

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Time will not be ours for ever :
He at length our good will sever.
Spend not then his gifts in vain.
Suns that set may rise again ;
But if once we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetual night.*

—BEN JONSON.

“Real Christianity.”

LAST week's *New Age*—a Socialist paper, apparently written by “intellectuals” for “intellectuals”—contained a review of Mr. Philip Vivian's powerful book, *The Churches and Modern Thought*, which was noticed in our own last issue, and which we hope will enjoy an extensive circulation in its present wonderfully cheap form. In the course of the review, our contemporary, while praising the critical part of Mr. Vivian's book, poured scorn on what it called “his proposed alternative to Christianity.” “Personally,” the reviewer, who is probably the editor, said, “we had rather live in the atmosphere of the most benighted Church than in the atmosphere of moral systematisers. The superstitious are at heart more human than the doctrinaires.” More human, are they? Well, they are not more humane—as Mr. Orage would find if he ever fell into their hands, after falling under their displeasure. But we have no right, and no intention, to object to this gentleman's personal preferences. Those who were brought up in a “benighted Church” may easily prefer it to other utopias than their own. It is so common to hark back to early affections.

All that, however, is by the way. What we wish to deal with is the extraordinary statement that “no alternative to real Christianity will ever be needed.” Here again, as we have had more than one occasion to remark lately, and in much the same connection, Dr. Johnson's dictum is illustrated that the adjective is the natural enemy of the noun. Mr. Orage would not dare to say that no alternative to *Christianity* would ever be needed. He knows better than that. Accordingly he slips in the word “real.” No alternative will ever be needed to “*real Christianity*.” We agree with him. “*Real Christianity*” is a perfectly meaningless expression. Nobody can say what another person intends by it. Naturally, therefore, it cannot figure in an alternative. You cannot have an alternative to an unintelligibility.

Children come up to one in the street and ask for “the right time.” There is no right time—and there is no wrong time. The time is the time. Children should be taught to ask for “the time” simply. Foolish people may call this pedantic. But there is no pedantry in encouraging accurate speech. And accurate speech reacts upon the mind, producing a more scrupulous intelligence—which is one of the greatest *disiderata* in the present age of fluent tongues and flabby thinking.

Mr. Orage reminds us—we mean, in this instance—of the children who ask for “the right time.” He talks about “real Christianity.” What does he mean? Does he really mean anything? Christianity

is Christianity. At least, it should be. And what is not Christianity is not Christianity. Which is the end of the matter.

What a reflection it is on this astonishing faith that even now, after it has been in the world nearly two thousand years, nobody is able to obtain assurance as to what it is, and when it is mentioned in newspaper articles the writers have to guard themselves against misconception by putting a vague, non-committal adjective before it. If this religion be of divine origin, and if it has, as we are told, been divinely supported from the very first, and will be so to the very end, its meaning ought to be clearly established. Yet it is still fiercely debated. Protestants denounce Catholics as idolators, and Catholics denounce Protestants as heretics. Then the Protestants split up amongst themselves into scores of sects, and denounce each other with pious ferocity. Ask them what Christianity is, and they all give different answers. There is not a single article of belief on which they are all agreed. And what they differ about must be of vital importance, unless they are the most quarrelsome people on earth.

The Pope of Rome teaches one thing as Christianity, and calls himself God's viceregent in this world. The Archbishop of Canterbury teaches another thing as Christianity, and declares the Pope, as God's vicegerent, to be a rank impostor. Each thinks the other wrong, and it is doubtful if either of them thinks the other is going to heaven. The Nonconformists regard both the Pope and the Archbishop as wretched pretenders, and teach quite another thing as Christianity. And the Nonconformists themselves, while they act together politically and socially through their Free Church Councils, cannot act with each other religiously, any more than they can act religiously with the Catholic Church or the Church of England. There is no unanimity, and beneath the surface there is no affection. They “love one another” with a most bitter love. They remind us of the Aristocrat and the Revolutionist. “We are brothers,” said the former. “Yes,” said the latter, “like Cain and Abel.”

And now on the top of this Tower of Babel the Socialist editor of the *New Age* flies a new flag of “real Christianity.” All the Christian sects on the lower floors are wrong. They must be, or why the adjective? Mr. Orage has got the real thing. But he does not tell us what it is. He talks about “the kernel of the Christian doctrine” which has “been obscured by the textual, historical, and theological husks” of “foolish fanatics and worldlings.” But “kernel” is only a word. What does it mean in this particular connection? What is the kernel of Christianity? And if Mr. Orage were to give an answer, how many Christians would it satisfy besides himself?

The issue may be narrowed down. Mr. Orage appears to agree with Mr. Vivian on the critical side of his work. What is attacked by Mr. Vivian may be dismissed. But what is left? Nothing. And apparently that is “real Christianity.”

Perhaps it was worth while boring down to the bed-rock. We know where we are now.

G. W. FOOTE.

Quickening the Pace.

IN reading Mr. H. G. Wells's *New Worlds for Old* and reflecting upon its lively and graphic anticipations of our planet as transformed by Socialism, I was peculiarly sensible of the quickened pace at which political ideas now march. I cannot say I count Mr. Wells a first-class philosopher. He seizes upon modern Socialism as he would seize upon radium, or airships, or electric cooking devices. It is all so much admirable material for a novel or a six-shilling popular essay. He writes as if policy was shaped mainly by journalists. Of the passionate, resolute, devoted efforts of the men and women in the common ranks of the Labor Movement he takes no special account. Yet such people represent the bulk of the world's population, and the Middle-class whom Mr. Wells chiefly addresses are in a marked minority. Nor do I find in this clever essayist's work any indications of a strong historic sense. Of course, he knows the Greeks and Romans, and is aware that the Middle Ages covered a thousand years of European evolution. But his consciousness of this immense past is a very light part of his equipment. He is vastly more taken up with the future milk-supply than with Cæsar or Milton. I also am interested in the future milk-supply, and all the other problems so brilliantly discussed in *New Worlds for Old*. But it is my firm conviction that a strong historical background enables the mind,—the most nimble, practical, Fabian mind,—to deal more effectively with the issues of the present day, from education down to milk, boots, and electric cookery.

However, I do not intend here to debate either Mr. Wells's Socialism or his philosophy. What struck me in his book was the speed and concentration of energy devoted to questions of economics and government. Plato wrote his *Republic* at leisure, and the dialogue served as an agreeable subject of supper-table chat for ages afterwards, nobody attempting to realise any of its hints. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* likewise afforded material for literary chit-chat rather than for the council-chamber of the State. Nobody hurried until the French Revolution. And now Mr. Wells's agility of thought is typical of civilisation itself. Not only do we all think more furiously than our fathers. We think with our eye on substantial objects. We reckon a dream poor unless it works out in Garden Cities, public bake-houses, free colleges, and municipal theatres. And while we plan and talk, the Western world, the Colonies and Japan are incessantly occupied with turning theory into practice. A generation ago, Old Age Pensions furnished topics for amateur parliaments and the loungers. To-day we are arranging our sliding-scale of so many shillings per week, and septuagenarians may now safely borrow on the strength of next year's allowance. We shall nationalise the English railroads soon, and the day after, almost forgetting the battle with the shareholders, we shall hasten to the next socialisation. For example, Mr. Wells sketches out the activity of the "Mind of the Civilised State,"—that wonderful spiritual power,—that machine of opinion,—which is to administer affairs in the shining To-morrow. He portrays a series of workers,—the author, the preacher, the medical investigator, the specialised man of science, and he adds:—

"A great and growing multitude of men will be working out the Apparatus of the Civilised State the students of transit and housing, the engineers in their incessantly increasing variety, the miners and geologists estimating the world's resources in metals and minerals, the mechanical inventors perpetually economising force. The scientific agriculturist, again, will be studying the food supply of the world as a whole, and how it may be increased and distributed and economised. And to the student of law....."

And so on, like Homer's catalogue of the ships, or Walt Whitman's breathless recitals of social energies and dramatic scenes. This is not a mere paper program. We all know that the united impulses of

our planet are plunging in one immense effort of economic reconstruction. It is as if past ages had descended the hill of Destiny like an enormous glacier, apparently motionless, yet in reality tending without pause to its goal in the vale, and now, under the influence of a new and genial air, the thick-ribbed ice is loosened from its bonds, and giant rivers go foaming down pasture lands towards the illimitable sea. Our century is at the melting point, and the sound of many waters deafens the ear.

I will not press that image too closely. To my mind, the evolution of mankind has proceeded inevitably through all the centuries. Amid errors of thought, political confusions, religious dissension and persecution, massacres and rebellions and bloody revenges, the inherent common-sense of the race has increasingly asserted itself, and travelled in a splendidly fatal line towards the day of universal industry and peace. The pagoda, the mosque, the pyramid, the temple, the cathedral have all contributed their part to the general procession of ideas. We of to-day are heirs, not immigrants into a strange land. The music of the passing hour has rich undertones of antiquity. Our fathers moved slowly, but surely, and we owe them an everlasting debt.

But what has quickened the pace?

The significant factor has been the decay of theology.

Theology was a sort of inexhaustible reserve fund for the politician of the past. Faced with difficult questions from the people, he appealed to the will of God. If the king overstepped the limits of his fair privilege, the people were reminded that God established monarchy. When bread ran short, the Church made rapid calculations, and assured the people that the tables of God groaned beneath a load of provisions. To the cry of earthly suffering, theology replied that in God's heaven no tears would flow. Of course, there was, often enough, conscious fraud in these proclamations from the church steps. But I am not disposed to severe judgment. I was once Christian myself, and the divine scheme seemed, for a time at any rate, sufficiently natural. The narrow science of the Middle Ages was obliged to use theology and its scanty consolations until a larger knowledge and riper experience created a new politics. The Nineteenth Century beheld the vital change. Comte, Strauss, Renan, Wellhausen and the rest of the giants of the study, assisted by the popular Free-thought movement in the West, and the semi-Rationalistic character of Chartism, Radicalism, Republicanism, and other such agitations, finally rendered the position of the Gods untenable. The Gods linger indeed, but as caretakers only, with the notice to quit nailed to the doors. So long as the vista of heaven stretched before the eyes of pain, it could endure the excessive deliberation of the Church and State. But the dream faded with the death of the last century. An after-glow still deceives the eyes of the more ignorant. To the mass of intelligent citizens the problem of the soul has shifted to the earth. Not long ago, we rested in the aisles, and listened to the long-drawn chant of the choir,—

"We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the City which is to come."

But now we have become aware of the actuality of the human problem. No longer do we wait for translation to the place of some divine drama. The theatre has suddenly flashed into visible reality on all sides. We run to the stage to play our parts, and never again shall we be content to watch the shadowy performances of angels.

F. J. GOULD.

A Guide for Those who Pray.

