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PRICE TWOPENCE

That which has ceased to be is no more.—MONTAIGNE.

Mr. Stead on Herbert Spencer.

WE have every desire to speak respectfully of Mr. W. T. Stead. He did a very brave and generous thing in helping the Rev. Dr. Torrey to book over his libels on Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. Freethinkers are not likely to forget the stand that he made then for truth and honesty in the face of the rampant bigotry on the one side, and the treacherous silence on the other side, of his fellow Christians. But our recognition of that fine act does not bind us to admire everything else that he may do, or to refrain from expressing our sentiments when we disapprove; indeed, we will do him the justice of believing that he would never wish us to take up such a miserable attitude. We make no apology, therefore, for stating our opinion that the article on Herbert Spencer in the June number of the *Review of Reviews* is not worthy of Mr. Stead, either intellectually or morally. We should be glad to know, as we half suspect, that he did not write it himself; but, as it is unsigned, we are bound to assume his general responsibility.

In the first place, the whole tone of the article (based upon the *Life and Letters*) is wanting in proper respect for a great man. It is not a question of agreeing with him or differing from him; it is a question of his size. Spencer did a very big work in the world, Darwin himself called him "our great philosopher," and his writings have influenced the leading minds of the whole civilised world, including Japan, and the most highly educated classes in India and China. To speak of such a thinker contemptuously is ill-conditioned. We should be liable to the same censure if we spoke contemptuously of (say) Newman. All genius is of the blood royal. Men of all creeds and parties may admit that. The one reverence they may all have in common is reverence for the great minds which, from whatever point of view, have shed a lustre upon the human race.

Mr. Stead's quarrel with Spencer is that he was not a Spiritualist, or a Theosophist, or whatever it is that Mr. Stead calls himself in this particular direction. But no quarrel justifies him in ignoring the size of the author of the Synthetic Philosophy. One ought to be bigger than another man to have any possible right to look down upon him; and surely Mr. Stead himself can hardly imagine that the *Letters from Julia* quite ranks with the *Principles of Psychology* as an intellectual achievement.

We infer that Mr. Stead (or whoever else wrote this article) attaches a spiritual significance to the discovery of Radium (with a capital R). Spencer, we are told, died before this discovery was made; and for that reason, apparently—for we can see no other—his "books to the next generation will be like those of the geographers before Columbus." But as the said "books" include the *Principles of Sociology* and the *Principles of Ethics*, it is difficult to understand how the discovery of radium is going to make them so obsolete.

"The limits of the unknowable," it is added, "are shrinking every day, and science is marching by the

road of matter into the realm of Infinite Mind." This is a statement which we meet with a blunt denial. Science is doing nothing of the sort. Neither radium nor any other newly-discovered substance is bringing us any nearer to Infinite Mind. We do not argue the point here. Mr. Stead does not argue it either—he merely asserts, and it is enough for us to challenge his assertion. And we may remind him that calling Spencer "a highly intelligent mole" is an uncivil exercise in the question-begging fallacy which was exposed with such logic and wit by another "highly intelligent mole" called Jeremy Bentham.

Spencer did not know whether there was a future life or not. Mr. Stead does—at least, he thinks so. Spencer therefore had his "limitations," and Mr. Stead has—what? Will it surprise him to hear that he has his limitations too? A little more reflection might satisfy him that he had no right to say that Spencer "did not know because he refused to enquire." The simple fact is that Spencer could not see his way to investigate so-called Spiritualism or "occult phenomena." And he gave a sufficient reason. "I am so wanting," he said, "in quick observation of people's doings, feelings, intentions, etc., that I should be easily deluded." Spencer saw his limitations. It would be well if Mr. Stead saw his. Men of his temperament are really not cut out by nature for the investigation which the great Agnostic declined. When it comes to seeing what is actually going on amidst baffling conditions, and in a possible atmosphere of trickery, one Maskelyne is worth a thousand Steads.

Spencer was very scrupulous about small things; he would not wear Levée dress, and when he played at whist "it was with the understanding that he would pay his losings when he lost, but would not accept winnings when he won." And on this slender basis a great edifice of personal criticism is reared. Spencer is described as "A man to revere; but hardly a man to love." Yet, as a great French moralist has said, it is a fault in our own nature if we cannot give our affection where we give our esteem.

We are told that Spencer "boasted of his lack of general culture." He did nothing of the kind. He never denied that general culture was a good thing for other people. All he said was that it was incompatible in his case with the immense task that he had planned, and to which he devoted his whole energies throughout his whole life.

It may be true that Spencer "was not an easy man to live with." But what does this mean? Many quite worthless people are easy to live with—in the ordinary sense of the words. David Hume's mother said that he was "gey ill to live with," but his fault really was that he was a born thinker; his sweetness of nature was almost perfect, and no man was better loved by his friends and equals. Spencer, like Hume, was a bachelor; but, unlike Hume, he did not keep house for himself; and the kind of life he had to lead was not calculated to develop the lighter graces of sociability.

Enough of this! It is poor work casting such reflections on a great man's memory. If, as the poet says, all are but what they do, the reputation of Herbert Spencer is perfectly secure.

G. W. FOOTE.

Agnosticism.

DISBELIEF in religion is becoming more and more characteristic of the modern educated mind. So far all is well; and if this emancipation from inherited superstition had as its accompaniment a boldness of speech that made the degree of disbelief manifest there would be cause for nothing but rejoicing. But, unfortunately, a large number seem impelled to adopt an apologetic attitude in relation to the orthodox world, and to confess their disbelief in much the same spirit that one might admit having contracted an infectious disease. Others put themselves to considerable trouble to invent a name which, while marking them off from the orthodox world, will also differentiate them from those unbelievers who, having braved the storm of religious rancor at its worst, are evermore favored with the full force of religious hatred. And for two reasons a name coined in this manner stands a good chance of prospering. First, the religious use it as a convenient weapon wherewith to belabor the more unpopular section of Freethinkers; and, second, as such words are, almost of necessity, less logical in their application than they otherwise might be, they are selected for criticism because they are really more open to attack.

A good illustration of this is found in the use and prevalence of "Agnosticism." Those who read Professor Huxley's account of the origin of that word might well wonder why he put himself to the trouble of manufacturing it. He found himself *minus* the belief in a God, and for his mental condition there was at hand the simple, old, and straightforward word "Atheist." That word was rejected and the word "Agnosticism" selected; while its author every now and again entered into a more elaborate protest against being identified with the much-abused Atheists. So far as "Agnosticism" has protected its users against the bitter attack on Atheism, the invention may be said to have been successful. In any other direction it has been a decided failure. It has given birth to a "religious Agnosticism," a "reverent Agnosticism"—each of which seems much given to proving that it is intensely religious, and therefore respectable. And, on the other hand, while Atheism remains as impregnable as ever, religious critics find tolerably easy material for criticism in the way Agnosticism is stated by most of its exponents.

An essay on Agnosticism, by Professor W. R. Sorley, in one of the groups of Pan-Anglican Papers, proves the truth of much that has been said above. There is in the opening sentence, declaring that Agnosticism "signifies an attitude of mind which is mainly modern in character," an unconscious sarcasm. For while the disbelief that a rational Agnosticism stands for is *not* particularly modern, the fear of offending social prejudice which it so often connotes is much more modern. Strong believers created sturdy doubters; strength of conviction on the one side bred strength of conviction on the other. But now, when belief itself has grown lukewarm, it seems as though its weakness had affected even its enemies with a like complaint.

Professor Sorley's criticism that Agnosticism as usually stated involves a contradiction can hardly be questioned. The statement that a knowledge of God is impossible does, as he says, imply not only a theory of the nature and limitations of knowledge, but also some apprehension of the nature of "God," and a consciousness that this nature cannot be brought within the knowledge of the knowable. But this is obviously a suicidal position. As has been pointed out against Spencer, the assertion that we have a consciousness of an "Unknowable" brings it within the region of the knowable, and so destroys its character of unknowability. The world is not divided into the knowable and unknowable, but into the known and the unknown. So far as we think of anything, we are bound to think of it as the possibly knowable—however distant or however incomplete our knowledge may be.

This is essentially the case with the question of God. The attempt to differentiate Agnosticism from Atheism by saying that the former declines to say whether there is a God or not, implies that "God" conveys an intelligible meaning, and that one is simply declining assent to a given proposition in the absence of adequate evidence. But this is emphatically not the case. The "gods" of anthropology—that series of "magnified non-natural" men—one can understand and discuss. But their existence, among civilised people, at least, is no longer a subject of discussion. No one affirms their existence, and, consequently, no one denies their being. When the civilised person is brought into contact with people whose culture-stage allows them to believe in their existence, they are denied most readily and most emphatically. The "God" of philosophy is another question altogether. Disowning altogether the "God" of anthropology, it leaves the word a mere aerial disturbance, possessing no more significance than the noise made by a stone falling to the ground. We cannot, therefore, hold our judgment in suspense as to whether "God" (undefined) exists or not; we simply cannot understand the meaning of the proposition. Or, if "God" is used in the sense of "a supreme mind," we are certainly warranted in denying the existence of a thing when the acceptance of its being negatives all the conditions and qualities of its existence as that thing is known to us. Mind which does not exist under the conditions of the only "mind" we are cognisant of, and which does not possess the peculiar qualities of the only "mind" we are acquainted with, is not "mind" at all, but something quite different. At this point, it is not a question of whether a something exists or not, but whether there exists anything possessing those special and peculiar qualities that we connote by mind or intelligence, apart from all the conditions that in our experience accompany intelligence and divested of the qualities by which we know it, and which are implied whenever we refer to it. Looked at in this way, we see that the philosophic theistic theory does not call for a suspensory attitude of mind, it invites a direct negative. Between the statement that A does not exist, and the statement that A exists, but differs from all other A's in every respect, there is no difference whatever. If there exists a "supreme mind" it must possess all the qualities that are implied when we speak of animal mind; if it does not, it is not mind at all, but something different.

The truth is, I fancy, that a certain species of Agnosticism owes its air of philosophic impartiality to the discussion of questions which, while amusing as conundrums, have no scientific, and therefore no real, philosophic validity. Take, as an example of a whole class, a question that is often propounded as illustrating the validity of the Agnostic attitude. Is space finite or infinite? Now so long as we think, even sub-consciously, of space as a *thing*, it is possible to argue whether we may, or may not, have a knowledge of space, *per se*. It is also possible to discuss whether space is finite or infinite in extension. But when we fix clearly in our minds that all we ever mean by "space" is the distance between two objects, and that space, as a general concept, is an abstraction derived from our continuous experience of distance, having no more actual existence than has the abstraction "Tree" apart from any particular tree, we see that the really correct answer is not a profession of Agnosticism, but a denial of the legitimacy of the question. In such matters we are dealing with abstraction, and committing the very old error of treating them as though we had before us concrete facts.

