

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVII.—No. 44

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1907

PRICE TWOPENCE

An immense quantity of modern confession of sin, even when honest, is merely a sickly egotism, which will rather gloat over its own evil than lose the centralisation of its own interest in itself.—JOHN RUSKIN.

The Sinking Faith.

DROWNING men catch at straws, as the proverb says; and drowning religions display the same instinct of self-preservation. We see many proofs of this in the present policy of the Christian Churches.

Mr. Campbell, in his *New Theology*, admits that wherever Christian Churches are holding their own, it is not because of the doctrines preached from the pulpit, but because of the social agencies that happen to be associated with them. Not dogma, but non-theological human sympathy, is the secret of their measure of success.

All sorts of social agencies are brought into play. There are Pleasant Sunday Afternoons, smoking concerts, clubs with billiard rooms, evening classes for acquiring interesting accomplishments, men's meetings, women's meetings, children's parties, debating societies—and so on by the yard; and behind and over all is the church or chapel itself as a first-class matrimonial bureau, with all the apparatus of courtship from introductions up to stylish weddings.

Gradually the "spiritual" element drops away, and the "worldly" element becomes more conspicuous. We mean what *used* to be called worldly; it is now called social, and the Churches are talking fluently about "social salvation"—a phrase which we invented nearly twenty years ago, and which they have borrowed without acknowledgment. Mr. Campbell, indeed, goes to the length of saying that it is not, and never really was, the object of Christianity to prepare men for a life to come; its object is, and always was, as far as people understood it, to create a better human life in this world. What a change from the good old hymn!—

" Nothing is worth a thought beneath
But how we may escape the death
That never, never dies;
How make our own salvation sure,
And when we fail on earth secure
A mansion in the skies."

The fact is that the Kingdom-Come business is falling into disrepute. A great many of the clergy are getting ashamed of it. They would have us believe that heaven is not exactly a post-mortem prospect, but something to go on with on this side of Jordan. As for hell, it is seldom mentioned, and commonly treated as a misunderstanding.

The whole Christian clergy may be challenged to prove that they ever passed on a single client to the beautiful land above. Such is their demonstrable success in celestial salvation. Will their success in social salvation be any better? We do not believe it. We ask any man of common sense to look at the clergy—to observe the mental and moral type of the profession—and then to ask himself if these men are likely to guide the world in the difficult and perplexing pursuit of political and social welfare. We would rather trust navvies and greengrocers—or any

men who are familiar with the bed-rock facts of life, and live in a natural atmosphere.

We have shown in our *Bible and Beer* that the Churches opposed the Temperance movement in its infancy. To listen to them now you would imagine that they were its parents. They denounce the drink traffic, as though the Bible God did not meet Moses at an inn, or as though Jesus Christ did not act as wine-merchant to a marriage-feast in Cana of Galilee. And the clerical reformers are always for short cuts. Dr. Clifford declared last Sunday that if he had his way he would shut up every public-house in England. Roadside inns and slum gin-palaces are all one to this pious gentleman. Instead of singing the Glory Song he cries "Down with Swipes."

It was Citizen Sunday last Lord's Day, and the preachers were all going it strong. Dozens of them were reported in the *Tribune*, and their utterances were asphyxiatingly monotonous. Fortunately, nobody could hear more than one of them at a time, or there would have been a marked increase in the death-rate. They seem to have just realised the fact that women drink too freely, and that children are too familiar with public-houses. They screamed about it in their usual way, and next Sunday they will be screaming about something else. If they stopped to think—supposing they are capable of the process—they might wonder how it is that Christian England suffers at all from such a horrible social sore, which is never seen (for instance) in a Moham-medan country.

They have a Brighton Dome Mission in the place built a hundred years ago by the greatest rake in England, who became George IV.—and who, by the way, was a very pious monarch. One of the recent Dome addresses was by the Rev. E. A. French on "Gambling," which drew a crowded congregation, the topic being one in which so many people are interested. Mr. French made at least one true observation. He said that there was gambling under the shadow of the cross. He was referring to the soldiers raffling for J. C.'s clothes, but he might have widened the reference with advantage. There is more gambling carried on under the shadow of the cross than elsewhere. Gambling is one of the peculiar vices of Christian countries.

Christianity is the most boastful creed on earth. It is always reading moral lessons to the "heathen" parts of the world—where great religions flourish far older than itself, and ethical systems, like that of Confucius, the great Secularist of Asia, far more scientific and practical, and therefore far more valuable, than its own. Money is begged from school-children as well as from millionaires for the conversion of these benighted heathen to the only source of true enlightenment. Yet the Japanese were advised by their official committee of enquiry not to adopt Christianity, on the ground that its moral fruits in Christian countries were so unsatisfactory. It would do the Christian men of God good to think of this. But they will not do so. They are too self-conceited. They will go on boasting while their faith is perishing—"The ruling passion strong in death." They remind us of the ventriloquist's dummy who goes on chattering until he is safe in the box and all is silence.

G. W. FOOTE.

"The Lesson of the Tower."

SUCH is the title of a very striking sermon by the Rev. J. G. Stevenson, of Brighton, which appears in the *Christian World Pulpit* for October 23. The discourse is remarkable both for the ingenuity of its multifarious applications and for its exegetical inexactitude. By the Tower is meant that of the far-famed Babel. Mr. Stevenson treats the narrative as a bit of Jewish folk-lore; but he is surely mistaken in thinking that the fairy tale was related, either primarily or secondarily, for the sake of inculcating any lesson for the guidance of human life. Even as a fairy tale, its direct object is, not to teach lessons, but to furnish a feasible explanation of the diversity of languages among mankind. All students of philology know that, so far as that object is concerned, the story is simply absurd. Mr. Stevenson admits that "it does not belong to an advanced stage of revelation"; but what is there to show that it belongs to any stage at all? It is ridiculous to suggest that "in a way simple folk could understand it sets forth such great lessons as that of man's responsibility towards God"; but in what part of it, as it stands, is there any either direct or implied reference to such responsibility? Where does it even hint that "God is not far from any one of us, and that therefore it behoves men to live with care and all humility"? Indeed, so remote from the tower-builders was Jehovah that he had to travel a long distance in order to see what they were doing. And, again, after beholding the work of their brain and hands, he returned to his distant home to ask his brother-gods to accompany him back on a specially punitive expedition. If the narrative reveals anything, it is not man's responsibility towards God, but rather God's jealousy of man's intellectual and social development:—

"And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the children of men builded. And the Lord said, Behold they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is what they begin to do; and no thing will be withholden from them, which they purpose to do. Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth; and they left off to build the city."

The confusion of tongues at Babel was effected because the gods were jealous of the marked progress of the human race. It was from the same motive that Jupiter chained Prometheus to the rock and delighted in his perpetual torture. That is how primitive man conceived of his deities. But as an explanation of the origin of different languages the narrative of Genesis is absolutely false.

"Diversity of language," says Canon Driver, "is dependent upon diversity of race. Differences of race are more primary in man than differences of language. Not only, however, are differences of race left entirely unexplained in the Biblical narrative; but the great races into which mankind is divided must have migrated into their present homes, and had their existing character stamped upon them, at an age vastly earlier than that which the chronology of Genesis permits, for the dispersion of mankind. The antiquity of man, and the wide distribution of man, with strongly-marked racial differences, are two great outstanding facts, which the Biblical narrative,—whether here or elsewhere in Genesis,—not only fails to account for, but does not even leave room for" (*The Book of Genesis*, pp. 133, 134).

Mr. Stevenson is fully aware that to the above arguments no reasonable answer is possible. As an explanation of the diversity of languages the story of the tower of Babel does not count. But instead of frankly acknowledging this, Mr. Stevenson says:—

"Good men who have insisted on our taking it literally have succeeded in taking the narrative out of all relation to the time-spirit. The form of this story belongs to the early stages of an ascending scale of civilisation. The soul of the narrative is for all time."

Will the preacher tell us what the "time-spirit" was when this story took shape? It was a time

of deep ignorance, when legends of all sorts sprang into being to account for insoluble mysteries. But surely the fast-growing legends had no soul apart from their form. The tower-building legend was an attempt to explain the origin of different tongues; but failing in that, there was no longer any soul left in it; and its only value for us lies in its marking a stage in the evolution of the human mind.

It was Robertson, of Brighton, who first called the attention of the English pulpit to the alleged distinction between the form and the soul of impossible Bible stories. It marked a great step forwards; but the distinction is, after all, nominal, not real, as Mr. Stevenson unintentionally demonstrates. He tells us that "the builders of city and tower were men of great ambition," who "would dare high things and do them." Then he states that ambition is a magnificent quality until it is tainted by egotism, or sullied "with some phase of latent or expressed selfishness." Granted; but there is no evidence whatever that the ambition of the tower-builders was so sullied or tainted. What the gods said was, "Well, if they keep on advancing at this rate, there is no knowing where they will end; and to prevent all further developments we will bring them to utter confusion." Mr. Stevenson moralises very touchingly, and, on the whole, quite accurately, only none of his lessons are naturally derived from the legend: he merely uses the story as a peg on which to hang them. Once you give up the form or body of anything there is no possibility of preserving its soul. Body and soul are absolutely inseparable. The one has never yet been found without the other. Disembodied spirits exist only in imagination.

As a matter of fact, nothing can be more ridiculous than this pulpit talk about the distinction between the form and the soul of Biblical passages. Every narrative is either true or not true. If true, it is true in form as well as in soul. If not true, it is untrue as a whole. This principle applies to parables and allegories as well as to literal stories. The diversity of languages was either the punishment of misdirected ambition, or it was not. If not, where is the soul of the story? Jesus was born of a virgin, or he was not. If not, in what conceivable sense can the story of the Virgin Birth be true? Christ rose from the dead, or he did not. If he did not, what earthly or heavenly meaning can there be in the doctrine of his resurrection? If the words employed are not true, what can be true? Much in Mr. Stevenson's sermon is profoundly true and beautifully expressed. He has the command of a picturesque literary style, and he knows something of the music and magic of words. His criticism of theological controversies, unjust land-grabbing and empire-building, and party pretensions is exceedingly fair and well merited; but what ghost of a connection is there between all this and the Tower of Babel? It may be true that "you cannot build selfishly and also build permanently"; and yet are not multitudes of wrongs hoary with age? Is not oppression often terribly long-lived? Are not many of the outwardly most prosperous people in every age also the most wicked? The tower-builders came to grief, not because they built selfishly or wickedly, but simply because they built at all, or because the Elohim were afraid of them; just as Adam was turned out of Eden lest he might eat of the tree of life, and live for ever as heaven's successful rival.

It will serve no good purpose, in the long run, to cling to the Bible as God's Word while criticising it as man's work, to worship its soul while discrediting its form. The masses of the people will never recognise the soul out of the body, nor bow to the spirit when the letter is discarded. This is the rock on which the New Theology is bound to suffer shipwreck. Its Christ is a mere ghost, an influence, a principle; while Jesus has been reduced to a mere man, subject to all the limitations of human nature. But the human Jesus shall soon slay the Divine Christ. In the absence of a bodily resurrection the spiritual resurrection is doomed. Whatever life

Christianity has had hitherto has been that of a strictly historical religion. Once the historical bases have been removed, Christianity will speedily die. The ghost age is past, and can never be revived. Belief in the supernatural without miracles is beyond the generality of people; and, apart from belief in the supernatural, religion, in any historical sense, is an impossibility.