It is high time that there should exist some recognised manual of the art of prayer. There are, of course, many books, and portions of books recommending prayer, just as there exists many accounts of the wonderful results that have ensued in answer

to prayer. But I do not think there are many—I must confess my total ignorance in this direction—of directions how and where to pray. Now this is a serious omission. If one goes in for swimming, boating, fishing, or general gymnastics, there are volumes giving elaborate directions both as to materials that are to be obtained and the methods that should be employed. But in the matter of prayer affairs are in a state of chaos. Beyond the general advice "go and pray" nearly everything is left to the discretion of the petitioner. The result is, in a word, confusion. If a chart is needed for a twelve-and-sixpenny set of Sandow's apparatus, surely there should exist a recognised guide for the benefit of those who "wrestle with the Lord."

My opinion might, of course, be suspect. I am therefore pleased to support it with an elaborate article by the Rev. J. H. Jowett—contributed to the *Christian World*, in which he attempts an outline of a text-book of the kind suggested. He points out that the Churches were "never so busy," their energies "never so multiplied" as now, and yet the practice of prayer—particularly private prayer—is on the decline. And with commendable shrewdness he opines that this is because we pray without method and irregularly. The want of method results in wasted effort, the irregularity prevents the formation of a proper habit. With a strong conviction of the value of prayer, and with a clear conception of the way in which the reform is to be accomplished, Mr. Jowett lays his proposal before the public.

His first rule is "Let every man appoint fixed times of communion with the Lord." The suggestion has common sense on the face of it. If one wishes to interview a Cabinet Minister it is useless rushing up to the House of Commons with a demand to see the Right Hon. So-and-so. One would be told that the Right. Hon. gentleman does not see visitors in this promiscuous manner; a meeting must be arranged, a time appointed, and then the interview may take place. A Cabinet Minister is, theoretically, a busy man, but after all he has at most the population of the British Empire to consider. And if he cannot give his personal attention to anyone without due notice, it is assuredly the height of folly to expect attention at any time or place from one whose *clientele* embraces the whole of the human race. The advice, therefore, to appoint fixed times for communion with the Lord is practical and sound. Each one should make it known that I, John Smith, of such and such an address and denomination, hereby appoint 9.30 a.m.—or some other hour—at which I am at home to a divine visitation. By this means there can be no doubt and no confusion. Rule Number One is admirable.

Rule Number Two follows as a matter of course. This is "Have a fixed place where prayer is wont to be made." Clearly, to appoint a time without naming the place would, in the phraseology of Euclid, be absurd. It raises visions of the aforesaid John Smith being hunted from place to place by the divine influence or personage, only to be discovered when the time for communion has passed. To know where one is to be found is quite as important as knowing when one is to be found. As Mr. Jowett wisely says: "If we have regular appointments with him.....our souls reveal a certain bias and expectancy, and they are watchful for his appearing." I admit the latter portion of the sentence is not quite as definite as it might be. Hotspur could call spirits from the vasty deep; the important thing was, would they come? That our souls may be expectant and watchful may be true enough, but that does not quite decide the point; will he keep the appointment. Still, the rules are sound—fix a time, name a place, keep the appointment yourself, and then all the rest of the responsibility will rest with the other contracting party.

Wise counsel accompanies the next rule, "Let a man remember the subtle interaction between his body and his soul." To begin with, it is well to be quite certain that one has a soul. Many people display a deplorable uncertainty on the point, and

are still more uncertain as to its relation to the body. Mr. Jowett, it must be confessed, does not throw much light on the point, since he neither explains what the soul is nor what are its relations to the body. Still, he says, remember their relations, never mind what they are, remember them. The word "subtle" is, too, a master stroke. The sentence contains no more information with it than it would contain without it, but it *looks* more. It suggests an overpowering, comprehensive knowledge calculated to check criticism and inspire confidence.

Part of this subtle interaction has to do with the bodily position assumed during prayer. "It is possible," we are told, "to kneel in a way which induces drowsiness; it is possible to kneel so as to make the soul wonderfully alert and receptive." Quite so. One can readily imagine that to assume a comfortable position on a hot day, with eyes closed and mouth just sufficiently open, would result in a termination of the petition with a snore. It has even been known that too long drawn-out prayers in church or chapel has resulted in a considerable amount of sleeping among the assembled congregation. By all means we must avoid a position that will invite drowsiness. The thing is, as Mr. Jowett says, to keep alert and receptive. For this purpose I would suggest that an ordinary footstool carefully but adequately packed with tin tacks—business ends upwards—would be most effective. The man who knelt on that would not only be secure from drowsiness, but he would find his flow of language markedly improved. This plan would not work in the case of the reverend bishop quoted, who always stood when he prayed; but his case might be met by the old religious plan of filling the shoes with good, hard peas.

It will not do, either, as Mr. Jowett points out, to imitate those who "flop upon their knees, for the flippant act encourages flippancy in the spirit." Once more I find myself in agreement with this illuminating writer. To waltz gaily into a room, "flop" upon one's knees, and go through one's prayers with the ease and gaiety with which one calls up a telephone exchange is to wreck all sobriety of thought and sedateness of character. One should not fix a time and a place, in order to end up with the airy "Are you there?" of the telephone call-box. Obviously the proper method is to enter the appointed place in the spirit that one approaches the chair of a dental operator—afraid of what may come, and yet nerved to face the worst. Don't flop, don't be flippant, don't sleep, are three golden rules for all who would pray in a really effective manner.

Rule Number Four runs, "Let a man attune his mind and soul to spacious thoughts and feelings." This is a most important rule. I once saw the advice in a Presbyterian paper to be definite and precise in one's prayers. But this has its drawbacks. Suppose one prays for Richard Jones to be cured of an illness, and Richard Jones dies. Of course, the godly know that the prayer has been answered by the Lord taking Richard Jones to a place where illness can no longer affect him. But this will not stop the ungodly scoffing. They, with their carnal minds fixed on concrete instances, will cite poor Jones's death as a proof of the folly of prayer. Therefore, the more general and spacious the feelings and the prayers the better. Instead of praying that a particular person may be cured, pray that those suffering from disease may be cured. In this case we have only to search among a moderately large circle of cases to be able to point to at least one clear answer to our petition. Don't pray for rain at a given time; that would be folly. The wise course is to pray that rain, if needed, will come in the "Lord's good time"; then we are tolerably certain to get an answer—sooner or later. Certainly the wise course is to keep one's thoughts "spacious." The wider, the more general, the more diffuse, the better.

I regret to say it, but Rule Number Five, and last, does not seem to be quite free from guile. This runs—"Let a man take care that the circle of his petitions grows wider every week." Now, I trust I

am mistaken, yet I cannot but think there is an air of worldly wisdom about this advice that consorts ill with the character of one who sets out to provide a practical guide for prayer. Presumably the reverend gentleman's unstated reasoning runs somewhat in this wise. To ask for a lot at once might well secure a refusal. The demand would be too extravagant, the order too large, and the result would be *nil*. Let us therefore proceed with diplomacy. A simple little request may serve as an introduction; it could not, indeed, be refused without an air of ungraciousness. Then little by little, week by week, let us become surely, but insensibly, more exacting. The advance of one week on another may be trifling—not sufficiently large to invite comment or refusal; but the cumulative effect will be great. Our regular appointment will secure continuity of attention; our equally regular increase will secure a larger and larger return for the outlay. In this way we shall capture the kingdom of heaven, if not by storm, then by guile, and plant ourselves on the divine bounty as an inescapable pensioner. Oh, wily Mr. Jowett! veiling beneath the innocence of the dove the wiliness of the serpent, and beneath the mask of the philanthropist the astuteness of the Stock Exchange operator.

As a prayer's *vade mecum*, Mr. Jowett's essay is unique, and compels admiration. Humbly he begins by requesting an interview at a certain time and place. This granted, the interview is converted into a regular weekly institution. That no chance is to be lost, the petitioner is warned not to permit himself to take a nap during the interview. To silence critics, prayers are to be couched in a general and spacious form. And once having established the connection, we are to increase our demands week by week. As a species of divine blackmail, nothing could be more admirably arranged. There is genius written all over it. May it meet with its due reward.

C. COHEN.

The Facts of Christianity.

FACTS are stubborn things and should be treated with the utmost respect. Theories are utterly worthless unless suggested and favored by undoubted facts. Science glories in its facts, and all its hypotheses have a factual basis. Theology also boasts of its facts, and is constantly appealing to them for support. The facts to which the theologian refers are of two kinds: external and internal, or historical and experimental. We intend to examine these two kinds of Christian facts with some care in order to discover whether they are facts or fictions.

Christianity is said to be resting upon a series of historical facts. These are the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection. But have these events ever literally taken place? Is the evidence for them conclusive? Incarnation signifies the act of being invested or united with flesh. Something that is not flesh enters into flesh and makes it its tabernacle. But can it be proved that such an act has ever transpired? We hear a great deal about the existence of an immortal soul in man, which is the one thing that differentiates him from the beasts of the field; but we maintain that the existence of the soul has never been established. There are myriads of people who do not believe in it, and are convinced that nothing immaterial resides in us. All we know is that man is a thinking, feeling, and acting machine; and there is absolutely nothing to show that he is anything more. But if it cannot be proved that man has a soul, how much less can it be proved that he is an incarnation of the Deity? The saying is, that there is something Divine in every human being, or that in every man the Divine Being becomes really, if incompletely and imperfectly, incarnate. Now, if this partial incarnation of Deity in every man cannot be established as an undeniable fact, how on earth are you going to prove his full, complete, and final incarnation in

Jesus Christ? There is not the tiniest scrap of evidence that Jesus, if he ever lived, differed in the slightest essential respect from other men. Is it not clear, then, that the Incarnation is not a fact, but a doctrine, not an event, but a theory unverified by a single ascertained fact. At the time of Jesus, the world was chock-full of incarnate deities, or God-men; and Jesus naturally takes his place among them. He was about the last to arrive, and he will likely be the last to depart. They all came in precisely the same way, and before the ever-growing light of knowledge they are all disappearing. Of course, the theologians assure us that whatever doctrine is allowed to drop out of the Christian scheme, the Incarnation must be retained as the foundation fact. And yet, in spite of all the exertions of the theologians, natural knowledge is spreading, and in its light all God-men eventually dissolve.

