

THE Freethinker

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It is not honest inquiry that makes anarchy; but it is error, insincerity, half-belief and untruth that makes it. A man protesting against error is on the way towards uniting himself with all men that believe in truth.

—THOMAS CARLYLE.

Dosing a Daughter And the "Undelightful" Atheist.

I.

THE author of *An Englishwoman's Love Letters* has much to answer for. He has evoked a crowd of imitators, who write imaginary letters from all conceivable people to all sorts of inconceivable people. And amongst the crowd is Mr. Hubert Bland—"Hubert" of the *Sunday Chronicle*—who is responsible for *Letters to a Daughter*, now published in a cheap shilling form by Mr. T. Werner Laurie, of Clifford's-Inn, London.

Mr. Hubert Bland has a pretty knack of writing superficial opinions and sentiments as though they were profound philosophy. An unsophisticated reader might easily imagine that what he does not know is not worth learning. He shakes his head and smiles, and winks—yes, *winks*—as who should say, "I am full of wisdom, and what I tell you is nothing to what I could tell you, if I would." Yet when you have heard all he does say, you perceive (if you have any sense and experience) that his wisdom is simply what passes for such amongst the so-called "men of the world"—the men who think that smokeroom yarns are wit, that the highest form of manhood is one that has infinite possibilities of gay-dog-ism, that enthusiasm for anything is odious and ill-bred, that whoever risks anything for his principles is a born fool, and that a flirtation with progress must be quite consistent with marriage to reaction. It must be admitted that Mr. Bland has more brains than we generally find amongst these "men of the world," and consequently says things now and then which are beyond their mental horizon; but he is of their company all the same, and his general attitude is exactly identical with theirs.

II.

These letters are not really letters to a daughter at all. Had they been such, and honestly written, they would have been more valuable. They are quite imaginary—not to say artificial—epistles, which give Mr. Bland an opportunity of airing his social and sexual ideas; or rather, we cannot help imagining, the social and sexual ideas which are likely to tickle the fancy of his readers. Mr. Bland knows that nearly all his readers will be men—and he bears the fact in mind. He often fails to keep up the pretence of his title. Even the most *blasé* man, writing to his daughter, does not tell her of the married lady, who had been reading "some Italian psychologist's book on Love," and wondered whether it was true that a lad of fourteen could have a passion for a lady of thirty, and asked "if such a thing were possible," and was answered in the affirmative (by this father!) not only with frankness, but with "a great wealth of detail." Nor is it easy

to conceive of a father, not a criminal or a madman, referring in a letter to his daughter to "the improprieties of Messalina," or defining for her the safe—and therefore the "proper"—limits of flirtation, and rather gloating over its "dangerously delightful possibilities." And when it comes to writing to her about the *ménage à trois* as "one of the commonest of social phenomena," one is compelled to hope that the girl has a clean-minded brother who is ready to read that amazing parent a wholesome lesson in the art of family correspondence.

We gather from these letters that amongst the writer's "set," and at this time of day, "any man might go to any picture gallery with any woman and escape censure." This is said in connection with the story of his coming across a couple spooning between two screens in a picture gallery, and the man giving him a look which meant "I know you are a decent chap, and I am confident you will hold your tongue." Now we do not wish to discuss the morals of Mr. Bland's "set," but we confess that we do not understand a father chattering about these things to his daughter only just out of her teens. Knowledge of the world is necessary, and it comes in time, but some of it can very well wait, and there is no need to offer a girl by anticipation some of "the rottenest part of the fruit of the tree of knowledge"—to borrow an expression from a great, good soul whom fate did not allow to be a father, but who was fit to hold a daughter's hand and lead her to all the noblest and sweetest wisdom.

III.

Let us not, however, judge Mr. Bland too harshly. We repeat that these letters to a daughter are quite imaginary, and that what he writes to the girl is really intended for his public readers. Everything proves this—even the reference to Dr. Clifford. Mr. Bland says that one would forget his "windy rhetoric," and one's "interest in the man would spring to life," if he were "caught with a guitar serenading a lady's maid in Gower-street." No man would write to his young daughter like that. It is not witty; it is merely absurd. Dr. Clifford, at his age, to say nothing of his aged spouse at home, would not be a "delightful" figure serenading a lady's-maid in Gower-street; he would be simply an old lunatic—and instead of "our hearts warming to the man," we should wish him a safe journey to Colney Hatch.

Mr. Bland claims to "belong to the great company of artists," on the ground that when he gets an idea in his head he is miserable until he "sees it before him in words"—which may only mean that he has the itch of scribbling. "I would rather," he says, "far rather, keep an aching tooth in my jaw than an aching idea in my head." But we do not think he need be worried on that account, for we have not noticed any idea in this book big enough to make anyone's head ache.

IV.

We gather that Mr. Bland would prefer a thoroughly conventional son-in-law. The first thing in his social code, apparently, is to wear a proper necktie. He mentions this virtue more than once, and congratulates himself upon possessing it. The next thing desirable in a son-in-law is that he shall drink and smoke. These accomplishments—which, by the

way, are excessively common—are “indications of the only temperament and attitude towards life which are compatible with true virtue.” Besides, the presence of a non-smoker and non-drinker “at dinner and after would be a perpetual reproach.” Ay, there’s the rub! The poor father-in-law couldn’t stand the constant reproach of one who didn’t share his sensuous indulgences. Indeed, his daughter’s husband—

“Must not be ‘anti’ anything to any extent. Not anti-vaccination or anti-vivisection, or anti-clerical, or any of those things about which the faddist rages. I don’t mean that he may not have strong opinions, but he must not carry them to the point of ‘anti.’ When a man reaches that point it always seems to me that he ceases to be human.”

Again we ask what is the reason of Mr. Bland’s concern? There are so many men—the overwhelming majority, in fact—who are not “anti” anything, with few ideas and no convictions, taking all things just as they come, ready to fight no battle, anxious to keep a sound skin, and desiring nothing but comfort and respectability—that it seems gratuitous on his part to protest so vehemently against the small chance of his being troubled with an anti-vaccinationist, or anti-vivisectionist, or anti-clericalist. For the rest, we quite understand his objection to anyone being in earnest about anything. It is constitutional. That is why he tells his imaginary daughter Alexa that monogamic marriage is so wonderfully “calculated to ensure unhappiness to the two parties concerned.” It is an odd statement to make to a young girl—and by a father; and the reason assigned is odd, to keep it company. Marriage destroys romance: that is the reason. But marriage does nothing of the kind; what it destroys is ignorance of each other. Romance is a matter of temperament. Adventures, said Disraeli, are to the adventurous. It looked like a flippant paradox, but it was profoundly true. The adventurous person finds adventures; and the romantic person finds romance. When we are in love we are all poets, to the full extent of our capacity; and life is a romance then, because we are romantic. But the romance dies in less than six weeks after marriage, Mr. Bland says. Well, it all depends. The romance of curiosity dies, but the romance of love does not, if there was any real love in the union. We appeal to an infinitely greater master of the human heart than Mr. Bland. What does Robert Burns say in one of his brief, triumphant songs?—

“John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And mony a canty day, John,
We’ve had wi’ ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
But hand in hand we’ll go;
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo.”

Why, the romance of life is inextinguishable in this old couple, even at the edge of the grave. They are not eaten up with small respectabilities; their life is a sincere reality; and romance still shines round them because they have kept the natural fire in their hearts. Robert Burns knew all this by the instinct of his royal, loving nature; and that is why his poems and songs—bawdy and all—make so much better a book, even for a dainty, delicate girl, than the letters of a worldling, with their cold prudence, and finicking Polonius-like philosophy. The occasional rankness will do little harm; it falls off the pure mind without leaving a stain. But the low maxims of a crawling circumspection eat into the very soul. Burns had the root of the matter in him. He never uttered a treasonable word against love. He knew it for the one grand reality in a world of phantoms; even as the greater Shakespeare knew it, and as Dante knew it—“the love that moves the sun and all the stars.”

V.

And now we wish to refer to a very odd (Mr. Bland would say “rum”) passage in the letter headed “The Tree of Knowledge.” It is this:—

“You know me well enough, I take it, to know that, like every other decently-honest man, when I have a

conviction I act upon it. Mind, I say a conviction, not a mere opinion. Mere opinions, when they differ widely from the opinions held by those around us, we often do wisely to keep to ourselves. But convictions are of another stuff. When we have them (and we don’t have very many of them as a rule) we must out with them, both in word and deed, or we perish. Concealed convictions set up in the soul a moral and intellectual rot.”

This is true enough; we are not going to quarrel with it; but it is odd, all the same—coming from Mr. Bland. He must have said it, not perhaps in a lucid interval, but in an unguarded moment; for we shall see how ill it tallies with the advice he gives “Alexa” on the question of religious conformity—which is a euphemism for moral hypocrisy. The explanation of which discrepancy is doubtless to be found in Mr. Bland’s avowal, after quoting a fine tag from Kipling, that he must come down from the heights to the valley, as he “never could breathe freely on mountain tops.” Men do let the truth out about themselves in moments of candor.

“Alexa” is staying with some friends, and she asks her paternal guide, philosopher, and friend—“Ought I to go to church?” He has already advised her to “bow reverentially in the House of Rimmon,” but she apparently wants more definite guidance. Ought she to go to church? The very word “ought” acts upon “pater” like the sting of a gadfly. She knows it irritates him. “It suggests Ethical Societies,” he says, “and their preposterous hymns.” But he will answer her question. Certainly she ought to go to church—just as she ought to dress for dinner. She should be of the “all round” people; those who respect other people’s prejudices—especially when they can gain anything by it. Not to go to church with your host and his friends is to advertise your irreligion, or at least your religious doubts, in “the most vulgar and objectionable way possible.” It is to “make yourself prominent and prickly.” And so on, and so on. The question of “concealed convictions” with their “moral and intellectual rot” being conveniently left out of sight.

At the next moment, Mr. Bland, who is not exactly a fool, recollects himself. He feels that he had better give Alexa’s question a fresh turn, and thus avoid downright rascality. He therefore takes it that she really means—“Is it wise, in order to make the best of life, to cultivate the religious emotions?”

VI.

In answering this question, Mr. Bland is particularly careful not to show his hand. He never states what are his own religious opinions, or whether he has any at all; and we rather fancy that if he told the plain truth in this respect, it would make the whole letter “On Going to Church” look ridiculous—or worse.

But let us hear what he does say. All the “nicest people,” the “gayest people,” the people of taste, the people “whose opinion you would most value of a poem, a novel, a symphony, a landscape,” are “in almost every case people with some sort of religious belief.” Then there must be very sad company for Mr. Bland amongst his associates in the Fabian Society. His assertion is utterly absurd in the light of familiar facts, and is really not worth discussing, when it is so obvious that so many of the masters of literature, for instance, are Freethinkers.

