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PRICE TWOPENCE

A man of character and energy, who expects to be something worth while in this life, and hence has to labor, strive, and struggle daily, leaves the future world to take care of itself, and is active and useful in this world.—GOETHE.

Was Byron a Christian?

MR. CECIL CHESTERTON, in a letter which appears on another page of this week's *Freethinker*, protests against our calling Byron a "sceptic," and claims him as a good Christian. Mr. Chesterton appeals to Byron's letters and Byron's "works." We also will appeal to both, and show Mr. Chesterton that he is mistaken.

Byron did repudiate "the religious dogmas of Christianity," and did not merely assail the "follies and hypocrisies of religious people."

There are many evidences of this fact scattered over his letters. Writing to Ensign Long, on April 16, 1807, he said:—

"Of religion I know nothing, at least in its favor. We have fools in all sects, and impostors in most; why should I believe mysteries no one understands, because written by men who chose to mistake madness for inspiration, and style themselves Evangelicals?"

Byron was then in his twentieth year, and it may be objected that his mind was not then ripe, but the earlier facts of his mental history will help to interpret the later.

Four years afterwards, in 1811, writing to his friend, the Rev. Francis Hodgson, he said:—

"I do not believe in any revealed religion.....I will have nothing to do with your immortality; we are miserable enough in this life, without the absurdity of speculating upon another.....The basis of your religion is injustice; the Son of God, the pure, the immaculate, the innocent, is sacrificed for the guilty."

We will now jump forward to 1822, the year of Shelley's death, and two years before the death of Byron. Mr. Chesterton quotes from a letter of Shelley's to Horace Smith, in which he says that if he had any influence over Byron he would "employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity, which, in spite of his reason, seem perpetually to recur." Mr. Chesterton regards this as decisive. But we are astonished that he does not see how it helps to prove that Byron was a "sceptic." The delusions of Christianity could not "recur" without having been absent, and if they recurred in spite of his reason, we must infer that his reason had rejected them.

Shelley's "speculative opinions," with which Byron desired to have nothing in common, went very much beyond the distinctive truth of Christianity. Shelley was an open and notorious Atheist; he also held strong and "startling" views on political, social, and ethical questions. Byron was, if anything, a Deist; and, except in regard to Republicanism, he had little sympathy with Shelley's numerous "heresies"—above all with his Atheism, which at that time was worse than the cry of "mad dog."

Mr. Chesterton ought really to have read Byron's two letters to Moore in March, 1822, more carefully. They should be taken, also, in connection with a letter

to Mr. Hoppner, dated April 3, 1821. Byron placed a natural child of his in a convent school. He meant her not to have an English education, and thought that by living "abroad, with a fair foreign education and a portion of five or six thousand pounds, she might marry very respectably." It was a part of such an arrangement, of course, that she should become a Roman Catholic. But it was natural that Byron should not put it in that way. "It is, besides, my wish," he wrote "that she should be a Roman Catholic, which I look upon as the best religion, as it is assuredly the oldest of the various branches of Christianity." These are surely not the words of a believer. If they are, it follows that Byron was a Roman Catholic—which is quite a novel view of his religious condition, and one that Mr. Chesterton would hardly welcome.

Now for the two letters to Moore. Mr. Chesterton quotes just enough for his own purpose. Had he quoted a little more freely he would have spoiled his case. Byron does say, "I am educating my daughter a strict Catholic." He does say, "I incline, myself, very much to the Catholic doctrines." But between these two statements he gives a reason, and Mr. Chesterton has omitted it. "For I think," Byron says, "people can never have enough of religion, if they have any." It appears that Mr. Chesterton is blind to Byron's humor when it plays the deuce with his argument. That it was humor is corroborated by a striking passage in the second letter to Moore. Byron says:—

"I am really a great admirer of tangible religion; and am breeding one of my daughters a Catholic, that she may have her hands full. It is by far the most elegant worship, hardly excepting the Greek mythology. What with incense, pictures, statues, altars, shrines, relics, and the real presence, confession, absolution,—there is something sensible to grasp at. Besides, it leaves no possibility of doubt; for those who swallow their Deity, really and truly, in transubstantiation, can hardly find anything else otherwise than easy of digestion."

Mr. Chesterton must pardon us for saying that the brother of "G. K. C." cannot, in his heart of hearts, regard this as serious. Byron's humor, not his piety, is speaking in these sentences.

