simply asked to hand over our minds to Mr. Bryce. But why should we do anything of the kind? Why should we not think for ourselves?

If the Bible is the source of England's greatness, what is the source of the greatness of France? Perhaps the *Daily News*, or the great Mr. Bryce, will answer that question. Then there is another question. If the Bible is not the source of the greatness of France, why should it be considered to be the cause of England's greatness? Moreover, there is the case of Japan. The Bible is not the cause of Japan's greatness. Neither is it likely to be the cause of England's greatness. In each of these cases there are natural causes at work. Science, art, literature, commerce, public enlightenment—such are the causes of a nation's greatness; for they make the civilisation by which nations are powerful and respected.

John D. Rockefeller, the Standard Oil King, who has been publicly impeached as one of the coldest and most callous scoundrels in America, and whose low-flash oil has sent thousands of poor people to cemeteries, has quickly succeeded in getting a testimonial from the Rev. Charles F. Aked. "I believe," he has just said to an interviewer, "that Mr. Rockefeller is a sincere Christian." This will enable many people to form a final opinion of Mr. Aked—and also of Christianity.

Millionaires can generally find accommodating men of God. Mr. William Corey, the steel magnate, wanted to marry Miss Mabelle Gilman; and they were spliced at a

midnight wedding by the Rev. Dr. J. L. Clark, of Brooklyn, who received a fee of one thousand dollars for the job. When the circumstances leaked out there was a rumpus. Mr. Clark apologised to his superiors, and returned the thousand dollars; but his Church does not consider this sufficient, and has called upon him to resign.

Two Kensitites were knocked down in a scrimmage at Christ Church, St. Leonard's. They are good Christians. Those who knocked them down are also good Christians. "Let brotherly love continue."

Was there ever a more foolish right reverend Father-in-God than the Bishop of London? This creature has lately been standing on his hind legs and telling the annual meeting of Queen's College, Harley-street, that "After much difficulty he had come to the conclusion that Jesus Christ was God in a totally different sense to the sense in which we were Divine." After much difficulty! Why, he started with that conclusion at school, and has only had to hold on to it since. Even if it were otherwise, how much difficulty would he find in coming to any conclusion that might be necessary to the preservation of that £10,000 a year?

A Berlin carpenter put out his tongue as the Kaiser was driving past. He is now doing nine months' imprisonment in consequence. The Kaiser's motto has been said to be "Me and God"—and the "Me" seems to be even more vindictive than the other partner.

At the recent Spiritualist convention in London the subject of "Mediumship" was dealt with by Mr. Hanson G. Hay. This gentleman said that it was a simple mode of transmission of intelligence. Very likely. We never heard of a medium who had a heavy load of intelligence to transmit.

Father Vaughan should cheer up. A strangely-dressed negro has landed at Liverpool from the *Campania*. He says he has come to England in the name of God, to save the Smart Set.

It is said that there is to be a Roman Catholic college for women at Oxford. The old Church brings up the tail of the procession, but it gets there in the end, though often too late. It is also said that the Vulgate Bible is to be revised. This is a step that the old Church can afford to take. For the Bible occupies a secondary position with Roman Catholics. The Church comes first. It is the living voice of God. The Bible is only the dead letter.

Mr. W. Clarke, a Freethinker, and a member of the Woolwich N.S.S. Branch, is on the Board of Guardians. As visiting Guardian to the Workhouse, he had to answer the questions, "Is Divine service regularly performed?" and "Are prayers regularly read?" He wrote in reply, "I am given to understand that the legalised hypocrisy is carried out to the full extent." This caused a row at the Board meeting. Colonel Ingram and Father Doubleday were especially indignant. The latter moved that the words be expunged from the visitors' book. This was carried by fourteen to three—Mr. Clarke being absent. It was a victory for the "legalised hypocrisy."

Religionists in more than one part of the world beat their gods when they are too deaf or lazy. At Popoli, near Sulmona, in Italy, they go for the priest when things turn out badly. A fire at the parish church consumed the bones of St. Boniface, the patron saint of the place. This was considered such a shocking calamity that the townspeople stormed the priest's house, apparently on the assumption that he ought to have prevented or stopped the fire. He was beaten mercilessly with sticks, and fled for his life. Soldiers had to be brought to the town to "calm the populace."

Dr. McComb, in the *Quarterly Review*, says that—"What is most striking in the present aspect of the controversy over human immortality is the average man's absolute want of interest in the question. People shrug their shoulders, and turn to their newspaper or their business at the mention or thought of an after-life." This bears out what we have always said. Nobody cared for heaven except as the only alternative to hell. Now that hell is played out (or burnt out) nobody wants heaven on its merits. Thus the salvation business collapses.

Another good man gone wrong. Rev. Frederick Borradaile, of St. Hilary, Lincoln, left £62,136. We all know

where he is now—if what he preached was true. And here's a worse case still. Rev. Hugh Bacon, of the Rectory, Baxterley, Atherstone, Warwick, left £97,819. He would give it all for an ice-cream.