Mr. Bland admits that there are “many worthy Atheists,” but “have you ever,” he asks, “met a really delightful Atheist?” The answer, of course, must depend on what is meant by “delightful.” We conceive it is possible, and even probable, that what is delightful to Mr. Bland and his “set” may not be at all delightful to a good many other people. What is one man’s meat, the proverb says, is another man’s poison. And, for our part, we believe that Mr. Bland might find professed Atheists undelightful, in the same way that he finds non-smokers and non-drinkers undelightful, as being “a perpetual reproach and a constant criticism.” Anyhow, a discussion turning upon such a word as “delightful” is necessarily futile. There is no firm standing-ground for the argument.

VII.

What is "the religious instinct?" Mr. Bland defines it as "a craving for personal relations with the Unseen." This cannot be understood by "a little agnostic Philistine"—it would be treated sarcastically by "a Hall of Science lecturer"—but it will commend itself to the mind of any nice girl, if she only submits herself to the following regimen:—

"Go, sit as much by yourself as you can in some great church—a cathedral for choice, of course; choose some corner where the light is broken by a stained-glass window—the glass must not be of date later than the end of the sixteenth century—and stay there quietly until after the service ends. Let the music of the organ, the clear voices of the choir boys, the penetrating odor of the incense, work their will upon you. Surrender yourself wholly, uncritically, to the influence of the place."

After reading that prescription, we are able to understand how Mr. Bland looks upon an Atheist as he looks upon a person "who does not like olives." His religion is merely a form of sensuality. His personal relations with the Unseen are the delusions of an invited hypnotism, which is surrendered to "uncritically." The intellect sleeps, and the religious emotions are stimulated into disorderly activity.

Mr. Bland may like that sort of thing, as he likes his choice cigar, his bottle of wine, and his olives; or it may be the sort of thing which he likes to see in young women, as putting a morbid finish to their sexual attractions. But he should not take the great Epicurus under his patronage. His statement that if Epicurus were alive in London to-day he would go to the new Catholic Cathedral at Westminster daily, and "would be one of the most devout" is sheer fatuous insolence. Mr. Bland does not understand Epicurus, though Epicurus would probably understand Mr. Bland.

The truth of religious ideas is a question that this epistolary father puts by. When his daughter raises it, he advises her to put it by. He does not want to lose a pleasure, and he gets a pleasure from gratifying his religious emotions. Besides, they are natural to men and women of the twentieth century; at least, to the men and women of his "set." There are exceptions, of course, but they are "freaks." Normal persons—like Polonius Bland and his up-to-date Ophelia—have religious emotions, just as they have "a liking for the scent of tonkin beans." From which it will be seen that whenever this gentleman thinks of religion he associates it with something to eat, or a perfume, or some other kind of sense-gratification.

We will leave Mr. Bland with his correct neckties, his drinks and smokes, his olives, his tonkin beans, and his religious instinct. And we wish to say, on parting with him, that we are rather pleased that he does not find Atheists "delightful." Atheists are not too callous to appreciate a compliment—even if it happens to be paid unconsciously. That feature, indeed, may sometimes render it all the more acceptable.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Miracle Factory.

LAST week I dealt with the frame of mind of a reviewer of a Protestant work, *The Making of a Miracle*. The reviewer, in the course of his article, expressed a fervent wish that everyone in the United Kingdom would read the work in question. As I was clearly included among "everyone," I dutifully obtained the book, read it, and intend to record the result. He also said readers would be disgusted, and I was, although my disgust covered a larger area than his own. I laughed with him at the beliefs portrayed; although here, again, my laughter was of a more comprehensive character. In fact, even now I cannot decide which deserves the palm as a mirth-provoker—the beliefs of the people written about,

those of the writer himself, or the reviewer, who is evidently under the impression that a ridiculous thing becomes reasonable if only it is given a new label.

The book is concerned with the founding of the Church of the Holy Rosary at New Pompeii, by Bartolo Longo and his wife, the Countess de Fuces, with its elaborated worship of Mary and Joseph. Bartolo Longo, who led an adventurous kind of life, spiritual and temporal, came into possession of the land on which stands the Church of the Rosary through his marriage. Converted from his errors—not, laments the author, by the right method, which would have been, presumably, through the doors of the Methodist Church—Longo and his wife were appalled by the religious ignorance of the peasantry at New Pompeii. One day in October, 1872, a "voice" came to him, ordering him to "propagate the Rosary." He recognised this as a message from Mary, and as a promise of his salvation. The author of the book, Mr. T. W. S. Jones, decides, in an amusingly judicious manner, that this was not a Scriptural conversion. He should have heard the voice of Jesus, not Mary, to have made the matter correct. Anyway, Bartolo, in his Roman Catholic darkness, set to work to carry out Mary's commands. Quantities of little images, medals, rosaries, etc., were obtained, to be scattered among the peasantry, with numerous pictures of the Virgin. Festivals were instituted, and at length, after various vicissitudes, with three priests told off to assist, the Sanctuary Church of the Rosary was created. The church is, apparently, richly decorated; has numerous altars, a valuable "Virgin's crown" of brilliants, containing four fine emeralds—the gift of two Jews—pictures, etc.; and, as is shown by the visitors' book, is a place of pilgrimage, not only for the uneducated peasantry, but for many distinguished Europeans. The gem of the collection, however, is the picture of the Virgin, gifted with miraculous powers, and blessed by the Pope, about which Mr. Jones tells a curious story. A picture of the Virgin was required for the church, and funds were low. From a friend Longo gained information of one that belonged to a religious house, value about 2s. 6d. At his request Longo was presented with the picture depicting the Madonna, with "coarse, heavy features, and ungainly shape"; St. Rosa, "fat and vulgar"; and the infant Christ. It was, moreover, much worn. The picture was about a yard and a quarter high, and there was some difficulty in getting it from Naples to Pompeii. It was at length handed over to a carter, and Longo went home rejoicing. The carter, however, on this occasion had to transport a load of manure. Great, therefore, was the astonishment of the dignitaries of the Church, who were waiting to receive the picture at the church, when it was found that the carter had brought the picture along on the top of his odoriferous load. Such was the first appearance of the miracle-working picture at New Pompeii. But, touched up by a local painter, and afterwards enclosed in a bronze frame valued at £400, encircled by medallions, and hung high above the high altar, it is now venerated by thousands of worshipers, and effects miracles of the orthodox order.

Mr. Jones is full of indignation at the false beliefs, spurious miracles, etc., perpetuated by the Sanctuary. That it does not belong to the true religion he demonstrates in various ways. His proofs are conclusive. When the Czar's "peace movement" was in the air, prayers were offered in the Sanctuary in New Pompeii. "How little these availed," says Mr. Jones, was seen "by the cruellest war of recent years" immediately after. Of course, prayers were also offered in other churches—those of the Methodists included; but it is a clear proof that the prayers of the Rosary were ineffective. To believe that Longo, a Roman Catholic, heard the voice of the Virgin Mary, and was guided by inspiration, cannot be true. Such an instance is not in the least analogous to the case of Evan Roberts. He heard the voice of Jesus, and was guided by him. That the Sanctuary receives gifts in answer to prayer, or

that people are cured of disease as a result of their faith in the Rosary, is the wildest of delusions. Such things can only occur in the true faith. The late Rev. Hugh Price Hughes *could* receive exactly the sum of money required in answer to prayer. The Rev. Dr. Horton could restore to health, by the same method, a patient given up by doctors. Protestant journals are plentifully besprinkled with *authentic* anecdotes of the same description. But to believe that such things occur in the Church of the Sanctuary is only to offer fresh proof of the manner in which Rome deceives its followers.

But with all my admiration for the superb and truly Methodistical logic of Mr. Jones, there is one point on which I do not find myself in agreement with him. This is in his method of dealing with the worship of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Many must feel that the position of Joseph in the New Testament is anything but an enviable one. It is certainly not one in which many would care to be placed. But, having been placed as he was, one feels that the Christian world has not shown the thankfulness to him he merits. Bartolo Longo is therefore, I think, warranted in thinking highly of Joseph. With considerable force he asks, "Did he not receive Mary when she was with child, and by thus taking her.....did he not deceive the Devil, who regarded her as the wife of Joseph, and thus shield her from the fury and powers of hell?.....Was he not the guardian of mother and child, as the Babe lay in the manger-cradle of Bethlehem?.....Was not his fatherly care ever present and helpful during the flight into Egypt and the return?.....Does not such a service require a man like Joseph, who could stand in God's stead to the Mother and the Son?"

One need only think of what might have happened had Joseph behaved as some might have done in his place, to realise how deep is the debt Christendom owes to him—hardly less than the debt it owes to Judas. So in the Church of the Rosary Joseph is prayed to as the Father of God, his intercession is requested, he is requested to use his influence with Mary and Jesus. He is one of the trinity—Jesus, Mary, Joseph—the only one in heaven who can say to Jesus "thou art my son," and, presumably, enforce obedience. Mr. Jones objects that this is blasphemy, and one asks, Why? He says that Jesus deliberately put his father and mother in the background, crying, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" and "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" But Bartolo is not dealing with Jesus's want of respect to his parents, but with the fact that they stood to him in the relationship of parents, and that they deserve the thanks of Christians accordingly.

Mr. Jones's other indictment of the Sanctuary is more convincing. He admits that there is much charitable work going on therewith. Orphans, for instance, are well looked after, although he thinks the Catholics should give them lessons in the Free Church Catechism. But, he asks, where in New Pompeii "do we find the solution of the labor-and-capital problems of our stirring times? Where any new hint at the solution of the hard problem of the glut of labor and the poor wages paid for toil?" Bartolo Longo would have to admit that no solution to these problems are to be found in New Pompeii. He would have to take a lesson from Protestant countries, which have been so conspicuously successful in abolishing the evils connected with these questions. Mr. Jones is equally strong in his position that an argument against the Rosary is, that it does not always reform. "How is it," he asks, "that the Madonna.....does not save her votaries from theft and murder, from crime and prison?" This on seeing someone imprisoned at New Pompeii. Well, the question is a good one. Among Protestants crime is unknown, or nearly so. And one seldom hears of a believer in Jesus being guilty of theft or murder or crime, or being sent to prison. Such things are confined to Roman Catholics. One can but admire the unerring logic of such a man. Much of the money, moreover, for maintaining the Church is taken from the poor, which justly rouses Mr. Jones's indigna-

tion. How different would it have been had these poor people given their money to the true faith, or even to the London Missionary Society, or a million shilling fund for perpetuating Methodism!

The *Methodist Recorder* was right. Mr. Jones's book is instructive. That such an institution as that engineered by Bartolo Longo, with its newspaper, sale of relics, myriads of reputed cures, and hundreds of thousands of worshipers, could develop in our own day, should awaken reflection. For these people have been under the influence of a great Christian Church. They are the product of centuries of religious life, the descendants of a people who were once the greatest in the world. If this does not awaken reflection, what will?

C. COHEN.

The Gospel of Christ in the Light of History.