A little later on, Byron says, "I do assure you I am a very good Christian." So far Mr. Chesterton is right. But there is an important addition. "Whether you will believe me in this," Byron says, "I do not know." The very expression implies that he did know. Moore did not believe him. In the "Conclusion" of his *Life of Lord Byron*, he says that "Lord Byron was, to the last, a sceptic." He denies, what does not need denying, that Byron was, like his friend Matthews, an Atheist. He even denies that Byron was ever a "confirmed unbeliever." But he does not say *in what*. The poet was evidently an unbeliever in Christianity when he wrote those letters to Long and Hodgson, and there is no serious evidence that he changed his mind subsequently.

Is there not a certain trickery in the adjective? Byron was or was not a "confirmed unbeliever" according to the meaning attached to the word "confirmed." Certainly he was not like Shelley; he did think out his opinions to definite issues, and stand by them. But it is perfectly obvious that he was not a Christian in any honest meaning of the word.

Turning now to Byron's poems, it is all very well for Mr. Chesterton to attribute the poet's satirical treatment of Christianity to his "humor" and "combativeness"—with or without the adjectives; but Byron was consciously and deliberately a soldier of freedom, and his satire was not mere rollicking fun or wild audacity; it was the gleaming whirl of his bright keen sword when it played around falsehood, wrong, and oppression. He hated, for one thing, the doctrine of heaven and hell and exclusive salvation. The strong and almost cynical lines upon his dog's grave are well-known. In the magnificent *Vision of Judgment*—the very top of English satire—he speaks of hell contemptuously as

"that immortal fry
Of almost everybody born to die."

In the great shipwreck scene in *Don Juan* he damns the same wretched doctrine:—

"And their baked lips, with many a bloody crack,
Suck'd in the moisture, which like nectar stream'd;
Their throats were ovens, their swol'n tongues were black,
As the rich man's in hell, who vainly scream'd
To the beggar, who could not rain back
A drop of dew, when every drop had seem'd
To taste of heaven—if this be true, indeed,
Some Christians have a comfortable creed."

In the same splendid epic—for such it is—Byron takes his own way of pouring ridicule upon other Christian dogmas:—

"The truth is, I've grown lately rather phthisical:
I don't know what the reason is—the air,
Perhaps; but, as I suffer from the shocks
Of illness, I grow much more orthodox.
The first attack at once proved the Divinity;
(But that I never doubted, nor the Devil);
The next, the Virgin's mystical virginity;
The third, the usual Origin of Evil;
The fourth at once establish'd the whole Trinity,
On so incontrovertible a level,
That I devoutly wish'd the three were four,
On purpose to believe so much the more."

The first half of the second line is entirely serious—"That I never doubted." We have already said that Byron was not an Atheist. The second half of the sentence is either quizzical, or it is the poet's subtle way of suggesting that God and the Devil hang together, each being the other's logical complement. All the rest of the stanza is unadulterated satire—even to the wicked wish that forms its fitting conclusion. We know that old Sir Thomas Browne expressed a somewhat similar wish. It was not like to like, however, but like in difference. For the seventeenth century Christian was so full of faith that he sincerely wished his religion were more difficult of belief than it was—which seems well-nigh impossible—while the nineteenth century Sceptic only employs the wish as a means of raising fresh laughter at a religious absurdity.

Byron saw clearly enough that if Theism, or perhaps Pantheism, survived in the future it would be independent of all the deities of the world's worship. He did not add "Christ" to the following passage in *Childe Harold*, but it inevitably suggests itself:—

"Look on this spot—a nation's sepulchre!
Abode of gods, whose shrines no longer burn.
Even gods must yield—religions take their turn:
'Twas Jove's—'tis Mahomet's—and other creeds
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds;
Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope is built on reeds."

There is not a line or a word in Byron implying the slightest belief in the deity of Jesus Christ, but many a line and word implying the contrary. Even the expression "diviner still" in connecting his name with that of Socrates is necessarily a tribute to him only as a man and a teacher. Three lines in *Don Juan* represent the poet as a Pantheist, far removed from all the special doctrines of Christianity:—

"My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, air, stars—all that springs from the great Whole
Which hath produc'd, and will receive the soul."

The pantheistic conception is also expressed, with regard to the whole life of this planet, in another

powerful stanza of the same poem:—

"Between two worlds life hovers like a star,
'Twixt night and morn, upon the horizon's verge:
How little do we know that which we are!
How less what we may be! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves."

Man's personal immortality is a ridiculous idea in view of that conception of the life of the world. And it must be confessed that Byron constantly recurred to the idea in a spirit of scepticism. The following lines present a very pertinent reflection:—

"Our days are too brief for affording
Space to dispute what no one ever could
Decide, and every body one day will
Know very clearly—or at least lie still."

All the talk of all men, and all women, and all clergymen (Sydney Smith's three sexes) does not alter the fact that we must die to ascertain whether there is a future life, and that, after all, there may be nothing to be known—and nothing to know it.