Once the Incarnation is discredited, the Atonement is seen to be a wholly impossible dogma. But even on the assumption that God is, and verily put on humanity as a vesture in the person of Jesus, the doctrine of the Atonement is unspeakably absurd. There never was a credible presentation of it. Fancy God making atonement to himself for the redemption of a lost world which he himself had created. Fancy God the Son dying a dramatic death just to tell mankind how passionately God the Father loved them. Or fancy the God-man rendering satisfaction to the eternal law of righteousness to make it possible for the Father to forgive and to restore to his favor the race that had broken that law, and deserved everlasting damnation. "But," someone may object, "those are only human theories of the Atonement, and may be silly in the extreme. What we must cling to is the *fact* of the Atonement which underlies all theories concerning it." In reply, we declare that the Atonement itself is a theory, and that what the divines call theories are but various statements, by different schools, of the one theory which, however stated, is fundamentally immoral and ridiculous.

Now, if the Incarnation and the Atonement stand condemned at the bar of criticism, there is no need for the Resurrection. In the Christian scheme the Resurrection holds the supreme place. Now abide the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection, these three; and the greatest of these is the Resurrection. In the Incarnation, God showed himself, or came into visibility, or proclaimed through a stupendous act, I AM. In the Atonement, which means the death on the cross, God showed himself to be suffering love, or gave a magnificent exhibition of *what he is*. In the Resurrection, God showed himself again, this time as all-conquering power. Well, now, does it not strike the reader that, on theology's own showing, the Supreme Being is a marvellous play-actor, who entered this world for the sole purpose of giving a theatrical performance in three Acts? Would such conduct be worthy of an infinitely wise, good, and loving Deity? And, furthermore, the testimony of the Resurrection is a colossal lie. What it represents God as saying is, "I can do it." That was nineteen hundred years ago, and he has not done it yet. If he *can* do it, and refrains from doing it through all the ages, who can reverence him as God? But is not the fact that the work remains undone to this day a proof that he lacks the power, and does not the lack of the requisite power, evinced by the perpetual inaction, amount to a practical demonstration of the non-existence of the God described by the theologians?

It thus becomes manifest that Christianity is not based on historical facts, but on mere dogmas which contradict all the historical facts known to us. But what about the other set of facts, called the facts of Christian experience, which occupy so prominent and vital a position in the theology of to-day? This is how a popular divine puts his case:—

"I claim that my facts are at least as real as the scientists' facts: that is (to borrow a clever illustration),

if the scientific man says, 'This room was swept with a broom,' I as a religionist am saying as real a thing when I say, 'This room was swept with a purpose'; or again, that if a man commits a murder, his guilty conscience is as real as the corpse of the person he has murdered.....The materials of religion are real, as real as the stuff of which the world is made. The student of nature comes close to them, yet the most real of them all he never, *quâ* student of nature, quite touches; yet they are there, dislocating or repairing our life. I am a religious man, because the facts are there: I am a religious agent, because they press on me with a pressure which I interpret as a vocation specially to deal with them: I am a Christian religious agent, because Christianity deals so adequately, so drastically with them, with such a volume of intellectual and moral power."

Unfortunately we are not told what these religious facts are beyond that they are "internal," "moral," and are spoken of in the "language of freedom"; but we are told that "religion, dealing with moral acts and their consequences, has staked, and rightly staked, her whole existence on the possibility of forgiveness and repair." Strictly speaking, "moral experiences" cannot be claimed as religious facts. They are secular facts with which science is infinitely more competent to deal than the best religion in the world. The Christian emphasis on "forgiveness through atonement" has done more to pervert the moral sense of Christendom than all other agencies put together. Nature knows nothing of forgiveness. When a man disregards or resists the laws of life there is no escape from the consequences. No prayer for pardon is ever heeded. To say that "if a man commits a murder, his guilty conscience is as real as the corpse of the person he has murdered" is to "darken counsel by words without knowledge." Guilt is a psychological fact, and must be dealt with in a thoroughly scientific way. The Christian introduces a foreign element into it and thereby complicates its problem. In fact, the Christian treatment of the conscience injures it. A deliberate murderer has no right to be happy. By rejoicing and being exceedingly glad he insults his own humanity. To treat moral experiences as religious facts is to corrupt them.

What, then, are the experimental facts of religion, and what is their evidential value? One of them is the sense of forgiveness, which enables the bad man to be joyous and jubilant, and throws the most unfavorable light on the character of God. In other words, the very idea of forgiveness does irreparable harm to two persons, the forgiver and the forgiven. As a matter of fact, however, there is no such thing as Divine forgiveness. The Divine forgiver is the creation of a morbid imagination, and the sense of his forgiveness is the result of emotional abnormality. Take the consciousness of God as another religious fact, and you will find that, although often real enough, it has positively no evidential value. It is a symptom of disease. In a thoroughly healthy constitution there is no trace whatever of the God-consciousness. It is a purely artificial product, and indicates that the system is out of order. You may have noticed at many religious meetings how what is called communion with Christ verges on madness. The people become so intoxicated with nervous excitement that they become perfectly hysterical. The experience is doubtless quite real but its reality only shows its abnormality. The Being believed in and communed with is a natural impossibility, and the experience to which a fervent belief in him gives rise is bound to have an injurious effect on the constitution.

Thus the facts of Christianity are all either fictitious or harmful. The so-called historical facts, on which Christianity is said to lie, vanish as soon as the torch of Criticism is turned upon them, while the facts of Christian experience can be scientifically explained without the least reference to any supernatural causes. Consequently, the argument for Christianity, drawn from either its spurious or its real facts, completely breaks down.

J. T. LLOYD.

Acid Drops.

England boasts of being the most Christian nation in the world, and the Church of England has just raised a special fund of nearly £400,000 for carrying Christianity in extra quantities to the poor "heathen." This same England is mightily proud of her war-fleet of two hundred and fifty vessels which have been manœuvring in the North Sea. Such is the noble consistency of the followers of the Prince of Peace.

Some people have queer tastes. Sir John Tollemache Sinclair desired to mark his appreciation of "the idea of the *entente cordiale* existing between France and England." Accordingly he decided to offer a picture by Murillo, worth £4,000, to the French nation, with a request that it should be hung in the Louvre. The picture represents Christ with a crown of thorns—and the presentation is made through M. Yves Guyot, a well-known Freethinker, and it will probably pass through the hands of Freethinkers all along the line. And the leading men in the French Government are all Freethinkers. Yes, some people *have* queer tastes.

The British Medical Association has decided to ignore the protests of certain prurient-minded Christians against the statuery outside its new premises. The decision is as it should be; although, had the Association yielded on the point, we should have felt compelled to offer our condolence with those who would have been robbed of the chance of gratifying their instincts by projecting outwards their own indecency and afterwards gloating over it in the name of public morality.

Rev. Dr. Aked describes clergymen as the "parrots of the church." Very likely. But what sort of a bird is he? Some would call him a Rockefeller pigeon.

Mr. Ben Tillett is a worthy man, and we are glad to see that he is back in England with recovered health. We are sorry however, that he still indulges in chatter about Christ. He has just been telling a Swansea audience that "Christianity died with Jesus Christ." Historically, of course, this is great nonsense; but if it were true, it would only prove that Jesus Christ was an utter failure. For what was the use of introducing a religion which nobody would be able to follow during two thousand years? Mr. Tillett should drop Christ and get on with the business.

Hartley, the jam manufacturer, has been knighted, and we dare say the fact is duly registered in heaven. For the said Hartley is a pious gentleman who fully expects to sing the Glory Song in the beautiful land above, in spite of the fat hump of wealth which stands in the way of his threading the needle's eye. According to the *Christian Commonwealth*, he has "proved himself during many years a genuine philanthropist," but this statement appears to be made entirely upon the strength of his "munificent gifts to Primitive Methodism" and other religious agencies. It is interesting to know that Sir W. P. Hartley "does not hesitate to attribute his prosperity to the identification of religion and commerce." Jesus Christ said it was impossible to serve God and Mammon, but that was a long time ago, and things have altered a good deal since then.

Rev. R. J. Campbell's little prayer to God at the City Temple on Sunday morning, May 31, told the Almighty: "We are so easily deceived." "We" are.

A lady had a bad foot through an accident. She took it to the Lord, but there were so many before her that she had to wait patiently till her turn came. It was Good Friday evening when her turn came. The Lord spoke the healing word, and instantly she could walk anywhere! Why are there any lame people left? It is so silly to be lame and sick and afflicted when the remedy is so simple and—so cheap!

Professor Peake is a layman who preaches, and like most laymen who preach, he is famous for his cocksureness. As a critic, he is among the sanest, but as a preacher, he is lost in the mist of superstition. Speaking the other day at Wesley's Chapel, London, he said that "we only understand what sin is when we look at it from God's point of view." Then we shall never understand what sin is, because God's point of view, like himself, is absolutely unknown and unknowable. What Professor Peake calls *God's point of view* is simply his *own*, as a theologian, which is totally different from God's point of view as represented, say, by Mr. Camp-

bell. If there is a God, it is a lucky thing for him that the majority of people pay no heed whatever to what the preachers say about him.

The Rev. Dr. Warschauer devotes three columns of the *Christian Commonwealth* for July 1 to an attempt to explain the Christian doctrine of forgiveness, and succeeds in explaining it completely—away. He still employs the old evangelical terms, but stripped of all their evangelical meaning. His practical conclusion is expressed in Stevenson's well-known words, that "a thing once done is not to be changed or remedied by any penitence." What becomes of the old Gospel of forgiveness through faith in the blood of Christ? It gets politely shelved, respectfully ignored, and practically denied. The worst of it is that the true teaching of science is being presented in terms of an antiquated and false Gospel, with the result that many simple-minded and ignorant people are led sadly astray.

The *Times* is responsible for the following. Some time ago the German Emperor presented to the Dalai Lama of Tibet an illustrated book, in German, on German Arsenals. This volume, says the *Times* correspondent, is preserved by the Dalai Lama and his *entourage* as a devotional work of mysterious import. The satire of this is delicious. If only it had been accompanied by a companion volume on "How to Make Money" the two would have stood well enough for the religion of nearly the whole of Christendom.

The Negro Bishop of Columbia is a whole-hogger with a vengeance. Disbelieving in divorce, he has the courage to advocate the most stringent social attitude towards the divorced and re-married. "You must refuse them admittance into your homes and society," his lordship cried. "It will not be easy, but it must be done." Bravo, Bishop! Ostracise them in society, boycott them in business, pelt them with rotten eggs in the streets. That will settle them, and it will be so very Christ-like!

A Wesleyan minister, the Rev. T. F. Rawlings, is of opinion that "*we ministers* can either make, or mar, or re-make the prosperity of the Church." That is the opinion of every sane person who knows anything about the subject. The Church is the creation of its priests. If the latter were to disappear, the former would soon cease to exist. It is amusing to witness the polite manner in which a clergyman bows the Holy Ghost out of the concern. We give Mr. Rawlings the credit, however, of having told the truth quite unconsciously.