Mr. Law, who has just returned from America, tells a *Christian World* interviewer some really fresh facts about the Rev. Mr. Aked's church. When packed, he says, it scarcely holds 600 people. It is richly adorned and elaborately furnished. The floor is covered with Turkey carpet, and the seat stewards wear white gloves. Four professional singers, who get fabulous salaries, take the place of a choir. Yet there are people in Liverpool who still believe in Mr. Aked.

Truth has a way of leaking out. What we have often said in the *Freethinker* was corroborated in Monday's *Daily News*. Mr. Alfred E. Hutton, M.P., writing from the House of Commons, said: "It is essential that the Government should enjoy the loyal and enthusiastic support of Nonconformists." Quite so. That is the essence of the situation.

Nonconformity is up in arms. The General Committee of the National Free Church Council met on Monday at the Memorial Hall, and passed a resolution urging the Government to "press forward the Special Religious Instruction Bill introduced by Mr. Reginald M'Kenna." This Bill provides that Nonconformist religious teaching shall be given in State schools at the public expense, while other religious teaching must be paid for as an extra by Catholics, Churchmen, Jews, etc. No wonder the Nonconformists want to see this Bill carried. They warn the Government that the "delay in proceeding with this measure is causing disappointment and dismay among the great body of Free Churchmen." These people are angry because their great opportunity is slipping away of quartering themselves upon the nation.

The *Manchester Guardian* refers to the "terrible leakage" going on in the Wesleyan Methodist Church, and says that "it must be going on in the other Nonconformist churches, and especially in those which are not so methodical." It appears that the Wesleyan net decrease this year is nearly 2,000. But the "saddest" fact is that 24,388 persons who were in full membership last May have "ceased to be members."

They are praying for rain in Roumania. There has been a prolonged drought and the harvest is seriously damaged. Well, it is better late than never, perhaps; but why didn't they pray for rain before the damage was done? Maybe the clergy put off the day of prayer as long as possible, in order to shorten the interval between the supplication and the answer. They know a thing or two, do the clergy—in their own way of business.

The following case appeared in the papers lately. A man who had lost one eye was chopping wood, when a splinter flew up and knocked his sound eye out. Of course, it couldn't hit the other one. Good old "Providence"!

According to a writer in the *Church Family Newspaper*, the worshipers in London churches often leave before the sermon, and the number of such is increasing. At one West-end church he saw "about a third of the congregation quietly walk out" when the curate was mounting the pulpit. They had had some.

Alfred J. A. Scott, aged 26, of the M Division of the Metropolitan Police, committed suicide. He left a letter saying that he had lost all he wished for—his sweetheart—and stated that he would meet her in heaven. That settled it. The jury knew at once that he was of unsound mind.

When we finally described the late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes' "Atheist Shoemaker" story as "a Lie in Five Chapters," the author affected to be horrified. Lie! That was a word never used by gentlemen. Telling lies is common enough, especially in religious circles, but describing them as lies is an unpardonable offence. On that ground the reverend gentleman crawled away from public investigation. And he was supported by his friend, the late G. J. Holyoake, who also affected to think "lie" an awful word. We pointed out that it was common in "respectable" publications, and gave instances. But that didn't matter. If it wasn't offensive in other people's mouths it was very offensive in ours. The term, however, is still in regular use. On Monday evening, in the House of Commons, Mr. Robertson, the Secretary to the Admiralty, described a certain report in the *Standard* as "an absolute lie." And the word was greeted with loud Ministerial cheers.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Suspended during June, July, and August).

To Correspondents.

G. STEARMAN.—It certainly seems a gross interference with household privacy, and we believe it is quite illegal. But the matter would be better taken up by Mr. Bottomley than by us.

R. J. HENDERSON.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

EAST KIRKBY.—Mrs. Besant's old Freethought writings are not in print now. Glad you so much enjoy reading the *Freethinker*. We know nothing about the Thomas Clarke you met at South Normanton, who met Bradlaugh on the platform and knew us personally. There are so many people about with romantic memories.

A. WEBBER.—Thanks. We have looked through the report of the pious speech by Mr. George Lambert, M.P., but can't see anything definite to criticise.

J. M.—You misread "utility." It does not simply mean your good, but the good of the race. From that point of view, *pity* is obviously useful. Besides, the tender emotions are necessary to family life, which in turn is necessary for the rearing of offspring; and those emotions, once developed, will naturally extend beyond the family circle; for we cannot shut up our feelings in "water-tight compartments." Shakespeare, who understood human nature as if he had made it, puts with this pigment an immortal touch to his portrait of Lady Macbeth. She had been in Duncan's bed-chamber and laid the daggers ready, and while her husband is murdering their guest she says:—

"Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't."

Lay emphasis on the "I," and the words are a lightning flash into the depths.

J. DE B.—Thanks for cuttings. Picture postcards of eminent Freethinkers would doubtless be a good thing, and we may see what can be done in that direction. Certainly, as you say, the *Freethinker* wants more advertising. We hope to deal with that matter presently. Sorry to hear that you also have lost so many things in the post. The Socialists would do well to drop references to this "model institution." The Post Office is not a model institution at all.

J. A. REID.—The point of the Bishop of Durham's calumny is that Mill *died* a believer. It is easily provable, of course, that he did not *live* one. Thanks for your letter. We have made use of the extract.