The eternal Whence and Whither, questions which George Meredith treats with such high disdain, haunts the human mind without ever finding an answer:—

"What are we? and whence came we? what shall be
Our ultimate existence? what's our present?
Are questions answerless, and yet incessant."

In the very first Canto of *Don Juan* the sceptical position with regard to a future life is stated with a brilliance that fools might mistake for frivolity, and a force that leaves nothing to be added:—

"Few mortals know what end they would be at,
But whether glory, power, or love, or treasure,
The path is through perplexing ways, and when
The goal is gain'd, we die, you know—and then—
What then?—I do not know, no more do you—
And so good night."

How a man of intelligence can read Byron and conclude that he was really and truly a Christian, passes our comprehension. Not only in the text, but in the spirit—not only in the lines, but between them—the scepticism of this great writer seems to us as obvious as the sun on a glowing summer day. The whole tone of his compositions—and there is such a thing as tone, although it is indefinable—is either non-Christian or anti-Christian. It was a true instinct on the part of those who denounced him as a lost soul, denied him burial in Westminster Abbey, and tried their utmost to keep his writings out of young people's hands. The idea of fondling "infidels" had not arisen in those days. It only arises when the battle of Faith and Reason is practically decided. Then the great sceptics who were cast out as a disgrace are brought back as a credit. They were misunderstood, forsooth! Perhaps they misunderstood themselves! They were good Christians without knowing it! Yes, the prodigal son is welcomed home again with feast and dance, and the cooking and consumption of the fatted calf. Voltaire himself has been treated in this way—to say nothing of the grave Darwin and the valiant Bradlaugh. And it appears that the same posthumous appropriation is to be attempted in the case of Byron. What a cynical smile would flit over that handsome face of his if he could see this odd game being played! Byron's face and Voltaire's together would make a superb picture in front of such a spectacle.

Byron was not a Christian. Great writer as he was, he was not an exact thinker in the sense that Shelley was; moreover, there was a morbid taint in his mind and blood, and this inherited defect asserted itself in many ways, one of them being the occasional recrudescence in his feelings of the superstition he had expelled from his intellect. One sees something of the same thing in the great Robert Burns. His penetrating intellect saw through all the dogmas of religion, but he never quite got its influence out of his nerves and blood. We believe that Shelley's words contain the essential truth about Byron.

G. W. FOOTE.

Disease and Religion.

MOST educated people are aware that there exists in relation to disease a speculation that is known as the theory of immunity. This theory has the merit of being simple in its main outlines, however complex it may be in its various ramifications. It is based upon the observed fact that, with all diseases, some people are more resistant than others. Any infectious or contagious disease quickly seizes upon certain people, while others are passed by. Between the very susceptible and the completely immune there is an incalculable number of stages, but the fact of some being quite immune is indisputable. And with any disease that kills, the disease itself acts as a selective agency, and so tends to kill itself by destroying the kind of organism on which it lives. Thus, a disease is acquired; those susceptible to it are killed, the less susceptible or the completely immune survive, and in this way a new generation is protected from attack. Of course, a bountiful Providence develops a new microbe to deal with the survivors, but that, as Kipling says, is another story.

It may also be observed that the process of selection is not probably confined to man; it extends also to the microbe. A microbe that is too virulent would operate by killing all it attacked, and so destroy its own food supply. There seems every reason for believing, therefore, that while the human is modified in relation to the microbe, the microbe is modified in relation to the man. By this means a kind of working harmony is evolved. The human suffers to the limit of endurance, the microbe modifies its assaults to a point consonant with its continuing to exist.

Now it has not, I think, been noticed how curiously this theory fits in with the origin and history of religion. Beyond a casual remark by Oliver Wendell Holmes concerning the probable discovery of the microbe of religion, no bacteriologist or pathologist appears to have paid the slightest attention to the matter. Personally, I do not think it would be very difficult to discover the religious microbe, but that may be passed by for the present as one of the unsettled questions in micro-biology. Still, it is indisputable that in the manner of acquiring religion, in the way in which certain members of the race acquire an immunity against attack, as well as by the way in which the religious microbe is modified to meet the conditions of the partly modified organism, the features common to both cases are numerous and striking.

It may be noted, in the first place, that religion is essentially a complaint of childhood. Historically, it belongs to the infancy of the race; and as it is a biological law that individual development summarises racial history, it happens that, as with measles, either this particular complaint is acquired during years of immaturity, or—except in isolated cases—is not acquired at all. The consequence of this is that, as in another direction where people are inoculated with a specific disease in order to escape another they may never contract, it is of first importance to one section of the community that lives by attending to those who are suffering from this complaint, that all children shall be inoculated with the virus of religion, whenever and wherever possible. It is also of importance to the rest of the people that children shall be given as clean a bill of health as is possible, and shall not be made spiritually sick so that a certain number of self-styled specialists may live by retailing specifics over which they claim patent rights. Hence the quarrel in the schools and elsewhere between those who claim the right to inoculate children and those who resist such a claim.