Dean Hart, of the United States, says he doesn't want to go to heaven if the place is peopled with the Higher Critics. The quantity of love squandered by these Christians on one another is astonishing. But after all, if Dean Hart is kept out of the company of intelligent people in the next world, it may be an agreeable arrangement for both parties. Some might desire the separation to be made at once.

Conscientious religious scruples ought to be respected, even though they crop up in unexpected places. W. S. Gilbert sang of the capacity of the enterprising burglar for innocent emotions; the Surrey Quarter Sessions recently provided a lesson in the capacity of a burglar for profound religious conviction. Accused and sentenced for burglary, a nameless prisoner objected to the policeman who captured him on the grounds that he was an "infidel." With righteous indignation he explained to the court that the constable had actually been married in a registry office, and inquired when it was that he attended Divine Service last. He also accused his captor of having said that he feared neither God, man, nor Devil. Naturally he objected, as a religious person, to being arrested by so irreligious a constable, although this did not prevent a sentence of six months' hard labor. What he evidently desired was to be locked up by a member of his own persuasion, and it is really a pity that the police arrangements do not provide for such a contingency. Conscientious scruples ought to be respected, and we suggest that some representative of the Nonconformist Conscience in the House of Commons should question the Home Secretary on the matter. It ought to be an easy matter to arrange that criminals of any particular denomination should be arrested only by members of the same persuasion. For a Freethinking policeman to lock up a Christian burglar is a state of affairs that calls for immediate attention.

The Bishop of Hereford declares that Mr. Balfour is a man born out of his time. He ought to have lived about 400 B.C. When one comes to think of it, there are quite a number of people about who ought to have lived several hundred years

ago. They would then at least have conferred upon the present generation the boon of their being dead. Meanwhile it is reported that Mr. Balfour is consulting with antiquaries and archæologists in order to fix upon a period sufficiently remote to fit the Bishop of Hereford.

Dr. Mackintosh, Congregationalist, has discovered it to be a "fact" that the leadership of the religious world has never rested with those men of reflection to whom we owe science and philosophy. We agree with him in the statement as far as it goes, for what it means is that religion has never received real support from adequately trained and informed thinkers. *Their* work has been in nearly every case to modify religious beliefs in such a manner as to lead to their ultimate rejection. And having pointed out this "fact," Dr. Mackintosh points out that the real leadership has lain with "men of intuition," which he apparently regards as something quite superior to either science or philosophy. All that one need point out in regard to this is that these superior "men of intuition," with their disdain of science and philosophy, have misled those who depended upon them in every possible direction. In physics, in astronomy, in geology, in biology, and in sociology the religious message has been proven to be wrong wherever it could be brought to the test of verification or common sense. Even in ethics and in its general view of human nature the teachings of religion, time after time, have had to be discarded. As a "fact" it is the scientists and philosophers who have all along had to correct these superior "men of intuition." And if it were not so common a sight, the picture of the ordinary religious individual setting himself up as a superior being to the great names in science and philosophy would be enough to make one roar with laughter. As it is, one only experiences a feeling of wearisome disgust.

The Rev. A. E. M. says that all that science can do is to describe the actual. Presumably, by this classification, the rev. gentleman believes it to be the function of religion to describe the imaginary.

Mr. John Morley is dead. There is now a Lord Morley, who is clearly a very different person. Lord Morley chides Lord Curzon (of all men!) for playing into the hands of incendiary natives in India. As head of the India Office, with a press law authorising white officials to suppress any native newspaper they choose, Lord Morley is quite a new avatar of "honest John."

Rev. Dr. Goodrich, of Manchester, addressing the International Congregational Church Council at Edinburgh, took up a fine God-Almighty position. "He said," according to the *Daily Chronicle* report, "that they claimed independence because they believed the individual Church was the body of Christ, so that the will and action of the Church, acting as a Church, was the will and action of Christ. There could be no appeal against Christ's will to any court, civil or ecclesiastical." What a lucky thing it is that there are rival Churches, and therefore rival wills and actions of Christ, in England! Otherwise, it would go hard with Freethinkers. *One* body of Christ, controlled by *one* will and action of Christ, would be sudden death to them. *The one* body of Christ would swallow them all before breakfast as a whet for its appetite. Let us rejoice in the *number* of bodies of Christ, and hope they will go on multiplying.

The *Daily Chronicle* is one of the organs of Nonconformist politics, and it has the code of honor one might expect. It prints certain "Correspondence" and bamboozles its readers into believing that the letters under that heading are a fair expression of public opinion. Of course they are nothing of the kind. They are carefully selected, and are thus a part of the editorial policy. Even a Liberal like Mr. J. Allanson Picton—who is the son of that famous Lancashire Liberal, Sir James Picton, of Liverpool—is refused the insertion of his letter on "Teachers and Compromise" because it points out the difficulties of Simple Bible Teaching in the public elementary schools. Mr. Picton stated, amongst other things, that the "religious difficulty" is not now what it was in 1870. Criticism has done a lot of work since then, and many of the teachers do not believe what they would be required to teach, unless they were content to lose all the chance of promotion. "It is this," Mr. Picton said, "that is the real religious difficulty now; not any little ridiculous differences between Church and Chapel."

"Have you," said Dr. Clifford to the young people at his Chapel—"Have you read the Bible God has opened for you in your homes? Have you seen why your father was brave and your mother sweetly good?" The preacher must have been joking. He knows very well that some fathers read

the Bible and are *not* brave, and that some brave fathers don't read the Bible at all. He also knows that there were brave fathers and good mothers in the world before the Bible existed.

Bishop Thornton, of Blackburn, had to deliver an extempore address the other day at Morecombe. He travelled to that place in his motor-car (fancy Jesus Christ in one!) and the notes of his discourse were blown out of his hand by the wind and lost. The wind was caused by the great rate at which the car was going. In an unguarded moment, the Bishop let out the news that the pace of the car was kept down while the police were about, but that the chauffeur drove for all he was worth when that impediment disappeared. But perhaps breaking the law, and imperilling people's lives, is all right in the sacred cause of religion.

"It is significant of the close association of Sir John Day's name with the terrible sentences passed by him that even the Roman Catholic priest officiating at his funeral thought it necessary to defend what he euphemistically called his 'severity.' The defence was as inept as the sentences themselves were brutal. When Father Gavin asked whether English judges 'were to bow before the maudlin sentimentality of the hour,' he overlooked the fact that a large number of his hero's sentences were reversed by the Home Office, and that no judge would now dream of inflicting the tortures which Day inflicted. The judges *have* bowed willingly in most cases—to what Father Gavin calls the 'sentimentality' of a more humane age, and it is in truth too late to excuse the ferocious savagery of the worst judge of modern times. 'A deeply religious man' Father Gavin calls him. What is certain is that he was, when on the Bench, a cruel and merciless man, and the introduction of this pious talk about him is simply nauseating. As Thoreau said: 'Talk of heaven! Ye disgrace earth.'—*Humanitarian*.

In a paper he read at the International Congregational Council, Principal Garvie totally misrepresented the attitude of science to the miraculous. Science does not even attempt to "determine what is or is not possible." Its one aim is to ascertain what has been and is. What it says about the resurrection of Jesus is, not that it was impossible, but that there is no adequate evidence that it ever happened. Miracles abound only in Dark Ages and among ignorant people. And Principal Garvie himself believes only in Biblical and Christian miracles. Why? But he must not be allowed to falsify the testimony of science without a protest.

There is a pretty kettle of fish among the Baptists of South Wales. They are so exclusive, so particular, and so strict that they decline to partake of the Lord's Supper with non-Baptists, and the East Glamorgan Baptist Association has just passed a solemn resolution calling upon those churches which have joined the Free Church Councils to withdraw from their membership. Over this question a big fight is in progress, affording another illustration of how ardently these Christians love one another.

A lively discussion is going on in the organs of Congregationalism as to whether the Congregational Church has any faith or not. Some say it has and some that it has not. Some argue it is this, and others that it is that. Our own opinion is that if it ever had a faith it is now practically dead; and it is certain that the faith of all other Protestant Churches is rapidly dying.

Dr. Minifie, of Boston, U.S.A., is a religious whole-hogger. Unable to fill his church by conventional methods, he endeavors to crowd it by strategy. He sends out pictorial postcards with sermonets on, and employs young ladies dressed in white to take up the collection. "If you cannot get men to Christ through the doorway," he says, "get them through the roof, but get them." And he gets them—into his church, and he gets big collections from them too. Nothing pays like enterprise.

A "Bachelor of Science" protests, in the *Church Times*, against the claim made at different meetings of Section B of the Pan-Anglican Congress, that there is no longer any conflict between science and religion. Though himself a Churchman, this writer says:—

"Now I write as a mere rank-and-file professional scientific man, but I can assure your readers that, however striking may be the example of Sir George Stokes, Lord Kelvin, and the scientific members of the Congress, the great mass of scientific opinion to-day is as much as ever convinced of the incompatibility of inductive science and the Catholic Faith." This "Bachelor of Science" is also of opinion that the "antithesis of Faith and Reason lies deep down in the

human consciousness at all times," and utters a solemn warning against the "old error of under-rating the enemy, a thing which will be most disastrous for our Church, and especially the clergy." It is quite refreshing to find an avowed Christian who has the courage to tell the plain truth about the present attitude of science to supernatural beliefs. After all, there must have been a good deal of deliberate lying indulged at the Pan-Anglican Congress.

Preaching at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge-road, the Rev. W. L. Watkinson said that "an Atheist logically ought to be a pessimist." Pray, where does the logic come in? Why should an Atheist be a pessimist? It is easy enough to exclaim, "But it is quite another thing when a man believes in God"; but is it another thing? An Atheist may be a pessimist; but a Theist, who keeps his eyes and ears open, cannot help being one. It is men of God, like Mr. Watkinson, who logically ought to be pessimists, because they are trying in vain to save a sinking ship, while the bulk of the people godlessly laugh at their perilous position.

Speaking on the membership decrease at Southport the other day, the Rev. Dr. Campbell Morgan expressed his utter detestation of statistics. Of course, they cannot be agreeable things to ministers just now; but this popular preacher was forced to confess that "the world is largely hostile or indifferent to the Christian testimony." "It cannot be contradicted," he cried. "It is the bare truth." And yet Christ is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe.

Sir Edward Grey is an able man, but he is not a thinker. Hence the absurdity of some of his recent remarks on Secular Education. He said that "it was logical, but, like most things logical, incomplete." We dare say this sounded very well, but we defy the speaker to give a definite meaning to his words without covering himself with confusion. "Logical" and "incomplete" do not stand in any intelligible relationship to each other. One term is theoretical; the other is practical. "Logical" can only mean that Secular Education follows inevitably from certain principles; namely, the principles of civil and religious equality. That it is "incomplete" can only mean that it does not include certain things which Sir Edward Grey considers desirable. Will he please tell us, therefore, what possible connection there can be between *logical* and *complete* in this meaning of the words?