J. A. E. BATES.—We are obliged.

G. ROLEFFS.—See "Sugar Plums." Thanks for cuttings.

W. R. WHITE.—Charles Dickens was a professed Christian, but he had the disease very mildly, and was certainly far from being orthodox. In politics he was a Radical; and, above all, a great friend of human liberty. But he appears to have had a little belief in the utility of what Carlyle used to call "our great National Palaver." In a letter to Bulwer he said; "It appears to me that the House of Commons and Parliament altogether, is just the dreariest failure and nuisance that has bothered this much-bothered world."

E. OLDING.—Sorry the answer cannot be given in a few words, or a few sentences. We may deal with the matter in an article. We note your wish that Abracadabra's articles on the Gospels might be reprinted with his former articles on the Acts.

BESSIE BROUGH.—Glad to receive the weekly batch of cuttings from you, in your husband's absence.

G. A. ALDRED.—J. M. Wheeler was a very careful writer, though of course not infallible; in any case, as he is not alive to defend his own views and statements, it is hardly worth while to start a discussion on any of them.

TRUTH-SEEKER (Bristol).—Your handwriting seems familiar to us under another name. What is your object?

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for your valued cuttings.

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—J. de B., 2s.; J. J. Finlay, 5s.

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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.

Next week's *Freethinker* will contain a special article by Mr. Foote dealing with Mr. Bernard Shaw's recent lecture on "The New Theology." Foote on Shaw should be interesting reading.

Last week's *Freethinker* sold right out, and some intending purchasers must have been disappointed. If this reaches their eyes, they might remember that copies of last week's issue can be obtained out of "returns" if they will repeat the order to their newsagents.

We printed an extra reply of last week's *Freethinker*, and still we were sold out. Can it be that our day is arriving? Are the public finding us out at last? At any rate, our circulation is steadily improving. Not rapidly, but steadily. Which shows that when we find readers we keep them.

Mr. Foote's evening lecture at Picton Hall, Liverpool, on May 5, was followed by many questions. One was put by an auditor who evidently thought it was crushing: "What would you give us in place of Christianity?" Without rising from his seat, Mr. Foote said "Common Sense." Very likely there was something in the way in which it was said. Anyhow, the reply caught on, and was very loudly applauded. Mr. G. Roleffs now writes us that it is becoming quite a catchword in Liverpool.

Mr. Cohen is lecturing at the new open-air lecture station at Parliament Hill Fields for three successive Sundays. This afternoon (June 2) he leads off, and he lectures again in the evening. The North London "saints" should give all the publicity they can to these meetings and help to make a crowd.

Unitarians have toed the line at last. The recent annual meeting of the United Unitarian Association at Exeter Hall declared in favor of Secular Education. A resolution, carried with only five dissentients, affirmed that in any future legislation the only satisfactory solution was to be found in recognising that for distinctly religious education the parents and the Churches were alone responsible, and that the State could not on principle undertake that duty.

It is seventeen years since Mr. W. W. Collins left England for New Zealand. We have heard of him from time to time during that period, chiefly through papers which he has edited or been connected with. Latterly, we have received no tidings of him, and we had begun to wonder if he was still in the land of the living. We are very pleased, therefore, to get a letter from him dated April 13. With it he sends a copy of the first issue of a newspaper he has started, called the *Examiner*. "I am hopeful," he says, "that it may help me to do more than I have been able to do in the past." Mr. Collins says that the news from England of late has been depressing—Holyoake, Watts, Saladin, and lastly Symes, all resting from their labors. "Knowing, as you do," he says, "what the fight is in a country of millions, you can imagine what it is in so small a place as this. I sometimes think no missionary ever tackled such work as fell to the lot of Symes and myself. Certainly none ever did it under the circumstances and existed so long." Mr. Collins adds that he will write to us again soon; meanwhile, he hopes we are in first-rate health.

Mr. Collins's *Examiner* is a threepenny monthly—at least, the first number is dated April—of the same shape as the *Freethinker*, but containing eight pages instead of sixteen. The first article, from his own pen, deals with the New Theology. He welcomes Mr. Campbell's heresy, but points out that the reverend gentleman is only saying what "scientists and Biblical critics" have been proclaiming for decades. From an announcement on the fourth page, we see that Mr. Collins is lecturing—or conducting "Rationalist Services"—on Sunday evenings in the Choral Hall. We have no doubt that he gets good audiences, for he is a born speaker.

Naturally, there is something in the *Examiner* about the late Joseph Symes. Mr. Collins describes him as—"A man of great ability and of indomitable courage; a determined

opponent of every form of superstition; an untiring and uncompromising advocate of Freethought,"—as one who "did a giant's work, and, like the brave soldier he was, fell fighting to the end."

Mr. Collins evidently reads the *Freethinker* still, and we are glad to see he has not lost his good opinion of its editor. Noticing the death of M. Berthelot, and regretting that the French Government did not follow his "wise principles" in dealing with the Church, Mr. Collins goes on to quote one of our own utterances on that subject—prefacing it with the following words:—

"There are some men—and they are the real leaders of men—who see plainly where others grope and stumble, and in some cases this power of keen penetration has been intensified by the knowledge which comes of long suffering. Such a man is Mr. G. W. Foote, the President of the National Secular Society."