In the case of religion, as in that of disease in general, we are presented, broadly, with two types of organism. We have that which shows a constitutional pre-disposition towards contracting religion and those who show an equal pre-disposition against it. Under normal conditions the principle of immunity would have operated by preserving the

non-susceptible type; and, broadly, this is what has actually transpired. The number of the immune has increased, although the rate of increase has neither been rapid nor uniform. The reason for this is that its operation has been checked by an artificially induced and sustained principle of selection in a quite opposite direction. The discovery that certain people were immune to the germ of religion was made very early in the history of mankind, and prompt steps were taken to weed out the unwelcome type. Among savages, as also under semi-civilised and civilised conditions, the aim of an interested and powerful class has been to weed out all those who showed a lack of susceptibility to religion. The type has been, and still is, systematically discouraged. Thus, whereas in the normal way it is the type that is immune to a complaint or a disorder that is preserved, in the case of religion an artificial selection has worked to kill off the immune while preserving the susceptible. The persistence of this particular complaint, the existence of the "religious instinct," so-called (there is really no more a religious instinct than there is an instinct for diphtheria or typhoid fever), is really the expression of the fact that an artificial selection has always been working for the suppression of an opposite type.

But he who fights against natural tendencies finds the dice constantly loaded against him. A particular type of organism can only be perpetuated by a perpetuation of its appropriate environment. In this case, as has been said, the environment had to be sustained by artificial agencies; and in the nature of the case a breakdown sooner or later was inevitable. In proportion as social evolution took the power from the hands of ecclesiastical organisations and distributed it over a wider area, and in proportion as that evolution opened up new avenues of interest and employment, the type of mind susceptible to the influence of religion declined, while the opposite type began to flourish. The normal law of mental variation and survival began to operate more freely and the type of mind best suited to the natural surroundings to show itself in greater numbers.

At this point another aspect of the theory of immunity appears. I have already pointed out that the process of selection is twofold. There is the protective evolution of the organism against the microbe; there is also the modification of the microbe to meet the changed organism. To follow up the analogy, the microbe of religion that affected people in the fifteenth or sixteenth century would be quite harmless to the people living in this. There has been a protective evolution against it. To thrive the microbe must be of a different variety, if not of a different species. In this manner it has come about that the religious influence to which the human organism is exposed has departed as much from the primitive variety as man himself has been differentiated from his simian ancestors. Of this change, what is called "advanced religion," "New Theology," and by other names is fundamentally the expression. It is the attempt of the microbe to perpetuate itself under changed conditions. Yet withal it retains its fundamental characteristics. It is still, for instance, parasitic in character. Its demands on the human organism are large and persistent. Its contribution to its welfare is practically *nil*. Such beneficial qualities as are claimed for it are clearly independent of it, and flourish as well in its absence as when it is present.

It would be indeed astonishing in this age of micro-biological investigation if some attempt had not been made to discover the microbe of this particular complaint and indicate the conditions of its development. The first part of this search has not been, as yet, completely successful; the second has been conspicuously so. Having its origin in the very dawn of human reason, it finds its nurture in the crude theorising, the vagrant fancies, and the fears of primitive human culture. It perpetuates itself vigorously so long as a primitive form of culture, or so long as a type of mind that is at once the

cause and the outcome of that culture stage, prevails. And just as the microbe of malaria is destroyed by an effective system of drainage, just as that of consumption is killed by light and air, just so the microbe of religion is starved to death by the growth of accurate knowledge, of effective social co-operation, and by a proper appreciation of the nature of those forces bearing upon human life. The work of that school of investigators of which Tylor and Frazer are such brilliant representatives leaves little doubt upon this head.

I have dwelt above only on those points of resemblance in virtue of which religion may be studied from the same point of view that one studies the theory of immunity in relation to disease. But in addition to the points of resemblance there are points of difference quite as striking. I have no space to dwell on these in detail; but there is one that marks it off from ordinary physical disorders. With physical disease no one is more aware of its presence than the unhappy sufferer. In the case of religion the difficulty is to persuade the sufferer that he is really ill. He will persist, not only that he is not unwell, but will protest that he is experiencing pleasures such as other people are ignorant of. It is only when he has completely recovered that he recognises how pathologic his condition has been. This would seem to lift the complaint into the general class of mental disorders, and future knowledge may enable specialists to indicate, as in other cases, the peculiar condition of the nervous system of which it is the functional expression.