The next assertion of Sir Edward Grey was that Secular Education "would not solve, but evade, the religious difficulty." No doubt this also sounded well—to religionists. But is it the business of the State to solve religious difficulties? And can the State be properly said to "evade" matters with which it has no legitimate concern? Perhaps, after all, Sir Edward Grey would be more complete if he were more logical.

The Christian Evidence lot brought their "great gun" up to Hyde Park on a recent Thursday evening—"which his name was Waldron." It was explained that he had come there specially, as they had been asked why they did not bring some prominent man to settle the "infidels." When discussion time arrived, Waldron, who affected to be very learned (the comical cuss!), referred to Irenæus. A sly questioner asked him whether he considered Irenæus a good authority. The great gun replied "Certainly." The questioner reminded him that Irenæus, his own authority, said that Jesus lived to be over fifty years of age and died; consequently there was no crucifixion of Jesus at the age of thirty-three. The great gun's face fell. But he resolved to bluff it. "What is your authority?" he asked. It was given. Then ensued a painful silence. The great gun was knocked out of time. And in the midst of the painful silence the questioner quietly walked away. His friends probably hope the great gun will look up the subjects he talks upon in future.

John Frederick Spencer, tradesman, Christian, and burglar, appealed against his sentence of twelve years' penal servitude. The Lord Chief Justice said the sentence was a very severe one, but it was amply justified, as the prisoner's burglaries had terrorised the neighborhood, and "he was supposed to have been a very religious man." *Supposed!* He was.

Rev. W. A. Hind, Wesleyan minister of Hull, and President of the local Free Church Council, who was arrested for "improper conduct" of a loathsome character, and refused bail, has been discharged by the Stipendiary Magistrate at the Police-court, apparently on the ground that he is an irresponsible epileptic. "Mad doctors" were brought up to

testify that he might act in that disgusting way "involuntarily," though the prison doctor who had him under observation in Hull Gaol found nothing abnormal in his physical condition, and thought the acts were too highly organised to be considered automatic. There was a lot of method in his madness. But he is discharged, and there the case ends. All we have to say is that precautions should be taken against the reverend gentleman's "involuntary" acts—and that it is very lucky for him that he was not a Freethought lecturer.

A very considerable number of these "involuntary" misfortunes occur in Catholic countries. We see by the last number of *La Raison* to hand that the following incident was recently chronicled in *Le Matin* (one of the principal papers in Paris) as occurring at Karwin, in Austria. A priest was called in to administer the last sacraments to a young woman dying of tuberculosis. He was left alone with her to perform the ceremony. But as he stayed a long while the relatives opened the door, and found to their horror that the confessor had outraged the moribund girl.

Frederick George Cook has had to pay for his mistake. He is head-master of the Temple Colston School, Bristol, and he thrashed one of the pupils for talking in church on the previous Sunday. The magistrates could not agree that the punishment was a proper and reasonable one, and they fined him ten shillings and costs. Henceforth he will probably let "talking in church" alone on week-days. His motto should be "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."

Rev. Dr. Torrey, who would look well in convict's costume, is quoted by Rev. Dr. Warschauer in the *Christian Commonwealth* as follows—under the description of "a notorious American revivalist":—

"If the wickedest man or woman in — should be in that hall that night, and should there and then take Jesus Christ as their Savior, the moment they did it God would blot out all their sins, and their record would be as white in God's sight as that of the purest saint in glory."

Dr. Warschauer regards this as "an immoral bid for converts." But is it not the teaching of the Bible? Of course it may be immoral all the same. We think it is. And we have said so for thirty years. The New Theologians are simply taking up our old positions.

When the "blasphemy" case was heard at Bow-street the public were rigorously excluded, on the false ground that the evidence was too shocking to be heard in open court. Monday morning's papers announced that, "The chief magistrate at Bow-street Police Court has made arrangements to afford better accommodation for the public and press at the resumption of the Siever case to-morrow." Only poor men were supposed to be interested in the Boulter case. So they were shut out. Rich people are interested in the Siever case. So they are let in. See?

We are glad to see that some of the French Radicals and Socialists are speaking very plainly about the Czar, who is to be visited shortly by President Fallières. One speaker at a public meeting, a Deputy, called the Holy Czar "the assassin of his people." This is true, but how mild!

"Christianity is the religion of which Socialism is the practice." So said the Rev. F. L. Donaldson, of Leicester, at the late Pan-Anglican Congress. If this were true it would be so much the worse for Socialism. We know what Christianity is in "practice." History has taught us that.

"Agnostics and others who discredit the Scriptures" are invited—by advertisement in the *Birmingham Daily Mail*—to send a postcard to "S. T." at Williams's Advertisement Offices, Bradford. We print the full address, though we are not paid for it, in order to give our readers a chance of being converted.

The Vatican has a new trouble to deal with. A movement has arisen for the abolition of clerical celibacy, and many priests have joined it. Being spiritual fathers does not satisfy them. But the Pope is bound to oppose this terrible heresy. He knows very well that married priests will lose popularity with the ladies—who are the mainstay of the Church.

"Providence" has been looking after the New-Yorkers. Humid heat, terribly oppressive, has been the order of the day there, and the tenement-dwellers have been forced to camp at night by thousands in the parks and other open spaces. "For his mercy endureth for ever."

Human Sacrifices and Religion.

From the year 300 to 1400 the world did not produce a single man of genius.

The Dark Ages was a successful conspiracy against the natural education, development, and evolution of man. Nature was replaced by a theogony; the intellect was abandoned for revelation—second-hand revelation—and the mind of man withered and wilted in the fetid atmosphere supplied by pedants. The priestly plan of having one class do all the thinking and another class all the work, wrecked the best in both. To get clear of the entanglement of this pedagogic fallacy is a problem that yet confronts us.

The insane idea that death was better than life, and that only through the shedding of blood could we escape damnation, has been taught by all priests. Moses tried to shift his people from killing men to slaying animals, but had a hard time of it.

Depend upon this, the priest never quits killing things of his own accord. Human sacrifices were at one time so prevalent, that the practice may almost be considered to have been universal, not only with the most debased, but amongst the most highly-cultivated and refined nations. Thus we find it existing down to the time of the Persians, Egyptians, Carthaginians, Thracians, Scythians, Greeks, Romans, and, to a certain extent, the Jews. It seems to have had no limits or boundaries, for it was found equally in the New World as the culminating act of an ornate ritual, and in the scattered islands of the Pacific Ocean.

In India, under the form of self-immolation, it is within the reach of living memories; and at this moment it is largely indulged in by the negro races of Africa.

At a time when the Chinese even ceased to burn the wooden semblance of a man, we find Themistocles offering up three youths; the wife of Xerxes seeking to appease the anger of the gods by burying twelve victims alive; the Carthaginians, as the highest act of propitiation, offering up their first-born sons, and casting their most beautiful children into the glowing, outstretched arms of a brazen image, from which they fell into the fiery furnace over which it stood; Aristomenes, the Messenian, slaying three hundred Lacedaemonians on the altar of Jupiter at Ithome; and, later, Augustus Cæsar immolating three hundred victims to the manes of his uncle Julius. Even Aurelian was accused of having been guilty of it; and Porphyry asserts that, in his time, a man was sacrificed yearly at the shrine of Jupiter Latialis; and this notwithstanding that a law had been passed as far back as 657 B.C., under the consulship of Lentulus and Crassus, forbidding human sacrifices.

That the thought of human sacrifices has been acceptable to a vast number of people, even down to our own time, is proven by the fact that, while they themselves do not practice the rite, yet they believe in a God who did. Jehovah ordering Abraham to kill his son expressed this idea. The fact that God stopped Abraham before he could use his knife reveals the inward revolt of the writer concerning the custom.

The rudimentary idea of salvation through human sacrifice is now departing from the minds of men. Only in song does it survive. Such hymns as "Jesus died and paid it all"; "There is a fountain filled with blood"; "Saved by the blood of Jesus"; "Nothing but the blood of Jesus," are the surviving echoes of this savage superstition.

Among savage tribes the idea that when they killed an enemy the strength of the individual slain was absorbed by themselves has a certain poetic truth. The Apache Indians, for instance, believe it literally. With cannibals, the idea was made doubly secure by eating the body of the victim, or at least his heart, and drinking his blood.

The Christian rite of the eucharist, wherein men eat the flesh and drink the blood, or pretend they do, of a great and good person, and thus partake of his nature, is a surviving variant of cannibalism.—*The Philistine*.

HURTING OUR FEELINGS.

It seems necessary to remind Christians, with regard to the question of susceptibility, that those of orthodox faith do not hold a monopoly either of conscience or feeling. The constant reiteration of illogical dogmas and insults is as distasteful to a Freethinker as are the fearless analyses and criticism of religion at the hand of the Freethinker distasteful to the believer. The susceptibilities of the Freethinker deserve as much consideration as those of the Christian. In the words of Carlyle, "He who builds by the wayside has many masters," and members of a church militant need not be surprised if the enemy they are attacking use as effective, or even more effective, weapons than they use themselves.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lectures suspended during the summer.)

To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £193 2s. 6d Received since.—R. J. Henderson (second sub.), 10s.; Erle Side, £2 2s.; Elizabeth Lechmere (second sub.), 10s.

GERALD MASSEY FUND.—W. Dodd, 10s. 6d.

R. J. HENDERSON writes: "I must thank you for your article on Balfour. You hit him off to a tee. He is on my political side, but I never liked him.....I wish to thank Mr. Heaford for his fine account of Freethought in South America. I was four years on the west coast, Chile and Peru. It is a grand coast; finest climate in all the world, and capital people. You can always meet good people wherever you go."

JAMES STEWART thinks our recent article on "Ora Pro Nobis" was "simply splendid." "It is nearly two years now since I started reading the *Freethinker*," he adds, "and I would not miss it for anything." This correspondent is thanked for cuttings.

W. DODD.—You might be able to arrange your approaching visit to London so as to attend the social gathering at Anderton's Hotel on Thursday, July 30.

UNKNOWN.—Thanks for the *Clarion* cutting. Words cannot be used in any way. Those who "do not accept the dictionary definition of religion" are bound to supply a definition of their own—and justify it.

W. WINDSOR.—The paper you mention is doing a good work in its way. No doubt its circulation would decrease if it spoke out more boldly on the theological implications of its scientific teaching. If we were more "discreet" our circulation would vastly improve, but we are not built for that policy, and we take the consequences of a forthright course.

E. ROBB.—Arrived safely. Thanks.

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

JOSEPH BATES.—Your courage is admirable. "There is," as you say, "a lot of uphill work to be accomplished before mankind will be freed from the fetters of superstition." We know it.