If, in such matters, we constantly asked ourselves what was really meant by the terms employed, a careful mental analysis would show that neither our language—when properly employed—nor our ideas ever imply the existence of something which must ever remain unknowable, but that both language and thought, fashioned as they are by human experience, have direct reference to what is

already known, and implies much more to be known. Agnosticism, therefore, would be perfectly sound if it confined itself to the position that it knows nothing whatever of "God," and that the word is quite meaningless. But, in this case, it would be plainly indistinguishable from Atheism; and, as I have already said, most Agnostics seem suspiciously anxious to prove to the religious that they repudiate Atheism as strongly as does any Christian. But when the Agnostic goes further, and proceeds to demonstrate that "God" must be unknowable because a knowledge of "God" cannot be brought within the compass of the human mind, he is taking up a suicidal attitude. For this position cannot possibly be made good unless we have some knowledge of the two things, concerning which incongruity is affirmed. Professor Sorley has little trouble in showing the weakness of this kind of Agnosticism. If he would only take up the question of a philosophic Atheism I do not imagine that it would be so easily disposed of.

A French writer who has studied English life to some purpose, Professor Emile Boutmy, has pointed out that, in France, men like Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, and Morley would have called themselves Atheists, while the French people would never have thought of them as anything else. The observation is searching and true. In any reasonable use of the word these men, with many other leaders of thought, are Atheists. But French public life seems to develop a more independent, honest tone than does public life in England. Here, a departure from accepted opinions is made with timidity and confessed with abated breath. And on the principle that things might have been worse, the non-believer who expresses his unbelief with a more or less mournful mien, and takes care to loudly disown those wicked Atheists, has a degree of sympathy and tolerance extended to him. One is almost inclined to wish that those who have not the strength to carry their opinions to their logical issue would stop altogether on the orthodox side. It is a debatable point whether they are a source of strength or of weakness to advanced movements. It is the few who go ahead that make the pace, and behind them are all the progressive forces of life of which they are the concrete expression. These forces bring even sluggards, dullards, and wobblers along sooner or later, and whether these aggregate a few more or a few less cannot be a matter of very great importance.

C. COHEN.

Confusion Worse Confounded.

THE Protestant Reformation was the deadliest blow that the Christian religion has ever received; and it was all the deadlier because unintentional. Martin Luther verily believed that he was doing Christianity a real and lasting service; that he was restoring it to its original simplicity and purity, and giving it a new lease of life and increased efficiency among the common people; that he was cleansing it from the corruptions and malpractices which had crept in during the Dark Ages, and preparing for it a future of greater spiritual usefulness than it had ever enjoyed before. Beyond a doubt, that was the aim which Luther had before him, and most sincerely and wholeheartedly did he set himself to bring it into fulfilment. But he did not realise the full significance of the movement which he initiated. He was ignorant of the fact that he was only taking part in a larger movement which had started more than a century earlier, and which was destined, though no one knew it then, to undermine, and utterly destroy, every form of superstition. Had it not been for this larger movement, this slow but general awakening of the ancient spirit of wholesome inquiry, the Protestant Reformation would never have taken place; and, had the Protestant Reformation not occurred, the Catholic Church would have been strong enough to thwart, at least

for some centuries longer, all attempts to revive Greek and Roman learning, which had been in a moribund state for a thousand years. Although running on independent lines, both movements were crowned with success; but our present point is, that the very triumph of Protestantism involved the eventual defeat of Christianity.

Luther revolted not so much against Catholic doctrine as against Catholic rule; not so much against the Church as against the administrators of its affairs at Rome. What he yearned and worked for was not liberty in any true sense, but freedom to proclaim and establish his own opinions, and to punish all who dared to oppose them. It is well known how intensely he hated, and how savagely he denounced, the teaching of Copernicus, and how gladly he would have suppressed it if he had had the power. Religious toleration was an unknown virtue in his day. But the formal rejection of the religious authority of Rome was virtually the denial of any authority whatever in matters of religion. The consequence was that, ere long, differences and divisions began to arise. First of all came the Zwinglians, who declined to accept Luther as pope; and before the sixteenth century closed there existed no fewer than eighty Protestant sects, each led by an infallible pope of its own. An attempt was made to unite upon the Bible as the ultimate theological authority; but as it was impossible to unite on any authoritative interpretation of the Bible, the effort was bound to fail. In course of time, Biblical Criticism demonstrated the essential fallibility of God's Book, and all hope of establishing it as the court of final appeal in theological controversies vanished. And the sects kept on multiplying, and with each multiplication Christianity lost ground.

Confining our study to England and Wales, we find that Protestantism is practically dead in the Established Church. The majority of Anglican divines regard the Reformation as one of the most gigantic blunders on record. The Protestantism of these two countries is to be found almost exclusively in the Free Churches. Now, it is acknowledged by the little popes, who are supposed to lead these numerous factions, that the present is at once an age of intellectual transition and of theological unrest, and that consequently great confusion of mind exists in many quarters. There is a vast multitude of *ex-cathedra* voices, but they are all contradictory, and there is no means of determining which, if any, of them utter the truth. It is admitted that the situation is critical in the extreme, and we are convinced that it is much more fatally serious than the leaders admit.

And yet it is claimed that, "in face of the present distress, the Free Churches are in a position of peculiar advantage," and that this "advantage lies in the fact that they represent the religion of the Spirit as over against the religion of authority. They have a credal basis, but no credal bond. They can move freely within certain large but well-defined limits." On examining this so-called advantage, we learn that it is both a delusion and a snare. Is it really meant that a "religion of the Spirit" is not also, and on that account, a "religion of authority"? Have the Nonconformists the audacity to assert that they alone, of all professing Christians, "represent the religion of the Spirit"? The Pharisaism of the claim proves its falseness. Again, is it possible to possess a "credal basis" and not be bound by it? What is the good of having it if it is not a bond? The boast is that the Free Churches "can move freely within certain large but well-defined limits"; but by what authority were those limits set? If they were set at all, it follows that the religion which moves within them is as much a "religion of authority" as any other.

The advantage of the present situation of the Free Churches having been shown to be really a disadvantage, let us examine the significant admission made by the leaders, namely, that the Free Churches are also in a position of "peculiar peril." This is entirely true; much truer than

they imagine. The Nonconformist pulpit, we are told, is free, and this freedom, we are further informed, may be "pushed to perilous extremes." We hold, on the contrary, not only that "liberty easily becomes licence," but that the idea of liberty in the presentation of revealed truth is perfectly preposterous. If the preacher is a man with a message, his first and only business is to deliver that message in the exact form in which he receives it. If he alters a single iota in it, he is a disloyal and fraudulent messenger. To modify or adapt a message in the slightest degree is to insult him who ordered its delivery. If the Free Churches have had a gospel committed to them, as they proudly claim, we are justified in asking, By whom was it committed to them? If by God, who gave them the right to sit in judgment upon the form in which it should be proclaimed? Any liberty indulged in here is licence, and any independence claimed is rank impiety. And yet present-day Nonconformity babbles about two conflicting and mutually destructive duties under which the preacher does his work: "the duty of adaptation," and "the higher duty of declaring the message he has received, and of guarding the deposit entrusted to his care."

The ineffable absurdity of this claim to liberty in the Christian pulpit is more manifest still when we consider the following statement:—

"The time has long gone by when the form of sound doctrine can be preserved by insisting on any form of sound words, and punishing those who may depart from it. The assertion of ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith is only possible to those Churches where freedom is a phantom and a thing to be feared. But this does not imply within the Free Churches complete liberty to think and speak as one likes, as though there were no gospel to be proclaimed and no body of truth to be expounded."

Surely, a sillier, more illogical statement was never made. Is it conceivable that a form of sound doctrine could be encased in a form of unsound words? Or can "a form of sound doctrine" be expressed in anything but words? If within the Free Churches one is not permitted to "think and speak as one likes," but as one is Divinely commanded to think and speak, why should the word "liberty" be introduced at all? Such a sentence as the following has absolutely no point: "It is the truth which the Christian has received that makes him free, and at the same time sets bounds to his liberty." What the truth frees one from is the tyranny of error, and the only bounds to that liberty are those which the truth itself imposes. The only other freedom which the possessor of the truth requires is the freedom to proclaim it. In the endeavor to secure this freedom the Free Churches say that they have been successful; and now they "have to struggle for the right to interpret the message, and to express it in terms other than those hallowed by age-long associations, but better suited to the mind of to-day."

In reality, this illogical demand for liberty of interpretation on the part of the Free Churches is a subtle confession of weakness. Having no external authority to fall back upon, and fully aware that many of the doctrines which their forefathers pronounced fundamental and essential have been completely discredited by modern science, they are eager to make their escape into a region to which criticism cannot follow them. They know perfectly well that they are acting in a cowardly fashion; but what else can they do? "Hard dogmatism," they aver, cannot, will not be endured, and "the mist of vague generalities" is equally inadmissible. That statement is immediately followed, however, by the hardest dogmatism ever known. We read about "the note of the Gospel," which is redemption, and about its "watchword," which is "the grace of God made operative for sinful men in Jesus Christ," about "a fact of Christ which is the background of all evangelical preaching," and about "a faith once for all delivered to the saints which is not to be criticised away." If this is not "hard dogmatism," pray what is it? This is an interpretation of the Gospel

preached by Paul; and this interpreter boldly declares that any other interpretation of it cannot be tolerated in the Free Churches.

Catholic Christianity is intellectually unbelievable, but it is intelligible. Protestant Christianity is at once unbelievable and unintelligible. There is only one Catholic pope, and his word on every subject is final. In Protestantism the popes are a great host, and they are never so happy or half so eloquent as when vilifying one another in the name of the Lord. The days of Protestantism are numbered; and when they are all accomplished then shall come the final tug of war between Freethought and historic Christianity, and history gives a clear indication as to which side will be victorious in that conclusive contest.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Sayings of Jesus.—XII.

(Concluded from p. 374.)

NEXT in importance to "eternal life" must be ranked eternal punishment; but before coming to the latter, one more alleged utterance of Jesus on the "eternal life" question requires to be noticed. In the First Gospel this reputed Savior is represented as saying:—

Matt. vii. 13-14. "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many be they that enter in thereat. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth unto [eternal] life, and few be they that find it."

Matt. xxii. 14. "For many are called, but few chosen."