Of course, this delusion of perfect health is fostered by the conduct of those who thrive upon its existence. These persist in calling health what is really the very opposite, and so induce a state of mind somewhat analogous to that induced by Christian Science. Probably if we adopted the Chinese method a cure might be found for this. In China—so it is said—people pay their doctors while they are well, and stop payment while they are ill. (Illnesses are said to be brief in consequence.) If, accordingly, the clergy were paid while people were free from the complaint, and their salaries were stopped the moment people showed symptoms of religion, we might hear considerably less of the evils of unbelief and listen to fewer lamentations as to the decline of religion.

C. COHEN.

Christianity and War.

NEITHER directly nor indirectly is this article concerned with the various deliverances of the International Peace Congress just held in London. Its main object is rather to examine certain views on the attitude of Christianity towards war which have found recent expression in some religious journals. It is, of course, frankly admitted on all hands that the Bible can be freely quoted both for and against war. In one portion of it we read that Jehovah "maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth," and in another that "the Lord is a man of war." One prophet speaks of a time when the nations shall "beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks," while another puts these words into God's mouth: "Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning-hooks into spears." Not even the New Testament can be appealed to for an unqualified condemnation of war. It is usual to sing the praises of Jesus as the Prince of Peace, and yet the Gospels represent him as saying: "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword"—a prophecy that has been abundantly fulfilled. The word "peace" is of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, but it generally signifies peace between each believing individual and God. On these pages there is not one word about making wars to cease to the end of the earth.

This, we repeat, is generally acknowledged by

Christian apologists. This is how the Bishop of Ripon puts it:—

"It has often been stated, and arguments have been founded on the statement, that Christianity laid down no rules respecting some of the great evils of the world—such as the status of women, slavery, and war. This is true, for Christianity is not a religion of rules, but a religion of principles; it is the introduction into human life of a new spirit, and that spirit is love."

There is no easier way out of the difficulty than thus to evade it; but an evaded argument still remains in its full force. Of what benefit are principles unless they are put into practice? What is the use of the spirit of love if it does not embody itself in corresponding deeds? And, furthermore, Dr. Boyd-Carpenter cannot be ignorant of the fact that the spirit of love is much older than Christianity. Buddha said much more about the beauty and power of the spirit of love than Jesus ever did. But the Bishop claims that "the improvement in the condition of the world, the spreading abroad of humaner principles of conduct, including humaner methods of war, are little more than the apprehension of the principles laid down by Christ." That is only a bare assertion; but let us see whether history bears it out. We find the same assertion in Gardiner's historical works:—

"Before the end of the seventh century, Teutonic and heathen England had embraced a new creed, and with that creed it had received those changes of thought, law, and custom which could not fail to follow on such a conversion. One change, above all, affects the general history. Warfare still goes on, warfare alike with the Britons and with Englishmen of other kingdoms; but warfare no longer implies extermination. Where the heathen conqueror carried mere slaughter and havoc, the Christian conqueror was satisfied with political subjection."

Thus narrowed down, we can all the more easily test the accuracy of the assertion. Gardiner refers to the overthrow of Chester by Aethelrith, in 613, as the "last case of mere destruction." Whether or not it was the last, we boldly declare that the alleged contrast between Heathen and Christian conqueror is not borne out by facts. Take the conquest of Britain by the Roman Empire in the first century, and you will learn, even from Gardiner's own account of it, that the end in view was not the extermination of the Britons, but their subjection to Rome; and that, once the subjection was accomplished, the conquered country enjoyed a period of greater peace and prosperity than it had ever known before.

It is doubtless true that civilisation has greatly mitigated the horrors of war in modern times by forbidding the molestation of peaceful inhabitants who protect their property, the ill-treatment of prisoners, and by prescribing immunity for flags-of-truce and for hospitals; but it is also true that, in consequence of the invention of gunpowder and numerous other discoveries, it has made war more destructive and more terrible, as well as rendered it swifter and more critical in its action. On the whole, the wars of Christendom have been the cruellest and most destructive wars in all history; and they have all been carried on under the banner of the Cross. The wars of the Church, and the wars waged on behalf of the Church, have not been distinguished for their humaneness and mercifulness. What about the wars of persecution with which history abounds? What about the massacre of St. Bartholomew in 1572? Who can read the history of Sedgemoor towards the end of the seventeenth century, and its tragic culmination in Jeffreys' Bloody Assizes, and conscientiously boast of the glorious triumph of the spirit of love introduced by Christ? Have not Catholics butchered Protestants and Protestants Catholics, without any reference whatever to the beautiful spirit of love, whenever they had the chance?