J. T. LLOYD.

Christian Morality.—II.

(Continued from p. 675.)

THIS defect of the Christian conception of morality is even more obtrusive when we come to deal with the remaining portion of Professor Seth's defence. Just as in the one connection he argues that Jesus was so concerned with the supreme problem of righteousness that he ignored those conditions which make righteousness possible, so in dealing with the alleged social deficiencies of Christianity the same prepossession is made responsible for his lack of concern with "political or economic questions, with questions of the organisation of social life." And, again, one's comment must be that it is precisely with these and similar questions that the real importance lies. The mere enunciation of moral precepts, no matter how lofty in tone, is at best a contribution of but doubtful value to the world's literature or to the sum of human knowledge. For in strict truth, so long as the world has possessed teachers or records, there has been no lack of such things. And the necessary vagueness of general precepts need continuous interpretation in the light of contemporary knowledge and social circumstances.

To love one's neighbor as oneself may be a good enough counsel; but how much of its value in actual application will depend upon circumstances that determine its interpretation? Is there, for instance, any valid reason for doubting that those Christians who made dungeon and stake the reward of heresy, and who sought to impress a uniformity of belief upon all, did in many instances believe they were promoting their neighbor's highest and best interests? The real corrective to such an application of the teaching is to be found in other considerations—social and intellectual—quite ignored in the recorded utterances of Jesus, and certainly foreign to historic Christianity. So, too, of an apparently sound social teaching such as "The laborer is worthy of his hire," a text much beloved by that curious product the Christian Socialist. All would agree on this, and the very agreement disposes of its value. For what men really need is not the vague counsel that laborers should receive payment for their work, but some equitable rule of determining what the value of their labor really is. During historic times, at least, there has never been any lack of moral rules that were wide enough to cover all phases of human conduct; but what has always been needed is a spirit or principle of interpretation that would enable people to adjust those rules to the changing circumstances of a developing society.

Now, the principle that would supply such a rule is one that is nowhere present in the teachings of the Gospel Jesus. Primarily there is needed an adequate conception of the State as a definite organic structure—adequate, if possible; but an inadequate one is surely better than none at all. But the State, as such, is simply ignored by Jesus. Professor Seth says that Jesus never counselled withdrawal from the State or neglect of civic obligation, which is so far true; but there is certainly no positive teaching concerning one or the other. On the contrary, the State is practically ignored. That the State—in the sense of the entire social structure—could be, and in fact is, the great determinant in the life of man is a view of things the New Testament never once reaches. Yet in any really scientific view of the case individual improvement is to be achieved through social life or not at all. For ultimately the

individual is only an expression of forces, active before he is born, active during his life, and continuing their activity after he is dead. Structure, habit, language, and frames of mind are only explainable by reference to the social medium; and to consider man apart from this medium is, to use an old metaphor, like considering the flight of a bird while ignoring the existence of the atmosphere. Divorce the individual from society and from the standpoints of both psychology and natural history he is an insoluble enigma.

Now, whatever may have been the faults of the Pagan civilisation, neglect of teachings concerning the State was not among them. Its fault lay, on the contrary, in the direction of making the conception of the State so dominant as to unduly limit the free play of the individuals composing it. But, to quote John Stuart Mill:—

"In purely Christian ethics, that grand department of duty is scarcely noticed or acknowledged. It is in the Koran, not the New Testament, that we read the maxim—'A ruler who appoints any man to an office, when there is in his dominions another man better qualified for it, sins against God and against the State.' What little recognition the idea of obligation to the public obtains in modern morality is derived from Greek and Roman sources, not from Christian; as even in the morality of private life, whatever exists of magnanimity, highmindedness, personal dignity, even the sense of honor, is derived from the purely human, not the religious part of our education, and never could have grown out of a standard of ethics in which the only worth, professedly recognised, is that of obedience."

And to this might be added the profound and striking passage in Plato's *Republic*, in which the State is deliberately likened to an organism, mutually dependent in its parts, the whole suffering when the parts are affected, and injury to the whole inflicting pain on all its components.

In this respect, therefore, instead of the Christian morality developing the implications of Pagan morality, it is altogether on a lower and less scientific plane. Instead of teachings concerning the nature and function of the State, we have either an ignoring of the subject, or the implied tuition that the State is to be accepted as a fact, wherever it exists, and that its commands are to be obeyed wherever they do not directly prohibit Christian doctrines. And to this rule, it must be confessed, Christian organisations have been tolerably faithful. This is seen in the support given by Christian churches to all forms of State control—so long as Christian organisations received a *quid pro quo* in the shape of State help, as well as in such utterances as those of Luther, when he advised the German princes to shoot, stab, drown, or poison, like mad dogs, those peasants who had risen against the hereditary feudalism of their country.

There is an echo of the teaching of Plato just alluded to, in St. Paul's teaching that the Church is a body akin to the individual organism, each member suffering or rejoicing with the injury or benefit of the whole. But it will be seen that while the Pagan applied the principle to the State as a whole, the Christian carries it no further than the Church as a petty organism within the State. In the hands of Plato the principle was essentially inclusive and social. In the hands of Paul it is essentially exclusive and sectarian. The one is based upon a perception of the fact that the interdependence of human beings is a natural, an organic fact, transcending or embracing all smaller differences. The other is no more than an appreciation of the necessity of common action and mutual support among a select community united in the bonds of a common belief. In the very nature of the case such a conception could only serve as a *social* bond in the extremely improbable event of the whole of the members of a society being in voluntary agreement on questions that must always be of a speculative character. And, as a matter of fact, Christian belief has always been more a source of social division than aught else. True, Professor Seth might argue that the ideal Church aimed at embracing all

within its boundaries; but, as Lange has pointed out, general agreement upon dogma is an impossibility. Agreement may be secured among a few by a dual process of selection and exclusion; but when the few have been selected, there remains the much larger number who have been excluded, and thus we have, not social co-operation, but social division as the result of religious influence.

It is the more necessary to emphasise the complete absence in Christian teaching of any principle that would cover social duties and obligations, since there is now so determined an effort on the part of a section of the Christian world to parade Christianity as supplying a sound working basis for social organisation. To Socialists at least—the whole of whose position is based upon a definite conception of the nature of the State—the absence of any working principle in the New Testament concerning the State should be enough to warn them off that mental monstrosity, Christian Socialism. That Christian preachers should try to capture the Socialist movement is to be expected, although it is to be hoped that, for their own sakes, Socialists will be sufficiently on their guard to prevent their movement being exploited by opportunist theologians. These would do well to bear in mind not only what has been said above, not only the famous declaration of the late Bishop Magee that "Christ's laws are laws not for the world, but for the Church," and that the attempt to turn them into laws for the State would involve, as regards individuals, "an intolerable tyranny, and, as regards the State, an impracticable absurdity," but also the recent official utterance of the Chairman of the Congregational Union, that "It is difficult to discover the rudiments of a social system" in the New Testament. Where Mr. Compton Ricketts says "difficult" I may safely say impossible. Sympathy with the poor there may be, but one needs more than mere sympathy with poverty and misery in order to safely undertake the tremendous task of social reorganisation.

(To be continued.) C. COHEN.

A New View of Missionaries.

CONFIDENCE-TRICK men, and other persons who prey upon their fellows, require a succession of new and inexperienced victims, else is their occupation gone, for "a burnt child dreads the fire." We do not want for a moment to suggest that there is anything in the missionary interest in education in China that suggests the confidence trick, but we are going to try to show that it is too much to say, as has been claimed, that "the pioneer work in modernising the educational system of China entitles the missionary body to the fullest meed of honor."

We say that they are not entitled to claim or expect praise or honor, for their interest in education has been and is directly a self-interest—their enthusiasm for their own theological opinions. If they educate the young Chinaman, it is because they desire to "convert" him. They are, we submit, no more concerned for education itself than was Bishop Horsley in 1795, who "did not know what the mass of the people in any country had to do with the laws but obey them."

In England, up to a comparatively recent date, the Church was slow to heed the demand of the masses for the teacher. It was not sure that intelligence should be universal. When that demand became too strong to be ignored, and the Church took it up, it was with the intention primarily of controlling that teacher. If popular education had to come, it must be the handmaid of dogma. The children of England were to be permitted to learn in order that they might first of all "read the Bible and the formularies of the Church. The purpose of all educational agencies was to Christianise; it was but an incident that they also helped to educate."

So it is in China to-day, where the cause of education is less threatened by Chinese prejudices than by the foreign prejudices of the missionaries. There has been less native reaction in connection with the demand for foreign knowledge than in anything else, and what success the missionary effort can boast has been chiefly due to this native demand for part of what they bring, as was also the case in Japan,

where their artful pupils—or patients, to adjust the metaphor—swallowed the educational jam and spat out the dogmatic pill. In China too, we have no doubt, it is the treacle they want, and not the brimstone.

But that the missionaries merely offer the first to induce the Chinese to swallow the second has been made apparent at the centenary conference at Shanghai. One of the missionaries naively admitted in a paper that their immediate purpose is more easily pursued among a "superstitious multitude" than among an "Agnostic, educated class." It was a similar recognition that made the Church unsympathetic towards popular enlightenment in England to begin with; "the more we know, the more we know we don't know."

The forlorn hope of dogma is to control the fountains of knowledge, to doctor the food of babes and sucklings; and we have seen how tenaciously it can fight to hold this last trench. Ecclesiasticism is under notice to quit, however, in British schools; the German educational system spued it long ago; France is even more emancipated; Switzerland was a pioneer of non-sectarian instruction; American public instruction has been a model since it knocked that clog off the wheel; and Japan's case we have already mentioned.

In China, fortunately, there is little prospect of the important work of education being so hampered. A representative committee of missionaries is now considering how to get a Christian university established in China, but even pro-missionary journals are against it. The *North China News* says:—

"A Christian institution subsidised by a non-Christian government in opposition to that government's own non-Christian institution presents a palpable anomaly, opening the way for much bitterness and friction at the expense of both religion and education. Not less liable to misconception and dangerous to international harmony would be the creation of a university looking for its support entirely to foreign sources. Its presence would be perpetual humiliation to China."

Christian students are not debarred from Chinese higher colleges and provincial universities, we believe, so long as they are willing to heed the Confucian observances and to render unto Cæsar the things that are his. The missionaries, however, instruct them that they cannot conscientiously bow to the tablets representing royalty. It is too late in the day to advocate reverence for royalty, or regard for the "divine right of kings," but the missionaries ought to be the last to discredit it. A student with an intellect capable of attaching conscientious importance to such formalities is little likely to benefit by instruction in any university; there would seem to be a crack in his head to begin with; and that there are missionaries who can fuss about such unimportant trifles only shows how unfitted they are to teach.

The mere proposal to found a university, from which non-Christian students are to be excluded, is sufficient proof for us that the educational zeal of missionaries is a pretence; it is the wolf of propagandism in an educational sheepskin; and it debars them, we maintain, from the honor they claim for work done, and from sympathy for work projected.

—Daily Press (Hongkong, China).