Now, with no less than seven different ways of getting to heaven (as described in the last paper), one would think that not a single human being could fail to reach the desired goal. Such, no doubt, would have been the case, had not the Gospel writer noticed the following passages in one of the "holy books" which he deemed necessary to summarise and ascribe to Jesus:—

"There is a city builded and set in a plain country, and full of all good things; but the entrance thereof is narrow, and set in a dangerous place.....And there is one only path.....so narrow that there could but one man go there at once. If this city, now, be given unto a man for an inheritance, how shall he receive this inheritance if he pass not the danger set before him..... If, then, they that live, labor not to enter these strait and vain places, they can never receive the things that are laid up for them" (2 Esd. vii. 6-14; 47).

"The Most High hath made this world for many, but the world to come for few.....There be many created, but few shall be saved" (2 Esd. viii. 1-3).

This completes the utterances attributed to Jesus on "eternal life." I commend them all to the serious attention of Christians who repose faith in the promises of the Gospel Jesus.

We come now to the subject of eternal torment, and with regard to this question, strange as it may appear, many Christian advocates, especially within the last few years, peremptorily deny that any such doctrine was taught by Jesus, or can be found in the Gospels. A recent example of this apologetic method of reading the Christian "scriptures" is the following, culled from a sermon by the Rev. H. Wallace Simm, delivered on Sunday, May 17, and reported in a local newspaper. After saying that much of the New Testament is to be understood spiritually, not literally, the reverend gentleman selects as an illustration "the saying of Jesus about the man who would be cast into that place 'where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.'" He goes on to say—

"If you read this passage for the first time, I do not think you would for a moment think there was a place where a literal fire is never allowed to go out and where the worm dieth not.....In the light of contemporary history, the explanation is as clear as crystal.....Outside Jerusalem was a large place called Gehenna—a rubbish heap. On that place was flung all the rubbish of the city. Naturally this bred a great many worms, and in the hot sun created an odor which filled Jerusalem. In order to cope with this, fires were built, and these fires

were never allowed to go out night or day. That is the interpretation. *It has no reference to a future life at all, nothing to do with hell* as we know it. Christ is saying that the man who does not live as God means him to live is fit only for the rubbish heap. He meant that every man was to be active and useful in the world." (Italics mine.)

Mr. Simm's statement respecting the fires in Gehinnom, "the valley of Hinnom"—the Greek form being *Gehenna*—is perfectly correct. Furthermore, several centuries before the time of Christ, in this valley upon a "high place" called Tophet, children were made to "pass through the fire" to Molech and other gods (2 Chron. xxviii. 3; xxxiii. 6; 2 Kings xxiii. 10; Jer. vii. 31, etc.). The name *Gehenna* was thus associated with religion and the cremation of living human beings, and would therefore at the time the idea of a hell first arose be the proper appellation for a place of torment of a similar nature in another world.

We will now look at "the saying of Jesus" to which Mr. Simm has so considerably referred without shocking his hearers by actually naming. The passage is Mark ix. 48-48, the last two verses of which read:—

"And if thine eye cause thee to offend, cast it out: it is good for thee to enter into *the kingdom of God* with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the *Gehenna of fire*; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

The words italicised in the latter portion of the passage are rendered in the Authorised Version "hell fire"; in the Revised Version "hell" only—the "fire" being omitted in the latter case, though present in the Greek text.

Now, setting aside the meaning supposed to be attached to the plucking out of an offending eye—which has nothing to do with the matter in hand—the only question to be considered is: Have the words in the foregoing passage any reference to a future life? Mr. Simm says they have not. If this be the case, why is the "kingdom of God" held up to believers as the most desirable place in which to dwell? and "the *Gehenna of fire*" as a place of discomfort or torment? Why, again, are these two places named as the ultimate destination—one or the other—of every human being? It is clearly implied that there is no other alternative. If a man failed to gain admittance into "the kingdom of God," then nothing remained for him but to be "cast into the *Gehenna of fire*." The Gospel writer, moreover, tacitly assumes that his readers knew this perfectly well. And, as a matter of fact, all who had read the books of Enoch and 2 Esdras did know it.

To get fresh light upon the matter I select several other alleged utterances of Jesus on the same subject, and at the same time subjoin the source passages from which the Gospel-makers derived their ideas.

GOSPEL SAYINGS.

Matt. xxv. 31. "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations."

Matt. xxiv. 31. "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds."

Matt. xvi. 27. "—and then shall he render unto every man according to his doings."

Matt. xxv. 23-33. "And he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

Matt. xxv. 34. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom

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Enoch ii. xlv. 3. "Behold he comes with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon them, and destroy the wicked"—"In that day shall the Elect One sit upon a throne of glory," etc.

2 Esd. vi. 23. "And the trumpet shall give a sound, which when every man heareth, they shall be suddenly afraid."

Jer. xxi. 14. "And I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the Lord." (Also Rev. xxii. 12.)

Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 17. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out.....Behold I judge between cattle and cattle, as well the rams as the he-goats."

Dan. vii. 18. "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever."—2 Esd. vi.

GOSPEL SAYINGS.

prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Matt. xxv. 41. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me ye cursed into the eternal fire—"

Matt. xxv. 41. "—prepared for the devil and his angels."

Matt. ix. 48 "—where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Matt. xxv. 46. "And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into eternal life."

Matt. xiii. 41-42. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Luke xvi. 23-24. "And in hell [Hades] he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father AbrahamI am in anguish in this flame."

OLDER WRITINGS.

70 (R. V.). "When the Most High made the world.....he prepared the judgment and the things pertaining to the judgment."

Enoch cv. 21, 23; cii. 5. "I beheld also a fire blazing brightly.....He said, There, into that place which thou beholdest shall be thrust the spirits of sinners and blasphemers."—"But you, ye sinners, are for ever accursed."

Enoch lxvi. 7. "Through that valley also rivers of fire were flowing, to which those angels shall be condemned, who seduced the inhabitants of the earth."

Isaiah lxvi. 24. "—for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched."

Enoch lxx. 14. "The angels shall take them to punishmentbut the saints and the elect shall be safe in that day."

Enoch lxi. 14; xc. 11. "The angels shall take them to punishment, that vengeance may be inflicted on those who have oppressed his children and his elect."—"They shall be brought from every part of the earth, and be cast into a judgment of fire."

2 Esd. vii. 36 (R. V.). "And then shall appear the place of torment, and over against it the place of rest; and there shall be shewn the furnace of Gehenna, and over against it the paradise of delight."

The statements in the foregoing passages are so clear that it is simply impossible to misunderstand them. The writers plainly refer both to a heaven of rest and a place of torment. The Reverend Simm has not a leg to stand upon. His whole argument is built upon the undying worm and the unquenched fire—an expression tacked on to one of the passages in Mark's Gospel, and found nowhere else in the New Testament. The reverend gentleman was, of course, acquainted with the Gospel passages here cited; these he conveniently ignored, and selected instead one with a certain tag at the end (not given in the same passage twice recorded in the First Gospel—Matt. v. 29-30; xviii. 8-9), and founded his argument upon that tag—a proceeding more ingenious than ingenuous.

It will be seen from the last source passage that, prior to the time of Jesus, *Gehenna* was the name by which the imaginary place of torment was generally known. The Gospel writers have merely employed the term they found already in use. *Gehenna* is named in the following passages: Matt. v. 22, 29, 30; x. 28; xviii. 9; xxiii. 15, 33; Mark ix. 43, 45, 47; Luke xii. 5. I cite two of these for the benefit of Mr. Simm, and ask him to explain the words italicised.

Luke xii. 4-5. "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But.....fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into *Gehenna*."

Matt. xxiii. 33. "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of *Gehenna*?"

The doctrine of a future life was unknown to the Jews who lived in Old Testament times; it was likewise unknown to their god El Shaddai, *alias* Yahveh. When the last-named deity was pleased to honor one of his worshipers, he took him to his kingdom beyond the skies without waiting for death, as in the cases of Enoch and Elijah; when he was minded to punish his erring or rebellious people, he caused them to die by the sword, famine, pestilence, fire, or earthquake: but in every case death ended the punishment. In specially bad cases, however, the Hebrew deity visited the sins of the fathers upon the children, and in the

third or fourth generation his anger was appeased—"For his mercy endureth for ever." Had the "Lord God" really created a place of torment he would, of course, have made the fact known when he gave to the Jews the laws he had drawn up for their observance: but not a word on the subject is found in any of the Old Testament books up to the time of the last writer—Malachi. The first crude notions of a future life we find in the unhistorical Book of Daniel (written as late as B.C. 165) and in 2 Maccabees. These were followed by the books of Enoch and 2 Esdras. Jesus, as we have seen, had no knowledge of "heavenly things," and knew only what the Gospel writers knew. The latter took their ideas of heaven and hell from the books ascribed to Enoch and Esdras.

Here I bring these papers to a close, though upon one point they are incomplete. I have omitted to notice the great prediction, attributed to Jesus, of the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming end of the world, which takes up a whole chapter in each of the Synoptical Gospels. To this subject I propose to devote two or three papers a few weeks hence.

ABRACADABRA

Notes on Tour.—IV.

(Continued from p. 378.)

LEAVING holy Italy and entering "infidel France" was like leaving the suffocating stoke-hole of an Orient liner for the pure air of the upper deck. Not that the physical features of Italy in any way resemble a stoke-hole, but the signs on every hand of superstition, and its natural concomitants, dirt and mendicancy, were so nauseating that, after three visits, I can only say I have few pleasant recollections of the country. On reaching Marseilles I paid a visit to the large cathedral there. It was not Sunday, but there was some service—for the relief of souls in purgatory, I think. The attendance was very small, and I counted only three men. A passenger from Melbourne, who accompanied me, was quite ready to ridicule all the ceremony and pomp of Catholicism as we saw it at Naples and at this cathedral, but he could not by any means see through the absurdities of the Bible fetish. Strange that papal infallibility should be so clearly untenable and illogical, but an infallible book "quite a different thing"! We spent the following Sunday at Lyon. Our room in the rue Condé was nearly opposite a large church, and we were able, with fair accuracy, to count the congregation leaving in the morning—of 129 attendants only 20 men. In the afternoon, theatres, cinematographs, concerts, and a circus—a terrible transformation of the Sabbath to one who had spent all his life in Scotchbyterian Melbourne!