H. S. WISHART.—Sorry to hear your voice gave way, and stopped your lecturing at Liverpool, Bolton, and Bury. Hope you are all right again now. Glad to hear some of the towns are developing local speakers. Sorry we cannot give you the references at the moment. We are just going away for a week. You cannot have too high an opinion of "Abracadabra's" work.

G. DUPLAY.—We regret overlooking the point. Dr. Frazer's lecture on *The Scope of Social Anthropology* is published by Macmillan & Co. at the price of sixpence net.

T. DEARDEN.—Glad to hear the Wigan Branch is doing so well and getting such good attendances at Mr. Wishart's open air lectures; also that "everybody will be glad" to know of Mr. Foote's intended visit in the autumn. We note the other matter. Branch-wrecking is a business that does not require much ability, but an ample supply of other qualities. Your members should be on their guard.

A. F. BATES.—We did not keep your copy. The stanza you now send does not seem equal to the rest.

G. ROLEFFA.—Glad to see the Liverpool Chief Constable is trying to get at the anonymous Christian who wrote him that letter about your meetings.

E. J. JONES.—Thanks for cuttings.

L. WAHL.—Too late for this week; in our next.

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote will be lecturing at Queen's Hall again in September. He visits Glasgow the first Sunday in October to open the new lecturing season there.

The Queen's Hall lectures will be under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. Under the same auspices, in October, a series of Sunday evening lectures will be given at Stanley Hall. A course of lectures will be arranged for if possible in South London. Unfortunately the "Horns" Assembly Room, at which some successful meetings were held last winter, is no longer available, as there is now a clause in the license against Sunday letting; which we take to be one of the characteristic moves of the present reactionary Government of London.

Under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, some Freethought demonstrations are being organised to take place on Sundays, either afternoon or evening, in the London Parks. A fuller statement will be made in our next issue. Mr. Foote will speak at some, if not all, of these Demonstrations. The other speakers will be Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. F. A. Davies, Mr. W. Heaford, and Mr. A. B. Moss. We understand that Mr. E. Wilson will kindly provide a brake and pair of horses as on previous occasions.

It may be asked why Mr. Lloyd is not amongst the speakers at these Demonstrations. The answer is that he was, of course, invited to speak, but was obliged to decline, although with great regret. Mr. Lloyd's throat is liable to be affected by out-door speaking. He made a gallant effort last year, but cannot think of repeating it.

Thursday, July 30, is the date fixed for the next social gathering at Anderton's Hotel, under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive. London "saints," and provincial ones too who may be coming to London, should make a careful note of this. The first gathering was very successful, and the second one ought to be more so. These functions enable Freethinkers to get to know each other, or to know each other better, and thus supply what we may call "social cement" to the party. Mr. Foote will be present, with some members of his family; and will be "supported" by Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, Davis, Heaford, Moss, and other platform representatives. We hope the hall will be crowded—and it holds a good many.

It being the wish of the N.S.S. Conference that the services of an organising lecturer should be continued, if possible, the Executive has decided to continue Mr. Wishart's engagement until the end of August. What will happen after that remains to be seen. Mr. Wishart is delivering open-air lectures in Yorkshire and Lancashire, and is getting good audiences. But the collections do not yield much, and there is not much sale of literature. These are matters that require organising. Obviously it is not possible for Mr. Wishart to be on the platform and in the meeting too. The local "saints" should push the literature amongst the crowd, and it would be a good thing to get ladies to go round for the "offertory."

Mr. Duncan's *Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer* was reviewed in last week's *Athenaeum*, and reference was made to his religious opinions. "The inference has been largely made from the concluding part of his *Autobiography*," our contemporary said, "that Spencer had modified or regretted his views on religious matters. This is a favorite statement with those who deal with the last days and penultimate judgments of celebrated men. There is, however, no authority for such conclusions in Mr. Duncan's book."

Mr. Joseph Bates kept his word, and made another attempt to preach Freethought in the Market-Place at Boston. This is how the *Boston Guardian* reports the scene:—

"A large crowd of people had assembled, not to listen to him, but 'to see the fun!' Bates waited until the services in the churches and the chapels were over, and then made an attempt to give an address, but he was 'baited' by the crowd, and was unable to obtain a hearing. He was hustled, but was rescued from the mob by P.C.'s Smith, Vickers and Scuffham, who put him in the telephone office in the fowl market, whilst they endeavored to disperse the people. A cab was sent for to take him home, but the cab did not arrive, and after about a quarter of an hour's incarceration he was brought out and was escorted to his new lodgings in Red Lion Street—he had changed his lodgings during the week—by the constables and Sergt. Whyte, followed by a

rowdy, disorderly mob of garrulous girls and hobbledehoy hooligans. Such scenes are a disgrace and will have to be stopped. If the man wishes to be an Atheist let him be an Atheist in a quiet manner; and if he feels constrained to expound his views let him expound his views, and if the public do not like them they need not listen to them. It is absurd and disgraceful to hoot him and chase him whenever he makes his public appearance."

Such is the civilising result of Simple Bible Teaching and other forms of religious instruction in elementary schools! Boston Christians are a long way behind the Athenian Pagans, who nearly two thousand years ago heard Paul with civil attention and politeness.

The Birmingham Branch had a very successful outing on Sunday. The trip was to Warwick, and the party visited Guy's Cliff and other places of interest.

According to the *Humanitarian*, the Humanitarian League will be represented at the coming Peace Congress by Dr. T. Baty, and the League "is bringing out a new edition of Mr. G. W. Foote's well-known pamphlet, *The Shadow of the Sword*, for use in connection with the meetings."

Michael Servetus, who was hunted down to his death by John Calvin, was burnt alive in 1553, green wood being employed to prolong his agony. A monument to his memory was inaugurated at Paris on Sunday. It is the work of the sculptor, M. Jean Baffier, and is largely due to the initiative of M. Henri Rochefort.

The President's Honorarium Fund.

WE have received some communications on this subject. The first is from a Bristol subscriber, who wants to get at "the readers of the *Freethinker*" and addresses them as "Dear Friends." His epistle, so addressed, runs as follows:—

"Brevity is the soul of wit, so let us get to the point at once. The motto of the President's Honorarium Fund would seem to be "festina lente," but does not suit me. Here you have a man who has been working hard all his life for the dissemination of Truth, with all the devotion and singleness of purpose which so eminently characterised the great pioneers of the movement. A man whose ability and talent were so warmly eulogised by the late Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, and yet shame to say, he has for long been unable to draw a salary as Editor of this journal.

Yet in spite of this serious drawback the paper has maintained its high standard of excellence in every respect.

It seems to me that we are taking an undue advantage of a man's good nature by permitting ourselves to receive the great benefit of his able writings and not contributing better towards his support. We all know that had our able President devoted his abilities to another line of life he might easily have been a wealthy man, but he is not enamored of money. Still a man must live, and it is right that he should be adequately remunerated. He not only goes without a salary, but has to put his hand in his private pocket for petty disbursements connected with the cause. This ought not to be so. Why up to the present we have not attained to £200 per annum! That ought to be doubled easily. Well here goes for a start. I now double my subscription. *Bis dat qui cito dat*. How is that for an illiterate?

Yours truly,
R. J. HENDERSON."

Mr. Erle Side, a South London veteran, writes:—

"I do hope that I shall for many years send my two guineas to this Honorarium Fund—a little gratitude to a great and pleasant fighter who can hit hard and laugh."

I care nothing about names. It makes no difference to me what the supposed great men of the past have said, except as what they have said contains an argument, and that argument is worth to me the force it naturally has upon my mind. Christianity forgets that in the realm of reason there are no serfs and no monarchs. When you submit to an argument you do not submit to the man who made it..... So far as I am concerned, I think more of reasons than of reputations, more of principles than of persons, more of nature than of names, more of facts than of faiths.—*Ingersoll*.

A Defender of the Faith.

THE defenders of the Christian faith are of various types, ranging from the subtle metaphysical apologist to the pugilistic paid-agent of the Christian Evidence Society. But the low-water mark of apologetics is not reached even here, and, indeed, it is questionable whether the defence, in intention at least, really stops short of the gibbet or the stake. That such a statement is not mere rhetoric will appear from the following considerations, which will also serve to show that the Christian spirit of persecution is very far from being dead.

A Godless Socialism is the title of a little booklet just recently issued, which, as may be surmised, is a fanatical diatribe concerned almost solely with the "godlessness" of the age—the "Socialism" of the title being rather more ornamental than useful. The writer advertises himself as a "disputant in numerous published debates," and also as the author of *Satan's Biography*—which latter fact may account for the sulphurous odor of some of the phraseology in the booklet. He has a special "Note" on the fly-leaf "To Literary Critics and Reviewers," which exhibits at the outset the author's modesty, and indicates the spirit and temper of the subject matter. He advises them that "This little work has been written solely to meet a Godless Socialism; and as those who are captivated thereby belong mainly to the class that prefers to call "an unpleasant odor" "a nasty smell," "all literary ornateness has been sacrificed to attain the end in view." It is not every writer who would thus hide his literary light under a bushel, and sacrifice "literary ornateness" out of consideration for the mental calibre and moral leanings of his readers; but as the booklet is mostly on sale at the *religious book-depôts*, it may be that it will find a suitable circle of readers on whom his condescension will not be wasted. It will be seen that Mr. Jannaway—such is the author's happy name—does not follow the example of those preachers who speak "over the heads" of their congregations; he studies the capacity and mental bearings of his prospective readers, and graciously condescends to call "an unpleasant odor" "a nasty smell." We are informed that "The writer of this little work used to find it both pleasant and instructive to converse with Mr. George Jacob Holyoake, for he was not only a cultured gentleman, but a lovable and courteous critic. It was not less bracing to listen to the discourses of Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, for he not only knew his own mind, but he was a thinker from whom much could be learned." This by way of traducing the individual who is the particular object of attack, and who is said to possess neither the "honest refinement" of Holyoake nor the "mental stamina" of Bradlaugh. But one looks in vain for any signs of either of these qualities in the pages of *A Godless Socialism*, not a single indication being apparent that its author has been in the habit of conversing with a "courteous" critic or of listening to the bracing discourses of a real thinker. And when he asserts that all who turn their backs upon the God of the Bible become "wandering stars," "wells without water," "unstable souls," "time-servers," it is evident that such golden opportunities for cultivating his intellect and improving his manners have been criminally neglected. He believes he has "read every published debate of the late Charles Bradlaugh, Colonel Ingersoll, and other nineteenth-century infidels," but where he learned his peculiar methods of controversy he does not tell us; certainly it was not at the feet of such distinguished masters of debate.