The Church and the People.

[We make the following extract from an interesting letter by Mr. J. W. de Caux on the Church Congress in the *Yarmouth Mercury*.]

THE Vicar's statements respecting fishermen have amused me greatly. Judging from what he said one would think that the clerics had always taken a lively interest in the spiritual welfare of the toilers of the deep. But have they? Had he consulted anyone cognisant of the facts he would have discovered that their interest in them was simply one of the loaves and fishes.

For centuries the Church claimed and received for itself alone, all along the coast, a half-dole which, from the sacred uses to which it was supposed to be put, was called "Christ's half-dole." The origin of this half-dole may be traced to those dark ages in which men were more superstitious than pious; and when serf and lord were equally ignorant, and equally at the mercy of the priest. The half-dole was, no doubt, in the first instance a free-will offering, given in the hope of thereby securing a good voyage, much in the same spirit as heathen make presents to their idols in order to propitiate them. The making of this free-will offering soon became a custom—a custom which in time came to be considered as a right; and this right was tenaciously claimed and rigorously enforced by Catholic priest and Protestant

clergyman until near the middle of the last century. And well it might be from a worldly point of view.

From time to time efforts were made to shake off this incubus; and, as late as 1845, the Rev. F. Cunningham, Vicar of Lowestoft, summoned before the Rev. E. M. Love and Edward Leathes, Esq., two of the Magistrates for Suffolk, a fisherman named John Roberts "for having refused or neglected to pay tithes for his fish." The case was argued for the defendant by Mr. J. H. Tillett, of Norwich, who contended that the "tithe did not arise," as was stated in the information, "in the parish of Lowestoft, *but in the sea*, and therefore, as it was neither legal nor just, it could not be enforced." The Magistrates, however, found for the complainant, and made an order for 10s. 3d. tithe and 10s. costs. Whether this order was obeyed or not I cannot say, but since then, as far as I have been able to learn, no effort has been made by the clerics to enforce their so-called rights. I have been told that the custom was enforced in this Borough until a fisherman, happening to have a tenth child born to him, took it to the vicarage-house in the vain hope that the Vicar would adopt it.

Fifty years ago, I know that the clerics took not the slightest interest in the so-called "spiritual welfare" of the fishermen. Mackerel and herrings were then sold upon the Beach and South-quay, during the summer and autumn months, throughout the entire week. I have myself sold hundreds of lasts on the Sunday. Was ever a word of disapproval of such a practice uttered by any of the clergy? Not a word! The only matters in which they showed any public interest were the enforcement and collection of Church rates.

But long before 1872—in which the Act of Charles the Second was first put in force in this Borough—this public selling of fish on a Sunday was discontinued. By whom was this change brought about? By the clergy? O dear no! It was by the salesmen themselves who, in the first instance, signed a round robin to the effect that henceforth they would refuse to do business on a Sunday. And on what grounds? That it prevented those engaged in the trade from going to church? O dear no! The simple and truthful reason was that there was no pressing need for such Sunday trading, and that it caused much unnecessary labor and prevented many from enjoying the customary holiday. My share in the matter was the enunciation of the idea, the drawing up of the round robin, and the getting it signed by my brother salesmen, all of whom are gone to "that bourne from whence no traveller returns" with the exception of my friend Alderman Suffling.

How comes it that the clerics are evincing such newly-born zeal in the observance of Sunday? Do they cry "Shop" for the benefit of the working-man or for themselves? Some recent utterances of the Vicar of Lowestoft will, I think, assist one in forming an opinion on the subject.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON OCT. 26.

The President, Mr. G. W. Footo, in the chair. There were also present: Messrs. J. Barry, C. Bowman, R. Brooks, H. Cowell, C. Cohen, E. Charlton, H. Farmer, J. T. Lloyd, W. Leat, J. Neate, C. Quinton, S. Samuels, F. Schaller, H. Silverstein, T. Thurlow, V. Roger, F. Wood, E. Woodward, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting were read and confirmed; monthly cash statement presented and adopted.

The Secretary reported upon the revival of active propaganda at Leeds, and a large number of new members were admitted for that town; also for Mountain Ash, Kingsland, Edinburgh, and West London Branches, and for the parent Society.

Correspondence in connection with Mr. Wishart's Mission was read from Leeds, Liverpool, etc., and a full report of his work in the various towns visited was given. After a lengthy discussion, it was unanimously agreed that special attention should be given to Liverpool. It was also decided to render some assistance to the Edinburgh Branch, and to run a course of indoor meetings at Woolwich.

In response to numerous requests from members and friends of the movement in all parts of the country, it was resolved to print as a leaflet the article entitled "A Black-guard Policy," which recently appeared in the *Freethinker*, from the pen of its Editor, Mr. G. W. Footo.

Mr. Cohen was elected to represent the N. S. S. at the forthcoming Conference on the Spurious Sports Bill; the Annual Dinner at Holborn Restaurant was fixed for Jan. 14; and the meeting closed.

E. M. VANCE, General Secretary.

Acid Drops.

"Social Salvation" is now a very popular phrase in "advanced" religious circles. Dr. Gladden has made it the title of one of his books, and we noticed a headline in the *Christian Commonwealth* last week—"New Theology and Social Salvation." We daresay these New Theology people don't know who invented the phrase, "Social Salvation." *We did*. We invented it nearly twenty years ago as a title for the English edition of one of Ingersoll's lectures which was brought out in pamphlet form at the *Freethinker* office. It was quite original then, as far as we were concerned. We had never seen it before, and if anybody else had we should be glad to have the reference. We don't want more than our due—but we want that. And we rather like showing the Christians that a Freethinker was in front of them—as usual.

Christians are always finding out things that we have been saying for years. We have always asserted that there was absolutely nothing new in the teaching ascribed to Jesus Christ. Rev. R. J. Campbell now agrees with us. In his latest printed sermon on "Jesus and the Kingdom of God" he admits that "there is no evidence that Jesus has transcended the level of his time in his religious beliefs." "He said not a word," Mr. Campbell adds, "nor produced an idea, which in some form or other had not found expression before." We are glad to hear our old statements echoed from pulpits. The world *does* move. Galileo was right.

Rev. R. J. Campbell, addressing a Socialist demonstration at the Alexandra Palace, denied that Socialism meant Atheism or Materialism. There was no harm in that, but a foolish Church parson, who moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Campbell, dotted all that gentleman's *i's*. The Rev. Aidan Hancock said that, "As an ardent believer in what was called the orthodox faith, he saw in Socialism a means of carrying out the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ." Why *will* Socialists listen to that sort of thing without telling the speaker to shut up? The chairman himself, if he knew his duty, would stop it. That foolish parson was really, however unintentionally, asking every Freethinking Socialist in the audience to reconsider his position.

Mr. Campbell himself is not a discreet Socialist agitator—as we have shown in recent numbers of the *Freethinker*. Even at the Alexandra Palace meeting he appears to have said (according to the *Daily News*) that "Socialism is actually a swinging back to the Kingdom of God on earth." An Atheist speaker who said the opposite of that would have been called to order; and why is not sauce for the Atheist gander sauce for the Christian goose?

The editor of "The Churches" column in the *Daily News*, incidentally—and, perhaps, accidentally—throws a little light upon that Socialist demonstration at the Alexandra Palace. People were paying half-a-crown for reserved seats. It was "not a working-class audience; there were far more middle-class people present than workmen." Suburban people, especially ladies, bought up hundreds of tickets from the local Branches of Socialist organisations. That is what we read in the *Daily News*—and it seems quite credible.

The Rev. Charles Brown, of Ferme Park Baptist Church, London, a stalwart champion of historic orthodoxy, in a bitter letter to the *Daily News*, accuses Mr. Campbell of speaking blasphemy in his recent sermon on "The Creed of Jesus," and expresses great surprise that "men like Mr. Jowett and Dr. Horton do not from the platform of the (Congregational) Union emphatically dissociate themselves from such pronouncements, and condemn their being proclaimed from a pulpit which has half-a-dozen generations of evangelistic teaching behind it." This is another attempt to apply the Christian boycott to the minister of the City Temple. How beautiful is Christian charity!

Here is a pretty kettle of fish. One day the Rev. Charles Brown calls Mr. Campbell a blasphemer, and the next the Rev. J. E. Rattenbury "protests against Mr. Brown's distortion of the plain meaning of Scripture." The meaning is quite "plain"—as plain as a pikestaff—and yet prominent parsons are at hopeless loggerheads as to what it is. These well-known three of London's men of God preach three distinct and mutually destructive gospels, and father them on the unfortunate Galilean!

The Pavilion at Blackpool is a famous and, from the religious point of view, wicked place of amusement; but at

the recent meeting of the Congregational Union one of the ministers, in a prayer, told the Almighty that it was "this hallowed spot." That was the hour of its conversion and consecration.

Free Churchmen "want free schools, free children, free teachers, and free land." Why? The answer was given without a blush by the Congregational Union at Blackpool: To "strengthen village Nonconformity." And yet Dr. Horton said that their central prayer ought to be, "Oh, to be nothing, you and I." "We are nothing," he added, "but broken and empty vessels." Still, they are the English nation, and everything must play into their hand.

Even doctors of divinity are beginning to use their critical faculty. In a book entitled *Lux Hominum*, the Rev. Dr. Menzies states that the Fourth Gospel is not "a book of history," that about the stories of Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria, for example, there are "inherent improbabilities." A reviewer in the *British Congregationalist* angrily censures him for making such a rash concession to the enemy. The truth will out, in spite of all obstacles.

In a brilliant article on "Half Victories," "J. B.", of the *Christian World*, admits that the Church of the present day is by no means identical with the Church portrayed in the New Testament, that "the stream is constantly taking the color of the soil through which it flows," and that consequently, "while the Church is absorbing Heathenism, Heathenism is, to some extent, absorbing the Church." That is incontrovertibly true. As long as "J. B." confines himself to pure reasoning, he is delightful; but the moment he turns dogmatist he begins to flounder like "a double double Dutchman in continent of mud," as Robert Hall used to say of Dr. John Owen. Here is one of his dogmas: "At the Cross all the nations and all the ages meet." So says "J. B.", the dogmatic emotionalist; but "J. B.", the thinker, would pronounce that statement utterly false. In point of fact, there is not a single grain of truth in it. At the Cross people are divided into innumerable hostile factions, or fighting armies.

The Bishop of Stepney is said to be one of the great preachers of the age; but a great preacher is not necessarily a great thinker. Indeed, we would be almost justified in saying that a real thinker cannot be a Christian preacher at all. Dr. Lang is certainly not a logician. Preaching at St. Paul's the other Sunday, he bewildered his hearers with words without knowledge on the subject of prayer. He emphasised the fact that the laws of nature are never interfered with or broken; but, having done that, he contradicted himself by adding that, in answer to prayer, God "may divert the course of disease in a sick child; or, even if a people pray, direct the rain that it may have its daily bread." How a sane man could utter such nonsense is inconceivable.

Here is the same silliness in a sillier form. The Bishop said: "When we know, or may know, God's will, we cannot pray against it." That is to say, we must let God have his way when we know what it is, but when we don't, we may ask him to take ours. This is what Christians mean by trusting God—imploing him to adapt his will to theirs. A perfect trust will cast out prayer, as any decent acquaintance with Nature inevitably does.