This is no doubt more than the truth, but it is not flattery, for it is sincere. Mr. Collins was always an honest man. And if he praises another man warmly, it may be comforting to reflect (with Vauvenargues) that "Never to praise with enthusiasm is the mark of a mediocre nature."

Mr. Gerald Massey, who is seventy-nine years of age, has long been working at a big book which is to crown the edifice of his fame as an Egyptologist. Mr. Massey tries to prove that Christianity came out of Egypt, and has amassed a mountain of evidence in favor of his position. He presented us with a copy of his *Natural Genesis* when we were a prisoner for "blasphemy" in 1888, and it is one of the most valued books in our library. Mr. Massey's friends are hoping that he may get some assistance from the Prime Minister through what is called the Royal Bounty. He and his daughter are living on a Civil List pension of £2 a week, but he has had to sell his home to scrape together the money to publish his new book, of which a thousand pages are already in type, and which will cost about £600.

The Secular Education League has issued a leaflet on Mr. M'Kenna's Religious Instruction Bill, pointing out that it is a purely partisan measure, favoring one set of religionists and inflicting injustice on all the rest of the community. Copies of this leaflet for free distribution can be obtained of the Secretary—Mr. Harry Snell, 12 Leighton-grove, London, N.W.

A CERTAIN UTOPIA.

Gonzalo.—Had I the plantation of this isle, my lord—

Antonio.—He'd sow it with nettle-seed.

Sebastian.—Or docks or mallows.

Gonzalo.—And were the king on't, what would I do?

Sebastian.—'Scape being drunk, for want of wine.

Gonzalo.—I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things: for no traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; wealth, poverty,
And use of service, none; contract, succession,
Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
No use of metal, coin, or wine, or oil;
No occupation, all men idle, all,
And women too; but innocent and pure:
No sovereignty.

Sebastian.—And yet he would be king on't.

Antonio.—The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning.

Gonzalo.—All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavor. Treason, felony,
Sword, pike, knife, gun, or need of any engine
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance
To feed my innocent people.

Sebastian.—No marrying 'mong his subjects?

Antonio.—None, man; all idle; whores and knaves.

Gonzalo.—I would with such perfection govern, sir,
To excel the golden age.

Sebastian.—Save his majesty

—*Shakespeare*, "The Tempest."

We no longer believe that this world is as the apple of the eye of one God who is alive to our slightest thoughts; but we know that it is subjected to forces quite as powerful, quite as alive to laws and duties which it behoves us to penetrate. That is why our attitude in face of the mystery of these forces has changed. It is no longer one of fear, but one of boldness. It no longer demands that the slave shall kneel before the master or the creator, but permits a gaze as between equals, for we bear within ourselves the equal of the deepest and greatest mysteries.—*Maeterlinck*.

Pain and Piety.

"Pain, grief, disease, and death—are these the inventions of a loving God? That no animal shall rise to excellence except by being fatal to the life of others—is this the law of a kind Creator? It is useless to say that pain has its benevolence, that massacre has its mercy. Why is it so ordained that bad should be the raw material of good? Pain is not less pain because it is useful; murder is not less murder because it is conducive to development. *Here is blood upon the hand still, and all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten it.*"—WINWOOD READE, *The Martyrdom of Man*, p. 520.

"The facts of organic and human nature, when observed frankly and judged without bias, do not warrant the argument of a supreme and beneficent artificer working after methods of human intelligence, but perfect in all his works; rather would they warrant, if viewed from the human standpoint, the conception of an almighty malignant power that was working out some far-off end of his own, with the serenest disregard of the suffering, expenditure, and waste which were entailed in the process."—DR. MAUDSLEY, *Body and Will*, pp. 180, 181.

"Dare look the Omnipotent tyrant in
His everlasting face, and tell Him that
His evil is not good."

—LORD BYRON, *Cain*, Act i.

HOW to reconcile the existence of pain with the existence of a benevolent Creator has exercised the ingenuity of those who would "justify the ways of God to Man," from the earliest times of which we have religious records. The Book of Job—one of the oldest, perhaps the oldest book in the Bible—is wholly occupied with the problem, and so damaging to orthodoxy were the author's views, that it could only find a place in the Bible after a great deal of alteration and interpolation.*

Without going into the beliefs of the ancient world on the subject, but coming down to the Christian era, we find that Christians were not troubled with the problem. Christ had declared that the prince or ruler of this world was opposed to him; he himself had several exciting adventures with the Devil, notably when the Devil, taking him up into an exceedingly high mountain, showed him all the kingdoms of the world. And, still more exciting, when the Devil perched him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and dared him to throw himself down to prove whether he was the Son of God. A test which Christ very prudently declined.

Now, if the ruler of this world was an evil being, it was only natural that grief and pain should predominate over his dominion. In the evils they suffered in this world, the Christian saw the persecution of the Devil; and, as the Devil and God were at war, those who suffered the most damage at the hands of the Devil here, were certain to be most highly recompensed by God in the world to come.