On reaching Paris, one of the first things I did was to go and see the house where Paine lived when he was a member of the Convention. The place is referred to in Moncure D. Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* (vol. ii., p. 64):—

"The irony of fate had brought an old mansion of Madame de Pompadour to become the residence of Thomas Paine and his half-dozen English disciples. It was then, and still is, No. 63 Faubourg St. Denis. Here, where a king's mistress held her many fêtes, and issued the decrees of her reign—sometimes of terror—the little band of English humanitarians read and conversed and sported in the garden. In a little essay on 'Forgetfulness,' addressed to his friend, Lady Smith, Paine described these lodgings. 'They were the most agreeable, for situation, of any I ever had in Paris, except that they were too remote from the Convention, of which I was then a member.....The house, which was enclosed by a wall and gateway from the street, was a good deal like an old mansion farmhouse, and the courtyard was like a farmyard, stocked with fowls, ducks, turkeys, and geese, which for amusement we used to feed out of the parlor window on the ground-floor.'"

When I was here two years ago, I rented a room in the rue St. Denis, which is really a continuation of

the Faubourg St. Denis, and I passed the "mansion farmhouse" many a time, little dreaming that it had once been occupied by such great notabilities as Madame de Pompadour and the author of the *Age of Reason*. The gateway is still there—in fact, nearly everything as described by the great man himself, except the live-stock, so the place is easily identified.

The Protestants have for some time been spreading their "tidings of good news" among the gay, Sabbath-breaking Parisians, and during the present month some prominent pastor of the "Reformed Church" is lecturing at 8 Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle on the general subject of "The Gospel and the Modern Conscience." I heard one of these lectures last Thursday, and found it very much like the ordinary apologetic effort. "The human heart yearns for gods," says old Homer, and the speaker really did not tell us much more than that, beyond stating that the Gospel satisfied that yearning better than anything else, and asking what the "incredulous" (unbelievers) could put in its place. But one thing he did say which I think was perfectly true, and that was, "*La France, n'est pas Catholique, la France est Matérialiste.*" And Materialistic I think she is likely to remain. At any rate, Protestantism seems to be a weakly exotic, which can never flourish in this soil. It is better suited to the stern, morose Britisher than to the light-hearted, pleasure-loving Frenchman. In support of this I may point out that most of the hymns sung in the *églises réformées* (the reformed—that is, Protestant—churches) are translations from the English, and can hardly impress even believers in the same way as the originals impress English hearers. Thus, "Abide with Me" (first stanza) becomes:—

"Reste avec nous, Seigneur, le jour décline,
La nuit tombe et nous menace tous,
Nous implorons ta présence divine,
Reste avec nous, Seigneur, rest avec nous."

There is a little poetry in the original; is there any in the translation?

I see by notices posted at the Catholic churches that the Romans are also in the field with lectures on "Modernism," to be delivered at the Chapelle de l'Assomption (Madeleine) by M. l'abbé Gandeau. When matters are boiled down, the subject is really very similar to the one mentioned above. But it would be wiser, after all, for both parties to adopt the attitude of Thomas Moore, Ireland's national bard, and exclaim indignantly, "Fancy bringing reason to bear on our holy religion!"

A. D. McLAREN.

Acid Drops.

The *Burton Evening Gazette* gives fresh currency to the absurd old story that "When Dr. Winnington-Ingram was Bishop of Stepney and was advanced to the Bishopric of London, some of the heartiest letters of congratulation came from Atheists with whom he had had discussion." His lordship's discussions with Atheists are mostly, if not entirely, imaginary; and Atheists thought as much of him then as they do now—and how much that is he may learn by reading the *Freethinker*.

Atheists are useful people when Christians want to make capital out of them. At other times they are put down as "wicked" persons, or their very existence is denied. Recently the man who writes "Our Handbook" in the *Referee* said that he had never met an Atheist, although he knew Charles Bradlaugh. Probably both statements are false. But their impudence is unquestionable.

The Rev. J. B. Meyer is turning South Africa upside down. He says so himself, and it must be true. While the mines are being shut down, and trade is languishing, and the unemployed are starving, and the general prospect of the country is gloomy in the extreme, the Gospel business, as conducted by Mr. Meyer, is booming, and the spiritual millennium is at the door! The Holy Ghost is not in it with this peripatetic revivalist and self-glorifier

We are glad to see the Rev. F. B. Meyer rebuked in the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, Kimberley. The reverend gentleman had been urging Christians to get hold of all the political offices. "It was an absurd thing," he said, "to allow the affairs of the country or of the municipality to be ruled by men who were not devout servants of God." Whereupon he is told that his words are simply "a warning against the intolerant religio-political spirit which has in the past been a curse to this country."

We have criticised the rowdy tactics of some of the too eager champions of Woman Suffrage, and especially their attempts to destroy the right of free speech at public meetings addressed by men against whom they have a personal grudge. But we do not concern ourselves with Woman Suffrage itself. It is outside the scope of this journal. We have read with interest, of course, the report of the ladies' great Albert Hall demonstration. One of the speakers was Dr. Anna Shaw, who was born in England, but is now an American. She is described as "a gifted lady minister," and her speech was greatly applauded. One of her observations was this. "It is impossible," she said, "for one half the nation to be entirely free while the other half is in bondage." Thus spake the gifted lady minister. But her point was far more energetically expressed by Shelley, the Atheist, nearly a hundred years ago: "Can man be free if woman be a slave?" Atheists usually come first. Christian ministers come last—and pose as discoverers.

Mrs. Despard, another Albert Hall speaker, also quoted Shelley—from the *Prometheus Unbound*. But we don't hear that there was any reference to Shelley on any of the banners that the ladies carried in their procession.

The London Missionary Society pays no attention to Paul's advice to "owe no man anything." Its income last year was £151,129, and its expenditure "only" £154,851—and that was "£1,669 less than had been estimated." We gather that deficiencies are met by overdrafts from accommodating bankers. For the report remarks that "there is One who is watching over the treasury of His work, and who in time of stress will arrange for such a special credit as shall prevent catastrophe." Does "the One" guarantee the overdrafts? It looks like it.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell is still advancing—in a circle. In his last published sermon, he waxes eloquent in denunciation of Paul's fundamental doctrine of justification by faith. He describes it as "obviously immoral and untrue." There is no such thing as imputed sin or imputed righteousness, no such thing as salvation through the merits of another. In reality, Mr. Campbell's break with Christianity is as complete as that of the most pronounced Infidel. His present teaching is a strange medley of Idealism, Pantheism, and Socialism, with an impossible Christ thrown in to cover up the heresy; but it is no more Christianity than is the Secularism advocated in the *Freethinker*.

And yet, strangely enough, we read in the *New Theology* that Jesus both saves us and reveals to us how we can save ourselves. What unmitigated nonsense. If Jesus saves us, what need have we to save ourselves? Or, if we can save ourselves, why should Jesus waste his time and energy in doing the work for us? As a doctor in philosophy, the Rev. Mr. Warschauer ought to be incapable of writing such silly twaddle, although as a minister of the Gospel a necessity may be laid upon him to contradict all reason.

The Rev. Algernon West says that "Christianity makes Socialism possible." Well, Christianity is two thousand years old, and Socialism is still only a dream. Christianity has ever been a glorifier of Individualism. Mr. West declares, further, that Socialism makes Christianity possible, which means, if it means anything, that, as yet, Christianity itself is impossible; and this is perfectly true. Another thing is true: if Christianity ever succeeds in making Socialism possible, it will only be at the expense of destroying itself.

How irresistibly laughable is the reckless inconsistency of the men of God. At one moment, they say that God would have redeemed the world long ago had it not been for the criminal torpidity of the Church. He is in bondage to and at the mercy of his own people, through whom alone he can do the work. At another moment, we are assured that ever since Pentecost the Holy Spirit has been dwelling in the Church, investing it with his own omnipotence, so that it has "command not only of itself, but of all besides." The one statement contradicts the other, and the natural inference is

that both are absolutely false. No God could be held in chains by the creatures of his hands, and no Church filled with a Holy Ghost could be inattentive to its appointed work.

But another equally ridiculous way of accounting for the dismal failure of Christianity is in vogue. God *could* do the job himself without employing human instruments at all; but in his great mercy he has seen fit to honor his people by condescending to do it through them. The world is utterly lost, and millions are going down to eternal damnation every second. God could save every one of them, and he passionately loves them all; but it is better that hell should be crowded with burning souls than that a handful of the elect should be dishonored. And yet there are some who pretend to wonder that Christianity is dying!

The Rev. Stanley Rogers, of Liverpool, evidently does not believe in improving the social conditions of the masses, and he sneers at those ministers who preach "a social Gospel." Of course, Mr. Rogers is an orthodox Christian, and orthodox Christianity concerns itself only with men's destiny in the next world. It is true that Christianity "came to maturity in the slums of ancient cities," and it is also true that it never attempted to do away with the slums. And it is of such a religion that the world has got so heartily sick and tired, and is ridding itself at such a rate.

According to Mr. J. M. Robertson, the Home Secretary is "one of the most prudent and practical of men." We hope the description doesn't include his sanction of the late "blasphemy" prosecution.

Mr. F. J. Shaw, an Independent Labor Party lecturer, told his North Shields audience the other day that very little had been done by the Government for the working-classes since 1791, when Thomas Paine wrote his immortal *Rights of Man* and advocated the system of Old Age Pensions, which is only now entering the field of practical politics. Mr. Shaw read a beautiful extract from Paine's work; it was printed in full in the local *Daily News*, and illuminated the page on which it appeared. The same Thomas Paine wrote the *Age of Reason*. This is a fact that should be pressed on the attention of those who conduct the *Labor Leader*.

Heine remarked on the old Hebrew conviction (see the Bible) that to "know" a woman was to have the last familiarity with her. Father Vaughan seems to take a different view of the matter. He is a priest, a celibate, and should know as much of woman as any other chaste bachelor. But he cannot keep his consecrated tongue off the ticklish subject. His chief occupation is giving (unsolicited) advice on sexual questions, and as the papers report him pretty freely he is becoming a bit of a nuisance—and to the young people at the breakfast-table a constant danger. We wish he would get hold of another monomania.

Probably the reason why he doesn't is that the sex question "draws" best. Father Vaughan's congregation last Sunday morning, when he was on the rampage again, filled the church, standing room being occupied, and quite a thousand people being turned away from the doors. This is better than the "men only" game.

That last Sunday morning's sermon was preached at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Farm-street, W. This was very appropriate. Father Vaughan denounced married ladies for being hostile to both the adjective and the substantive.