The *Church Times* is in tears because "there is a growing tendency on the part of some doctors, and of the nurses who carry out their instructions, to limit, or even to forbid, the presence of the priest, and the exercise of his ministrations" at the bedside of the sick, "on the plea that the health of the patient may suffer." But this is only one of the many proofs that Science is steadily displacing Religion at every point. The *Church Times* may weep its heart out, but it cannot alter the course of modern development. When knowledge comes, ignorance and superstition must retire.

Dr. Roberts, whose addresses to the Church of This World, Kansas City, are sometimes reprinted in our own columns, seems to be making good progress. Hitherto, the the Church's assemblies have been held once a month in the Shubert Theatre. They are now being held fortnightly. Dr. Roberts addresses large audiences and edits a monthly called *Here and Now*. Our readers are able to form an idea of his matter and manner. They will also be able to appreciate the following peculiar tribute to Dr. Roberts in the *Lexington News* :—

"In this man Roberts is presented one of the anomalies of our civilisation. Extremely cultured and refined, well-informed, and, as far as we know, blameless in his social

relations, he owes all that he prides himself upon, and all there is good and learned in him, to our civilisation, which owes all that is good in it to Christianity. Yet those gifts he turns against the source of their creation. His creed is unbelief, and when that prevails there will be nothing but dreamy speculation. He preaches a doctrine whose success is more dangerous to peace and good order than all the examples and lives and teachings of all the thieves and murderers and liars, and more destructive of virtue than the work of all the pimps and prostitutes in the great and growing city in which he lives."

This pious tune is getting obsolete in England, though it seems to be pretty common in America. The *Lexington News* doesn't trouble to see how it is that there are so many liars, thieves, murderers, pimps, and prostitutes in the Christian city of Kansas, which Dr. Roberts is trying to improve.

According to the *Christian World*, a large portion of the gatherings at Gipsy Smith's revival meetings at Carnarvon do not understand what he is talking about, owing to their lack of acquaintance with English. Still, they have derived "great spiritual benefit" from the meetings all the same. The truth is that if some mechanical figure came on the platform, and waved its arms and emitted loud sounds, it would have precisely the same effect, so long as the audience understood that it was a revivalist performance. People go there for an emotional debauch, and see that they get it. Physiologically there is little difference between them and those that seek the public-house to experience the feelings induced by intoxication. And morally the difference is scarcely less questionable.

The Rev. Dr. Washington Gladden, American Congregationalist minister, says of America's "monumental injustices" that the Church "has gathered into her communion many of the most conspicuous of the perpetrators of these injustices—they are nearly all Church members—and has made herself a pensioner upon their bounty, and has been content with preaching to them the 'simple gospel' that such men always love to hear." We have not the slightest doubt of the truth of the statement, only we should like to know what there is in genuine Christian teaching to exclude such men from membership. And it certainly is questionable whether any church, in America or elsewhere, would ever think of refusing a millionaire who sought membership.

"Has a man a moral right to be an Atheist?" asks the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon. No one but a born fool or a parson would ask such a question. Every man is what he is—morally, mentally, and physically—because of all the forces that make him so. Perhaps the poor fellow meant has a man a moral right to tell other people he is an Atheist? Which is quite another question, although even in that form rather confusing. Every man should have the legal right to express his opinions, for without that right the possession of opinions is comparatively valueless. And, morally, everyone is under an obligation to point out to others, as well as ability and circumstances will allow, what he believes to be the truth. Of course, such a conception of legal rights and moral obligations would be very unwelcome to Mr. Gibbon and his kind, but purifying influences must be so to everything that subsists upon the existence of their opposites. The reporter of Mr. Gibbon's speech says it was quite remarkable to note the number of bald-headed men in the audience, and treats this as a compliment to the speaker. Well, as the audience answered Mr. Gibbon's question with a loud shout of "No," it is pretty clear that the baldness was not brought about by excessive thinking.

Mr. J. D. Jones, M.A., B.D., is a gentleman who is most anxious that Christians should reflect credit upon their creed by superior truthfulness and general conduct. This is the way he sets the example. He had been, he says, in Hyde Park, and seen the "ugly laugh pass round as the Lord was vilified and blasphemed"; but when some humble Christian would get up, and in faltering accents tell of Christ's grace and help, the temper of the crowd changed. "Hats came off, tears gathered in unaccustomed eyes, and scorn gave place to something like reverential awe and worship." Quite miraculous! Again, a Mr. Frank Smith, in the same park, once mounted an Atheist platform and told the people "who Jesus really was, and what Jesus really did." And the London workmen concluded the meeting with "three cheers for Jesus Christ." Again miraculous! Unfortunately, it isn't true. No one outside an asylum can believe that a crowd with "ugly" laughs, jeering at the name of Jesus, were suddenly moved to tears, took off their hats, and gazed with "awe and worship," because some humble Christian faltered out a few earnest words. Such a psychological combination in the same persons is a sheer impossibility.

bility. And as for the other story—well, that is beginning to travel round like the famous watch story. Originally, I believe, it was in Hull. Then the cheering crowd shifted to Manchester and one or two other places. Now it is in Hyde Park. No doubt, when Christians have circulated the lie a little longer, they will be quite ready to swear to its accuracy. Meanwhile, we would suggest to Mr. Jones that a little more attention to truth-speaking in his own case would not be amiss. It would, at all events, set an example to others.

It is astonishing what a lot some people know about God. Here is Mrs. Cadbury, for instance, telling the National Union of Women Workers that God has nothing to do with the conditions of hundreds of thousands of the poor of this country. We incline to agree with her—on Atheistic grounds. But the lady spoke on Christian grounds, and her declaration from that point of view is an absurdity. If God exist, instead of being merely imaginary, everything in the world, including the condition of the poor, happens according to his will. If it doesn't, whose will is it that is stronger than God's? We pause for a reply—as the orator said. Mrs. Cadbury will perhaps explain.

Last week's *Christian Commonwealth* contained one good thing, at least; it was a reference to the attitude of the recent Congregational Union assembly at Blackpool. "That assembly," we read, "did itself little honor when it howled down an effort to get religion handed over from the Government's schools into the sole care and bosom of the Churches. 'No,' they cried; 'Government shall establish the Bible.' Then, a few minutes later, they grew enthusiastic over Disestablishment, under the lead of the justly popular voice of Mr. Horne. The contrast and inconsistency were startling."

The New Theology is advocating the need of preparing an expurgated edition of the Bible for the use of children, as so much of the stuff contained in it, specially in the historical portions, is unfit for youthful eyes and ears. The Rev. J. Morgan Jones, of Aberdare, has been winnowing the books of Joshua and Judges, and finding very little golden grain. Others will repeat the experiment, and find less.

The *Islington Gazette* sent a special representative to report on the Finsbury-park affair. This gentleman, whoever he is, does not agree in opinion either with Mr. Pack or with his Christian opponents, and therefore claims to be perfectly disinterested. He went to the park to see for himself how matters really stood between the opposing camps. The real cause of the trouble was soon apparent. Mr. Pack had shifted his pitch again and again to avoid the disturbers of his meetings, but the Christians followed him up, their object being to get as near to him as possible, and thus prevent his holding an orderly meeting. "As I was standing there," the reporter said, "one of the Defence League's clerigymen came right up and within earshot of Mr. Pack and directly facing his meeting began to strike up another. When it is recollected that there was ill feeling on both sides, and that at that very moment Mr. Pack was being interrupted by a gentleman in a tall hat whom he was compelled to threaten with the terrors of the police, this will be seen to be a very unwise policy; for a tiny spark might be enough to ignite the indignant Christians and the equally indignant Agnostics. As one who is indifferent to both sides—disagreeing as I do with both—but as one who does not want to see the park turned into a bear-garden on Sunday afternoons—I emphatically protest against this kind of thing, as being calculated to cause breaches of the Sunday quiet." The *Islington Gazette* representative very properly calls upon the park police to keep "a respectable and respectful length between the two parties." This is more common sense, as well as fair-play, and the police ought to carry it out in all cases. No speaker should be allowed to get too near another speaker's meeting. A space is legally set aside for public meetings, and order ought to be legally maintained there.

We are very glad to see this editorial statement in the *Islington Gazette*. It confirms the report of personal friends of ours, who have followed the Finsbury Park affair for many months. There is undoubtedly a deliberate conspiracy on the part of the Bakerite Christians, including several Christian ministers, to drive Mr. Pack out of the park by sheer rowdyism. It is an old game, but it cannot be played as it used to be. Freethinkers are more numerous now, and better able to take care of themselves.

Baker himself seems anxious to qualify as a martyr. We hope he will not secure the crown. But he tries hard for it.

Dr. Stanton Coit is now a typical religious preacher. Even his texts are becoming more and more evangelical. The other Sunday he discoursed in the morning on "Underneath are the Everlasting Arms," and in the evening on "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." He will soon be sporting the Roman collar.

Mr. J. C. Nicol, a Willesden schoolmaster, claims to have found the real author of the works of Shakespeare. It would be more to the purpose if he devoted his wonderful powers to finding the real author of the Bible. One thing is certain—it isn't God.

The Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Unions Congress has appointed a special sub-committee—consisting of Mr. C. W. Bowerman, M.P., Mr. W. C. Steadman, M.P., Mr. A. Gill, M.P., and Mr. Ben Cooper—to inquire into the allegations of sweating in connection with the Salvation Army social work. We hope the whole truth will come out now.

In a recent lecture by Professor Delitzsch, that author traces the practice of burning witches to the ancient Babylonians. But he points out that the ancient Babylonians were probably content with burning witches in effigy; it was Christianity that improved on the practice by burning them actually. Babylon, he says, never fell so low as Rome. We really do not know why Professor Delitzsch should single out Rome in this connection—except it is that he belongs to the opposite Church. But as a mere matter of history, Protestants have been the most active witch-hunters and the most fiendish of witch-torturers and burners the world has ever seen. And it is to be noted that the majority of those tortured and burned were women; because, as Puritan theologians obligingly explained, the Devil has more influence over women than he has over men.

It is all right; the Bishop of London's reputation is safe. The Rev. W. L. Watkinson asserts that he was quite correct in saying that our present civilisation originated in Christianity. All we need now is to know how Christianity originated our civilisation, or, failing that, what are the elements of civilisation that belong to Christianity proper. And when this question has been answered, perhaps Mr. Watkinson and Bishop Ingram will deal with those Christian preachers who assert that our present civilisation is an evil and needs remodelling on a new basis.

Mr. Watkinson also says that "in the salvation of one there was proof that Christ could save all." But suppose we reverse the statement, and say, "In the fact that Christ does not save all there is proof that people are mistaken in thinking that he brings salvation to any." One cannot expect Mr. Watkinson to try this form of the argument, but there is a great deal to be said in its favor nevertheless.

Much excitement is caused in New York by a minister who has taken to reading novels in the pulpit. And yet there has been a greater quantity of fiction dispensed from the pulpit than from any other place in the world.

With the aid of a wooden cross, some burglars broke into a church at Rochford and stole everything of value. Another example of the power of the cross.