The Protestants took this idea over intact from the older Church. Bunyan, in his *Pilgrims' Progress* and *Holy War*, represented the Christian life as one continual battle with the Devil. Luther believed that the Devil was the author of all evil. He himself had long discussions with him, in which the Devil tried to shake Luther's faith. "He has not been carrying on his business during thousands of years for nothing," says Luther, who found the Devil "very learned" and "very expert."† Suicides he declared to be the direct work of the Devil, "in the same way that a traveller is killed by brigands." Even ordinary accidents had the same origin. "Satan," says Luther, "once tried to kill our prior by throwing down a piece of the wall upon him: but God miraculously saved him." He was also the author of disease. "Idiots, the lame, the blind, the dumb, are men in whom devils have established themselves; and all the physicians who heal these infirmities, as though they proceeded from natural causes, are ignorant blockheads, who know nothing of the power of the demon."‡

This, of course, was quite in accordance with the teaching of Christ, who cast out devils from the dumb, the blind, and the insane.

* Dr. E. J. Dillon, *The Sceptics of the Old Testament*.

† Michelet, *Life of Luther*, p. 328; Bohn's edition.

‡ *Ibid*, 320-1.

When this view prevailed, there was no problem to be solved. Satan was the author of all the pain and evil, God of all the good. But now there is no Devil to act as scapegoat to carry the problem of pain into the wilderness. Several causes have contributed to the disappearance of this once powerful potentate. The territory once ruled over by the Devil is now occupied by science, which teaches that blindness, dumbness, and insanity are due to natural causes; such cases being now handed over to the medical man instead of the exorcist. Then the geologists discovered that pain and death, instead of being introduced to the world by the disobedience of Adam and Eve at the suggestion of the Devil, abounded on the earth for millions of years before man appeared upon the scene. Lastly, the Bible itself, the only source of the little that was known of the Devil, became discredited in its science and history.

To-day, you may sweep the theological horizon without discovering any trace of an evil spirit. The once mighty Lucifer, Son of the Morning, at whose name millions trembled, is now reduced to take refuge with the Salvation Army, the Peculiar People, and a few other obscure sects. The rest of the Christian world have dropped the Devil out of sight—almost out of memory. Like a modern Jonah, he has been thrown overboard to lighten a creed heavily laboring on the seas of modern, scientific, and historical criticism. And now the Christian world stands confronted with the staggering question. "If there is no Devil, who is responsible for the existence of pain and evil?"

In a very able article, entitled "Religion, Reason, Agnosticism," contributed to the *Westminster Review*, April, 1893, Miss Bodington observes:—

"How is it possible to reconcile the conception of an all-good supreme Being with the fact of the existence of evil? The humanitarian spirit of our age, acting on minds still animated by orthodox ideas of theology, tends to evolve a type of deity well satirised by Matthew Arnold as a trinity of the 'Three Lord Shaftesbury's.' All the terrible side of Nature and human life is judiciously veiled, like the vivisectioned dog discreetly covered with a cloth in Claude Bernard's statue."

The believer tries to work round the question. He says things are not so bad as the freethinker makes out; that the pain and misery in the world has been greatly exaggerated. Matthew Arnold said of Wordsworth:—

"But Wordsworth's eyes avert their ken
From half of human fate."*

The same might be said of most of those who attempt to justify the God of Nature. The great Cardinal Newman, however, was not one of those who refuse to see the darker side of nature. In his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, after noticing "the disappointments of life, the defect of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin," he despairingly concludes, "All this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery which is absolutely beyond human solution" (p. 379). Another religiously-minded man, the late distinguished physician, Sir Benjamin Ward Richardson, declares that "Nature is a laboratory of pain on the most gigantic scale; she stands at nothing in the way of infliction, spares nothing that is sentient." And he adds: "If we think of the pain Nature inflicts, it seems far more cruel than any experimentalist can possibly conceive."† Some preachers, far from attempting to deny the fact of the existence of pain and misery, even attempt to found an argument for religion upon it. They say that suffering is so great that there must be a God and a future life to redress or compensate us for the agonies endured in this. The eloquent American preacher, Theodore Parker, took this view. After pointing to the scourge and jail awarded to Paul, and the "thorny

crown" and "malefactor's death" of Jesus, he goes on:—

"Kossuth gets his hard fate, and Francis the Stupid sits on the Hungarian throne; Austrian, Hungarian, German, French, Italian" dungeons are crowded with the noblest men of the age, who do perpetual penance for their self-denial, their wisdom, their justice, their affection for mankind, and their fidelity to God. These die as the fool dieth. There is no hope for any one of them in a body without a soul, in an earth without a heaven, in a world without a God."‡

The Rev. Baring-Gould, who cites this passage, is of the same opinion. He says "misery, wrong, oppression blot the history of the past and smear that of the present. Patriots groan in dungeons. Civilisation enriches one and pauperises a score. Juggernaut's car rolls over the necks of thousands." The belief, the hope of a future life has, he says, "been ploughed into the conscience of mankind by the oppression of centuries." After reciting some of the atrocities committed by rulers like Theodosius, Adonibezek, and Justinian, he says:—