THE Rev. W. R. Inge, M.A., D.D., Margaret Professor of Theology at Cambridge University, has outgrown several Christian prejudices to which lesser men are still in bondage. He is courageous enough to believe "that our Lord used what is called hyperbole, that he did over-state the truth which he meant to impart as the best way of impressing it on his hearers." He also admits, like an honest man, that Paul's "crushing indictment of a whole civilisation," in the first chapter of Romans, is "too severe" to be accepted as just and true by "those who have read and admired the literature of the period." But he cannot yet pride himself upon being a completely emancipated scholar. He is still the slave of prepossessions not a few. Preaching at Westminster Abbey on Sunday morning, August 18, from Romans i. 16, he fell into one or two palpable errors which a man devoid of historical bias would easily have avoided. Nothing is clearer than that he was reading the history of Christendom through highly-colored spectacles.

According to Dr. Inge, the apostle Paul laid down the exact lines upon which the struggle of the Church against Paganism was to be carried on. "In the first place, no compromise was permitted with idolatry. In the second place, the bond which was to keep society together was proclaimed to be affection, confidence, and kindness, and this principle was acted upon in a way which impressed even the Pagans. Thirdly, a most strenuous campaign was carried on against all the vices which poisoned a wholesome family life." There is here the false assumption that Paganism did not proclaim and enforce these three grand principles. In point of fact, Paganism advocated them quite as enthusiastically as Christianity ever did. All the leading Pagan philosophers had a glowing passion for righteousness, purity, and love as qualities absolutely essential to a peaceful, happy life. Dr. Inge cannot honestly question this statement. To begin with, every student of Paganism knows that the Cynics and the satirists allowed no quarter whatever to idolatry. Indeed, it is fully admitted by Dr. Harnack that "satires upon the gods were as cheap as blackberries in that age." Even Tertullian, who, in his own exaggerated style, characterised idolatry as "the principal crime of mankind, the supreme guilt of the world, the entire reason of judgment," was yet bound to concede that "the knowledge of one God is possessed by all"; and he refers to the phrases "God sees," "God knows," "God is good," "As God will," as in common use among the Pagans. This position is so firmly established that it would be a waste of time to dwell on it any longer. Coming to the second principle, namely, "the resolution to love, and trust, and think the best of everybody," we are obliged to observe that there was nothing distinctively Christian about it: it was a principle of Pagan philosophy as well. Dr. Inge would find it somewhat difficult to prove that the Christians were in the habit of thinking the best of everybody. They

thought well only of themselves. It was with anything but "affection, confidence, and kindness" that they spoke of the Pagans. Many Christian teachers could not tolerate either philosophy or philosophers; "the best service they could render the gospel-mission was, in their opinion, to heap coarse abuse on both." Tatian, Theophilus, and Tertullian dealt in low calumnies and invectives, and were neither kind nor just. It is very doubtful whether they were even honest men. It is true that others, particularly Justin, Clement, and Origen, treated their opponents more humanely as well as more scrupulously; but the fact remains that the bulk of Christian apologists ignorantly looked down upon and despised the representatives of Paganism.

"For the third principle," says the Professor, "the battle for social purity, they [the Christians] maintained what in modern language would be called total abstinence movement. Thousands of Christians took vows of celibacy or virginity, and even disparaged the marriage state, so determined were they to prove that men and women need not be the slaves of their appetites. It was a violent attempt to straighten the stick by bending it in the opposite direction." A curious sort of campaign, surely, "against all the vices which poisoned a wholesome family life," although it was the very remedy so strongly recommended by the apostle Paul. The assumption, of course, is that under Paganism the purity and happiness of family life were seriously imperilled, if not destroyed. Even Dr. Inge says that "the happy family life which we in England enjoy, with that innocent freedom and intercourse which is the reward of being above suspicion, is an incalculable boon which we owe directly to Christianity." Now, let it be understood at once that we are in cordial agreement with the Professor when he says that "it is not those who know history best who talk about the 'good old times'"; but we beg to remind him that it would be equally relevant to observe that "it is not those who know history best" who vilify one system in order to eulogise another. Far be it from us to exalt Paganism for the purpose of discrediting Christianity; but a sense of justice demands that we should challenge Dr. Inge to prove that family life is, on the whole, much purer and happier in Great Britain to-day under Christianity than it was in ancient Rome under Paganism. The Professor may reply: "Read the *Satires* of Juvenal, and judge for yourself," and we instantly retort: Study Pliny's *Letters* and Plutarch's *Conjugal Precepts*, and the numerous monumental inscriptions of every Pagan age, and see for yourself. Juvenal satirised only the follies, vices, and corruptions of society, while Pliny and Plutarch portrayed its excellences and virtues. From the latter we learn that under Paganism there were "thousands of men and women who observed an inviolable community of affection and fidelity to their lives' ends"; and the monumental inscriptions were "couched in terms of the tenderest affection," and often recorded, "not merely the number of years, but also the number of months, days, or minutes during which the union of life and love lasted." How would Professor Inge like a foreigner to form his estimate of the morals of British society alone by the records of our divorce courts, and the scenes to be daily and nightly witnessed in the neighborhood of Piccadilly-circus? That would be just as fair a method of judging as the one the Professor employs.

Dr. Inge's great point is that there has been progress under Christianity. Granted; but had there not been progress under Paganism, and is it quite certain that human progress would not have been on a larger scale down to the present had Pagan philosophy been allowed to continue as the supreme guide of conduct? It is a well-attested fact that the ethical teaching of Pagan schools was in quality equally as good as, and in form much superior to, that imparted by the Church Fathers. With a zeal never surpassed, philosophy aimed at the moral progress of the race. Seneca taught that the worthiest pursuit was the study of becoming better day by day.

He advised his friends to be intimate only with men who were capable of improving them or of being improved by them. Epictetus insisted upon the duty of directing all efforts to the attainment of faultlessness of character. Self-improvement, self-examination, and self-sacrifice were invariably represented as the most vital tasks that could ever be undertaken. Indeed, liberty, equality, and fraternity were the great watchwords of Paganism as embodied by all its great teachers. Slavery was condemned as a cruel violation of the law of brotherhood. Indeed, it is safe to state that Christianity emphasised no moral virtue that did not receive at least equal emphasis in the schools of Philosophy. We hold, therefore, that it is a piece of sheer dogmatism to assert that we owe any degree of moral progress to the triumph of the Christian religion that we would have lacked to-day had Paganism not been forcibly suppressed.

Among the five causes of the rapid growth of the Christian Church, enumerated by Gibbon, is "the pure and austere morals of the Christians." But too much has been made of this point. Present-day apologists speak of the primitive disciples as if they were altogether superior beings. That such they were not is indisputable. Undoubtedly many of them led beautifully simple, pure, and benevolent lives. In their care for the poor they set an example to their Pagan contemporaries. But, *as a class*, they were not superior to the average Pagans. This we learn from both non-Christian and Christian judges. Educated Pagans could not perceive the exceptionally high moral excellence of the early Church. Marcus Aurelius, instead of praising the virtues of the Christians, complained of their obstinacy. Pliny, Tacitus, and Suetonius pronounced their religion one of the lowest and corruptest forms of superstition. We find from Paul's Epistles that even his converts in different parts were anything but perfect. Among them were men and women convicted of the most loathsome sexual abuses and other excesses. A general charge against them was that they looked upon themselves as above the moral law. This is how Tertullian met the reproach of moral depravity cast upon them in his day:—

"As for your saying that we are a most shameful set, steeped in luxury, avarice, and depravity, we will not deny that it is true of some, but it cannot be said of all, not even of the majority of us."

Now, Tertullian flourished in a period (160-230 A.D.) that is now often characterised as the Golden Age of the Christian Church, when she is said to have been morally and spiritually at her highest and best. And yet even in that happy age Tertullian could only claim that the majority of her members were tolerably decent folks. To the same period, though a little later, belonged Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. Writing of the Decian persecution, he maintained that it was a scourge with which they had been punished for their sins. The views of this prelate are thus depicted in Farrer's *Paganism and Christianity*:—

"His description of the Church is as bad as possible. Each man thought only of increasing his property; among the priests there was no devotion, among the ministers no sound faith; in their works there was no mercy, in their manners no discipline; false swearing, evil speaking, and quarrelling were rife; many bishops became secular agents, and left their flocks in order to seek merchandise abroad, and were eager in the pursuit of hoarding money."

Enough has now been said to show that if Christian apologists fairly faced the facts, utterly throttling the vicious spirit of partisanship, they would be bound to acknowledge that the moral profit derived from Christianity is a highly-doubtful quantity; that in the Gospel of Christ, face to face with the whole history of Christendom, there is not much to be proud of, and that the very slight moral progress recorded has often been realised in the teeth of organised Christianity. Men who live on the Gospel try hard not to be ashamed of it, but they fully succeed only by squaring their reason.

J. T. LLOYD.

Acid Drops.

King Leopold, of Belgium, is a devout (Catholic) Christian. What he is besides, the Congo horrors show us. Czar Nicholas, of Russia, is another devout (Greek Church) Christian. What he is besides, the Russian horrors show us. During June, 110 political prisoners were sentenced to death by this pious creature's bloody court-martials, and 151 during July. The August figures will probably be worse. Oh for an hour of the great Pagan rulers who had no other religion than patriotism, before the blight of Christianity fell upon the world!

Monday's *Daily News* gave a column (with portrait) to the Rev. D. Ewart James, the new-imported Congregational minister at Southend—the gentleman we referred to a few weeks ago as strongly objecting to the Sunday band on the front and other forms of public enjoyment on "the blessed Sabbath." According to the *D. N.* report, he is a mighty preacher, though the bits given from his sermon were the veriest commonplaces of pulpit eloquence. There was even a good old "scornful" reference to Professor Tyndall—whose name, by the way, is not "Tyndale." Fancy a person of Mr. James's intellectual size "scorning" a giant like Professor Tyndall! But these reverend gentlemen preach to ignoramuses—to the great, uneducated, vulgar, and pious majority of the middle classes, who know no more about Professor Tyndall or his likes than they know about quadratic equations or siderial chronometry. It is on this stodgy mass of the population that present-day Christianity rests; and a pulpit whipper-snapper like the Rev. D. James is therefore able to be insolent to the Tyndalls and Darwins and Haeckels, not only with impunity, but with the certainty of applause.

Preacher James has the usual talk with the Lord before the sermon, in which he gives the Almighty plain hints about local politics. Last Sunday morning, it appears, he treated God to a few words about the quarrel between the Town Council and their medical officer of health. This sort of thing, of course, is gross hypocrisy. Such local references are really meant for the congregation; but, instead of speaking to them direct, the reverend gentleman gets hold of the heavenly telephone and lets them listen while he carries on his part of the conversation with Omniscience.

The medical officer of health at Southend has been jockeyed out of his post. Why? Because he wanted to do his work too well, and tried to do it quite impartially. He offended the susceptibilities and the pockets of some local big-pots, who have "got their own back." Dr. Nash has paid the penalty of being honest. What religion he professes we don't happen to know; but we understand that the local big-pots who resented his attentions are very good Christians. They *would* be.