Jesus said "Blessed are the poor" and "The poor ye have always with you." The Rev. J. J. Vaughan says, on the contrary, "poverty is a hideous and a horrible evil, depressing, demoralising, and degrading. Poverty was not even a regrettable necessity, for our intellectual and material resources are sufficient to enable us to abolish it." Mr. Vaughan is under the delusion that he is "preaching Jesus."

Mr. Sidney Webb is a very able man, but he seems to find it necessary to play to the gallery occasionally. Speaking at St. Anne's Hall, Clapham, he warned his hearers against being misled by misrepresentations of Socialism. "Atheists and free-lovers," he said, "were the accusations levelled against the early Christians, as against everything new." We cannot believe that Mr. Sidney Webb really regards Atheism as an "accusation." What is he himself? It would be interesting to have a plain statement on the subject. So many of the Fabians keep their religious (or irreligious) views up their sleeves.

Socialists are crying out lustily against "misrepresentations." Here is Mr. R. P. Farley, for instance, writing to the *Daily News* as ex-president of the St. Helen's Labor

party, complaining that the St. Helen's Conservatives have on their platforms "a notorious ill-liver, whose special point is to charge Socialists with a desire to stamp out religion and to bring about a state of sexual promiscuity." We are sorry for the Socialists, but glad to see that they are able to make their complaints heard in the newspapers. Secularists were not so lucky. The grossest libels were perpetrated against them, and the Liberal, as well as the Tory, press winked at the performance. Mr. Stead was the only Liberal in England who said a word in opposition to Dr. Torrey's vile slanders on Ingersoll and Paine. Many years before that, a wretched Christian Evidence creature called Walton Powell—a born criminal, with the marks of it on his face—went round England saying a thousand times worse things about Secularists than their enemies are now saying about Socialists. He even declared that Secularists held secret classes to teach children unnatural vices. And this unspeakable creature gathered in money, was patronised by heaps of Christians who ought to have known better, and addressed big audiences of congenial fellow-bigots. He came a cropper at last—through being found out. After undergoing a long term of imprisonment for debauching young girls at Bristol, he was arrested and imprisoned again for bigamy. Then he disappeared. Even his old "pals," like the comic-opera infidel-slayer who exploits the name of Bradlaugh, don't seem to know what has become of him.

The *Daily News* devoted an article to the crusade against Socialism which the Conservatives are starting in the name of "religion" and the "family." Our pious Nonconformist contemporary joined in the chorus of denunciation of the misrepresenters of Socialism. But the same journal, although we happen to know that its editor was aware of all the facts of the case, never said a word against Dr. Torrey for villainously misrepresenting the characters of Paine and Ingersoll. Circumstances alter cases.

The idea that Socialism is anti-religious because some men who are Atheists are also Socialists, is ridiculed by the *Daily News*. "Even the man in the street," it says, "if he would stop to think, knows that the typical English Atheist of our time, Mr. Bradlaugh, and the typical critic of conventional sexual morality, Ibsen, were both of them violent opponents of Socialism." Fancy the man in the street knowing anything about Ibsen! He knows very little now even about Bradlaugh. Good old man in the street! The *Daily News* must mean Bouverie-street.

The newspapers report that an anonymous gentleman called at the British and Foreign Bible Society's place in Queen Victoria-street, and left Bank of England notes for £2,500. What was it the Tichborne claimant said about some people having money and no brains?

The chief character in the Rev. Dr. W. J. Dawson's new novel, *A Prophet in Babylon*, is of opinion that the day of the churches is practically at an end. His motto is, "The Church must go." This, mark you, is the candid conviction, not of a Freethinker, but of a man who has spent a life-time in the Christian ministry. Thus we have a significant corroboration of Freethought teaching from a most unexpected quarter.

Mrs. Besant's lecture at the City Temple on "Spiritual Life for the Man of the World" was called by the Rev. R. J. Campbell, who presided, a "magnificent oratorical effort." Very likely it was—in its way, for Mrs. Besant was always eloquent. But the substance of that oration! How thin it looks in cold print! Mrs. Besant even sank to the hackneyed absurdity of saying that a great sculptor does not carve a statue out of the marble, but is "setting free a statue within the marble." Upon such absurdities as this do the "spiritual" people erect their moonshine philosophy. A child can see that the statue is not really in the block of marble. Only the material of the statue is there. The statue itself is form. And until the statue is carved the form only exists as an idea in the sculptor's mind.

A little while ago the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, in his official capacity, opened a Palestine Exhibition, the proceeds of which were to be handed over to the Society for the Propagation of Christianity among the Jews. Immediately the minister of the Old Hebrew congregation remonstrated with his lordship for giving his official sanction to a Society which has for its object the conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith; and his lordship, perceiving his mistake, very sensibly made this handsome apology: "To all Jews in our city I beg to express my profound regret for what, in my ignorance, I have done." Now, the *Church Times* calls the Lord Mayor seriously to task for con-

descending to offer such an "abject apology," angrily reminding him "that the Christian religion, from the very beginning, has had this aim—to convert the Jews to a belief in the Messiah." The *Church Times*, however, misses the whole point, which is, a Lord Mayor's right officially to snub a large number of the citizens; and, besides missing the point, our contemporary forgets its manners in calling the Jews an "alien race." Citizens are not aliens; and all citizens ought to receive equal treatment.

That Christianity aims at the conversion of all unbelievers in it proves nothing, because practically all religions have the same object. The Jews would be as fully justified in trying to convert the Christians as the Christians are in attempting to convert the Jews. The devotees of every faith firmly believe it to be the only perfect one in the world. Does not the *Church Times* know this simple fact?

We print a letter in another column from Mr. R. Chapman—a good, honest, zealous Freethinker, for whom we have every respect. It appears to us, however, that he overlooks some very important facts in his defence of Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P. In the first place, he overlooks the fact that Mr. Robertson is a declared Socialist, which Mr. Chapman is very far from being. In the next place, he overlooks the fact that Mr. Robertson had pursued exactly the same policy at previous by-elections—opposing a Socialist who stood for Secular Education, and helping an orthodox Liberal who stood for the Nonconformist plan of Simple Bible Teaching. In the third place, he overlooks the fact that Secular Education is not a Freethought question, but a political question, which any member of parliament, or any political speaker, is justly liable to be questioned about. In the last place, he overlooks the fact that people in general must go by a candidate's public program, and not by private pledges he may give to certain sections of his constituency. If Mr. Hughes did that sort of thing, and really did not mean to support Simple Bible Teaching, according to his program, he was a very "Sub Rosa" candidate indeed.

Another word—and a last one. We are not at all concerned in the *Freethinker* with the other differences between the rival candidates at Huddersfield, Colne Valley, or Jarrow. Our whole concern is with Secular Education. And we believe that to be of such vast importance that it dwarfs all the other points in the rival programs into insignificance. Look at France, look at Japan, if you want the proof.

The weather has not been kind to Scotch farmers, and when the sun peeped out on the blessed Sabbath some of them thought (in spite of all the Holy Willies) that they had better take the chance of securing their crops. This is naturally viewed as dreadful wickedness by the men of God who do most of their work on the very same day. One of them, the Rev. Thomas Matthew, of the O. S. Manso, Kilwinning, pours out his loud lament in the columns of the *Ardrossan Herald*. Why, oh why, he asks, will farmers "run the risk of incurring the divine displeasure" for the sake of "a few pounds"? The reverend gentleman doesn't reflect that the "few pounds" may be his own share of the farmers' returns. Is he willing to give up his share and live on faith? If not, he had better let the farmers earn his salary as they can. Beggars ought not to be choosers.

"Providence" has been busy again in Italy. The recent earthquake has nearly wiped out several towns, and the actual number of people killed will never be known, for many of them are buried beyond all hope of recovery. The death-roll is certainly more than six hundred—not to mention the injured. What is it the Scripture says? "He doeth all things well. For his tender mercies are over all his works."

Alderman Hamilton, the new mayor elect of Preston, refuses to pay an official visit to the parish church, or even to his own Baptist chapel. His refusal has aroused "considerable feeling." Naturally. But we beg to congratulate him on his correct attitude. He is a true Nonconformist. Mayors are not elected to represent their fellow citizens in churches and chapels.

Rev. R. W. Gautrey, a Nonconformist star, says that "there can be no brotherhood in Atheism." How much is there in Christianity? Look at the Churches. How they love one another!

Rev. F. A. Rees, of Nottingham, has been lecturing on "Wit and Humor of the Pulpit." We suggest a companion subject—"Snakes in Ireland."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 3, Stanley Hall, adjoining the "Boston," North London; at 7.30, "The Pope's Challenge to Free-thought."

November 10, Liverpool; 17, Birmingham; 24, Stanley Hall, London.

December 1, 8, 15, Queen's Hall.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 3, Workman's Hall, Romford-road, E.; 10, Stanley Hall, North London; 17, Liverpool; December 1, Birmingham; 15, Workman's Hall, Romford-road, E.—Address: 241 High-road, Leyton.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 10, Manchester; 17, Stanley Hall; 24, West Ham. December 22, Holloway.

G. JACOB.—Richard Carlile edited a paper called the *Republican*, though it was largely, perhaps mainly, devoted to Freethought. This may explain the reference you draw our attention to.

W. K. TURNER.—A considerable number of Ruskin's works are being issued by George Allen at 1s. per volume. Others, which are still copyright, are being issued at two or three times that price. George Allen's editions of Ruskin are, of course, the best, having copyright passages and notes, even when the body of the text is now public property.

J. DE B.—We were acquainted with the facts in the passage you copied out of Baedeker's *Great Britain*. It was fitting that the house in which Shakespeare resided in his last years at Stratford, and in which he died, should have been demolished by a parson in 1759, after a vulgar quarrel over the rates. The Rev. F. Gastrell immortalised himself by that act of destruction. He couldn't have done it in any other way.

G. GARRETT.—We have passed your letter over to Miss Vance, who is sure to deal with it satisfactorily now that she is once more at the N. S. S. office. Pleased to learn that three of the five persons you got the *Freethinker* sent to for six weeks are "delighted with it, and have decided to take it regularly."

H. C. BODE.—More than one great Latin scholar of the Renaissance period was quite capable of imitating the style of Tacitus in a single passage. Such a *tour de force* is possible, although it would not be possible to write a whole work in the same style. Some parodies in modern times have been remarkably like the originals. Gibbon thought the style of Tacitus "inimitable." Probably, however, he would have admitted as much as we assert.

DIANOLO.—The Stanley Hall lectures are being advertised in the *Islington Gazette*. Thanks. We hope some capable Christians—if there are any knocking about now—will come and oppose Mr. Foote; especially some who have talked big things on Parliament-hill Fields and in Pinshbury-park as to what they would do if they had him face to face.

QUIZ.—The new edition of Mr. F. Bonte's pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, is now nearly ready. It will be on sale in a day or two. This edition is being issued by the Secular Society, Ltd. Glad to hear you think it such an "eye-opener." The new (popular, cheap) edition of *Bible Heroes* is in active preparation, and will be ready shortly.