"The King of Dahomey sips sugar and water whilst a hundred human beings are being massacred before his eyes and their blood is being puddled with the blood of tigers. History paints oppression whirling its bloody lash after man, and man, in the madness of his despair, flying like Orestes to the temple of God, and there sitting as a suppliant, sullen and resolute: 'Here will I keep my station and await the event of judgment' (Aesch., *Furies*). Without a belief in God, the avenger of all such as call upon Him, and a future life, in which the wicked should cease from troubling and be troubled himself in turn, man, the most downtrodden of all creatures, would wrap his mantle about his face, creep like a wounded hare into a corner, and sob to death."‡

These writers, professors of three differing creeds—Roman Catholic, Unitarian, and Church of England—are all agreed as to the existence of a vast quantity of pain and misery on the earth. They are also in agreement with John Stuart Mill, an unbeliever, who, in his essay on Nature, observes:—

"In sober truth, nearly all the things which men are hanged or imprisoned for doing to one another are Nature's everyday performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognised by human laws, Nature does once to every being that lives, and, in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters whom we read of ever purposely inflicted on their living fellow-creatures."

This is bad enough; but there is more to follow:—

"Nature impales men, broaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, freezes them with cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed. All this Nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and of justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst; upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequence of the noblest acts, and it might almost be imagined as a punishment for them. She mows down those on whose existence hangs the well-being of a whole people, perhaps the prospect of the human race for generations to come, with as little compunction as those whose death is a relief to themselves, or a blessing to those under their noxious influence.....Nature has Noyades more fatal than those of Carrier; her explosions of firedamp are as destructive as human artillery; her plague and cholera far surpass the poison-cups of the Borgias..... Anarchy and the Reign of Terror are overmatched in injustice, ruin, and death by a hurricane and a pestilence."§

It is a terrible indictment, but the facts are indisputable. Schopenhauer remarked that Dante drew all the materials for his description of hell from this earth, "and yet he made a very proper hell of it";

* If Theodore Parker were alive now he would add Russian to the list.

† *Works* (1867), vol. xi., p. 15.

‡ *Origin and Development of Religious Belief* (1884), vol i., p. 77.

§ J. S. Mill, *Three Essays on Religion* (1874), pp. 29-31.

* In memory of the Author of "Obermann."

† *Biological Experimentation* (1896), p. 4.

but when he came to describe heaven and its delights he could find no materials for it, so he merely repeats the instructions he received there. "If, finally," says Schopenhauer, "we should bring clearly to a man's sight the terrible sufferings and miseries to which his life is constantly exposed, he would be seized with horror; and if we were to conduct the confirmed optimist through the hospitals, infirmaries, and surgical operating-rooms, through the prisons, torture-chambers, and slave-kennels, over battle-fields and places of execution, if we were to open to him all the dark abodes of misery, where it hides itself from the glance of cold curiosity, and, finally, allow him to glance into the starving dungeon of Ugolino, he, too, would understand at last the nature of this 'best of possible' worlds." What a poignant sentence! "The dark abodes of misery, where it hides itself from the glance of cold curiosity." It haunts the imagination, and, once read, prints itself indelibly on the mind. The religious pretend to ignore Schopenhauer; it is easier to call him a "gloomy pessimist" than to answer his arguments. But listen to the verdict of Richard Jeffries: "Human suffering is so great, so endless, so awful, that I can hardly write of it. I could not go into hospitals and face it, as some do, lest my mind should be temporarily overcome. *The whole and the worst the worst pessimist can say is far beneath the least particle of the truth, so immense is the misery of man.*"†

Some pious apologists appear to be absolutely incapable of seeing the application of the facts they record. They dwell upon the ingenuity by which animals compass the destruction of their prey, but ignore the sufferings endured by those preyed upon. In a lecture by that great opponent of Darwin, Professor Richard Owen, entitled "The Power of God as Manifested in His Animal Creation"—there is, says Mr. Call, "a terrific representation of a serpent devouring its prey. The exquisite adaptation of the parts to the whole, the wonderful work of hands, feet, and fins, accomplished by a mere modification of the vertebral column, are all eloquently descanted on by the admiring anatomist. He describes with scientific enthusiasm the motion and the action of the serpent. He tells you how it glides along; how it lifts up its crushed prey and holds it, grasped in the death-coil as in a hand, to the gaping mouth; and the woodcut shows you the cruel eye, the barbed jaw, the overlapping folds, the victim in the deadly embrace, and the mouth of the loathsome creature closing over the poor helpless head. Behold a true symbol of the dark side of nature, a faint emblem of the difficulties we must encounter if we are determined to argue that such horrors had an omnipotent or even quasi-omnipotent Designer."‡

Of course, such an atrocity might illustrate the ingenuity or skill of its Creator, but it would be the devilish ingenuity of a cruel and malignant monster.