Mr. J. H. Gartrell put his canine friend, "Inkum Pinkum," into the Penzance Dog Show, and the Kennel Club Committee objected to the entry on the ground that the "sire, dam, and breeder" had not been stated. Mr. Gartrell replied that he did not know the pedigree of his dog, except that it was descended from the wolf or the jackal, or a cross between them; that it was distantly related to man, without having vanity enough to make a heaven for itself in the next world, and a hell for all who did not agree with it—in short, that it was a secular dog, quite content to make the best of this world, without troubling its head about vain questions.

Edgware Parish Church is ordered to be "closed for divine worship" until its bowels have been cleaned out. Four feet of slime under the stone floor, full of broken coffins and rotting corpses, made the place a perfect treat to the congregation. All the Holy Spirit with which the church was impregnated at its consecration will not avail to purify the atmosphere. Perhaps the more hygienic conditions, when the church is reopened, will be appreciated by the Holy Spirit as well as by the worshippers.

Two policemen broke into a tobacconist's shop in High-street, Hampstead, and are now thinking it over in prison. One of them, William Stoodley, had "regularly attended P. S. A. classes at a Walthamstow church." Much good it did him.

England is going rapidly to the dogs. Parliament is doing its utmost to hasten its arrival at that unspeakable destination. By the passing of the Bill legalising marriage with a deceased wife's sister, we are assured by a dignitary of the

Church, "another blow has been struck at the innocence of life, and at the integrity of national morality." The laws of the Church, according to this self-righteous dogmatist, are the laws of God, and consequently to abolish any of them by an Act of Parliament is to undermine all the virtues, and to fling society into a state of hopeless confusion and chaos. The only comfort is that this kind of foolish talk has not the power it once had to seriously arrest human progress.

Before leaving for America the Bishop of London exhorted the clergy of his diocese not to celebrate the marriage of men with their deceased wives' sisters. Such marriages are perfectly legal now, and the Anglican Church is "the Church of England as by law established." But its clergy are "priests," and they say to the people "Don't you forget it." And the chief business of a priest is to be irrational and meddling.

During the Bishop of London's trip to America he will meet President Roosevelt at Long Island. Birds of a feather! Roosevelt is the gentleman who told three lies in three words. He called Thomas Paine a "dirty little Atheist." All that is wanted to make up a first-class trinity is the presence of the Rev. Dr. Torrey. Such a trio might challenge creation.

The other Sunday, the Vicar of Shirebrook, in the diocese of Southwell, was too ill to conduct the services. In the morning, the church was closed. During the afternoon, the Congregational minister offered his aid, which offer the ailing brother gratefully accepted. So in the evening, the Nonconformist parson read the prayers and delivered a short address, an action which the parishioners regarded as eminently neighborly. Now, however, if the *Church Times* has its way, severe episcopal censure will be pronounced upon the Vicar for permitting such "a flagrant breach of Church order"; and that High Church organ can account for the irregularity on the part of the clergyman only on the supposition that "the state of his health temporarily affected his judgment." Behold, how these Christians love one another!

Last week, some 800 Wesleyan ministers and their families were on the wing to pastures new. This ministerial flitting is an annual feast for which the Connexion has to pay about £8,000. A Methodist journal calls this expenditure "a sardonic commentary on the boasted practicality of John Wesley's followers." But the railways ought to be duly thankful that they are the recipients of such a large proportion of "the Lord's money." It will cover up a multitude of their other sins.

Socialism *must* be right, because the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, the new superintendent of the West London Wesleyan Mission, teaches Socialism; and he assured his Nottingham friends, on saying good-bye to them, that all his messages are given him by God. This is an end to all controversy. We wonder where non-Socialist clergymen get their messages from. If Mr. Rattenbury gets his from above, does it not logically follow that all others derive theirs from below, from the venerable Father of Lies?

General Booth has published a new book, entitled *The Seven Spirits*. Any relation to the seven that Jesus cast out of Mary Magdalen?

Rev. B. Gregory, addressing the Brotherhood in the Central Hall, Manchester, said that the Churches must put themselves in a right relation to Labor. Many of the men who led the people's cause (whatever that is) in England were not opposed to Christianity. But, alas, many Continental labor leaders were avowedly anti-Christian. The reverend gentleman had to make a still worse admission; namely, that "for all practical purposes the people of England were outside the pale of every denomination."

The Rev. W. Hudson Shaw, M.A., Rector of South Luffenham, Stamford, seems to be a straightforward, honest man. Preaching at Oxford, the other Sunday, he boldly declared that "the Churches which bear the name of Christ, almost universally now, both in theory and in practice, refuse to abide by his social teaching." Then he added: "It has been thrown to the winds." And yet *all* the Churches hypocritically sing, "Crown him Lord of all."

The Rev. Dr. Nehemiah Boynton, of Brooklyn, who is now supplying at Whitefield's Tabernacle, openly admits that in America "the church-going system has somewhat broken down. There is a general admission that during the last fifteen years there has been a decline in the attendance at public worship. There are, for instance, 1,800,000

people in Brooklyn, and of these there are only 150,000 members of all the Protestant churches." This is the fact. Of course, Dr. Boynton, true to his profession, comforts himself with the hope that "there will be a return to the Churches." Time will show.

Children, being keen observers, soon see the contradiction between theory and practice. An American Sunday-school superintendent asked the children if they thought it right "to use the Sabbath Day to play ball and tennis and golf, and such things." Not a single hand went up. Very pleased at the children's apparent piety, he again inquired if they believed such use of the day was wrong. Still not a hand was uplifted. Puzzled, he demanded an explanation of their strange attitude. At once one of the boys said they did not raise their hands either way because they didn't know. "You say it is wrong," said the boy; "but everybody does it, so how can we tell?" Wise children!

Mr. J. Carvell Williams, the well-known Nonconformist, writes to the *Daily News* on the Nonconformist Parliamentary Committee's new Education Scheme, which was criticised in our leading article last week. We are glad to see that he is far from being in love with it. This is what he says of the "religious teaching" clause:—

"The keystone of the scheme I take to be the continued maintenance of the principle of local option. That is to say, a local educational authority may (1) adopt a purely secular system, which would be a policy of evasion; or (2) it may permit Bible reading if it be without note or comment, which may be regarded as a policy of compromise; or (3) it may apparently allow the Bible to be the basis of religious teaching, subject only to the Cowper-Temple Clause and the prohibition of anything denominational or sectarian. This I may designate as a policy of pitfalls. For with the Bible in his hand as a text-book the High Churchman can inculcate—or thinks he can—the doctrines of baptismal regeneration, while the Evangelical will have the same means of furthering his own views. As for the distinction between sectarian and unsectarian, and denominational and undenominational, who will provide an efficacious rule for discriminating between the two? I do not envy the local authority on whom it may devolve."

The Nonconformist Parliamentary Committee ought to answer this. But they won't.

Dr. Clifford committed a fatal blunder when he wrote a long letter, conveying his peculiar views on education, to the *Church Times*. It was really a lecture to Church people on the dulness of their understanding in educational matters. The refrain was, "Anything is better than hypocrisy"; hypocrisy being, of course, a special commodity of the Church. But readers of the *Church Times* saw through his plausible casuistries and gaping sophistries, and four clever correspondents, in the following number, exposed the essential hypocrisy of his pleas and the cruel injustice of his demands. Here was a complete and beautiful turning of the tables. Two of the correspondents succeeded in proving him guilty of misrepresentation, self-contradiction, quibbling, and evasion, and one kept hurling back at him, in a sweetly adroit manner, his own pet phrase, "Anything is better than hypocrisy."

There was a big pilgrimage festival in honor of the Madonna of the Well at Capurso, near Bari, in Italy; and "Providence" allowed four cases of bombs, intended for the fireworks, to explode, blowing four spectators to pieces, and severely injuring ten others. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

The Rev. J. Macartney Wilson thinks there is something very seriously wrong with Mr. John Davidson's brain. The great man is getting dafter and dafter every year. At last he has produced the "very newest theology," which is no theology at all. He has "brilliant gifts," but "he has a kink or twist somewhere," and his latest teaching is "pure moonshine," "concentrated poison, and can bring nothing but ruin to those who accept it." But is Mr. Wilson's teaching any more wholesome? He quotes Browning—

"God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world."

Well, the first line may or may not be true: we are not competent to offer an opinion, not having any knowledge on the point; but the second line is a damnable lie. Mr. Wilson is an arrant hypocrite if he pretends not to know it.

Serious rioting took place lately at Kilwinning, in Ayrshire. It was all over religion; Papists and Protestants, ye ken. Police reinforcements had to be brought over from Ayr, or the town would have been sacked. "Religion makes men brothers." Of course—like Cain and Abel.

A Christian young man consulted a minister as to whether or not he should remain in the wholesale whisky trade, in connection with which he had been from boyhood. Being a Christian, he was anxious to know what the minister had to say on the subject. The man of God told him that there were two tests by which he could indubitably ascertain what he ought to do. First, he must ask, "If Christ were here now, would he do the work which I am doing?" Well, it is well known that Jesus was not an abstainer. His enemies accused him of being a habitual boozier. Moreover, Jesus was once in the trade himself; and on one occasion it was said of him that he made a huge quantity of wine for the immediate consumption of a company of convivial people who were already drunk. The reference to Jesus is, therefore, a pious fraud. The second test, "Can I ask Jesus's blessing upon it?" is equally silly. The young man should find out what his duty is by other and infinitely more sensible means than those suggested by the minister.

Christians lie without a scruple. One of the boldest liars is the editor of the *Christian World Pulpit*, who says that the working man owes his Sunday rest to Christianity. Nothing of the sort. Sunday is only the Jewish Sabbath observed one day later and under a Pagan name. Christianity has simply modified an ancient institution to suit its own purposes.

Another lie told the working man is that he owes to Christianity "the hospital in which his wife and children receive medical and surgical help in sickness and accident." There were hospitals in Greece hundreds of years before Christ. There were also Roman hospitals at an early period, and monuments discovered in Great Britain show conclusively that the Romans had a medical staff. But the earliest known hospitals for disease were founded by Buddhist priests in India. It is true, however, that the working man's need of hospital treatment for himself and family in times of sickness is largely due to the baneful social influence of Christianity.

Infidel lecturers always figure, in religious journals, as pitiable nincompoops, who, when challenged, have nothing to say for themselves. Recently, while speaking against Christianity in a village in the North of England, one of them is said to have been completely discomfited by a bent, old woman, who simply said: "This Bible has enabled me, a widow with eight children, to feed myself and them all these years, and I am now perfectly happy because the hope of heaven is in my heart. That is what my religion has done for me. What has your way of thinking done for you?" The lecturer was dumb. He was utterly floored. The audience burst into tumultuous applause at such glorious triumph of the faith! This is only an old lie dished up afresh. Of course, all names are prudently suppressed.

The Rev. Dr. Ross Taylor described his beloved land, the other day, as "this sect-ridden country of Scotland"; and looking into the future, he was afraid that things would go from bad to worse. That is what Christ has done for "Caledonia, stern and wild"; and he has done almost as much for England and Wales!