The Manchester City Council refuses to allow the game of bowls to be played in the public parks on Sundays. When the proposal was under discussion, a protest was read against it from a local Primitive Methodist Church. These morose religionists urged that no pastimes of any kind should be allowed on "the Lord's Day." Councillor Hart, however, expressed surprise "that a body like the Primitive Methodists, who had themselves in times past had to fight for their right to act as their consciences dictated, should seek to restrict the liberty of others, as they were doing in that instance." But what is it the proverb says about beggars on horseback? Councillor Jones replied to Mr. Hart, without answering anything he had said. He opposed Sunday recreation because "there was no demand for it." This is a falsehood, and even if it were true it takes all the principle out of Mr. Jones's argument, for it implies that things are right or wrong just as they are in demand or otherwise. The time may come when Christian bigots will wish that they had never used that line of reasoning.

A very ignorant or very designing person called "Quartus" is allowed to write at length on this question in the *Manchester Guardian*. He states that the Lord's Day "began as a weekly commemoration of the Resurrection," that it "still remained a working day," and that the early Christians "had to work on the Lord's Day for their heathen employers." These statements are entirely false, and it is astonishing that the chief Liberal paper in the provinces should print such stuff in its largest type. No doubt it plays the game of the Non-conformist gang who govern England just now to tell the people that "Sunday rest is a gift from Christianity." But it is a lie. And every educated man knows it to be so. The fact is that the Sun's Day (for that is what Sunday means) was the legal day of rest for the slave population, and all hired workers, in the Roman Empire; and the worshipers of Christ assembled on that day simply because it was the only day on which they were free to do so—just as Freethinkers hold their meetings on Sunday in England because Christian law and practice have made it the most convenient time for such gatherings. The whole thing is of the greatest simplicity. Sunday, both as a day of worship and as a day of rest, was a general institution throughout the Roman Empire before Christianity existed. "Quartus" should learn the facts or tell the truth. We mention the alternative courses because we are not certain whether he is an ignoramus or a charlatan.

The Sunday closing of the White City has given rise to a good joke. The Franco-British Exhibition is "Franco" during the week and "British" on Sunday.

James Thomson ("B. V."), the poet, once assured us that the clergy would go in for smoking-pews some day. We see by an American paper that his prophecy has been fulfilled. Rev. Sydney Goodman, of Atlantic City, preached on May 17 to "a congregation of men who lolled back in their chairs smoking stogies and pipes, and in a receptive mood to hear him." A few minutes before they had enjoyed a moving-picture show. Parson Goodman (he belongs to the Episcopal Church) sees good business in this "smoking" idea. He is up to date in everything—including short sermons. He even announces that when the weather gets really warm the men may take off their coats and collars—and he may get as far as pyjamas. There is a men's club connected with his church, and the membership was only 300, but he introduced smoking and put on boxing-matches, and the membership went up to 1,400. Poor Christ! Like Bottom the weaver, thou art translated. Was it worth while being crucified for this?

The week before last a trainload of *pilgrims* came to grief in Belgium; last week another trainload of *pilgrims* came to grief in Italy. "Providence" seems to be down upon them at present.

The *Daily Chronicle* has a new solution of the religious difficulty in elementary schools. Hand it over to the teachers! Let these ladies and gentlemen teach our children whatever they please! Is it possible to conceive a more ridiculous policy? And this is a Liberal paper's only alternative to Secular Education.

Mr. R. M. John, of Birmingham, chairman of the recent annual conference of the National Association of Head Teachers, rather favored the view dealt with in the previous paragraph. But it is, perhaps, only natural that the teachers should take a lofty estimate of their own ability. We prefer Mr. John's more independent opinion that "pan-denominationalism" is "pandemonium." If the "right of entry" were tried it would soon lead to chaos.

The Pope told some British tars the other day that "when it was asked what it was necessary for a man to do to be saved, the answer was that it was sufficient for him to perform the duties to which he had been born." This is quite a new version of Christianity. Had it never been anything but that there would have been very few Freethinkers. Unfortunately for the Pope's "modernism," history tells us what Christianity has been—and the record is damning.

"Less and less, as the years go by," said a writer in the *Church Times* recently, "is to be seen evidence of the influence of religion at the Royal Academy. This year we have one Biblical subject in the fifteen hundred." Yes, and the Bibliolators should be thankful even for that. They may go further and fare worse.

The Lady Suffragists are going to have a grand Hyde Park demonstration to-day (June 21). In their proces-

sions they will carry flags bearing the names of eminent women and great men who have "helped the woman's cause." We don't see the names of Jesus and Paul amongst them—and we think we understand the omission.

Thomas Bone, miner, Glenbuck, was tried for the murder of his wife and unanimously found guilty by a Glasgow jury. He was duly sentenced to death, but was afterwards reprieved. During the interval he was operated on by two local clergymen who were proud of their work and reported him to be "penitent." When the reprieve arrived, on the eve of the expected execution, he had a Testament in his hand, and he blubbered out that he wanted to be with his wife (whose brains he had battered out with stones on the public highway)—presumably in heaven. The next morning he would not take his breakfast, shied his boots at the warder, broke glass, etc., and cursed and swore like a trooper. It was a great disappointment to the godly. They hoped he would die repentant and "trusting in Jesus." The reprieve spoilt the edifying performance.

"The Devil was sick,
The Devil a saint would be;
The Devil got well,
The Devil a saint was he!"

Such are the refining and elevating influences of "our holy religion."

The Edinburgh Central Library Committee declines to add Ingersoll's works to their collection at present. We hope they will have the sense to do so hereafter. Meanwhile, we suppose they have the adventures of Jonah and the whale, and Balaam and his ass, on their shelves.

Rev. F. G. Eyres, vicar of Blackmoor, improved the occasion at the burial of the little girl Lacey who was so brutally murdered in broad daylight and within easy reach of those who would have been so glad to aid her if they had only known. The reverend gentleman was very anxious that "Providence" should not be brought into disrepute. They were not called upon, he said, to unravel the mystery by which God allowed that crime to take place. The Almighty had his own reasons. Their business was to bow their heads in pious submission to his sovereign will. But this is an old story, and people are getting tired of it. The real "mystery" in the matter is simply the contradiction between the facts of life and the preachings of the men of God.

The Pan-Anglican Congress is meeting in London. It is a big affair. But its basis is the dead falsehood of the past. It has neither part nor lot in the living truth of the future. For the rest, what a sarcasm it is, after the lapse of nearly two thousand years, with a divine revelation to start with, that it is necessary for Christians to discuss at all with each other! Over in Brittany some 50,000 pilgrims, besides tourists, have been gathering at the shrine of Our Lady of Rumengol. There are many sick, and swarms of beggars, and priests exploiting the show. An old folly, and an old trade—whether in Middlesex or Brittany.

Professor Granville S. Hall, president of the Clark University, claims to have discovered that women have two souls. Only two? Some women have more than that. And some men have none at all. So where are we now?

According to the *Sunday School Chronicle*, the greatest humanising agency in this country, next to compulsory education, is the Penny Post. Christianity takes the third place—if any.

The minister called to inquire why he no longer attended church, and the following was his explanation: "What would I be going to the kirk for? Is it to hear sermons? Why, I'm eighty years old, and I've had seventy years of sermons. I've heard Free Church, and U. P., and Established, and English Kirk, and Auld Lights, and New Lights, and the rest. Now, meenister, would you keep pouring watter on a droon'd rat?"

The *Catholic Times* calls Zola "the apostle of putrid realism." Is our contemporary acquainted with the Bible?

John Frederick Spencer, of Leicester, draper, Sunday-school teacher, and burglar, is now doing twelve years' penal servitude. There is no particular moral. He was not a Freethinker.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended during the summer.)

To Correspondents.

C. A. B. (Liverpool).—We appreciate the joke, but it is rather personal. There must be some good Christians even in business; though we doubt if the one in question never told a lie in forty-five years. But interested friends so easily flatter!

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged.
—Donations, £165: Annual Subscriptions, £188 9s. 6d. Received since.—W. P. Adamson, £1 1s.; J. Grandon, 5s.

GERALD MASSEY FUND.—James Grant, 10s.

W. P. ADAMSON, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes: "I cannot adequately express my indebtedness to your great work. In season and out of season, like Prometheus, you bear aloft the Torch of Reason and Humanity against the enemies of Freethought. Long may you be with us to lead and guide us to victory over the hosts of prejudice and superstition."

J. W. WHITE (West Stanley) writes that at last, after repeated attempts, he has succeeded in getting the *Freethinker* into the Reading Room and Library of the local Co-operative Society—and is now trying to get in the Life of Bradlaugh. Mr. White wishes us "many years of health to carry on the good work of Freethought."

G. EHRMANN.—See paragraph. Thanks.

G. P. DUPLAY.—Sorry we cannot find room for your ill opinions of what, after all, is your own nation.

IRISH READER.—The only subscribers to the *Freethinker* that we know of are those who get it direct by post from our publishing office. The great majority get it through newsagents. Glad to hear you are circulating this journal in your own district.

JOSEPH BATES, 47 Tunnard-street, Boston, Lincs., would be glad to hear from any "saints" in the neighborhood. He proposes to give Freethought lectures in the Market-place on Sunday evenings.

J. L. WILLIAMS.—See "Sugar Plums." Thanks.

PAUL ROSS.—You wish to speak or write on behalf of Freethought, and ask how you should proceed. Why not put yourself in communication with the nearest N. S. S. Branch, that at West Ham, which holds meetings in the Workman's Hall, Stratford?

W. J. McMURRAY.—Some of the Socialist pamphlets, cracking up religion and Jesus Christ, shall be dealt with in our columns—beginning with a little volume issued by the Fabian Society, and going on to some of the I. L. P. publications.

T. H. ELSTON.—As you say, the absence of money has kept mere adventurers out of our movement, or driven them out if they ever got in; but, on the other hand, our poverty has prevented our achieving much propagandist work. Our advocates may be ever so honest, but they cannot travel without cost, or live on air; and the hire of halls, and expenses of advertising, cannot be covered without something more substantial than the most excellent sentiments.

W. TAYLOR.—Sent as desired. Thanks for paper.

E. J. JONES.—On the whole, the *Manchester Guardian* is a good paper, as papers go in England. Thanks for cutting.

ANTI-BIGOT.—Glad to hear that you and your friend "have both taken the *Freethinker* for about two years, and enjoy reading it more than any other paper." We will deal with the rest of your letter next week; it is too late for our present issue.

G. L. A.—You forgot to enclose the handbill, but we are satisfied on the point you refer to.

H. MARSON.—It may be useful. Thanks.

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

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Sugar Plums.