It is a remarkable and highly-significant fact that Peace Societies, Peace Conferences, International Arbitration, and International Mediation are products, not of the Ages of Faith, but of the modern

Ages of Scepticism and positive unbelief. The ebb of religion witnesses the flow of humanitarianism. When has there been "Peace from the Christian Standpoint"? A week ago the following statement appeared in a well-known religious journal:—

"Many of the faithful advocates of peace, especially on the Continent, do not share this 'Christian standpoint.' They approach the desired end by other ways. Out of a pure love to humanity they seek peace and pursue it; from a bitter sense of the economic waste which marks our present rivalries, they are led to desire a better day. The Christian faith is not given to them to share, and perhaps they may be forgiven if they think hardly of the Church of Christ for its coldness. It is for us to make plain that from the Christian standpoint the way is no less distinct to the end of their passionate hope."

With the spirit of that extract no serious fault can be found; but the last sentence displays the lamentable weakness of the writer's case. It is granted that the unbelievers discern a "distinct way to the end of their passionate hope," and the only claim set up is that "from the Christian standpoint" the way to it is "no less distinct." Let us consider the writer's contention. He concedes that "the argument from the inhumanity of war is unanswerable," and that "if common sense were the arbiter warfare would soon vanish." "But," he asks, "is there no sanction acknowledged by the believer in Christ, and not by the philanthropist who has no vision beyond the bounds of humanity?" We answer that no other sanction is required, and that whatever other sanction the Christian pretends to possess has been wholly inoperative throughout nineteen centuries of Christian history. But what is this other sanction? It is not found in the "song of the angels," nor in the Sermon on the Mount. The writer informs us that it is to be found in "Christianity as a religion of redemption and of new life in the Holy Spirit." We have heard that many times before, but there is absolutely nothing in it. Christianity has been "a religion of redemption and of New life in the Holy Spirit" from its very start, and yet, being such, it has never made for the peace of the world.

At this point, our friend loses himself in the fog of supernaturalism. "It was to a new conflict Christ summoned his followers," he tells us. "From the Christian standpoint the first definition of peace is 'peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'—peace by the blood of his Cross." That is the truest remark in our friend's whole article. Christianity won all its triumphs and acquired all its power by means of otherworldism. Otherworldism was the steed on which it marched, across innumerable rivers of blood, to its giddy throne, and it is on the same steed that it is now rushing headlong to its doom. Jesus and his apostles despised the present world, despised it because it was at once wicked and passing away. "Ye are of this world," Jesus said to his enemies; "I am not of this world." "He that hateth his life in this world," he told his disciples, "shall keep it unto life eternal." The Epistles are full of scorn for this world. To love this present world was an unpardonable sin against God. Christians had no abiding city here, but looked upon themselves as heirs of the world to come. It mattered but little whether war or peace reigned down here as long as they believed in the white robes and the golden harps beyond the fiery flood in which this world and its things were so soon to be swallowed up for ever.

That life-crushing nightmare is now at last passing away, and this world is looming up and asserting itself as the only world for which we need care and toil. The voice of humanity is beginning to utter itself and to silence the imaginary voices of Deities and monsters of the deep; and when interpreted its message amounts to this: men ought to be governed by enlightened intelligence, not by superstitious imaginings; and so governed they will perceive that their welfare can be secured, not by fighting, but by learning to respect, love, and serve one another, and that this world, while they are in it, should be their all in all.

J. T. LLOYD.

Acid Drops.

One of the American high-jumpers who took a prize at the Olympic Games attributed his success to his being a Christian Scientist. But as his six-foot-three jump was not a record, to what does he attribute the success of the fellow who licked him by anticipation?

The *Sunday Chronicle*—or Mr. William Purvis who writes the article—is agitated over the question of the alleged miracles at Lourdes. The right point of view is everything in such matters. Tons of circumstantial evidence weigh very little in the scale of reason. The whole bulk might turn out to be absolutely worthless if you could only get to the bottom of every detail. Miracles at Lourdes are attested by "honest witnesses." Very likely. So was witchcraft. People came into court and gave circumstantial evidence on which men, women, and even children were found guilty and put to death. Nevertheless, we are all satisfied nowadays that these people, though honest, were mistaken. We put by their circumstantial evidence as of no value whatever. And the "miracles" at Lourdes are regarded in the same way by the modern civilised intelligence. That some cases of disease are healed is probably true, but the cures are not supernatural. Let the Virgin give a wooden-legged man a new leg. That *would* be something.

Rev. Benjamin James Marrow, curate of St. George's Church, Stockport, eloped with the wife of Mr. Ernest Beswick, a Manchester merchant. The Divorce Court has awarded the husband £1,000 damages. Another proof of "the moral inadequacy of infidelity." Yes, religion is the only thing that keeps people straight—though the amorous curate is so difficult to manage.