A London policeman ran a gentleman in for taking his number. He called it "interfering with him in the execution of his duty." The magistrate reminded him that the number was on his collar in order that it might be taken. But he couldn't understand it—and went away sorrowful. A thousand to one he is a good Christian, and goes to the house of God regularly.

In the *Atlantic Monthly*, the American Ambassador, Mr. Bryce, speaks out boldly on the subject of "Progress." Among other wise things, the Right Honorable gentleman says this: "The barque that carries Man and his fortunes traverses an ocean where the winds are variable and the currents unknown. He can do little to direct its course, and the mists that shroud the horizon hang as thick and low as they did when the voyage began." The hyper-orthodox *British Weekly* calls that the most melancholy sentence in recent literature, and adds the silly comment: "But has Professor Bryce forgotten that the people which sat in darkness saw a great light that shone upon the world—the face of Jesus Christ?" Any further comment would be sillier still.

Father Vaughan has had a dream about Heaven. Very likely. Heaven is a dream.

The newspapers reported Father Vaughan's dream. Naturally. It was good copy for their readers; who belong

to the country that Thomas Carlyle said "contains forty millions of people—mostly fools."

South Wales was the scene of the great "revival"—led by that unspeakably foolish creature, Evan Roberts. That part of the Principality is renowned for its godliness. We are not surprised, therefore, at its fondness for dirt. Mr. G. R. Sims, who has been investigating there, says that at Tredegar, for instance, he could not find a single public bath or washhouse. In a common lodging-house at Neath, he found one room with eight double beds in it for "mixed" occupation. Eight married couples, with children, sleep in those beds nightly—without a board or a rag of curtain to conceal them from each other.

What an old game it is, claiming that distinguished people who lived with one set of opinions died with another. Not long ago, the Bishop of Durham played this little game with the memory of John Stuart Mill, who died thirty-four years ago, and is only now attempted to be made out to have been a Christian at the finish of his career. At present, it is the late Mr. Gladstone's turn. A Catholic lady, Miss Owen Waters, stated in the *Ilford Recorder* that G. O. M. died a member of her faith. This statement being communicated to Mr. Herbert Gladstone, he contradicts it in the following manner: "There is absolutely no vestige of foundation for the allegation that my father was in close communication with Rome, and died a Roman Catholic. I cannot conceive how any living person outside a lunatic asylum could make himself responsible for such a statement." Mr. Herbert Gladstone doesn't seem to be aware that the only peculiarity of the practice he censures is its application to his father.

The late Earl of Dunmore, the Christian Scientist, died of heart disease. It was a flat contradiction to his doctrines, but nature pays no attention to theology or metaphysics.

Christians sometimes pray for "a new heart"—and a good many of them want it. A new something else is wanted occasionally. When the chaplain went through a certain hospital, he stopped at the bedside of a patient who had not yet "made his peace with God," and begged the Lord to grant him a new heart. When he had finished, the patient said to him "If it wouldn't make any difference, ask Him to grant me a new liver. That's what I want."

The dear *Daily News* (of course!) reproached the Salvation Army very gently for its "sweating" policy. There was a flattering reference to "its brave and generous efforts to do good," but a damning piece of evidence to the contrary had to be put on record. Listen:—

"The worst aspect of the low wages paid by the Salvation Army is perhaps the effect they have had on the men who were forced to accept them. A man driven to pawn his tools, may apparently work for years for the Social Wing without ever being able to save the few pounds which would enable him to replace the lost instruments of his craft."

This is not only damning, but damnable; and the *Daily News* would not scruple to say so if the Salvation Army were a Non-Christian organisation.

Mr. Stennett, the London secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, described as nonsense the reply made by "Colonel" Jacobs to the Trade Union protest which we reported in our last issue. He gave case after case of competent workmen who applied to the Salvation Army, were taken on to work for the Social Wing, and found themselves in a state of miserable slavery. But the most important thing that Mr. Stennett said was this:—

"As to the taunt that trade unions do nothing for such men, if the charitable public will give us the money they gave to the Salvation Army social work, we will erect and run workshops where there will be no question of sweating and where men will receive what they earn, and have a real chance to stand on their feet again, a real hospital for the wounded soldier of labor."

This is a capital idea, and it really ought to be acted upon. Religious organisations should never be allowed to conduct social philanthropies. Trade Unions would be excellent agencies for the work. They would understand it. And the loafers and shirkers would get short shrift at the hands of their honest fellow-workmen.

Some weeks ago the Rev. R. J. Campbell announced that a fund would be opened to assist young Free Church ministers who had been pushed out of their places for

favoring the New Theology. We see a further account of it in the *Christian Commonwealth*, where a "Liberty of Prophesying Defence Fund" is started. But it doesn't seem to catch on. The total amount of subscriptions to date is only £3 4s. We can do better than this in the *Freethinker*.

Mr. Keir Hardie has got as far as Japan, but Christ is with him there, so he isn't lonely. We trust he will come back better in health, and sound enough in mind and body to apologise for insulting the memory of his good old father and mother, because they were Secularists.

More poverty-stricken disciples of the poor Nazarene! Rev. Henry Christopher Lewis, of Binstead Rectory, Arundel, Sussex, left £36,870. Rev. Henry Boothby Barry, of Burlington-street, Bath, left £39,832. "Blessed be ye poor"—"Woe unto you rich." Is it a farce or a tragedy?

"The cry is still they come." And appropriately the case is a Scotch one. The Right Rev. Dr. James Butler Knill Kelly, of Cuchullin Lodge, Inverness, lately Lord Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness, left £42,348. How are you now, Kelly? Warm, isn't it?

Mr. J. S. Foster Chamberlain over-estimates his intellectual powers. He believes that Paul's Epistles are full of interpolations. Indeed, he goes so far as to assert that the apostle's "message has been lost to the world by the way in which his writings have been edited and interpolated." But Mr. Chamberlain is confident that he has succeeded in restoring that message, and so he has just published a book, the sub-title of which is, "A Restoration of St. Paul's Letters to their Original Form." Why, nobody can tell whether or not Paul ever wrote a single line of the metaphysical stuff traditionally ascribed to him, much less that he wrote thus or thus. What this book amounts to may be thus stated: This is what I, Mr. Chamberlain, think St. Paul ought to have said.

The Rev. J. Ernest Rattenbury tries hard to make out that where the Bible attributes vengeance to God, we are not to take the language literally. Mr. Rattenbury is sure there is no such thing as vengeance in our Heavenly Father. But the reverend gentleman is simply playing with words. Whatever his God may be, the God of the Bible is a horribly vengeful being, who is continually paying his enemies out. And the Christian God, as described in the New Testament, is not one whit better than Jehovah, for he burns his enemies—keeps them roasting—for ever and ever in hell-fire.

Rev. Thomas Lord, of Horncastle, is in his hundredth year, though he is still capable of conducting the service and preaching for half an hour. Of course, heaven is his home, but he won't go there till he is fetched.

Thomas Hell, a St. Louis policeman, has been ordered to change his name or retire from the force. This is a bad blunder. While this constable keeps his highly respectable name—for all the best people go to the place he is named after—the St. Louis authorities, in dealing with the criminal classes, could always "Give 'em Hell."

Many French priests, as a result of the Separation Law, have had to turn to business for a living. Some breed rabbits, some rear poultry, some have become workmen. We congratulate them on doing something useful.

Alexander Arthur Jonathan Price, of Corschill-road, Streatham, has been bound over in £20 to keep the peace and be of good behavior for twelve months. His chief recreations were reading the Bible and threatening to cut his wife's throat.

A young couple went to the church at Isle Abbots, near Ilminster, Somerset, to get married. The officiating clergyman happened to be drunk, and wanted to read the Burial Service. Perhaps the fuddled parson had a dim recollection of some unhappy marriages he had celebrated, and fancied that the Burial Service was appropriate to the occasion. Naturally, the young couple thought otherwise, and the bibulous man of God's performance is now the subject of an ecclesiastical inquiry. He has our sympathy.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 29, Stratford Town Hall.
 October 6, Glasgow; 13, Manchester; 20, South Shields; 27, Leicester.
 November 3 and 10, Stanley Hall, London; 17, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

HAROLD G. Kent.—You will see that we have done justice to your letter and enclosure. Thanks.

THE TOUZEAU PARRIS FUND.—Fifth *Freethinker* List:—Frank Smith, £1 1s.; W. P. Madden, £1; Alfred Germany, 2s. 6d.; J. W. Fitch, £1; G. Davey, 2s.; Elizabeth Lechmere (2nd sub.), 5s.; Blackheath, 2s.; W. T. Nash, 2s.; James McGlashan, £1; W. Robertson, 1s.; E. Gwinnell, 2s. 6d.; J. Thackray, 1s.; W. F. C., 2s. 6d.; Joseph Bevins, 10s.; H. Jessop, £2 2s.; Lancastrian, 2s. 6d.; George Jacob, £1; W. Heaford, 5s.; H. Scholey, 1s.; C. Heaton, 2s. 6d.; A. J. Fincken, 10s.; W. P. Murray, 2s.; George Paul, 2s. 6d.; Secularist, 2s. 6d.; W. Garthwaite, 2s. 6d.

O. J. BROWNING (Canada).—Keir Hardie's four books, recommended after his lecture, are not a bad mixture: The Bible, Shakespeare, Burns, and Shelley; but he doesn't seem to have given enough attention to the three Britishers. Pleased to hear there is not quite so much hot and strong bigotry in your part of the Dominion.

ELIZABETH LECHMERE SAYS: "Though it cost me the loss of a piece of women's finery, I add another 5s. to my first subscription to the Touzeau Parris Fund. For since reading your second appeal I feel what you say, and will follow our leader's example and let my money go 'in the direction' of my 'convictions.'" This correspondent is informed that we agree with her about Father Lambert's book on Ingersoll. It is a work of no importance, and could only please fools and fanatics.

GEORGE JACOB, subscribing to the Parris Fund, says: "Your splendid appeal (p. 554) is irresistible, because genuine and consistent. I never had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Parris." Another part of this correspondent's letter is dealt with in "Sugar Plums."

C. A. FELSON.—Glad you are circulating the Salvation Army Tract amongst Trade Unionists. It is high time, as you say, that the working-classes understood the real nature of Booth's enterprise.

F. T. WILKINS.—Shall be sent as requested. Yes, you shall have a free ride in our motor when it comes along. Glad you like the *Freethinker* so much, and that your regret is that you only made its acquaintance six months ago.

J. W. FITCH writes: "Recognising how indebted I am for my intellectual salvation to you, I deem it an honor to be privileged to contribute to the fund in aid of a veteran fighter in the cause of freedom. I know no paper whose standard of excellence surpasses that of the *Freethinker*, and I read none with so much profit."

THE COHEN "SALVATION ARMY" TRACT FUND.—C. A. Felson, 1s. 2d.; John Wood, 2s.; G. Round, 1s. 6d.