Some persons, with great ignorance or strong imagination, have said that the *Freethinker* appeals to illiterate readers. Others say that it appeals to the working classes. But it never appealed to any class; it has readers amongst all classes; the truth being that it has always been written for men and women merely as men and women. What else they may be—in other words, what are the accidents of their existence—has never been a moment's consideration. We address the intrinsic, the universal, the abiding in them. Some of our readers move in the upper circles of society—some move in the lower circles; but all belong to the same great fraternity of those who think, as distinguished from those who acquiesce. You may find fools amongst the wealthy; you may find philosophers amongst the poor. One of our most valued contributors is a working stonemason. By renouncing the common pleasures of so many of his fellow-workmen, he has saved money out of his wages to buy a picked collection of the costliest books, written by the leading minds of the present age as well as by the elect minds of former ages; and having fed his own mind in this way, he has occupied many hours of his scanty leisure in writing really valuable articles for this journal. So what is the use of talking about class distinctions? They do not exist for the intelligent, the thoughtful, the well-informed. They only exist for those who are lost in the shows of life. And as for the *Freethinker* being addressed to illiterates, is it easy to conceive anything more grotesque? People who know nothing worth speaking of may easily follow the contents of any religious paper. But let them try this journal, and see how soon they will come to grief. The simplest articles and paragraphs in our pages contain references and allusions that would be lost on ignorance; and the way in which the writers carry on trains of reasoning is enough to give a severe headache to unpractised intelligences.

Appreciative letters reach us from time to time that throw a strange light on the "working-class" and "illiterate" theories about the *Freethinker*. We have occasionally printed one of these, and we are now going to print another. We had occasion recently to reply to a letter from a correspondent whose name we should prefer to withhold, even if he wished us to disclose it. He is a military man, a "gentleman," a scholar, and an author; and this is how he writes in acknowledging our reply:—

"DEAR MR. FOOTE,—

I must thank you for your very kind and courteous letter. You must excuse the rather familiar manner in which I address you, but the *Freethinker* has by now become such an old friend, and your whole work is so identified with it, that I cannot help claiming you as such also. I have read it in many parts of the world, and I think I can say without boasting, under most conditions—by the camp fire as well as in bed on a Sunday morning; in temperatures many degrees below freezing point, and in climates which almost make one believe there may after all be such a place as the Christian Hell. Thus it has become a valued friend; and I trust, for myself and all its other readers, it may continue as such for many a long year to come.

Believe me

Yours sincerely, ———"

"Illiterates" forsooth!

Mr. F. Bonte, in his admirable pamphlet, *From Fiction to Fact*, which has done, and is doing, so much good as a propagandist "eye-opener," has stated with what delight he first came across the *Freethinker*, and with what pleasure he has read it ever since. Now there is a French edition of that telling publication, and also a Flemish edition, and Mr. Bonte has written them both himself. Few men are able to write, and write well, in three very different languages. Mr. Bonte is one of them. He is another of our "illiterate" admirers.

Mr. J. L. Williams, after several rebuffs, has succeeded in getting the Central Free Library, Abordare, to accept a copy of the *Freethinker* weekly and have it placed on the table in the Reading Room. He also informs us that the local Institute of the Independent Labor Party has this journal placed on its Reading Room table by a member who is a Secularist, though not a member of the N. S. S. Branch.

It is customary for the Newcastle Secularists to organise outdoor meetings on the Town Moor on the occasion locally known as Race Sunday. For a very large number of years now, Mr. Cohen has addressed large audiences with great acceptance. Unfortunately this year Mr. Cohen is unable to undertake this engagement, and the Branch have secured the services of Mr. H. S. Wishart, who no doubt will prove an efficient substitute. In the morning, at 11, Mr. Wishart lectures, near the North-road entrance, on "Ballard, Blatch-

ford, and the Bottom Dog," and in the evening, at 7, near the Military Sports Stand, on "From Christism to Atheism."

We were hoping that some more of our readers would send us a subscription towards the Gerald Massey Fund, but it is no use wasting ink, and we shall not refer to the matter again unless there should be a more encouraging response. We have received, including what is acknowledged this week, the sum of £9 13s., and we have remitted this amount to the honorary treasurer of the Fund at Glasgow.

Sir Robert Hart, who has just returned home after such long service in China, was the subject of an interview in a recent number of the *Daily Telegraph*. He explained that behind all the culture and beliefs of the Chinese lay the ethics of Confucius. "That great teacher," he said, "had no creed as to a future state, even as to the Deity; but he taught that men must live as if there were a future of rewards and punishments, and a God; and they must do their duty to their fellows and to the community. The great result of these ethics is non-interference with your neighbor or with neighboring nations. The Chinese are not aggressive. They regard armies as objectionable; but the events of the last fifty or sixty years have forced them to take defensive measures." Just so. The peaceful followers of Confucius have been forced into militarism by the aggressive followers of the "Prince of Peace."

Reviewing the Life of Holyoake, the *Manchester Guardian* gives him plenty of praise, but also notices the defect which so often brought him into trouble with others who shared his opinions. "There was a curious something in his composition," it says, "which led him time after time to question, distract, and ultimately upset or desert the movements in which he was engaged. His biographer calls it broad-mindedness, and is at pains to show nearly always that Holyoake was right and his colleagues wrong. To the reader it often looks more like intellectual waywardness..... An enemy or half-friend of his cause would make a slight concession or give some slight token of friendliness; he would rush out of the ranks and fall on his neck. This sort of habit is ruinous to the discipline without which no uphill movement can win." This is very near what we had to say in the *Freethinker* lately.

Galileo told his persecutors that the world *did* move, and Pascal afterwards told them that they themselves could not help going round with it. We are reminded of this by a cutting sent us from the *Morning Post*. Reviewing the new Life of Holyoake, that Conservative organ introduces a good word for two other Freethinkers. "To men like Bradlaugh and Foote," it says, "much is due. Courage and self-sacrifice are rare enough in this world." This might be said more easily of Bradlaugh, for he is dead, and building the tombs of the prophets is an ancient pastime; but Mr. Foote is still alive—very much alive—and the compliment to him is rather surprising. It is in singular contrast to the Liberal newspapers, which fight so shy of mentioning Mr. Foote. Even during the late "blasphemy" prosecution it was wonderful how little they knew of his action in the case. We congratulate the ablest of the Conservative papers on its liberality in this instance.

The friendly reader who sent us the *Morning Post* cutting wrote: "My only wish is that you may live to exclaim over the last senile gambols of the Church—'é finita la commedia!'" In another language, Rabelais would have called it a *sanglante comédie*. But we are forgetting our correspondent's good wish, for which we thank him.

Mr. F. A. Davies calls attention to a serious grievance. Disorderly conduct is too often permitted at open-air meetings in the London County Council parks. Mr. Davies had a very large and appreciative audience at Parliament Hill Fields on Sunday, yet it was nearly wrecked by one man, a local preacher named Cook, who had been speaking from the Christian Evidence Society's platform. This person beat the front of the Secular platform with his fists, and carried on generally like a raving maniac. Nevertheless, the park attendants, even when appealed to, showed considerable reluctance to interfere, and it was some time before the disturber was escorted outside. Fortunately, Mr. Davies had a good hold on the meeting, and was able to bring it to a dignified close; but he ought to have had the prompt assistance of the guardians of the public peace. There seems to be a concerted movement for breaking up Secular meetings. But it will not succeed, in spite of the supineness of the authorities.

Our recent article on "Thomas Paine and Old Age Pensions" is reproduced in the *New York Truthseeker*.

The Psychology of Conversion.

A CORRESPONDENT in the *British Weekly*, a short time ago, asked, "What is conversion, and how may it be attained?" And the Rev. David Smith devoted the whole of his correspondence column to an exposition of the subject of Conversion. Whether the questioner felt mentally or spiritually enlightened as the result of his effort, may be regarded as doubtful; but to anyone in the habit of looking beyond the mere language to the objects of thought, or the truths intended to be made clear, the answer was very far from being intellectually satisfactory.

The word "conversion," said Mr. Smith, means "turning about," and in the original suggests the image of a lost wanderer. Then follows an illustrative picture of "the pitiful Savior pursuing the wanderer, and calling after him: Turn ye, turn from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" And conversion, he said, "is just turning at the call and obeying it." But does the use of such figurative language really make us any wiser as to what conversion is? The literal act of "turning about" is one that is understood by everybody; but its metaphorical significance, as applied to a religious or mystical act, is not so easily grasped. The uncertainty involved in the phrase, the "truly" converted, and the varying views held by different sections of Christians as to the very nature of the act, shows that the fitness of the figure, as applied to such a mystical phenomenon, is not quite what Mr. Smith's fancy has painted it. Conversion, he says further, "is a personal matter, a surrender to the will and guidance of Jesus." Nevertheless, it is not wholly voluntary, since "conversion is the work of God." Man's freewill is thus dependent for its exercise in the matter upon the influence of divine power; but the responsibility for the unfinished work of God, strangely enough, does not rest with Him "whose ways are not our ways," but with man himself. This is not a very consoling doctrine for poor, frail humanity, but it is consonant with the Christian conception of "divine" justice. It is ever the wrong person who gets punished. Was the race not condemned to eternal misery because of Adam's sin? And was not Jesus Christ, the innocent, crucified for man's transgressions? It will thus be seen that the complaint of the unfortunate twin in the poem, that "when brother Jim was naughty they were sure to punish me," receives no sympathetic response from the ethics of Christian jurisprudence. It is quite in keeping with the divine "plan of redemption" that he should be wounded for Jim's transgressions. And so, when the Spirit of God fails to operate successfully in a man's conversion, the needs of divine justice require that the blame of the Spirit's failure be placed to man's account. When Mr. Smith says that conversion is the work of God, he is, of course, expressing the belief of the evangelical portion of Christendom; but the particular part that the Spirit of God plays in the "turning about" is as mysterious, presumably, as it is erratic. The theologian has always been content to cover his ignorance of the Spirit's method of working—and, at the same time, get credit for much wisdom—by a parrot-like repetition of the mystical utterance, "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whither it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." Why the Spirit should at one time rage like a howling tempest, as in a Welsh revival, and at another merely sigh in the gentle breeze, is one of those mysteries the attempted solution of which the theologian regards as evidence of profanity. The part, too, that the human being himself plays in this mysterious operation is not to be gathered either from Holy Writ or from the expositions of its divinely-appointed interpreters. Sometimes man is a passive, and sometimes an active, agent in the process, and sometimes a fellow-worker with the divine influence. But Mr.

Smith does not attempt to reduce to any kind of understandable order the chaos in which the subject of conversion is involved. Indeed, "confusion worse confounded" would be a fitting description of his reply to this correspondent. Because, having given a definition of conversion, he immediately loses sight of it and introduces a religious habit of mind, which he also calls conversion, although it has nothing in common with his definition.