R. TRELEASE.—Thanks for copy of the correspondence on John Stuart Mill in the *Consett Chronicle*. "Veritas" conducted his case very ably, and the editor is to be congratulated on his impartiality. We may say something, later on, about Pastor Rey's letter; but, on the face of it, it is not personal witness, such as would be admitted in a court of law. Up to the present, the Bishop of Durham has not produced one atom of proof of his statement that Mill died a believer. We have merely his own uncorroborated word that proof *does* exist. And what a Bishop's word is worth on such a matter every sensible man is able to judge for himself.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Pleased to hear from one of our "constant and admiring readers" in Ireland. We have looked through Bishop Crozier's sermon at Belfast, and can find nothing definite enough in it to criticise. It is difficult to fight a cloud. If that is the best Bishops can do in Ireland—God help them! Which means that their case is hopeless. Which again means intellectually, not financially.

ROBERT STEVENSON.—Thanks for cutting. See paragraphs. Glad to hear from you as a nine-year old reader of this journal, who never misses it.

L. H. LABONE.—We shall make use of it next week. Thanks. You are quite right in your conception of Ingersoll. He was a grand man—in body, brain, and heart; as honest as the daylight, as transparent as pure air; one who was not merely liked, but loved. The day we spent with him eleven years ago is one of the reddest-letter days in our memory. Glad to hear you so much enjoy reading the *Freethinker*, and also to hear that your wife is a Freethinker as well as yourself.

H. S.—We cannot agree with you. There is more good than that in the Bible. Don't let us be bigoted. If we point out the bad, and there is plenty of it, we must admit all the good, or stand convicted as blind (or one-eyed) partisans.

JOSEPH BATES.—We can Mr. Wishart will not be able to visit Nottingham just yet, but we have handed over your kind letter to the N. S. S. secretary.

IDA MILLER.—Abraham Lincoln was the author of the statement you quote. Glad you are looking forward to hearing Mr. Foote at Stanley Hall.

ATHEIST.—Sorry we cannot inform you. The tune must have been common in Scotland when Lord Neaves wrote to it "Let Us All be Unhappy on Sunday."

ELIZABETH LECHMERE.—Your letters in the newspaper you mention must do good. We wish Freethinkers would utilise their local press more frequently. We are not astonished at Bishop Wilkinson's lying low when challenged for proof of his statements.

T. TOOMEY.—Christian bigotry, as you and other freethinking workmen find it, is a terrible thing—and we are laboring for its extinction.

F. PALMER.—Atheists subscribe towards hospitals like the rest of the community. But they do not aim at establishing Atheist hospitals. They believe that all such institutions should be absolutely unsectarian. Most, if not all, of them hold that hospitals should be municipalised. At present, under the guise of charity, they are hunting-grounds for sectarian bigots.

W. P. BALL.—Always glad to receive your cuttings.

J. HUTCHISON.—Our statement about the diminution of crime in France was based upon official statistics, and cannot possibly be affected by the personal views of Dr. Sarolea, addressing the Edinburgh University French Society.

J. BROUGH.—Coleridge on Shakespeare is good—of course; a very great writer on the greatest. You can get it in a shilling volume of the new "Everyman's Library." You should also read Professor Raleigh's new volume on Shakespeare in the "English Men of Letters" series, 2s.

W. G. HASWELL.—Cannot read it carefully for a few days. Glad to have your thanks once more for the "intellectual treat" you say you find every week in this journal. Thanks for list of names.

F. STACEY.—Thanks for your interesting letter. Such communications prove that our work has not been in vain.

J. LEO.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

JAMES NEATE.—Much obliged. Will look through it for next week.

W. J. EDWARDS.—We note your view that other Welsh districts should organise as Aberdare has done, so that Freethought lecturers might spend a week in going from Branch to Branch.

H. BLACK (Manchester).—We would rather hold your letter over for the present. The same idea has occurred to other "saints." But we prefer dealing with the matter, if necessary, after the Secular Education League's demonstration.

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*.

THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

SCALE OF ADVERTISEMENTS: Three words, 1s. 6d.; every succeeding ten words, 6d. *Displayed Advertisements*:—One inch, 4s. 6d.; half column, £1 2s. 6d.; column, £2 5s. Special terms for repetitions.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote's first lecture in London this season will be delivered this evening (Nov. 3) at the Stanley Hall, near the "Boston"—one of the bus and tramcar landmarks of North London. Stanley Hall is really next door to the "Boston" and is technically in Fortress-road, Junction-road. It is a very accessible spot, cars and buses passing the door from Oxford-circus, Easton-road, King's-cross, etc. There is also the Tufnell-park station of the new Charing-cross and Hampstead "tube" right opposite the hall. Mr. Foote's subject is "The Pope's Challenge to Free-thought."

Mr. Foote's lecture on "What is the New Theology?" drew an extra big audience to the Leicester Secular Hall on Sunday evening, and pretty nearly half those present were ladies. What a change from the old days when ladies were so few and far between at Secular meetings! Mr. Sydney A. Gimson occupied the chair, and Mr. F. J. Gould sat on the chairman's right. Mr. Foote's lecture lasted a good deal over an hour, and was followed with the keenest interest from beginning to end. The audience, indeed, appeared to be thoroughly enjoying itself.

A little party of eleven in Mr. Foote's audience were brought over in a brake from a village some nine miles distant. Their leader, one of our most appreciative readers, is the son of a Nonconformist minister still in harness. He regarded his ten companions as his flock, and brought them all up to shake hands with the editor of the *Freethinker*.

We are glad to hear that the Leicester Secular Society's Bazaar turned out a gratifying success, enough money being raised to carry on the Society's work (in addition to the regular income) for some time to come.

Liverpool "saints" will note that Mr. Foote is paying their city another visit next Sunday (Nov. 10). Unfortunately the Picton Hall is not available, having been engaged all through the winter by other parties. The only hall that is available is the Milton Hall in Daulby-street. It is not as large as could be desired, but if we cannot have what we want we must make the best of what we have.

London Secularists should help to pack the Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street, next Thursday evening (Nov. 7), when the New Secular Education League holds its first Demonstration. Mr. Foote is coming up to town that night in order to be present. Tickets are being circulated as a form of advertisement, but it is not a ticket meeting; it will be a case of first come first served, and Secularists should be early. They will be able to applaud the right men, the right speeches, and the right points. The chair will be taken by Mr. Halley Stewart, M.P., and the list of speakers includes the Rev. R. J. Campbell, Mr. C. F. G. Masterman, M.P., Mr. Pete Curran, M.P., and the veteran Rev. Stewart D. Headlam. With all these respectable names, the Demonstration ought to attract newspaper notices.

Forty-four new members were admitted to the National Secular Society at the last Executive meeting.

The Secular Society, Limited, is issuing a new (the third) edition of Mr. F. Bonte's powerful and effective pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*. There has been an unavoidable delay in the publication, but we have passed the final proof and the printers are now working off ten thousand copies, which ought to be on sale by the time this week's *Freethinker* is in its readers' hands. This new edition has been revised and somewhat enlarged. The matter has been broken up into sections, and altogether the pamphlet looks more ship-shape. We hope the "saints" will do their best to put this ten thousand copies into prompt circulation. It is calculated to be of immense usefulness to the Freethought cause. And there are sixty-four pages for one penny!

We have the receipt of Mr. Sydney A. Gimson, of Leicester, honorary treasurer of the Touzeau Parris Fund, for £73 1s. 3d., being the amount of subscriptions acknowledged by us up to the last issue of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Gimson has received the following subscriptions direct, in addition to those already acknowledged by him in our columns:—Madame Le Lubez, £1 1s.; J. Brandon Medland, 2s. 6d.; F. Peterson, 10s.; Wm. Felbrup, £1; S. Leeson, 10s.; W. Leeson, 2s. 6d.; W. Wilber, 2s. 6d.; Mr. Ainge, 1s.; Mr. Drinkwater, 1s.; H. I. Bale, 10s.; H. E. Crisp, 5s.; E. Belfort Bax, £2 2s.

Shelley's *Queen Mab* was declared by the law of the land to be "blasphemous." From fifty to ninety years ago it was "unmentionable." Last week a copy of the first edition fetched £100 by auction in London. "How the whirligig of time brings in its revenges!"

Freethought propaganda, such as we have given our life to, does not lead to fame and fortune, but it leads to something better; the consciousness that one has fought a good fight for the truth, the strong respect of men and women whose good opinion is worth having, and a still warmer feeling in the hearts of an elect circle of appreciators. One of these last, writing to us from an Ayrshire town a considerable distance from the commercial capital of Scotland, says: "I myself and another Freethinker were the victims of divine anger not long ago, and all because of you. We cycled to Glasgow to hear you on October 6, and got a thorough drenching on our way home; but we agreed that your splendid 'Defence of Atheism' was an ample recompense." This correspondent ends his letter by saying: "You move me more powerfully than any man in the world, and I always rise with more grit after your weekly call." We do not print this in a spirit of vanity. We wish to say that we also have our recompenses. We would rather hear such words than the cheap applause of multitudes, or the chink of all the gold in the Bank of England.

"The Mother."—I.

BY DR. JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS,

Minister of the Church of This World, in Kansas City.

WE shall sometime find out that the real divinity of this world is the mother. A few know it now, but the most prefer strange gods. Men must worship; why, we cannot tell. Because men always have, and still do, worship, we assume that they always will. Not for walking only were fashioned the curious hinges of the knee. To worship wisely is to be exalted; to kneel is to ascend; to bow down is to take wings; "closed hands work; folded arms perform; a gaze fixed on heaven is toil."

Men make gods of many things. There is scarcely anything known to man that has not somewhere, at some time, been distinguished with divine honors. Men have worshiped snakes, trinkets, amulets, and charms; they have bowed down to wooden deities and images of iron and stone; to mountain, river, grove, and fountain they have poured oblations and paid vows. They have knelt to the sun, called upon the silent stars, and prayed to the planets in their heedless flight. The great sea has been a shrine into whose insatiate waves they have poured the sacrificial blood. Warriors, conquerors, chieftains, and rulers have been deified and adored. These gods are gone; their altars and their worshipers are dust; still men make gods. Ambition, pleasure, power, fame are the gods in the modern temple. Some worship a being they call God, but know not; a vague phantom, a being without body, parts, or passion—that is unthinkable; a being infinite—that is unknowable.

Every man exalts something or someone to whom he pays homage; every man has one place more sacred than all the rest of this universe where he stands in awe. No man can worship without taking upon himself the image and likeness of the being or thing which he adores. It is for this reason that religion, like high-power explosives, is dangerous. For its proper and beneficent use intelligence and knowledge are required. Religion without intelligence, faith without reason, worship without discrimination, are full of peril. It is commonly believed that to be religious is enough, but the intensely religious man may be a fanatic, a fool, or a nuisance. Above all things the worship, the bowing down of the human soul, requires discerning, intelligent thought. Religion has been of vastly more harm than benefit to the world. For every hurt that it has healed, it has made a thousand wounds. Because men do not know this, hypocrisy and self-deception creep unawares into religion. Men say they love the Bible, when, in fact, they only care for certain parts or passages that appeal to them; men say they love God, when it is absolutely impossible to love an infinite, an unknown being; Christians say they love Jesus, and yet in all the ages of Christian history they have persecuted and persecuted Christ's kinsmen.