T. H. ELSTON.—Mr. Foote has received no reply to the letter he wrote you more than a month ago. Is there no reply, or is the Newcastle Branch going to do nothing this winter?

W. P. MADDEN writes: "Being only a recent convert from the Christian religion, the pleasure of ever hearing Mr. Parris in the cause of Freethought has not been mine, but your earnest appeal induces me to respond, and I accordingly beg to enclose £1 towards the Fund, which I hope may at least equal eventually the suggested amount."

ALFRED GERMANY.—Pleased to know that your friend, to whom the *Freethinker* was sent for six weeks, is "enthusiastic" about it, and has become a subscriber. Thanks for all your efforts to promote our circulation. Delighted to hear you say that you have read this journal for some years, and that we have taught you to think. We want no higher praise. That is precisely what we aim at, and it is the only thing worth aiming at. We wish you success with the book you are writing.

JAMES MCGLASHAN, president of the Glasgow Branch, subscribing to the Touzeau Parris Fund, says: "I hope you will get a good round sum for him, and ease his mind if not his body."

R. J. HENDERSON.—Hope you are well again now. Thanks for cuttings.

J. HILL.—No doubt amusing as it happened, but rather raw for print— isn't it?

H. JESSOP writes: "Mr. Parris is a stranger to me, but through your introduction I feel that you must hear from me. I enclose my mite." This correspondent is warmly thanked for his encouraging letter, and for his persistent efforts to promote our circulation. We are very glad to hear that a copy of the *Freethinker* gets into the local hospital every week. It must do the patients who read it more good than the pious and melancholy stuff they are so plentifully supplied with.

E. GWINNELL.—We don't see any flaw in our statement. We do not say that anything can or can not be created. We confine ourselves to saying that the human mind (the only one we can speak for, you understand) knows nothing of creation in the sense of the production of substance. This is impregnable—and it is sufficient.

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

J. THACKRAY.—Have too much in hand this week; will deal with it in our next.

LANCASTRIAN.—If you pay quarterly in advance, and yet cannot get this journal regularly from your agent, you should transfer your subscription to our publishing office.

L. H. LABONE.—Shall be sent, and the rest of your letter dealt with next week.

L. LEWIS.—Glad to receive cuttings.

J. CHAMBERS.—Thanks.

W. KIRKPATRICK.—All Theists do and must hold that the universe is finite, for their "God" is infinite, and there cannot be two infinities. See what Thomson (Lord Kelvin) and Stewart say in the *Unseen Universe*.

W. HEAFORD SAYS: "My remembrance of Mr. Parris goes back some 35 years, and I am sorry that his serious accident should have deprived the party of his valued services."

G. MANCO.—The allusion is to Mr. John Morley and the *Fortnightly Review*. It means spelling "God" with a small "g."

H. SCHOLEY.—Glad you found our *Darwin on God* so interesting.

ENQUIRER.—Bradlaugh was a Freemason; he joined through the Grand Orient of France, the English lodges not admitting Atheists. Pleased to have your stimulating letter.

LOUIS E. MABBETT.—Sorry we cannot supply the information.

A. J. FINCKEN SAYS: "I regret being a laggard in so deserving a case. I have many times listened to Mr. Parris, and was very sorry when he ceased to talk for us."

W. P. MURRAY.—Will deal with it next week.

J. BROUGH.—We never notice it, and don't want to see it. Thanks for all the rest.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

We have had a man selling the *Freethinker* in the streets for some time. Naturally there is no rush for the paper, but some are sold, and these get into fresh hands—which is a clear gain. Moreover, the sale of the paper induces people to inquire after books and pamphlets; and that may lead to anything, in the course of time. Our man was seen in the streets by Mr. W. P. Madden, who called on our shop manager (Mr. W. A. Vaughan) and said it was so good a thing that he would guarantee half-a-crown a week for at least six weeks in order to extend it, and in the hope that others might help in the effort, which is one good way of counteracting the boycott against us in certain quarters. What do the "others" say? Perhaps they will write or call on Mr. Vaughan at our publishing office.

With regard to the street sale of the *Freethinker*, Mr. George Jacob writes us as follows: "A man who was selling the — in Cranbourne-street informed me that all street vendors of that paper receive 9s. per week and one farthing on every copy sold. Perhaps a similar arrangement might benefit the *Freethinker*. At present the 'lovely' *Freethinker* is obscured, like the 'modest violet.' Few readers know where to obtain it. Many object to the postage, and paying in advance. Lately, in Regent's Park, I gave an Atheist from 'Frisco a copy of your paper. The next time we met he spoke highly of it, and asked where he could buy it. I mentioned a few shops that I knew of; but he said they were too far away; didn't I know of some place near Portland-road? I had to confess my ignorance."

There was a mistake in one of our last week's "Sugar Plums." Our veteran friend Mr. Neate inadvertently misled us on one point. The document that Mr. Lloyd read out in Victoria Park amidst so much applause was not "the letter he had received from his late congregation in South Africa, wishing him to come back to his old church." It was really the official "deposition" document issued by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of South Africa—a

document which we have seen, and which we referred to in the *Freethinker* some time ago. It was issued in September 1904, nearly two years after Mr. Lloyd had resigned the pastorate of the Bree-street Church, Johannesburg. That was after he wrote *From Christian Pulpit to Freethought Platform* in our columns, and its publication in pamphlet form. The offence alleged against him was "publicly avowing and teaching atheistical tenets." He was deposed from "the office of the holy ministry," but told that he would be welcomed back whenever he repented and retracted.

While the pen is in our hand we will make this whole matter as clear as daylight—and silence for ever, as far as they can be silenced, the Christian scoundrels who have been making free with Mr. Lloyd's reputation. Our friend and colleague is a sensitive man who doesn't like being talked about or written about; but if the thing has got to be done—once for all—we believe he would like us to do it in preference to anyone else.

Mr. Lloyd resigned the pastorate of his church at Johannesburg in October, 1902. He did so because he felt that he no longer believed the doctrines he was expected to preach, and because he wanted a period of rest and peace to think matters out and come to settled conclusions. He continued preaching to the end of the year, and the congregation made kind and handsome efforts to induce him to remain. A farewell meeting was held in January, 1903, at which eulogistic addresses were delivered and a purse of £315 was presented. Two days later, Mr. Lloyd left South Africa. Soon after his arrival in London he heard Mr. Foote lecture at the Athenæum Hall in Tottenham Court-road. And the rest is history.

There you are, Christian scoundrels! Those are the facts. We state them once for all. You can go on lying if you choose—and probably you will; but decent people will understand.

West Ham and district "saints" will please note that the Stratford Town Hall has been engaged for three Sunday evening lectures, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited, on September 15, 22, and 29—the lecturers being Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Foote. The local N. S. S. Branch will co-operate as usual. Friends able and willing to assist by displaying a window-bill or circulating handbills should apply to Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C.

There will be another Freethought Demonstration to-day (Sept. 8) at Parliament Hill Fields, where the new North London Branch has been doing excellent work throughout the summer. The speakers will be Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and Davies, and the chair will be taken at 3.30 prompt. North London "saints" will please note—and note it well.

Mr. Wishart finishes his Freethought mission at Bristol as we go to press this week. We shall have more to say about it next week. Meanwhile we may state that the new N. S. S. Branch that has been formed has Mr. B. G. Brown for secretary, and will meet on Sunday mornings at 11 in the Labor Party's Hall, and on Sunday evenings (open-air) at 7.30 in the Horsefair.

Mr. Eden Phillpots, the eminent novelist, wrote to Mr. Andrew Carnegie, who had presented Torquay with a Free Library, asking—"Will you approve a gift embracing selections from the works of Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Haeckel, Renan, Mill, Arnold and certain other rational thinkers?" which Mr. Phillpots wanted to present to the Library authorities. Mr. Carnegie replied: "Let me assure you that in my opinion no collection of books would be more valuable than that you propose." At the same time, he never intruded his own wishes in connection with his gifts. It was for the authorities to decide.

One verse of Mr. Swinburne's poetical tribute to the late Karl Blind in the *Fortnightly Review* shows that he has not forgotten his old loves, nor his old hatreds—and the latter were generally as sound as the former:—

"When all a forger's fame
Is shrivelled up in shame;
When all imperial notes of praise and prayer
And hoarse thanksgiving raised
To the abject God they praised
For murderous mercies are but poisonous air;
When Bismarck and his William lie [die.]
Low even as he they warred on—damned too deep to

The "abject God" is good. So is that "damned too deep to die." It is good to hear a great English poet speaking his noble native tongue like a man, instead of caterwauling it like an old tom cat.

"O'er Moor and Fen."

O'er Moor and Fen is the title of one of Mr. Joseph Hocking's novels, a copy of which was kindly lent to me by a Methodist friend for the purpose of whiling away some idle hours of a holiday at Harrogate. I had previously read *The Scarlet Woman* and *The Purple Robe*, in which Joseph attacks the Roman Catholic Church, and "pours contempt on all its pride." In *O'er Moor and Fen* he essays to slay another iniquitous monster which is causing no little anxiety, not only to the Methodist Body for whom he more especially writes, but to the whole of the Churches, Catholic and Protestant alike—the growth of Atheism. The success of Joseph's pugilistic effort may be gathered from the fact that the recent Methodist Conference was able to report a serious decrease of membership. The appointment, too, by the Conference of the Rev. F. Ballard to the new post of Connexional Evidence Lecturer, testifies to the power of fictional apologetics. And if Mr. Ballard's platform and other efforts prove as successful as Mr. Hocking's in fiction, there will doubtless be an opportunity at the next Methodist Conference of appointing a few more lecturers, with "unique" qualifications, as infidel slaughterers.

O'er Moor and Fen is related as the experiences of a Mr. Caleb Sutcliffe, the senior Circuit Steward—an important office in Methodism—in the district where the scene of the story is laid. His statements and opinions may therefore be taken as representative of the views held by the rank and file of Methodism upon the controversial questions with which the story deals. The principal characters are a young Methodist minister, Bernard Hawthorne, who comes to take charge of a decaying church in Lynford, and a Mr. Hugh Clitheroe and his daughter Mary, who have the reputation of being antagonistic to religion—in short, "Atheists." The writer does his utmost to keep alive the old fanatical hatred of the unbeliever, and singles out the term "Atheist" for especial anathema. Biblical criticism and science are regarded as the enemies of "faith," and the phraseology running through the book as strongly reminiscent of the witch-burning and heresy-persecuting days of the Church. The heroine's father, so the tale runs, is "a pronounced unbeliever, and a man who, in his so-called scientific research, had dabbled in all sorts of strange experiments." His daughter, too, "aided her father in his ungodly experiments, and was regarded by those who knew her best as one who shared her father's Atheistic beliefs." The application of the words "strange" and "ungodly" to scientific experiments is plainly indicative of that moral weakness and slavish mental fear which characterised the Church's opposition to knowledge for so many centuries. And the association of Atheistic beliefs with scientific research is certainly an instructive commentary on the assertion, so often made, that "Religion has nothing to fear from Science." As Mr. Hocking claims to represent Methodist life, and give expression to Methodist sentiment, it will be seen from such phraseology how deeply that organisation is still steeped in mediæval fear and superstition.