Conversion, he says, "is a crisis, the turning-point of a man's life"; and he speaks of the converted being able "to look back to the hour when they made the great surrender and the light broke into their soul." But, he adds, it should be said with all emphasis that "this is not necessary. There are many who have no such remembrance; yet they are Christians." They did not pass through "any rude crisis in their spiritual experience, any painful transition 'out of darkness into light.'" Conversion is a "turning about," but these Christians were converted without turning about: it is a "crisis," but they experienced no such crisis. If anything is to be gathered from such language it is that "being converted" and "being a Christian" are not one and the same thing. The Christians whom Mr. Smith has in view, who dispensed with conversion, are those who "were consecrated by prayer and faith ere they were born, and nurtured in a godly atmosphere in a home which was a little sanctuary with an altar and a mercy-seat." That is to say, they were taken in their tender and most impressionable years and taught, as veritable truth, religious opinions which are a mere matter of geographical situation. They were nurtured in a powerful religious atmosphere the same as the Mohammedan or the Hindu, and accepted the religion of their home and country in just the same way as these benighted heathen. This kind of "conversion" is a universal phenomenon, and very far from being, as Mr. Smith alleges, "a distinctive idea of the New Testament." This, he thinks, is "the ideal sort of conversion"; and certainly it is the sort that Christianity depends upon for its numerical strength; the kind that is metaphorically described as "turning about," being of too exceptional a nature to take seriously into account. The very existence of a special class of missionaries and evangelists, who are often of a most emotional temperament, is evidence of the difficulty in bringing about this class of conversion; while the transient results of such emotional pressure are everywhere acknowledged by the more stolid section of Christendom. Those "millions of changed lives," which are said to result from such efforts, are not even poetic fiction; they have no basis in actual fact.

Mr. Smith's use of figurative speech exhibits a strange lack of coherence and fitness. Conversion means "turning to Jesus," and, he says, "we have need to be continually turning to Him." In speaking of a deceitful person as a "Mr. Facing-both-ways," the appositeness of the figure is apparent; but how anyone can be continually turning toward the same object is difficult to comprehend. In a literal sense, a person continually turning would only face a given object once every complete gyration. And to describe a definite mental attitude by such a figure as continuous revolution, is both inapt and meaningless—the two conceptions have no point of agreement. And this, be it observed, is the same Rev. Mr. Smith who recently received the honor of D.D. from the Glasgow University. But the merits upon which such a distinction was bestowed are certainly not in evidence in the correspondence column of the *British Weekly*, which he conducts. An old friend of ours once wrote an essay, entitled "Shall the Gutter teach the Schools?" and, considering the misuse of language on the part of such learned dignitaries, the schools, apparently, stand in some need of intellectual instruction.

What, then, is conversion, and how is it attained? If we dismiss the large percentage of converted Christians who were never converted—i.e., who never

"turned about"—we have a small residue of the "truly" converted who "were struck to the earth while on the way to Damascus, and beheld a great and shining light, and heard a voice," which changed them from being persecutors of the faith into earnest, believing, and enthusiastic propagandists. That the current of a person's life may be permanently changed by a "rude crisis" in their experience may be admitted as a fact, but that the result of such violent emotional upheavals is always of an elevating nature is open to very serious question. The volcanic type of conversion is perhaps best studied in connection with public revivals; and the injurious effects of such unhealthy excitement is most strongly condemned by Dr. Starbuck in his very painstaking and instructive book on religious phenomena. "The most glaring danger," he says, "is found in the emotionalism and excitement of religious revival. The effect is to produce a state of mere feeling which, when it passes, leaves no spiritual residuum, and often drives person's to irrational conduct." As to the methods employed in producing "conviction of sin, etc.," he observes that "one of the forces working in revivals is that of suggestion and hypnotism. The tactics used by the revivalists are in many respects similar to those of the hypnotists." Commenting upon the magnetic influence that is seen to operate in "the crowd," he further says that "the force of the popular mind in religious movements is not to be distinguished from its exercise in political campaigns, in battle, in mobs and strikes. Everyone who is familiar with the methods of revivalists knows how perfectly they coincide with those of 'the leaders of men' described by M. Le Bon." The question, therefore, as to how conversion is brought about, admits of a sufficiently intelligible explanation upon psychological lines, without having recourse to the mystical phraseology of the theologian, which is merely the solution of superstition. As an illustration of what conversion is, the instances given by Dr. Starbuck of the disposition and habits of animals being momentarily changed by some "rude crisis in their experience"—of vicious horses becoming gentle, and docile creatures becoming wicked—are none the less instructive because they have reference to the animal world. Because, as Dr. Draper remarks, the only path to a scientific human psychology is through that of comparative psychology.

We would not lose sight of the fact that some conversions undoubtedly do take place when, apparently, there are no external influences at work. But when we consider the important part that the *sub-conscious* plays in our psychic life, there seems no reason to doubt that the exalted state of religious feeling experienced is due to antecedent causes of which the subject has no conscious knowledge, or which he has unwittingly forgotten. There is no more instructive part of Dr. Starbuck's work than that which deals with "conversion as a normal human experience." And his inquiry as to whether there are, among the so-called natural—i.e., non-religious—experiences, phenomena analogous to those which appear in each stage of conversion, is certainly subversive of the belief that conversion is "the work of God."

When Mr. Smith says that conversion is a "supreme necessity," he is merely expressing the opinion of that section of Christendom which believes as he does, because, as the same diligent investigator observes, "there are some Christian Churches which have never taught the doctrine of conversion." And where the antecedent influences are not at work to produce the conditions necessary to the phenomena, naturally the phenomena does not occur.

The same orderly sequence of events that obtains in the physical world obtains also in the spheres of feeling and thought. The reign of law is as unquestionable in the mental as it is in the material world, and to introduce a "supernatural" hypotheses to account for the phenomena of conversion is as unwarrantable as it is unscientific. It is not to the theologian that we must apply for "light and

truth" on this very complex subject, but to the scientist—to the psychologist. As the theologian was in error in his interpretation of the earth's history and movements; as he was mistaken in regard to man's origin and nature; as he was wrong in attributing disease and plague to divine visitation, so is he also wrong in supposing conversion to be brought about by supernatural means. Conversion, ecstasy, trance, and such-like phenomena, are problems in the domain of psychology. Theology can only stand helplessly by while science is collecting data for the formation of rational conclusions—impotent to furnish anything toward their explanation other than the shibboleths of superstition.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

The National Secular Society's Conference.

THE National Secular Society's Annual Conference, among its other advantages, provides an opportunity for a renewal of acquaintanceship between Freethinkers from all parts of the country. And, when all is said, the opportunity for such meetings, with the strengthening of the consciousness that members of the N. S. S. are all parts of a common movement, united in the bonds of an unselfish ideal, is certainly not the least valuable feature of such a gathering. Geographically, too, a better situation than Manchester could hardly have been chosen, and one saw there most of the old attendants at Conferences, as well as many newcomers. Delegates were present from Aberdare, Birmingham, Huddersfield, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Nelson, Newcastle, South Shields, Wigan, etc., and from a number of the London Branches. Many well-known Freethinkers from various parts of the country were also present in their capacity of private members.

Good sense, good feeling, and general harmony were the outstanding features of the 1908 Conference. The formal business of the meeting was quickly dispatched, and, no one finding any reason why the Society should have a less useful man for President in 1908-9 than it had had in 1907-8, Mr. G. W. Foote was re-elected after suitable speeches from some of the delegates. The reply of the new-old President, thanking the Society for its renewed confidence, was, as usual, all that could be desired.

"Who wants to wear a badge?" was the query raised by the report of the sub-committee *re* a badge for the Society. Miss Vance presented the report, and expressed herself in cordial agreement with those who disliked the design selected by the sub-committee. In the midst of a series of uncomplimentary comments on the proposed badge, peace was restored by the suggestion, "Why not a Pansy?" It is the emblem of Freethought all over the continent, and is, withal, pretty. Eventually it was resolved that a Pansy, fashioned in the Bradlaugh colors, should be prepared as a badge for all those desiring to wear it. How many will so desire remains to be seen.

A more serious matter was raised by the Birmingham motion that the National Secular Society should be reconstructed on the lines of the Secular Society, Limited, and registered in a similar manner. It was thought that in this way the legal disabilities at present affecting the Society would be overcome, while the fact of the Society offering legal security for the receiving and expenditure of money might induce many to give while living instead of benefiting the movement by legacy. The motion had its commendatory features, but it possessed many disadvantages, and delegates were not slow in pointing these out. A final statement from the President clinched the whole matter. The idea of registering the National Secular Society had, he explained, occurred to him from the beginning, but after careful reflection he decided that it was not practicable. The legal disadvantages of the N. S. S. were many, but as things were there were compensating features. It was not tied down as an incorporated body would be, and it could do things in defiance of the law that a registered body could not do. It would, for instance, have been impossible for the Secular Society, Limited, to have undertaken the defence in the recent blasphemy prosecution. The N. S. S. could do as it pleased in the matter. Being a non-legal body, it possessed nothing and could lose nothing. If in the eye of the law the N. S. S. had no corporate existence, it would have no corporate responsibility, and while the Blasphemy Laws remained there were great advantages in this. The serious difficulty the N. S. S. had labored under was want of funds. This had now been overcome by the formation of the Secular Society, Limited, while the relation of the two bodies was secured by the fact that the directorate was composed of

N. S. S. members. So long as this arrangement was maintained the relations of the two bodies on their present footing was secured. And if members of the N. S. S. joined the other body in sufficient numbers there was no likelihood of the arrangement being disturbed. Having considered the matter further, after some little discussion the motion was withdrawn by the delegates who had it in hand.

Motions such as those for the establishment of Sunday-schools, the association of the N. S. S. with the International League for the Rational Education of Children, and the continued engagement of an Organising Lecturer, afforded little room for a difference of opinion. They all involved questions of ways and means, and after a few remarks by various speakers, the matter was referred to the Executive to be dealt with during the forthcoming year. Secular Sunday-schools is certainly a subject that calls for attention, and no doubt if the difficulty of gathering the children together over somewhat wide areas could be overcome, suitable teachers would volunteer their services. In this matter the Executive might be assisted by offers of help and by suggestions from those who are favorable to such a development.