Every heart that loves has the divine right to be first wooed and won; every soul that adores must be first persuaded, fascinated, and awed. The man who wrote or said that God commands men to love him did not understand the nature of the human heart; even Omnipotence cannot command or compel the love of a human being. The heart that is free to love must be free to reject, and the freedom to love implies the freedom not to love. If God would have men love him he must come as a wooer comes—he must persuade and charm and thrill.

So far as I can see, the old religion and the old worship have done about all they can do for this world. Perhaps they have been useful in the past—that is a matter of opinion to be founded upon the historic story; but, for the present, the world now, they seem to be reaching the end of their usefulness. The old themes are threadbare, people are indifferent to them, they make no impression upon the heart or upon the mind of the world. There

never was in the history of man a business with such enormous expenditures of capital and effort with such small returns as that of our current religion. In a census of church attendance taken on a recent Sunday in a city of five-quarters of a million the fact was disclosed that but one in fifty had attended divine service. It is a safe guess that for every person that reads the Bible this morning an hundred read newspapers. What the editors, the correspondents, and the newsagents who are on earth now said this morning is of more moment to the world of man than what Paul and Habakkuk said week before last. The sober statement of John Mitchell is of more interest to us than the apocalyptic delirium of John of Patmos, while millions of human beings are more vitally concerned in the acts of the arbitration commission than they are in the acts of the apostles. These conditions have lessons to teach if we can but learn.

I shall make bold to say that the time has come, that the need is urgent, and that the opportunity is inviting for a new divinity and that divinity, "the mother." We know that men have always worshiped. We know that they have worshiped various and useless things. We know of nothing more worthy of the homage of men than the mothers of men.

It requires but the slightest effort to adapt all we think or fancy of God to what we know of the mother. It is the simplest process to take any of the terms that are commonly applied to this Ruler of the skies, the terms that somehow carry the thought, the feeling, the longings of men, and apply them with new and fitting force to the mothers of the world. We speak of God as a being of mystery, providence, and power, the author and preserver of life, the inspirer and helper. We do not know that he is any of those things; with certainty we cannot say what he is, but those words and terms represent what men have imagined that he was; any one of those descriptive words applies to the mother of men. As mother, she is the vast and sacred mystery, the guardian appointed of nature, who embodies the miracle and sanctity of life. Lying beneath her loving heart in the strange mysterious birth-sleep, life, fashioned by the deft and unseen hand of nature, awaits the moment when with surprised and startled cry it comes upon the shores of this strange world. If there is anything sacred about our thought of God, the masculine, the man-god, that we cannot transfer and adapt to our thought of mother and motherhood, then our idea of God is poor and mean, and our idea of motherhood is meaner still. We speak of the Infinite as a being of providence, who wateh, guards, directs and shapes the destinies of men; we do not know that God does that. I suppose that our saying so indicates that we think he ought to do it, but we do know that the mother is the providence of life. Long, long before the need is, she has dreamed of its coming, lovingly thought of its approach; between the heart of the new life and her own there have been those mysterious and subtle changes of sympathy that we men know nothing of; in the secret and the sanctities she has ministered of herself at that altar of life. The most helpless thing in this world is the human infant, and but for the providence of motherhood, but for her prescience, her forelooking, her divine and thoughtful care, life could not be. She is more of a providence to this world than anything we know of God. We do not know that he ever suffered, that he ever went out of his way—we do not know that he ever threw himself between one of his children and danger—we do not know that he ever followed a wayward child into night and darkness and in loving arms held him and brought him back; we do know that the mother has done it ten thousand times. We speak of him as the author and helper, as the inspirer of men. What man ever did great and noble things from any knowledge he had or any influence he received from the vague, the unknown, the shadowy, the intangible infinite? How many of the children of mothers have endured suffering and sacrifice and years of

patient and heroic toil for them, or the mothers of their children? He who is not susceptible of inspiration from the mother can illy expect to receive it from any God of the skies.

The idea of the mother applies with yet greater force to that addition to the God idea which has been made through the work performed by Christ. As a matter of fact, the worship of the Christian world has, except in form, withdrawn from God the Father; he is used only in prayer and terms of speech; the real God that the Christian has been worshiping is the Christ God, the man God, the Nazarene prophet exalted and deified. They say about him, "He died for us, he suffered that we might live, through him there is mediation, we obtain forgiveness of sins, his sacrifice was vicarious and made for us." I am not disparaging the work of the great Prophet when I say those sufferings, as far as we know, have been more than matched thousands and thousands of times. Thousands of men have been crucified that suffered longer than he; upon the cross he hung six hours possibly; men have been known to hang forty-eight hours before death, the only friend, came to end the agony. Moreover, the sufferings of the man crucified were less than the sufferings of the mother that stood over there in the darkness, and when her son was dead knelt at the cross and clasped his feet with her hands and covered them with kisses and with tears. The mother that sees the son die a death of agony suffers more than the son who dies. And in this world the sufferings of the mother, if we measure them by any known standard, overpeer the sufferings of Christ as the mountain overpeers the hills. Of course, I know how they say that he was infinite and that it was a vast and mighty humiliation for a god to be assassinated. I think myself it was, but we don't know anything about the sufferings of the Infinite being; that is fiction, fancy, guess, phantasmagoric; that is all made for theologic purposes. But we do know what pain is, when the hand of cruelty reaches and finds the nerves of sensation. We know that deeper and more tragic pain of the heart when tears fall inward. I do not disparage any work the Nazarene did when I say that the mothers of men have suffered more for men than any prophet that ever died upon the cross or at the martyr's stake. The mother has tasted death for every man. If then, the idea of suffering vicariously is essential to the God idea; if, in order to have it there, they must have imagined or secured the crucifixion of the great prophet, if that is necessary, the mother has more than fulfilled it.

And then they say, "We have forgiveness through his suffering." Let us suppose that the idea is necessary to our conception of God. Whom have we sinned against? We have sinned against God, and God in the person of Christ has paid the debt, and we are exempt, we are discharged, in the name of Christ we are pardoned and vindicated. That is merely a scheme. No man can sin against God. In no way can a man alter or change or affect the Infinite; he is unchangeable, inaccessible, unapproachable, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever," and what we do, or leave undone, does not affect him. That is theological sin. It doesn't count with the men and women who face realities and seek for the heart of things. When we make any mistakes we are brought to the bar; we can violate a law of nature; God never forgives that; we know that the consequences fall with unerring and inexorable certainty. God never forgives any sin that we can know or tell anything about; he only forgives the fictitious sins—the sins for whose remittance the priest stands to minister, and the Church takes up collections—but the sins that we know anything about God does not forgive. A man may imagine he is forgiven, may bring himself by certain mental operations and external influences into a great exaltation and fancy that he has made his peace with God, he is pardoned, he is free from the curse and consequence of sin. Thousands of people believe that, but it is those things that we

know nothing about. The sins that we commit are against the mother, or the children of mothers, and there is no other. We can commit a sin against ourselves, children of mothers, we can commit injury or sin against some other human being, children of mothers—and do you know, that if men so lived in this world that they should offend not the child of any mother, there would be no need for divine blood to be shed, nor for a court where we could plead the name of some vicarious Christ. Sin and evil would disappear, and, really, the only one that can forgive, the only one with whom the wrongdoer needs to seek reconciliation, is the mothers of the world.

(To be concluded.)

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND THE *DAILY MAIL*.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It seems that the *Daily Mail* has finally decided to throw in its lot with that effete institution known as the "Church of England." Being concerned about the "dearth of clergy," the editor recently invited a dignitary of the Church to contribute an article to the *Daily Mail* on the subject. We were treated to a column of trivial detail; the fundamental causes for the scarcity of clerical recruits were not touched upon. Freethought criticism and evolution of mind were not alluded to. How ostrich-like! But it seems that even the "fool of the family" prefers to seek other spheres than in a moribund church. The editor of the *Daily Mail* may have been satisfied with the article, but it certainly did not come to close quarters with the question. It merely dealt with the internal differences of the so-called "Church of England," which is full of sects. In a subsequent issue, the *Daily Mail* published a pathetic appeal from the rector of Croyland, Lincolnshire. This occupied more than half a column. The editor would probably not insert a paragraph on behalf of the Secular Hall, Leicester. It seems that Croyland Abbey is in ruins, but the people of an agricultural district are too poor to supply the funds to save the building. £700 has been spent this summer on the thirteenth-century roof to prevent it collapsing. The church would swallow up enough to provide old-age pensions for the rural workers. It appears that "from Croyland the great University of Cambridge took its rise, Abbot Joffrid sending monks to start a school of learning in that place." It is said that its bells were the first in England. I suppose it should be regarded as famous for that reason alone. The rector's "heart-breaking" appeal touched the heart of the "pious" *Daily Mail*, and it published a leaderette in the same issue. It asks: "Are there none of our readers who will help in the noble work of preserving its time-honored fabric for future generations?" I wonder what the future generations will think of our controversies. Will the advocate of Freethought be as despised as he is now? Will our universities be primarily ecclesiastical establishments, with vast sums sunk in chapels? Will they continue to turn out men whose mental courage is a negligible quantity? Will a man like the Bishop of London be regarded as Oxford's ideal, and a dilettante like Mr. A. J. Balfour the best that Cambridge University can turn out? Some become Freethinkers, in spite of their university training. Charles Darwin spent some years at Cambridge, but his opinion of the curriculum was not very favorable. What do the universities do to stimulate originality and individuality? The universities are undoubtedly greatly responsible for the present educational impasse. We have almost reached a crisis; but the heads of the university colleges do not seem to recognise the fact, or they pooh-poo it. The universities are greatly responsible or the Bible fetish. I am not an Anarchist, but I sometimes think that if the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges were all destroyed nobody would be very much the worse. The universities are fed by the public schools, and the former supply the latter with masters, and so a caste system is evolved and maintained. Let the precious, "pious," double-dealing, self-seeking *Daily Mail* do its best to bolster up this huge conspiracy. We will laugh at it. Perhaps it will be piping a different tune before very long.

J. A. REID.

ANOTHER MYTHICAL CONVERTED INFIDEL.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—With reference to your inquiry *re* Mr. G. H. Bibbings, I should like to say that he never has been an unbeliever. In the letter he sent to the Rev. Cynog Williams, pastor of

the Heolyfelin Baptist Church, Treconon, he said that, after eighteen years of opposition to Christianity, he had heard the voice of the Savior within the last ten months. And yet, considerably more than ten months ago, I was forced to oppose him because of his slighting remarks concerning Atheism at a lecture on Socialism and Christianity, delivered at Mountain Ash. As the result of his statement that Christianity and Socialism were synonymous, I wrote a long letter to the *Aberdare Leader*, in which I stated that Christianity and Socialism were practically opposed to each other, and challenged Mr. Bibbings to a public discussion on the question. Mr. Bibbings is—or at least has been until lately—a recognised lecturer of the Spiritualist Society. I have heard him lecture many times, but never without somehow bringing in Christianity. The worst I have ever heard him say concerning Christianity was, that the Christian Church as an organisation has not been sufficiently interested in the social life of the people. The rich men in the Churches he denounced as being anti-Christian—such men, for instance, as Rockefeller, etc. He has preached in a chapel here at Miskin, where I live, and his address could not be distinguished from a Christian parson's sermon of the ordinary type. As a Spiritualist, he has always believed in the supernatural; so he could never have been an "infidel." It is rather strange that his sudden conversion comes just as he has been appointed an organiser of the I. L. P. amongst the fervently religious Welsh people.