After reading of such intellectual and controversial advantages enjoyed by the author, the puerility of his "little work" stands out in all the greater contrast. We begin to wonder, as we note the childishness of his defence, whether we are really living in the twentieth century, with all its boasted culture and enlightenment. His little work

(an oft-repeated phrase) is, with all humility, dedicated to

"THE GOD OF THE BIBLE"—

though whether with, or without, that gentleman's consent does not appear. The moral delinquencies of the God of the Bible, concerning which so much apologetic literature has been written, present no stumbling block to Mr. Jannaway: with all his faults he loves him still. "If anything," he says, "herein contained is thought to be unnecessarily harsh, let it be attributed to the fact that he has sought to emulate the 'man after God's own heart,' who wrote: 'Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee? And am not I grieved with them that rise up against Thee? I hate them with perfect hatred.'" Such is the elevating ethical influence of Bible morality. Because a fellow-mortal refuses to bow the knee to Mr. Jannaway's petty Jewish God, who is unknown and unacknowledged by the major portion of the human race, he must therefore "hate him with a perfect hatred." One of the greatest scourges that has ever afflicted mankind is fanatical religious hatred; and the species that has been the most vindictive and cruel is the Christian variety, of which our author is a truly representative specimen. The Quixotic charges of this religious knight are as comical as the strange delusions which prompt them are amusing. In going forth to do battle with the unbeliever he finds encouragement for his soul in some of those Jack-and-the-Beanstalk stories narrated in the Old Testament. The modern infidel, he says, "is not by any means the first reviler of God who has been put to shame and defeated. Nearly three thousand years ago the little shepherd-lad, David, picked up the gauntlet thrown down by the blasphemous bully, Goliath, and not only rendered him *hors de combat* with the most primitive of ammunition, but, having no sword in hand, 'Ran and stood upon the Philistine and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith.'" "A generation or so later another swaggering scoffer appeared, and, flattered by his empty-headed followers that he was 'goodly' looking, thought he could carry all before him with his spear; but his bluster was short-lived, for a God-fearing man appeared on the scene and 'Went down to him with a staff and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.'" "In like manner the enemies of God made food for the hungry lions which they had caged for the purpose of devouring the man 'greatly beloved of God.'" And with his faith and courage sustained by these humane and ideal reflections, our hero goes forth to war. Unfortunately for his religious intentions, the power that manipulated the rack and the thumb-screw no longer exists. How he would delight to "hew the Agags in pieces," and "dash their little ones against the stones"! It is frequently claimed that Western civilisation is indebted to the influence and inspiration of Christianity; but one has only to study the moral effects of that religion upon orthodox believers like Mr. Jannaway to see the value of such an assumption. Cotter Morrison, in his estimable book, in a chapter dealing with "Morality in the Ages of Faith," commenting upon the religious austerity of mediæval Scotland, says that "If fanatical belief in Christianity, coupled with the most intemperate zeal in enforcing the precepts of the Bible, could have made a people moral, the Scotch would have been a moral people towards the middle and end of the seventeenth century." But after nearly a century of gospel teaching at the highest pressure, he says it may fairly be stated that "the Scottish people in the seventeenth century were in that state of semi-barbarism where no moral principle is able to take hold." And Mr. Jannaway is evidently still in this semi-barbaric condition; his mind is armor-clad with religious steel plates that are impervious to any historical or moral truth. It were in vain to attempt to reason with him; to tell him that "the man after God's own heart" was very far from being a moral

paragon; to explain that the "God of the Bible" is a purely human conception reflecting the progressive mental and moral stages of the Hebrew people, or to get him to understand that the advanced ideals of the present age have left his Bible morality far behind. And there are many evidences that the moral outlook of Mr. Jannaway is typical of the view that obtains in the orthodox religious world.

It would be impossible to refute the arguments of his "little work," for the simple reason that it does not contain any. It is full of nothing but abuse of the lowest and most vulgar type. We are favored with the usual references to "the vitiating influences of the vile productions passing current as 'Freethought literature'"—which is the little way these Jannaways have of expressing their disagreement with other people's views—but for "vileness," for brazen effrontery and gutter vaporings, *A Godless Socialism* is a little masterpiece. We will not reproduce any of the vituperative language which adorns its pages; but when a person suggests that all those whose views of an anthropomorphic deity differ from his own would be more at home "roaming about on the tiles and in the back gardens with dogs and cats," it will be seen that the moral machinery of such a "courteous" writer needs overhauling and—cleaning. We have said that this booklet is mostly on sale at the book-depôts of a *religious* character; and as these depôts usually have committees who carefully scan the books that are supplied to Sunday-school libraries to see that no seeds of unbelief are likely to find their way into the youthful mind, it is fair to assume that the slanderous matter of this booklet is not unknown to these moral censors. And the fact that such a vile production is allowed to pass without a protest from his Christian brethren is further evidence that the moral tone of the religious world leaves much to be desired.

We have not drawn attention to this abusive booklet because we think it worthy of notice from a controversial point of view, but because of that spirit of hatred and persecution which it breathes, and which the progress in modern knowledge and culture has been unable to eliminate from orthodox Christianity. Though not in active eruption, that historic spirit is very far from being an extinct volcano. That is a very significant story of Grant Allen's—*The White Man's Foot*. Those who have read it will remember the old Hawaiian chief, Kalaua, with his European polish, able to converse with the tourists on the Mail Steamer in good English, "a Christian now, like all the rest of them." But, as the story shows, behind all the veneer of civilisation and formal acceptance of Christianity, old Kalaua was still at heart the hereditary high-priest of the goddess Pélé, finding his highest religious joy in the festival of Maloka, and capable of sacrificing human victims—even his own kith and kin—to the honor of his fearful deity. And so, though the growth of public morals has put a stop to the annual flow of victims convicted of witchcraft—sacrificed in obedience to a direct Bible command—though the horrible instruments of Christian torture have, so to speak, been beaten into ploughshares and pruning-hooks by the force of public opinion, yet the Jannaways, as *A Godless Socialism* abundantly testifies, are quite ready to renew the ancient rites and ceremonies, and wreak their righteous vengeance on those offending mortals who have dared to turn their backs upon the God of the Bible.

Mr. Jannaway is also the author of a booklet entitled *Good Time Coming*, descriptive of an impossible millennium, which knocks all the visionary Utopias and Socialistic dreams into "a cocked hat"—a time when the leopard shall have performed the wonderful feat of changing his outer covering; when the King of the Forest will be metamorphosed into a lady's pet-dog, and a little child will lead him with a string; when the fierce tiger will lap milk out of the pussy-cat's dish on the hearth, and when the wasp, by way of amusing himself during your Sunday afternoon nap, will tickle your nose with his

sting. But, as the Bible rightly says, that time is not yet; nor can we understand any sane person seriously believing that such a time will ever arrive. The good time that *is* coming will be when "gods" have ceased to trouble the weary brain of man; when human energies and human thought are directed to the improvement of his life and the increase of his happiness, and when religious fanaticism and religious bigotry have been swept away for ever.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Christian Hypocrisy at the Grave.

FREETHOUGHT is life and action.

Christianity is a coffin and the hearse.

The professors of the orthodox faith, by frequent argument, have admitted that Freethought may be all right to live by, but Christianity is needed when men come to die.

Freethought is willing to accept the distinction thus conferred upon it, for if a man or woman live "all right" they need not be concerned or alarmed regarding the mode and manner of dying. To live "all right" enables one to die "all right." We are all interested in living. We all know that we have life, and that to all who have life death must come. Life is the beginning of consciousness. Death is the end. As there was nothing for the individual before the individual life was, so there will be nothing for the individual when death ensues.

The foregoing thoughts have been occasioned by the recent receipt of a communication informing us of the demise of one of our enthusiastic subscribers, with a request from a lady member of his family—presumably wife or daughter—that the *Blade* discontinue to his recent address. The tone of the letter indicates that this particular member of the dead subscriber's household did not agree with him in his views, and it discloses the further fact that she did not take very kindly to his reading our paper. Among other things, the writer of the Epistle says:—

"Please allow me to say that he enjoyed the paper while he was in health, but when sickness and death came it offered him no comfort. The Christian religion and the prayers of a Christian minister gave him more comfort than can be found in your paper."

More was said along the same lines, but the foregoing is enough. It admits that while the deceased was in health and strength, in full possession of his mental faculties, capable of the use of his reason, he actually "enjoyed" the paper, and the carrion crows of the death-chamber could not influence or turn him from his known and accepted views upon religion. It also admits that when the poor, tired brain failed to properly perform the function of thought, when mind and body were both enfeebled, the women members of his household, aided by a "Christian minister," undertook to wring a confession of faith from the parched lips, and by such an act they sought to prove to the world that the dead man had lived a lie, and another conversion to the Christian faith is announced.

The Church is welcome to all such converts, save for the slander that his family have allowed to be perpetrated upon his name and memory. Even in death Freethinkers are not safe from assault. Christian ghouls have, ere this, penetrated the grave to make a holy vengeance upon an inoffensive and helpless corpse. What wonder, then, that, like a thief in the night, these Christian ghouls will penetrate the chamber of death, and by cruel tricks, without the consent or knowledge of the dying, indulge in the hollow mockery of prayer at such a season, and the slightest twitch of the lips, whether of approval or disapproval, is accepted as a renunciation of an intellectual plane of thought and construed as an acceptance of that religious faith which he had previously spurned.

In a great measure, Freethinkers are responsible for these things. Too many fail to make proper

provision for such an emergency. Very few have done so. Anticipating such a *contretemps* in the case of death, care should be taken to guard against it during active life by having preparations made in advance. There is nothing gruesome about it. We must all die. We all realise that. The same end awaits us all, and the *Blade* advises its subscribers, friends, and readers to be fully prepared, so that when the grim reaper makes his call they will not be subjected to the humiliating disgrace that befell the dead man in the present instance.

The letter we have received furnishes the best sort of argument in favor of Freethought. It admits, by implication, that the Christian religion is fitted only for children, intellectual imbeciles, and persons in the throes of death. In this instance the dead man, "while he was in health," actually "enjoyed" the *Blade*, and the logical inference is that when he became unable to enjoy it his reasoning powers had failed, his mentality had ceased, he was "as a little child again" and a fit subject for a "Christian minister" to work off his prayers and faith upon.

Ah, friends, could he have known and realised what was taking place around him in those moments of fitting life, there would have been precious little comfort in the Christian religion, or in the prayers of that Christian minister, for those gathered about him; and, while we dislike to say harsh things in the presence of death, yet we regard the incident here related as an insult to the intelligence of the man now dead.

—*Blue Grass Blade* (Lexington, Ky., U.S.A.)

The World of Books.