In the course of the story, the young minister makes the acquaintance of the Clitheroes, and is invited to Rough Leigh, their place of residence. Hugh Clitheroe is conversant with all the results of Biblical criticism, and imparts to the minister a mass of information of which he seems to have been entirely ignorant. The result of the Clitheroes' influence became apparent in his discourses, and, according to the Circuit Steward, one of his subsequent sermons "might have been preached by Thomas Cooper in his Atheistic days, or by Charles Bradlaugh." He "conceded all those vile statements of Hugh Clitheroe and his daughter" anent Balaam's ass and Jonah's whale. The "seeds of Atheism were being sown"—which is the Steward's mode of expressing the fact that intelligible thought was being presented in place of the usual mystic jargon. And we are told that, in consequence of his discourses,

"many people wrote him anonymous letters calling him *Atheist*," while others advised him to get his addresses published in the *Freethinker*. It never appears to strike the narrator that there is anything mean and despicable in attacking a person with a deluge of *anonymous* letters, or in hurling objectionable epithets at his head. Indeed, between a Jewish fanatical mob crying, Crucify him! Crucify him! and a Christian public disturbed by unpalatable truths, there would appear to be little difference in spirit and intention. A young minister, struggling with intellectual difficulties born of a larger knowledge, might justly claim the sympathetic forbearance of the people to whom he ministered; but the sympathetic faculty is so little developed among his hearers that they bluntly advise him to get his addresses printed in the *Freethinker*. The ironical advice is, of course, the measure of Christian toleration. It is not a question of truth, but merely of tradition; and the weightiest evidence counts as nothing against *Field's Handbook of Theology* and *Horne's Introduction to the New Testament*. Caleb Sutcliffe has read these learned works; therefore the Methodist maidens who read *O'er Moor and Fen* need not trouble themselves as to the authorship of the Pentateuch or worry over "Who wrote the Psalms of David?"

Notwithstanding all the dreadful things that are said to result from Atheistic beliefs, it is a relief to find that they do *not* affect a person's physical appearance. Miss Clitheroe, who shared her father's Atheistic opinions, on account of her stately figure and commanding presence, was called "the Queen of Lynford." She was "tall, magnificently formed, and stood as straight as a soldier on parade." Her great wavy masses of dark chestnut hair, and dark flashing eyes, inspired the old Circuit Steward with the wish to be an artist, in order that he might reproduce this handsome specimen of Nature's handiwork on canvas. Neither did Miss Clitheroe's moral nature suffer by reason of her Atheism. When the young minister is arraigned before the Inquisitorial Executive Committee, on the charge of consorting with Freethinkers and Atheists, and the Committee urges its right of knowing that the minister's *fiancée* shall be morally fitted to occupy the position of minister's wife, with flashing eyes Bernard Hawthorne demands: "And who dares say a word against Miss Clitheroe's moral character?" And the Inquisition is obliged to acknowledge that "no one had ever breathed a word about the Clitheroes' uprightness and purity of life." It will thus be seen that there is a strange want of logical consistency in Mr. Hocking's calumny of Atheism. He works upon the popular prejudice in the minds of the religious public against the term "Atheist," and does full justice to the hostility and bitter feeling existing in Lynford against the Clitheroes. And yet, for broad-minded toleration of others' opinions, nobleness of mind and heart, shown both in their attitude toward their persecutors and their care of the poor and suffering, these same Clitheroes stand out in marked contrast to the petty, squabbling religious crew who figure in the novel. The artistic effect of Joseph's diatribe is thus utterly spoiled by such a damaging contrast.

An amusing feature of the book to an outsider is the absurd estimate of the position and the abilities of the Methodist ministry. Mr. Sutcliffe "regards the position of a Methodist minister as the highest in the world." He admits there may be good preachers among the Independents and Baptists, or even in the Established Church, but to compare the preachers of those sects with those of Methodism would, Caleb says, "be like comparing skim milk with good cream." I took the opportunity, while at Harrogate, of sampling, in two places, the so-called "cream" of Christian preachers. One of the samples was a "star" from the West London Mission, the Rev. Trevor H. Davis, and the other a reputed scholar in the Methodist Body. The "star" was a serious disappointment, and what it was he was driving at in his discourse I was unable to discover. Lecturing on the Monday night on "Oliver Cromwell,"

he sought to exalt the old Puritan's character by the statement that "toleration of religious opinion, other than by law established, was unknown in England until Cromwell's day." And the reverend gentleman didn't seem to see that such a statement was a serious blot on the reputation of the religion he was seeking to uphold, and that as a Christian minister he ought to have been ashamed to utter it. The other sample, the "scholar," spent half an hour on the Sunday evening in trying to make the Invisible Church *visible*; but in vain did I wait for it to emerge from the mental fog of the speaker's ideas! The Methodist ministry! One can only smile at the childish and extravagant notion that exalts them to such a pinnacle, and marvel at the audacity that penned, even in fiction, a statement so remote from the truth.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Christian Humor and Rapacity.

SOMEHOW or other the "comic spirit," as Meredith called it, and the religious spirit are mutually destructive. Where one predominates the other rarely co-exists. Yet the Christian publications are, almost invariably, pregnant with unconscious humor which, though unperceived by the "true believers," is an unailing source of amusement to the sceptic.

Foremost among this variety of comic literature is the Annual Report of the British and Foreign Bible Society, an old copy of which—dated 1901-2—recently came into my possession.

It opens with a confession "of deep and humble thankfulness" for "the continued guidance and blessings of Almighty God," and then proceeds to enumerate the blessings—the first being that "God has taken to Himself four of the Society's most distinguished Vice-Presidents."

Such gratitude is, of course, very touching; though the reason for it is not obvious at first. As we shall see in the course of this article, to the Society "nothing comes amiss, so money comes withal"; and I suggest that the "deep and humble thankfulness" is inspired by visions of new Vice-Presidents, and, as a *conditio sine quâ non*, more funds! Apparently, even to a Bible Society, cash is not an unnecessary consideration, for the Holy Spirit lapses into inactivity immediately the funds decrease and missionaries are withdrawn.

It is upon this point that I wish more particularly to dwell, and to give a few details of the work of this Charitable Society.

We note, *en passant*, that there has been an increase in the sales of Bibles; and as presumably this product of sweated labor yields some small profit, we are not surprised to find the fact recorded "with extreme satisfaction."

Anent the manner in which these Bibles are disposed of, it is instructive to glance at a report of the Society's work "among Muhammadan Tribes." Here we are informed that "sometimes there is reason to think that, in order to effect a sale, the Colporteur rather minimises the position and authority of the Gospel, letting the Muhammadan purchase the book as secondary to his own Koran." What shocking blasphemy this seems when we remember that "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God"! Just fancy a colporteur palming off the real original Word of God as a work of less importance than that heathen book the Koran! Why, it comes precious near that unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost!

Of course, the Society is not indifferent to the business side of the transaction, for we read that "it is a matter of thankfulness that a man should purchase the Gospel, though without having a clear idea of what it is."

How shocked these pious people would be if a commercial traveller in any other branch of business than Bible-selling were to dispose of his goods by such deceitful methods.

In a survey of the "Home" work of the Society we learn that "the sick, the blind, the aged, the

orphan, the emigrant, the cripple, the pauper—all the needy children in God's family—are helped to possess God's Book." But why do such people exist in God's family? Does not the fact carry with it the most striking indictment against the God of Love? Furthermore, I suggest that what these unfortunates want is not God's Book, but health, sight, strength, and the comforts of life. What an appalling thought it is that God would neglect his family entirely were it not for this Society and similar institutions! With this Damoclean possibility hovering over us, surely we ought to assist the work. The Christians make their Deity an impotent nonentity, dependent upon machinery and the work of men's hands for the circulation of his Word. Such a being as they worship does not even command the respect of a rational man.

As an instance of the glorious unanimity and brotherly love which Christianity inspires, we are informed that the Society is "sadly hindered in their work abroad" by "the ceaseless opposition of the Romish Church!" Here is an edifying spectacle. One sect of Christianity obeys Christ's injunction, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," by selling Bibles through dishonest methods, while an opposition firm in the same business hampers them at every turn.

So the glorious game goes on *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.

In spite of the hostility of Roman Catholicism, the Bible Society does not allow mere sectarian prejudices to interfere with business, for we are told that, in France, "hardly a day passes which does not bring orders from Roman Catholic booksellers and priests' seminaries, which seem to depend on the Society for their Hebrew Bibles and New Testaments." One such order runs: "Please send me two hundred kilos of New Testaments," from which I deduce that the Bread of Life is sold at so much per pound instead of by the loaf.

One of the most striking facts one notices on glancing through the Report is the grasping callousness of the Colporteurs in their endeavors to secure purchasers for their Bibles.

In one case, "a mother of nine, so poor as to be on the brink of starvation, paid 50 centimes for a New Testament." And in another home, where there were three children and the father laying ill, the Colporteur accepted the last three sous—the whole of the mother's humble store—in exchange for the Gospels.

What an ennobling scene—the Colporteur departing from the poverty-stricken hovel, calmly pocketing the three sous with a smug countenance, leaving the sick father, penniless mother, and hungry children without the wherewithal to obtain medical assistance or the next meal. This, and numerous similar incidents, are quoted with evident approval for the delectation of their supporters at home.

And this is Christian charity in the twentieth century!

That such a rich Society should rob these poor people by preying upon their superstition in such a contemptible manner, is enough to earn for them the loathing of all right-thinking men!

ALFRED GERMANY.

The perfect loveliness of a woman's countenance can only consist in that majestic peace, which is founded in memory of happy and useful years,—full of sweet records, and from the joining of this with that yet more majestic childishness, which is still full of change and promise;—opening always—modest at once, and bright, with hope of better things to be won, and to be bestowed. There is no old age where there is still that promise—it is eternal youth.—*John Ruskin*.

As for the excellent little wretches who grow up in what they are taught, with never a scruple or a query, Protestant or Catholic, Jew or Mormon, Mahometan or Buddhist, they signify nothing in the intellectual life of the race.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*.

Correspondence.

THE VALUE OF ATHEISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Often, upon reading such excellent articles as "What Price God?" by Mr. G. W. Foote, in the *Freethinker*, I have asked myself the question: "What, then, is the real value of Atheism?" And time after time, I have been forced, with perhaps few other Freethinkers, to answer: "Zero."

The question resolves itself thus:—

1. What is Theism? The system of thought as held by a Theist; and, we are told, a Theist is a man "with God."
2. What is Atheism? The system of thought as held by an Atheist; and, we are told, an Atheist is a man "without God."

And the difference scientifically:—

1. The Theist says: there is a God, and He created something out of nothing—the universe.
2. The Atheist says: there is not a God, and that something has ever been something—the universe.