T. BENNETT.

"IS MR. ROBERTSON CONSISTENT?"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—In reference to your correspondent, Mr. H. C. Shackleton's, letter under the above heading, perhaps you will kindly allow space for the following comment.

It is usually considered a rule, as well as a matter of common courtesy, that questions following an address shall relate closely to the subject-matter laid before the audience. Therefore the question of Freethought views and Jarrow election, introduced by Mr. Shackleton's query, appears on the surface to be entirely irrelevant in a discussion of "Liberalism and Socialism."

In regard to the question itself, it may be of interest to Mr. Shackleton to learn that many other Freethinkers, members of the National Secular Society, also distinguished themselves by working strenuously for the return of the candidate referred to, as if the support of the Free Church and "Simple Bible Teaching" were his only, or certainly his chief, recommendation. The said candidate's pledges on behalf of Secular Education were sufficient to give satisfaction to the active Freethought workers in the Jarrow Division, which ought to count for something in the dispute; and although Mr. Shackleton and his friends ("most of us" are his words) may laugh, it is an important set-off to the pledges, etc., understood that seventeen "Labor" members voted *against* the Secular solution, which was not made a party question when the crucial time came. Additional support is given to this set-off by the fact that, according to printed reports of the proceedings, Mr. Robertson was the member who spoke out plainly and frankly in the debates in the House, being compelled to take to task some of the other speakers of the party which is supposed to be pledged to Secular Education, for the manner in which they tumbled over each other in their anxiety to proclaim their orthodoxy.

The "lecturing for a chapel" complaint seems too paltry for comment, or very soon it will be a mortal offence for a Freethinker to look at a church or listen to the Hallelujah Chorus!

I trust no Freethinker will envy the member for Tynside his position while he is called upon to oppose the petty fault-finding of Freethinkers, in addition to the attacks of religious opponents, in his social and political labors.

Only a few weeks ago, I sat in Newcastle Town Hall, beside two old Northumbrian stalwarts, noting how their bronzed faces lit up with pleasure when Mr. Robertson, in spite of interruption and loud protests from the enemy, with splendid courage and tact, insisted upon reply to Mr. McKenna himself upon the point of the public demand for Secular Education. Anyone having the cause of Secular Education seriously at heart could not but feel that, whatever difference of opinion as to method may obtain, at least here was a man full of the justice of his cause, the courage of his convictions, and the determination to express his opinion, whenever likely to do good, at all costs.

R. CHAPMAN.

[We have had to cut down Mr. Chapman's letter a little. The omitted passages are mainly those reflecting on Mr. Shackleton's motives. That is a vein in which correspondents must not indulge, or the discussion forum would soon be a bear-garden. We have left in all the praises of Mr. Robertson, which Mr. Chapman will probably consider the chief thing.—EDS.]

The Limit.

ONE calm and sunny day on Mount Olympus
The ancient Gods in calm enjoyment sat.
Zeus and Apollo, Venus and Mercury;
Aphrodite, Psyche, Vulcan, and the rest.
For this was their Elysium of Bliss—
To end their days in peace and sweet repose.
Ignoring earth, with all its toils and griefs;
Faded away from all mankind's beliefs.

Soft was the murmur of the gentle stream,
The birds did warble in the rustling leaves;
Choice fruits and tea were served up for the ladies;
Cigars, and wines, and billiards for the gents.
Gramaphones and modern pianolos
Discoursed sweet music to them all the time.
(And, by the way, no harm was my intent,
A God, I think, *should* be addressed as "gent.")

Great Zeus did then beam round benignantly
And spake in calm and philosophic tones:
"I think this heaven of ours is something like!
Replete with all the latest innovations,
To make us happy, and confirm our joy.
Venus, my love, I really think, my dear,
The credit's wholly mine for this idea.

This realm is our Elysium of the Gods.
And here we shall extend the friendly hand
To all old Gods that shall have had their day,
In other words, 'found out,' as we were too.
Tho' they deserted be by ingrate man,
Here we will give them welcome, one and all,
To join with us—be with us as their own"—
(At this point, Hermes was rung up on the 'phone).

"O Jove," said Hermes, "our gateman doth inform
Me of a stranger waiting at our door.
He craves admission to our happy land,
Because his days are over on the earth."
"Admit him, then," cries gen'rous-hearted Zeus,
"We'll make him welcome at our festive board."
And Venus spake: "As a foretaste of bliss,
I'll greet him with my customary kiss."

And then the strange God came within their view;
The Pagan gods did gaze with blank dismay.
What was this fearsome thing before their eyes?
A old, decrepit man of evil leer,
All clothed in rags, with matted, tangled hair
That perhaps had not been washed since he was
With blood upon his brow in lieu of hat, [born;
And greasy beard that smelt of mutton fat.

His eye was baleful and his nose Semitic,
His face most cruel, his aspect vile and mean;
A horrid, bloody sword stuck in his girdle,
And feet of brass—'tis strange, but it's a fact.
With horror-stricken eyes the old Gods stared
Upon this uncouth monster, grim and strange.
And then, with one concerted, diamal groan,
They fled—and left *Jehovah* there alone.

HENRY STUART.

SIN.

The source of all superstition is the fear of having offended God, the sense of something within ourselves which we call sin. Sin, in its popular and therefore most substantial sense, means the having done something to satisfy ourselves which we know, or might have known, was displeasing to God. It depends, therefore, for its essence on the doer having had the power of acting otherwise than he did. When there is no such power there is no sin. Now let us examine this. In reflecting upon our own actions we find that they arise from the determination of our will, as we call the ultimate moral principle of action, upon some object. When we will, we will something, not nothing. Objects attract or repel the will by the appearance of something in themselves either desirable or undesirable. And in every action, if analysed, the will is found to have been determined by the presence of the greatest degree of desirableness on the side towards which it has been determined. It is alike self-contradictory and contrary to experience, that a man of two goods should choose the lesser, knowing it *at the time* to be the lesser. Observe, I say, at the time of action. We are complex, and therefore, in our natural state, inconsistent, beings, and the opinion of this hour need not be the opinion of the next. It may be different before the temptation appear; it may return to be different after the temptation is passed; the nearness or distance of objects may alter their relative magnitude,

or appetite or passion may obscure the reflecting power, and give a temporary impulsive force to a particular side of our nature. But, uniformly, given a particular condition of a man's nature, and given a number of possible courses, his action is necessarily determined into the course best corresponding to that condition, as a bar of steel suspended between two magnets is determined towards the most powerful. It may go reluctantly, for it will still feel the attraction of the weaker magnet, but it will still obey the strongest, and must obey. What we call knowing a man's character, is knowing how he will act in such and such conditions. The better we know him the more surely we can prophesy. If we know him perfectly, we are certain.

So that it appears that at the stage first removed from the action we cannot find what we called the necessary condition of *sin*. It is not there; and we must look for it a step higher among the causes which determine the conditions under which the man acts. Here we find the power of motives depends on the character, or the want of character. If no character be formed, they will influence according to the temporary preponderance of this or that part of the nature; if there be formed character, on the conditions, again, which have formed it, on past habits, and therefore on past actions. Go back, therefore, upon these, and we are again in the same way referred higher and higher, until we arrive at the first condition, the natural powers and faculties with which the man has been sent into the world.....

Actions are governed by motives. The power of motives depends on character, and character on the original faculties and the training which they have received from the *men* or *things* among which they have been bred.—Sin, therefore, as commonly understood, is a chimera.

—J. A. Froude, "The Nemesis of Faith."

FIRST CAUSES.

Fundamentally, the hypothesis of a first cause enunciated by theists, agnostics, or materialists is in its essence identical. Thus, the orthodox usually postulate a spirit as the origin of all things; but, by constituting it originless, they are merely clothing a phantom of their own imagination with eternal properties, and *asserting* the existence of an unmakeable something which ever existed. Agnostics, similarly, style their word-begotten Deity—"the Unknowable Energy"—an unknowable something which ever existed, and "from which everything proceeds." Finally, materialists also postulate their first cause—*matter-in-motion*—an unmakeable something which ever existed. Hence, all three hypotheses are equally valid as assertions or assumptions. But the materialist claims this striking advantage over his opponents, he demonstrates by actual experiment what that elementary matter is, and what its forces are, which form the constituents of his eternal something; while the orthodox and the agnostic detail nothing and prove nothing, but begin their systems with assumption, expound them by aberration, and ratify them by reiteration.

—A. Redcote Dewar.

HUMANITY.

Individuals die, but that much of truth which they have revealed, that much of good which they have done, is not lost with them; Humanity treasures it up and the men who walk over their graves reap the benefit of it. Every one of us is born to-day in an atmosphere of ideas and of beliefs elaborated by the whole of bygone Humanity, and each of us brings, even without knowing it, a more or less important element to the life of Humanity to come. The education of Humanity progresses as those pyramids in the East rise, to which every passer-by adds a stone.—*Mazzini*.

My bonny man, the world, it's true,
Was made for neither me nor you;
It's just a place to warstle through,
As Job confessed o't;
And aye the best that we'll can do
Is mak the best o't.

—R. L. Stevenson.

Obituary.

JUST as we are going to press a telegram reaches us to the effect that Mr. Touzeau Parris died last night (Monday). We cannot say more at present.

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.

STANLEY HALL (Forest-road, Junction-road, N.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Pope's Challenge to Freethought."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (North Camberwell Hall, New Church-road): 3.15, Reopening of Freethought Parliament—Louis B. Gallagher, "Christianity and Socialism."

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife-road): 7.30, F. A. Davies, "The Religion of Shakespeare."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workman's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford): 7.30, C. Cohen, "Atheism, Socialism, and Christianity." Selections by the Band before Lecture.

COUNTRY.

ABERDARE BRANCH N. S. S. (Pugsley's): W. J. Edwards, "Education."

BRISTOL SECULAR SOCIETY (I. L. P. Hall): 3, To Discuss Proposed Visit of Mr. G. W. Foote.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Hall, 84 Leith-street): 6.30, W. D. Macgregor, a Lecture.

GLASGOW: Secular Hall, Brunswick street—12 (noon), Discussion Class; 6.30, Social Meeting.

LEEDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Club, 125 Albion-street): Friday, Nov. 1, at 8, A. Kitson, "Are Characteristics Transmitted?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road): 6.30, George Mason, "Secularism and Education."

NEWCASTLE DEBATING SOCIETY (Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, Nov. 7, at 8, Joseph Bryce, "Words."

SOUTH SHIELDS (Navigation Schools, Market-place): 7.30, Lecture arrangements.

OUTDOOR.

BRISTOL SECULAR SOCIETY: Horsefair, at 7.30, B. G. Brown, "Some Remarks on Christian Methods." With special reference to the revival of the Atheist Shoemaker Story.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Mound, at 2, meets for Discussion.

MR. WISHART'S MISSION.

HUDDERSFIELD: Thursday, Oct. 31, Market-place, at 8, H. S. Wishart, "New Gods for Old Gods."

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