THERE is no harm in going back a little in the matter of Shelley literature. We do not apologise, therefore, for calling our readers' attention to an article in the May number of the *Nineteenth Century* on "Shelley 'Contra Mundum.'" Mr. Arthur P. Nicholson, the writer of it, boldly defends the poet's Atheism as being what Trelawny called it, "the key and the distinguishing quality of all he wrote." Short shrift is given to the partisanship of men like Browning and R. H. Hutton (to compare great things with small!), who argue that Shelley, while not an actual Christian, was at least a potential one, and would have blossomed into a most respectable orthodox believer if he had only lived long enough. Ay, there's the rub! For he incontinently died and frustrated all these pious prophecies. Mr. Nicholson argues very much as we have always done in the *Freethinker*. He goes through the poet's meteoric career and shows that at every point of it he was still an Atheist. Referring to *Queen Mab*, the *Refutation of Deism*, and the *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, he says: "The conclusion that in 1814 Shelley was an atheist is surely irresistible." In 1816 Shelley wrote the word "Atheist" after his name in the visitors' book of a Swiss hotel, under that of a clergyman, who had remarked after his signature that "no one could view that sublime scene and deny the existence of God." Christians have called Shelley's act on that occasion a shocking exhibition of bad taste, but they do not censure the fussy piety of the man of God who "talked shop" everywhere. It is perfectly proper for a Christian to intrude his opinions; bad taste begins when an Atheist calls him to order by remarking that "there are others." And, after all, it is difficult to see how a mountain proves the existence of God any more than a sandbank. God ought to be as obvious from the top of Primrose Hill as from the top of Mont Blanc.

* * *

Mr. Nicholson goes on to Shelley's action after Harriet's death, when he made a legal effort to get possession of his children. The answer filed against his plea set forth that the plaintiff "avows himself to be an atheist," and that in the notes to *Queen Mab* he "has blasphemously derided the truth of the Christian Revelation, and denied the existence of God as the Creator of the universe." These statements were not contravened, and Lord Eldon, the judge in the case, plainly said that there was "nothing in the evidence" before him to authorise him in thinking that the plaintiff had "changed his principles." Could anything be clearer than that? And as Shelley was twenty-five then, and only lived some four years longer, what more do we want? Mr. Nicholson, however, thinks it well to print Trelawny's testimony

by way of conclusion. Trelawny knew Shelley intimately during the last year of his life, and had many conversations with him on the deepest subjects, and Trelawny says: "He ignored all religions as superstitious.....He was an Atheist."

We quite agree with Mr. Nicholson—we have taken the same position in these columns—that the transcendentalism in some of Shelley's poems, as in *Adonais*, does not imply belief in "a God or a future life." "Shelley," he says, "in spirit was his own Prometheus, who through knowledge would regenerate mankind, a cause in which he was as ready to endure the ills of destiny as the sublime Titan." But why does Mr. Nicholson say that Shelley "lost his dreams of changing the world by an idea"? Mrs. Shelley's authority on that point is sadly inadequate. Her more commonplace nature was too much pleased with the idea that her poet-husband was losing his desire to "turn the world upside down." It showed a sound controversial instinct on Matthew Arnold's part when he seized upon this very fact as the starting-point of his famous article.

The rest of Mr. Nicholson's article is an able defence of Shelley as a great poet, which is almost a work of supererogation. But one observation is worth noting. We have lately remarked, in some articles on Shelley's Letters to Miss Hitchener, that it might almost be said that he was "born without original sin." Mr. Nicholson evidently holds something of the same idea. "Had there been a strain of grossness in Shelley," he says, "the grossness which we find in Rabelais and Shakespeare, it would have enriched his genius, for the greatest writers are those who can range the whole gamut of emotions, from the obscene to the spiritual." We think there is truth in this. And we will add, for our own part, that if there had been that strain of grossness in Shelley, there would have been no "Harriet scandal" for the delectation of the enemies of a great poet who was also a great Atheist. "Whoso hath ears to hear let him hear."

The July number of the *Humanitarian*, the monthly organ of the Humanitarian League, contains an article, written we suspect by Mr. Salt, on "The Prevention of Crime Bill." Mr. Salt's article—if we may call it his—ought to be reproduced in the *Westminster Gazette* as an antidote to the light and airy acceptance by Mr. J. M. Robertson, M.P., of the Home Secretary's new bantling—indeterminate sentence and all. Mr. Robertson has a powerful mind, but sympathy and imagination are not his strong points, and he looks placidly about sentenced criminals being at the mercy of the Home Office and the prison system for the rest of their natural lives. Mr. Salt says he has no objection to habitual offenders being kept "in hospital" until they are cured, but "our prisons at present are not moral hospitals," and the indeterminate sentence "presupposes the existence of a type of judge, magistrate, prison governor, visiting justice, gaoler, and policeman, which does not exist, as a class, at the present day." Both the "mind and the machinery" of a really reformatory system are lacking, and Mr. Gladstone's Bill is likely to be "simply a device for inflicting a life-sentence." The whole article deserves very careful attention at the hands of Humanitarians. There are several other important items in this gallant little monthly.

The July number of the *Positivist Review* opens with an interesting article by Mr. Frederic Harrison on Herbert Spencer's "Life." Professor Beesly writes on "The Royal Meeting" in an eminently common-sense spirit. But the most notable contribution, from our point of view, is Mr. Swinny's article on "George Jacob Holyoake," which is an extremely able and judicious piece of work.

Correspondence.

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Cicero asserts in his "Duties of a Magistrate, XIII.," that Lucius Flaminius, when a consul in Gaul, was prevailed on by a courtesan at a banquet to send to have a man beheaded in prison.

This was not improbably the origin of the story of the beheading of John the Baptist.

FRANCIS RAM.

Iconoclasts' Cricket Club Fifth Match

V.

Kensington Palace Cricket Club.

RESULT: Iconoclasts won by 8 runs. This match was played on Sunday, July 5, with above result. Our captain at last won the toss, and thanks are due to all Freethinkers who have successfully invoked the aid of the Blessed Virgin. Minett, who is a staunch Freethinker, played very finely, making top score, and having the best bowling analysis.

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

THE FUN OF THE BIBLE.

At this season of the year many people seek for light reading for the holidays. We recommend them to read the Bible. No other book, except Voltaire's *Candide*, is so full of fun. But we must "speak by the card or equivocation will undo us." The Holy Ghost's humor is not as our humor, nor his wicked witticisms as our witticisms. The Holy Ghost is not so uproarious as Mark Twain, nor so ironical as Mr. Dooley. Quips, repartees, and epigrams are strangers to his shadowy pages. Maybe, an attenuated humor is best suited to a book by a ghostly author. Although we cannot say that there is a laugh in every chapter, a snigger in every verse, the humor is sufficient. There are sly stories, quaint burlesques, and jokes enough to have eradicated the droop of the mouth of the High Churchman, and the resemblance to a tired cab-horse habitually worn by the flat-chested warriors of the Salvation Army. As a funmaker, the Holy Ghost stands lower than Artemus Ward, although he is his superior as a writer of fiction. The Ghost is a showman; absolutely calm about his exhibits, as a showman ought to be. He says the most deliriously funny things without turning a hair. That delightfully funny story of Jonah and the whale is the perfection of unemotional joking. Whilst reading it we fairly sympathise with the poor whale who had a bed-sitting-room in his "tum-tum." The humor of the story of Noah's Ark is infectious, and the Adventures of the Talking Snake in Eden hardly less so. Daniel in the Lions' Den, The Ten Plagues, The Tower of Babel, Ezekiel's Aldermanic Banquet, are all brilliant examples of Oriental Fun. The Adventures of J. C. in the later pages are funny enough to wrinkle the face of an undertaker with smiles. When the hero walks the waves, slangs the fig-tree, turns water into real champagne, feeds thousands of people with a bath bun and a few sardines, and finally sails away like a balloon, it is worth all the money charged for the volume. The refusal of good people to see his jokes must have made the Ghost laugh. He must have held his two sides, which are six, until his three heads, which are one, fairly ached from the explosion.

DEGRADING THE NATION.

What on earth is the matter with the clergy? They preach on Socialism, Politics, Family Life, Hospitals, Novel-Reading, and, in fact, everything except what they are paid to rant about. Take Father Bernard Vaughan, for example. He evidently wants people to consider him as a perambulating *Enquire Within Upon Everything*. Quite recently he chortled about obscene literature, and implied that its circulation meant national degradation. When he has time, he might do worse than read the Holy Bible. As a father, in another sense than the title of the reverend gentleman implies, we must reluctantly admit that the Bible is very "hot" in its treatment of sex-matters. It is quite Oriental in its nastiness, and, as we all know, Eastern vice begins where our own leaves off. We endeavor to keep the novels of neurotic and decadent authors out of our little ones' reach; but "God's most Holy Word" is sufficiently "warm" to make a bronze statue blush. No novelist would dare today to disfigure his pages with detailed and glowing accounts of incest, sodomy, rape, onanism, and unnatural vice. He would be imprisoned and his books rightly destroyed. Yet the clergy force the Bible, which contains all this foulness, into the hands of every child. We do not believe in bowdlerising any book; but, if ever there was any occasion for such drastic treatment, it certainly should be directed against the Bible. Unfortunately, if all the objectionable passages were deleted, "God's Holy Word" would be so reduced in bulk as to be unrecognisable. Instead of braying on indecent literature, let the clergy set us an example. Let them cease to force into children's hands a volume which they dare no longer read in its completeness to a mixed audience. Until they consent to do this, they must merit the appellation of "chartered libertines."

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, C. Cohen; 6.15, W. J. Ramsey.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, Lectures.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity and Secularism."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, F. A. Davies, "Was Jesus Always Wise?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, W. J. Ramsey, "Crimes of Christianity."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Hyde Park (near Marble Arch), 11.30, H. B. Samuels, "Prayers for Rain, and Other Things."

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.

BURY: Fair Ground, Tuesday, July 14, at 7.30, J. McLennan, a Lecture.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: The Meadows, 2.30, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S.: Corner of Shiel-road and Boaler-street, Thursday, July 9, at 8, Sidney Wollen, "The Teachings of Christ and its Effect upon Conduct." Sunday, July 3, at 3, "The Evolution of the Idea of God"; at 7, "The Trinity: its Origin and Mystery."

ROCHDALE: Town Hall Square, Thursday, July 16, at 7.30, J. McLennan, a Lecture.

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

LEEDS: Friday, July 10, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Christ a Crystallisation.—I."

WIGAN: Sunday, July 12, Market Steps, at 11, "The Chief Characteristic of Christ"; 3, "The Salvation Army: a Public Fraud"; 7, "Why Women should not be Christians." Wednesday, July 15, at 7.30, "The Growth of Christ."

BOLTON: Monday, July 13, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "The Salvation Army Exposed."

NELSON: Tuesday, July 14, Secondary School Ground, Market-street, "The Farce of the New Theology."

BURNLEY: Thursday, July 16, at 7.30, "Why Believe in Christ?"

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