Professor Giebel says:—

"He who only seeks wisdom, design, and appropriateness in Nature, had better turn to the natural history of the tape-worm to try his ingenuity upon. The entire object of its life consists in the production of eggs capable of development, and cannot be attained except through the sufferings of other creatures; millions of eggs perish aimlessly; some are developed, and the embryo finally becomes evaginated and grows into a sucking and reproductive scolex, the young of which produce eggs and putrify in the excreta of other beings. Here we have nothing of beauty, design, or wisdom in the ordinary human construction of the terms."§

Yet Van Beneden, the great specialist and authority on parasites, of which the tape-worm is an example, piously observes: "He who has adjusted and regulated everything in its due order and proportion, watches with as much care over the preservation of the most repulsive insect as over the young brood of the most brilliant bird."||

Professor Fiske is another scientist who believes that the evolution theory is compatible with a belief in a beneficent Creator, and yet he observes:—

"A blind process, known as Natural Selection, is the deity that slumbers not nor sleeps. Reckless of good and evil, it brings forth at once the mother's tender love for her infant and the horrible teeth of the ravening shark, and to its creative indifference the one is as good as the other."*

Professor Fiske speaks of it as "a blind process." Yes, but if there is a Creator of Nature he is responsible for all the processes which take place in Nature. As Professor Huxley remarked, It is intelligible that the Creator should operate according to such rules as he might think fit to lay down for himself:—

"But that would leave the operation of his will just as much a direct personal act as it would be under any other circumstances. I can also understand that (as in Leibnitz's caricature of Newton's views) the Creator might have made the cosmical machine, and, after setting it going, have left it to itself till it needed repair. But then, by the supposition, his personal responsibility would have been involved in all that it did; just as a dynamiter is responsible for what happens when he has set his machine going and left it to explode."†

(To be concluded.) W. MANN.

MORIBUND CHURCHES.

Wherever and whenever religious agencies succeed, it is rarely because of the driving-power of what is preached, but because the preacher's gospel is glossed over or put in the background. We have popular services by the million, in which devices are used to attract the public which ought not to be necessary if their framers had any real message to declare. But they have not. Popular pulpit addresses rarely or never deal with the fundamental problems of life. The last thing one ever expects to hear in such addresses is a real living presentation of the beliefs the preacher professes to hold. He makes passing allusions to them, of course—such as appeals to come to the Cross, and such-like, but they generally sound unreal, and the pill has to be sweetly sugared. The ordinary way of preaching the gospel is to avoid saying much about what the preacher believes the gospel to be. To be sure, there are many social activities in connection with the Christian Churches. If it were not for these most of the Churches would have to be shut up. They are quite admirable in their way, and often produce excellent results, but they imply another gospel than the one supposed to be preached from the pulpits. They ignore dogmatic beliefs, and assume the salvability of the whole race, and the possibility of realising the kingdom of God on earth. Wherever the Churches are alive to-day, and not merely struggling to keep their heads above water, it is not their doctrine but their non-theological human sympathy that is doing it.—*Rev. R. J. Campbell, "The New Theology," pp. 10-11.*

OUR DEBT TO THE PAST.

Children should realise the bleak and unprotected state through which their remote ancestors must have begun a human existence, the great dangers which they had to overcome, the contests with beasts and with the severities of climate, the hardships and perils and straits through which they passed; and should be grateful to those unknown pioneers of the human race, to whose struggles and sufferings and discoveries and energies our present mode of existence on this planet is due. The more people realise the effort that has preceded them and made them possible, the more they are likely to endeavor to be worthy of it: the more pitiful also will they feel when they see individuals failing in the struggle upward and falling back towards a brute condition; and the more hopeful they will ultimately become for the brilliant future of a race which from such lowly and unpromising beginnings has produced the material vehicle necessary for those great men who flourished in the recent epoch we speak of as antiquity; and has been so guided, since then, as to develop the magnificence of a Newton and a Shakespeare even on this island in the northern seas.—*Sir Oliver Lodge.*

* *The World as Will and Idea* (1891), vol. i., p. 419.

† *The Story of My Life*, p. 135.

‡ W. M. W. Call, *Final Causes* (1891), pp. 102-3.

§ Cited in Buchner's *Force and Matter* (1884), p. 22).

|| *Animal Parasites*, p. 13.

* *The Destiny of Man* (1890), p. 23.

† *Science and Christian Tradition*, p. 110.

Correspondence.

"NATURE'S INSURGENT SON."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to Mr. Lloyd's article and the question which your correspondent Mr. Reid wishes to see further discussed, I may point out that the language used is figurative. Bacon embodied the truth of the matter in the apparently paradoxical statement that man commands Nature by obeying her. We may say with equal truth that man rebels against Nature, or that he carries out her will just as we may regard Art as contrary to Nature, or as merely a section or province of Nature. As Shakespeare says, "Nature is made better by no mean, but nature makes that mean.....the art itself is nature." Man can only "defy" or improve Nature by obeying her promptings and her laws, *i.e.*, by intelligently taking advantage of and utilising for his purposes various laws or facts which are parts of Nature. Custom entitles us to use either kind of metaphor to point or emphasise our meaning, but we should always bear in mind that *both* kinds are equally admissible, though in form contradictory.

If confusion or difficulty arises in anyone's mind through the use or abuse of such metaphors, he should cast them aside, and confine his attention to plain literal statements of the case. "Nature's Insurgent Son," reduced to the literal or actual fact, is simply "Man, a product of Nature, opposing unpleasant tendencies in nature"—or, in other words, "human intelligence overcoming natural evils." Whether we choose to regard this as rebellion or obedience is simply a matter of taste or oratorical convenience.