The Executive's motion—

"That this Conference expresses astonishment at the fact that the Liberal Government, with its overwhelming majority in the House of Commons, has brought in no less than three Education Bills in two years, having dropped two of them, and apparently being by way of dropping the other—which is a scandal to statesmanship; that this Conference desires to record its opinion that these three Bills were all devised by Nonconformists in the interest of Nonconformity, and thus deserved to fail; and that this Conference warns the friends of Secular Education throughout the country against the danger of the proposed Round Table Conference, by which the supporters of religious education at State cost, with State authority, in State schools, hope to arrive at some compromise that may secure the great Christian Churches special privileges to the disadvantage of all the rest of the Community."

raised a question of immediate practical importance. It was moved by the President, who pointed out that the proposed Round Table Conference contained the promise of a danger that all friends of Secular Education must try to avert. The whole difficulty was, as always, a religious difficulty; and nearly the whole interest of the religious parties in the dispute was a religious interest. The special danger now confronting us was that Churchmen and Nonconformist, each despairing of getting all that each desired, would patch up a compromise giving to them the utmost obtainable at the moment, thus trampling underfoot the legitimate rights of the remainder of the community. In the Round Table Conference, Secularists, even if invited, could take no part. Any Conference that did not take as a settled principle the complete neutrality of the State in religious matters was, so far as we were concerned, a farce. An arrangement patched up between two religious bodies only meant a repetition of sectarian wrangling and the general hindrance of educational reform. In this matter, it seemed that Freethinkers were about the only ones that could be trusted. They had a clear principle at stake and one that did not admit of barter.

A useful topic was raised by Motion 15, regretting that a Liberal Government had once again sanctioned a prosecution for "blasphemy," and suggesting the formation of a committee—apart from the N. S. S.—aiming at the repeal of the Blasphemy Laws. Many people who are not identified with any Freethought movement might be induced to cooperate in such an endeavor, while the formation of a strong committee with the names of people belonging to all shades of opinion might induce members of Parliament to act in the matter. The Blasphemy Laws are a relic of mediæval barbarism, and as such ought to be swept on one side. It was also suggested that the names of prominent people in various parts of the country who would be likely to join such a movement might be sent up to the N. S. S. Executive.

Sunday Laws form another barbaric survival, and this question was raised by Mr. Cohen, on behalf of the Executive, in connection with the closing of the Franco-British Exhibition on Sundays. To open a huge International Exhibition at enormous expense, invite Frenchmen to come as visitors, was both an absurdity and an insult. At home, French people were accustomed to be treated as rational beings, capable of visiting an art exhibition without running any particular moral danger, and their opinion of English people and English manners would certainly not be heightened by finding the doors of the Exhibition closed against them. The educative effect on our own people of the opening of the Exhibition would also be great. The Sabbatarian Sunday had undoubtedly been responsible for much of the drunken habits of the English people, and it was noticeable that a decline of Sabbatarianism had been attended by an improvement in manners and by an increase of sobriety. Mr. Imre Kiralfy had publicly stated that if the commissioners received an adequate expression of public opinion

they would open the Art section of the Exhibition to the public. The difficulty was to secure an organised expression of opinion. It was suggested, therefore, that members of Trades Unions, Clubs, Friendly Societies, and other bodies should work to get resolutions passed in favor of the Sunday opening of the Exhibition, while voters might also see what might be done by badgering their local M.P. If attention were given to this, it was within the bounds of possibility that London might see the greatest Exhibition ever held in this country open on Sunday during the last three months of its existence.

A motion advocating cremation, and recommending the Executive to devise some arrangements whereby deceased Freethinkers might receive an interment in accordance with their professed opinions, with a vote of thanks to the Manchester Branch for entertaining the Conference, brought the proceedings to a harmonious close. The proceedings, while not of an exciting character, had been helpful and encouraging. The report of the past year had been, on the whole, cheering; and the prospects for the future were hopeful. With enlarged financial resources, and a development of the spirit of co-operation, organised Freethought may easily become a force with which politicians will soon have to reckon.

C. C.

Correspondence.

INTERNATIONAL MORAL EDUCATION CONGRESS.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—We are requested by the executive committee of the International Moral Education Congress to call the attention of your readers to the First International Moral Education Congress, which will be held in the University of London from the 25th to the 29th of September next, and for which active preparations have been for some time in progress.

The general committee of the Congress, under the presidency of M. Léon Bourgeois, late Premier of France, is constituted of over 300 persons, representative of the educational thought of our time in the leading countries of the civilised world, more especially Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and the United States of America. There are in no less than sixteen countries secretaries of considerable educational standing actively engaged in securing an adequate representation of their several countries at the Congress. The executive committee, of which the chairman and vice-chairman are respectively Mrs. Sophie Bryant and Professor J. W. Adamson, is composed of practical educationists representing the widest varieties of thought on educational matters. Finally, the Congress has the great distinction of having received the good wishes of His Majesty the King, and of being under the patronage of the Ministers of Education for England, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, and other countries.

The Congress has an essentially practical object in view, that of improving the moral education offered in schools. To attain this object, the organisers have appealed for support to educationists and to education officials the world over. Almost all the educational leaders of Europe, without distinction of religion or party, and a large number of the highest educational officials in many countries, have responded to this appeal, and have welcomed the holding of the Congress. The accession of these administrators is of special importance, since only the co-operation of Governments can ensure the realisation of the suggestion which may be expected from the Conference.

This is the first of a proposed series of International Congresses dealing with the problems of moral education. Accordingly, this Congress restricts itself in the main to a general survey of school problems from a moral point of view. Matters of school organisation, of methods of training and teaching, of discipline, of direct and indirect moral instruction, of the relation of moral education to religious, intellectual, aesthetic, and physical education, will be discussed; and everything is being done to get the ablest specialists to read papers, most of which will afterwards appear in the report, and should supply invaluable data for the furtherance of moral education all over the world.

It devolves upon our country to undertake the main organisation of this Congress and to be responsible for the greater part of the expenditure requisite for its success. We would, accordingly, appeal Sir, with your permission, for the most generous encouragement your readers can bestow. On the extent of the financial support will partly depend how far the large intentions of the promoters of the Congress can be realised, and it is, therefore, hoped that adequate response may be forthcoming.

Donations, which are urgently needed, may be sent to Messrs. Robarts, Lubbock and Co., 15 Lombard-street, E.C.;

to the Hon. Treasurer, Lord Avebury; or to the General Secretary, Gustav Spiller, 13 Buckingham-street, Strand. Further information about the Congress will be gladly supplied by the general secretary.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,
AVEBURY, Hon. Treasurer.

Vice-Presidents.

The Right Hon. Arthur Herbert Dyke Acland, P.C.; Sir William R. Anson, Bart., Warden of All Souls' College, Oxford; Sir Edward H. Busk, Chairman of Convocation and Past Vice-Chancellor of the University of London; Sir William J. Collins, Vice-Chancellor of the University of London; Sir James Donaldson, Principal of the University of St. Andrews; Lord E. G. Fitzmaurice, Under Secretary of State; Dr. John Marshall Lang, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Aberdeen University; Sir Oliver Lodge, Principal of the University of Birmingham; Sir Philip Magnus, M.P. for the University of London; Dr. T. F. Roberts, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wales; Prof. Dr. Michael E. Sadler; Dr. Anthony Traill, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin.

PALM SUNDAY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Could any of your readers inform me of the name of the author of that beautiful picture representing the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? I should like to write to him, for I'm fond of art and I simply dote on most of this picture. We have the road, the palms, the ass, the two young Nazarenes leading the ass, and, above all, Jesus. Surely the whole conception is marred by the presence of those two young men. To my mind, those two young fellows leading the ass, in their rather shrunk "nighties," spoil the picture. When we consider that Jesus could walk on the water with his bare feet, and when we regard those feet and note that they are a fair-sized pair of well matched, well spread, flat feet; and when we consider that this feat was, or were, performed without the assistance of cork soles or pneumatic sandals; when we, I say, consider this, and we consider that he could send a herd of swine running down a steep place into the sea, simply by his voice, then I ask, why those two fellows in their "nighties"? What are they there for? Surely he ought to be able to keep his ass on the move by a blow or two from those fair-sized flat feet, or from shying by a bark or *schweins-piel* from that useful voice. I want to ask the artist to repaint the conception, for the sake of old and young—especially the young—for they sometimes laugh at it and become tainted with the foul canker of irreligion.

MARTHA (a mother of seven).

P.S.—There is no truth in the rumor that the seven were devils.

Iconoclasts' Cricket Club Second Match

V. Figaro Cricket Club.

THE above match was played on our ground in delightful weather, and resulted in a victory for the Iconoclasts by 15 runs. Our team showed capital all-round form, and fully deserved their victory.

A gratifying feature was the presence of a large number of spectators, who were greatly interested in what proved to be a most exciting game. Many ladies, too, were present, and thus added a dash of color to the already picturesque surroundings.

Our opponents, although defeated, were greatly pleased with our ground, and expressed sympathy with the aims of the I. C. C.

When we left the ground we passed an open-air "mission," and the sloppy faces of the participators showed a marked contrast to the healthy, athletic features of the Iconoclasts.

H. E. VOIGT, Captain I. C. C.

Obituary.

WE much regret to have to announce the death of Miss Mary Spedding, of Newcastle, the daughter of a very old-time Secularist, Mr. Peter Spedding, who was connected with the local movement in the old Bradlaugh days. Miss Spedding was only twenty-seven years old, and for some years previous had been seriously ailing. She was very well known to all the Newcastle workers, and it was her illness alone that reduced her activity. She was a bright, intelligent girl, and quite free from any trace of superstition. She desired a Secular funeral, and on Tuesday, June 2, a good number of sympathisers gathered round her graveside to do tribute to her memory. Mr. W. Wright read an appropriate Service.—T. H. E.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. Schaller, "What Christians Believe?" Brockwell Park, 3.15, F. R. Theakstone; 6.15, F. Schaller, "Christianity v. Science."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, H. B. Samuels, "Bible Miracles."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30 and 6.30, C. Cohen.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, A. Allison, a Lecture.

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

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

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): Social meeting, Thursdays, at 8.15.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S.: Corner of Shiel-road and Boaler-street, Sidney Wollen, 3, "The Rival Gods of Theology"; 7, "What Shall We Do with Jesus?"

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S.: Town Moor (near North-road entrance), H. S. Wishart, 11, "Ballard, Blatchford, and the Bottom Dog"; Near Military Sports Stand, 7, "From Christism to Atheism."

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

LEEDS: Friday, June 19, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, Bible Readings—"Bad Points in Christ."

NELSON: Tuesday, June 23, at 7.30, "The Morality of Jesus Christ."

WIGAN: Wednesday, June 24, Market Steps, at 7.30, "Rev. Rhonnda Williams' Useless Christ."

WARRINGTON: Thursday, June 25, at 7.30, "Jesus Christ a Blind Guide."

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