The Boston magistrates ordered Elizabeth Barwick to pay fines and costs amounting to £5 12s., or undergo three months' imprisonment. Her boy had been caned by the headmaster of Shadfriars Council School, and she went to the school and smacked the pedagogue's face, knocking off his spectacles. We are bound to say that our sympathy goes to the mother. Parents who do not beat their own children are naturally wild when outsiders take up the performance. And the fact that the Bible encourages it does not make it any better.

When *will* the cane be banished from English schools? Teachers who cannot manage children without beating them have mistaken their vocation. The cane is not allowed in the schools of Japan. Any teacher in that country who struck a child would lose his situation on the spot. And the cane will be banished here when Secular Education comes in.

Rev. C. C. Atkinson, D.D.—which means a doctor of divinity inside church, and often a darned duffer outside—conducted the morning service in Chester Cathedral on a recent Sunday, when Mr. Justice Coleridge (Lord Coleridge) attended in state. The preacher must have considerably astonished the judge. He admitted that education was the main cure for crime, but it must go hand in hand with sound religious teaching or it would never succeed. Look at France, where Secular Education has enormously increased crime! Which, by the way, is an enormous lie. Look at America, where corruption is rapidly gaining ground! Of course, there is nothing of that sort in Christian England; not even on pious Boards of Guardians. And how about Japan? Dr. Atkinson is silent as to that country. Why? Because it is Secular Education in the nation's schools for a whole generation that lifted Japan up to its present high level.

A correspondent has sent us a curious leaf out of the July number of the *Magazine of Foods and Beverages*. One column on one page deals with biscuits, ices, coffee, etc. The other column is headed "Reviews" and is full of spluttering piety. The books noticed are not such as you would expect to see reviewed in a trade journal. The first is entitled *The World and its God*, and we read that "The author is a keen, observant lawyer, who has a clear and ample knowledge of the world and its God, which he handles in a trenchant style." Good God! Another book is by a lady, and we are told that "all her writings are fragrant and intensely Biblical." Of another book it is said that even those should welcome it "who already have a large apparatus on the parables." Apparatus! Yet the man who wrote that extraordinary sentence actually praises another book for its "ripe and reliable scholarship." Altogether, we wonder what sort of people this journal caters for. Are

they all deacons, churchwardens, and Sunday-school teachers? And have any of them ever been to school?

President David Starr Jordan, of Leland Stanford Junior University, has a very readable article in the current number of the *Hibbert Journal*, entitled "The Religion of the Sensible American." This religion is supposed to be expressed "In Terms of Life." On reading the paper, however, we find that from beginning to end it is couched, not in terms of life, but in those of theological mysticism, and that the thought is often drowned in a muddy river of rhetoric. Life, the natural life of earth, is contemplated from the giddy heights, or the dark and confusing depths, of supernatural religion.

Take the following sentence: "When a man begins to live—love, deny himself, serve—he understands what life is, and knows that death cannot touch it." The first part of the sentence is true enough, taken by itself; but the last clause spoils it, because it is not true. We know that death *does* touch life, even the truest, sweetest, and best. Every individual dies, and when the individual dies, *that*, so far as we know, is the end of him. Neither President Jordan, nor another, can adduce a single shred of evidence to the contrary. Death is the terminus, beyond which lies nothing but unbroken silence and impenetrable darkness.

According to President Jordan, "the sensible American" is everlastingly prating about God, and about life from and in God; but what is meant by such jargon it is impossible to discover. All we are told is that his God is neither angry, jealous, nor benevolent; is not "a judge, a tyrant, a king, a huge, hoary-bearded giant"; and, after all, this is to tell us—nothing.

Mr. R. J. Campbell has gained the reputation—among Christians—of a daring and profound thinker. In this he has, of course, had the advantage of working in a field where mediocrity is the prevailing mental characteristic. In literature, science, philosophy, or sociology, we expect the reputation would not have been quite so easily gained. Be this as it may, he has one of the characteristics, at least, of all theologians. He can be bearably reasonable when dealing with those religious beliefs with which he disagrees, and then become as unreasonable as they when stating his own religious convictions. For example, in a recent sermon he pointed out, rightly enough, that the current conception of God was a reflection of the prevailing social state. The God of the Roman Catholic Church, he says, is the old Roman Emperor magnified. The God of sixteenth-century Protestantism is the projection of the irresponsible kingship of that era. This is quite correct, but why stop here? Is not Mr. Campbell's God quite as much a reflection of the existing social state as any other God has been? What is the God who governs by constitutional methods, filled with compassion for suffering, desirous of decent wages, decent education, and decent homes for all, but a projection of twentieth-century constitutional monarchy, colored by the prevailing interest in social topics and a growing humanitarianism? Of course the other gods were man-made, and so, of course, is Mr. Campbell's deity. His God has the same origin as the others, and although its creator has examined his handiwork and pronounced it very good, it stands about as much chance of surviving as the others.