Thus we find that the Theist postulates an "Uncreated Creator," to the Atheist's "Uncreated Creation"; and that both their arguments are merely verbal, as neither explain the creator nor the creation, and the result is—*nil*.

But, I hear many assert, science does explain the creation, just as I have heard many others say theology does explain the Creator. Yet I frankly fail to see how either of these systems in any way offers an explanation. The former, as the latter, resting purely and solely on hypotheses based on ever changing philosophical arguments. Science asserts the "Laws of Nature," theology, the "Laws of God." Yet both these codes, Natural or Divine, rest, as every thinker must acknowledge, upon mere inferences drawn from the vast and unbalanced ignorance of man's mind, and his inability to grasp first principles, or things as they are in themselves. Turning now from the scientific and religious aspect, let us look at the question philosophically. Roughly, Atheism philosophically falls under the system of Materialism, and Theism under that of Idealism.

Now let us take an infinite chain:—A, B, A, B, A, B, A, B. The Materialist will say all is matter and will place his finger on A; to him, matter is first, mind is second. The Idealist will place his finger on B and say, mind is first, matter is second. The Pantheist puts his finger on both A and B at once. And the difference philosophically:—

1. The Materialist says the universe began with A.
2. The Idealist says the universe began with B.

Thus we find that both their arguments are merely verbal and that their value is—*nil*.

And so with all other systems of thought. It is much easier to prove them all one than it is to prove them all diverse. Descartes becomes Spinoza, Spinoza—Locke, Locke—Berkeley, Berkeley—Hume, Hume—Kant, Kant—Spencer, Spencer—Huxley, and Huxley—G. W. Foote, etc. To not be considered a mere babler of words, I should like to explain myself as follows:—

It seems to me that Berkeley, nearly two hundred years ago now, answered the scientists apparently for all time, by stating, "It seems no less absurd to suppose a substance without accidents, than it is to suppose accidents without a substance." And that, "though we should grant the unknown substance may possibly exist, yet where can it be supposed to be? That it exists not in the mind is agreed; and that it exists not in place is no less certain—since all place or extension exists only in the mind, as hath been already proved. It remains, therefore, that it exists nowhere at all"—*i.e.*, in the Absolute Zero. And again, he asserts, this time by the word of Philonous:—

"Consequently, every corporal substance being the *substratum* of extension must have in itself another extension, by which it is qualified to be a *substratum*: and so on to infinity. And I ask whether this be not absurd in itself, and repugnant to what you granted just now, to wit, that the *substratum* was something distinct from, and exclusive of, extension?"†

And what is pure extension?—Absolute Zero.

Thus, the whole cosmic process resolves itself under the one great law of Inertia; so that the entire universe lies before us, as Luther said of God, "A blank sheet, on which nothing is found but what we ourselves have written." Or, again, in the words of Spinoza, "Final or first causes are only figments of the human mind," bubbles which must burst before the finite can once again dissolve into the infinite atmosphere of eternity. In any category, infinity excludes finity, unless that finity be an identical part

* *Principles of Human Knowledge.*

† *Three Dialogues.*

of that infinity. As Mr. Crowley states in his work *Berashith* :—

"In the category of existing things, space being infinite, for on that hypothesis we are still working, either matter fills or does not fill it. In the former, matter is infinitely great; if the latter, infinitely small. Whether the matter-universe be 10^{10000} light-years in diameter, or half a mile, it makes no difference; it is infinitely small—in effect, Nothing."

So in the first case we see, being infinitely great all else is crowded out, and it = 0; and in the second, all being infinitely small, the unmathematical illusion (the *maya* of the Hindus) likewise vanishes in 0. So, likewise, does Theism resolve into Pantheism, which itself dissolves into Atheism; the $I = \infty = 0$ and *vice versa*. But which? I, for one, can but answer, *Agnosco!* J. F. C. FULLER.

EDUCATION IN CANADA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A "saint" in England forwards me your paper weekly, and has done so for several years.

The educational discussions have always been of great interest to me—perhaps because I am a School Trustee for a School District in this Province, and all the troubles "at home" seem just simply silly to my untutored mind. We do not have these squabbles. Why? you ask. And this is the answer: "Section 106, Public Schools' Act, 1905, reads as follows: 'No Trustee shall hold the office of Teacher within the district of which he is a Trustee; and a continuous non-residence of three months by a Trustee shall cause a vacation of his office, provided always that no clergyman of any denomination shall be eligible for the position of Superintendent, Inspector, Teacher, or Trustee.'"

This, you see, makes it a duty for a Trustee to live in his district and attend to his work for which he is elected by his neighbors, and keeps out church influence of every kind. Does not the solution seem simple?—and yet how hard for old England to grasp. There are many other good things in the Act, and one or two weak spots which in time will be culled out, but nothing so cumbersome as the clause quoted in your issue of July 21 from the *Westminster Gazette* re the Education Bill of the Transvaal.

Bible-teaching of any kind is not mentioned in any portion of the Act.

SCHOOL TRUSTEE.

Stolen Relic Found.

CAMORRISTS' CHARM AGAINST POLICE MOLESTATION.

SINCE February last, the inhabitants of Altavilla Irpina, near Avellino, have been in mourning over the mysterious theft of the miraculous blood of San Pellegrino, which was preserved in a reliquary in the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption. San Pellegrino's relics were but one among some twenty-eight similar hoards of martyrs' blood kept at diverse sanctuaries in the Neapolitan provinces, which, so long as the Bourbons held sway, used to liquify and boil periodically, as the famous blood of St. Januarius continues to do to-day.

Many suspects had been arrested in vain when recently Marshal Capezzuti, leader of the crusade against the Camorra, chanced to discover proof that the relic had been stolen by four Camorrista implicated in the notorious Cuocolo murders. The exact whereabouts of San Pellegrino's blood remained, however, a mystery till yesterday, the festival of the Assumption, when, acting on secret information, Capezzuti, with half-a-dozen carabinieri, broke into the dwelling of a Camorrist ex-convict named Paesani, in the city of Naples, and found the sacred ampolla hidden under the petticoats of a gaudily-dressed image of the Virgin Mary. It transpires that members of the Camorra were in the habit of making a pilgrimage to this private oratory to invoke heavenly aid on their criminal enterprises. They venerated the blood relic as an infallible charm against molestation by the police.

To-day, the mayor, parish priest, and churchwardens of Altavilla Irpina have gone to Naples to reclaim the treasure, while the municipality has telegraphed to the Vatican for the Pope's special benediction upon Marshal Capezzuti.

—Daily Chronicle.

EVERYBODY PAY UP.

A negro preacher, whose supply of hominy and bacon was running low, decided to take radical steps to impress upon his flock the necessity for contributing liberally to the church exchequer. Accordingly, at the close of the sermon, he made an impressive pause and then proceeded as follows: "I hab found it necessary, on account ob de astringency ob de hard times an' de general deficiency ob de circulatin' mejum in connection wid dis chu'ch, t' interduce ma new ottermatic c'lection box. It is so arranged dat a half dollah or quahtah falls on a red plush cushion without noise; a nickel will ring a small bell distinctually heard by the congregation, an' a suspendah-button, ma fellow mawtels, will fiah off a pistol; so you will gov'n yo'selves accordingly. Let de c'lection now p'ceed, w'ile I takes off ma hat an' gibs out a hymn."—*Independent*.

THE DIVINE LAW OF COMPENSATION.

Bridget had been going out a great deal, and her husband, Mike, was displeased.

"Bridget, where do ye spend yer toime nights? Ye're out iv'ry avenin' fur two weeks," he said.

"Shut up, Mike! I'm gettin' an edication," she answered.

"An' phwat are ye learnin'?" said her indignant husband.

"Why, to-night we learned about the laws of compensation."

"Compensation," said Michael. "What's that?"

"Why, I can't explain; but, fur instance, if the sense of smell is poor, the sense of thaste is all the sharper, and if yez are blind, ye can hear all the better."

"Ah, yes," said Mike, thoughtfully. "I see, it's loike this. Fur instance, if a man is born wid wan leg shorter than the other, the other is longer."

Canonicals.—The motley worn by Jesters at the Court of Heaven.—*Ambrose Bierce*.

Agitation and clamor, like a fire-bell, may disturb the repose of society, but they may prevent her being burnt in her bed.

The Pope put his foot on the neck of kings, but Calvin and his cohort crushed the whole human race under their heels in the name of the Lord of Hosts.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*.

I have done a little good—and it is by far the best of my works.—*Voltaire*.

Be on your guard against the ox before, the mule behind, and the monk on every side.—*Spanish Proverb*.

Religion is a superstition in fashion, and superstition is a religion out of fashion.—*Hobbes*.

Obituary.

WE have to record the death of Mr. W. R. Stansell, one of the leading lights of Secularism at Sunderland. When the N. S. S. Branch existed there, Mr. Stansell was its President; since then he has often lectured on the Quayside, Newcastle-on-Tyne. His death occurred on Sunday, August 25, and the funeral took place on the following Thursday at Bishopwearmouth Cemetery, the Secular Burial Service being conducted by Mr. Harold G. Kent. The following notice of the deceased appeared in the *Sunderland Daily Echo* of Monday, August 26 :—

"His many friends will learn with regret of the death of Mr. William Robinson Stansell, a member of the *Echo* staff, which took place at his home, 30 Ann-street, last night. Mr. Stansell, who was 54 years of age, suffered from consumption of the lungs, and for about nine months has been so ill as to be unable to attend to his duties. Mr. Stansell was chief reader in the *Echo* office, and occupied the position for 22 years. He served his apprenticeship as a printer in London, and came to Sunderland from Shrewsbury. He was very well known in local friendly society circles, being an active member of the Ancient Order of Foresters, and a Past Chief Ranger of Court George Hudson. He was also on the Grange-over-Sands Convalescent Home Committee, and, indeed, interested himself in everything appertaining to friendly societies. He was a man with an exceptional amount of general knowledge, and had a somewhat unique personality."

Mr. Stansell was evidently a man of mark. He will be greatly missed by the local Freethinkers.

The political economy of true religion interprets the saying that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," not as the promise of reward in another life for mortified selfishness in this, but as a pledge of bestowal upon us of that sweet and better nature, which does not mortify itself in giving.—*John Ruskin*.

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, W. J. Ramsey, a Lecture; 6, G. A. Aldred, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, Guy A. Aldred. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, C. Cohen,

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, Free-thought Demonstration—speakers, Messrs. J. T. Lloyd, C. Cohen, and F. A. Davies.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Now the birth of Jesus was in this wise."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station (G.E.R.), 7, W. J. Ramsey, "The Book of Common Prayer."

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

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, C. Cohen, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Wednesday, Sept. 11, at 8.15, in the Bull Ring, H. Lennard.

BRISTOL BRANCH N. S. S.: Public Meeting, at 7.30, in the Horsefair. Addresses by Messrs. B. G. Brown and H. Long.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Debate; The Mound, 7, meets for Discussion.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Captain Duncan's Navigation School, Market-place): 7.30, Lecture arrangements, etc.

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