Mr. Reid speaks of lunatics in asylums as being in many cases victims of Natural Selection. Many of them, it seems to me, are victims of Unnatural Selection, *i.e.*, of the Artificial Preservation and Multiplication of the Unfit, a process which has done much to lower the stamina and happiness of the race and must be counteracted by Rational Selection in parentage, or Sterilisation of the Unfit.

W. P. BALL.

CHURCH BELLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—*Apropos* of an article which appeared in your issue of the 12th inst., a few words on the above subject may not be inappropriate or even uninteresting to Freethinkers, who, like the general public, seem to have little knowledge of a science that claims many thousands of not altogether religious, but secular advocates. It is a science which gives much pleasure and recreation, mentally and physically, to even thoughtful and studious people.

Certainly there is something to be urged against the noise of the bells in a crowded and sordid city, if one be so foolish or unfortunate as to take up his quarters in close proximity to a peal of bells. On the other hand, bell-ringing, or campanology, is one of the purest enjoyments we have—which cannot be admitted of most of our national pleasures.

As regards bell-ringers being essentially or sentimentally religious, sending up their praises to the "Throne of Grace," nothing could be more contrary to fact, for it is one of the most serious complaints of the clergy that they who call the worshippers, by the use of bells, to church, seldom attend themselves. Bell-ringers love the science and art in changing a number of sounds to a part or full extent, which is extremely intricate and most fascinating.

The bells, unlike the organ and choir, are not an "accompaniment of public worship," but an ornament. Were the Church disestablished, or even the triumph of philosophy in its place, the science of campanology would remain. Allied to mathematics, it is secular, and one of the best assets the clergy have to the continuance of public worship. Overthrow the Church and melt every bell, the art would not be destroyed. Hand-bells or private bells would be resorted to, and should you be so unlucky as to find your neighbors bell-ringers, the wisest plan would be to flee away and be at rest. Noise and thought have ever been enemies. There is little of the latter in the most pious and religious, and they, curiously enough, have no bells. Fanaticism is noisy and aggressive, but one can hardly charge the Church of England with any of the above qualifications. In a poetical sense, there is music in a peal of bells. They belong, as it were, to the immortals, speaking of the past; sad enough, if history be correct. The Church may have many faults and vices, but all that is secular in it will endure. There are some who aspire even beyond material philosophy, and, like Mr. Holyoake, feel no certainty in one thing, while others are positive of everything. Let us see to our sails, that we perish not in the general wreck which the removal of innocent pleasure would hasten.

M. G. FRENCH.

The Miracle-Worker.

ONCE upon a time there came
Into far-off Du-pha Land,
One who sought to climb to fame
By his tricks of sleight-of-hand.
Crowds of Du-phas, high and low,
Flocked to see the opening "show."

First, the hat he handed round
To receive each Du-pha's mite
With our conjuror renowned
Money was a trifle "light").
Smiling then upon the throng,
"Now," said he, "I sha'n't be long!"

"Here is water in a glass,
Aqua pura—nothing more.
See, I make a magic pass
(Watch me closely, I implore!)
Now, behold! 'tis filled with wine.....!"
Said the Du-phas, "*He's divine.*"

"Fisherman, who standest there,
With thy basket by thy side,
Choose thy largest cod with care—
Now its mouth pray open wide."
Out fell sixpence.....Mazed and awed,
People whispered, "*'Tis the Lord.*"

"See this quartern loaf of bread
(Pass it round, John, if you please),
Just one loaf I think I said—
Bless my soul! why, what are these?
Twenty loaves, and all from one.....!"
Said the crowd, "*'Tis Yakveh's Son.*"

"With your kind permission, I
Now will 'blight' this little tree;
Every drop of sap shall dry,
Every leaf shall withered be.
Be it so!" He waved his rod.....
Cried the Du-phas, "*This is God.*"

When he made his final bow,
All around were on their knees.
"Sir," they cried, "we marvel how
Thou canst do such works as these,
If thou comest not from the skies—
Art not God in human guise?"

Our magician thought awhile
Ere deciding on a "cram";
Then, with a seraphic smile,
He announced, "The Lord I am!
If the wonders I have wrought
Don't convince you—well, they ought!"

Then they grovelled at his feet,
Called him "Blessed Lord" and "King"
(All because he'd done this neat
Little bit of conjuring!);
Whilst they praised in dulcet tones,
Gold they gave, and precious stones.

Naught to do but sleep and feast,
Many moons the Fraud did reign
(When the golden offerings ceased,
He performed his tricks again!).
He was God, the Du-phas say,
And believe it to this day!

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SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15 and 6.15, F. A. Davies.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred, "Types of Atheists." Brockwell Park, Guy A. Aldred, 3.15, "Life of Shelley"; 6.15, "Theosophy and Secularism."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, C. Cohen, 3.30, "The Fate of Religion"; 6.30, "Reasons for Atheism."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.

PLYMOUTH RATIONALIST SOCIETY (Foresters' Hall, The Octagon): 7, Mr. Rundle, "Morality."

WEST STANLEY BRANCH N. S. S. (I. L. P. Institute): 3, Annual Meeting—Election of Officers, etc.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S.: Annual Excursion of Members and Friends to Ballageich Hill. Brakes leave foot of Queen-street at 10.15.

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S.: Market Cross, on Saturday, at 8, George Whitehead, "Socialism and Christology."

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