Messiah Campbell is working wonders. He is even gaining a reputation as a profound thinker—which is little short of a miracle. It is claimed that he is "saving" the Socialist movement by turning it in a Christian direction. Listen to the following in last week's *Christian Commonwealth*:—

"We welcome the new *entente* between Christianity and Socialism. The effect which the influence of Mr. Campbell and others have had upon the democratic movement is already quite marked. In not a few quarters the spirit of hatred has given place to its opposite, whilst Socialist leaders, who at one time were intolerant of religious beliefs, have become sympathetic, if not enthusiastic."

We have prophesied this for years. Christianity is nobbling the Socialist movement, as a boa constrictor nobbles a jack-ass—licking him all over before swallowing him.

The Rev. C. Silvester Horne, M.A., is so zealous in defence of the Nonconformist position that he both forgets and contradicts his Bible. "Buildings," he says, "are not holy. They never can be holy." "The New Testament authority," he contends, "is all to the effect that holiness can only attach to the holy character and the holy mind." As a matter of fact, however, even the New Testament recognises the holiness of places, for we read of "holy ground"

(Acts vii. 33), "holy mount" (2 Peter i. 18); and of things, for mention is made of a "holy kiss" (Romans xvi. 16), "holy commandment" (Romans vii. 12), "holy covenant" (Luke i. 72), while the Old Testament abounds with references to "holy garments," "holy vessels," "holy house," "holy water," "holy chambers," "holy flesh," "holy way," "holy pots." Even the hire of the "harlot" is said to be "holiness unto the Lord." It would not have been convenient to remember such passages while declaiming against "holy orders, holy rites, and ceremonies" in the Church of England.

Equally inaccurate is Mr. Horne's definition of "saintliness." "Saintliness," he asserts, "simply means sanity. The Christian is the type of the perfectly sane man." But in the Bible "saints" would be correctly translated by "God's people," people consecrated, or set apart for God's service. Carlyle, as all readers of his *Life by Froude* well know, was an Agnostic, who ridiculed the Christian preaching he sometimes heard; and yet Mr. Horne goes to the Agnostic, rather than to the Scriptures, for the religious meaning of Bible words. Practically, we know saintliness, as embodied in the most loyal Bible Christians, borders not on sanity, but on insanity.

The religious consciousness has received another shock. By experiment it has been found, after treating growing wheat with high tension electricity, the yield has been increased by 30 to 40 per cent. For generations people have been praying for a bountiful harvest without increasing the yield by the most infinitesimal fraction. And now science steps in, and in a cold-blooded, materialistic manner accomplishes all that the religious world has been working for, and doesn't even say a prayer at the end of it. To live the truly religious life is becoming almost daily a matter of increasing difficulty.

"We will not accept coercive creeds and dogmas," exclaimed the Rev. Bernard Snell at Edinburgh the other Sunday. Then he added that "in their nature creeds are meant to be coercive." Of course they are; and Mr. Snell must know that the multitudinous creeds of Congregationalism are as cruelly coercive in their respective spheres as any others. In its nature, Christianity, in whatever form it exists, is the most heartless religion on earth. Christians are everlastingly persecuting, and, whenever possible, putting to death, not only non-Christians and anti-Christians, but one another when they happen to pronounce different shibboleths, thus exemplifying that spirit of love and self-denial which is said to constitute the very essence of the religion of Jesus.

Indeed, a Congregational minister says, in a letter to the *Christian Commonwealth*, that "the Nonconformist Conscience cramps the soul in the bonds of little systems, which it calls creeds," that "its creeds are concentration camps which it looks upon as the perfection of religious strategy," and that, in fact, "it reeks of self-righteousness." That is doubtless true; but we must add that it is more or less true of all existing versions of the Christian religion. There are innumerable different roads to heaven, and every one of them claims to be the only way, which proves that they are all alike pure inventions.

East Ham Teacher: "Why was Moses hidden in the bulrushes?" Promising Pupil: "Please, miss, because they didn't want him vaccinated." Behold the power of Simple Bible Teaching!

An exceptionally wise writer in the *British Weekly* has come to the conscientious conclusion that the Church of Rome is not "a Church of Jesus Christ." That settles it. The only inconvenient fact is that equally wise Catholics are quite as convinced that Protestantism is not "a Church of Jesus Christ." We do not lay claim to any exceptional wisdom, nor do we refer to any alleged revelation; but it is our humble belief that "a Church of Jesus Christ" is conspicuous on our planet only by its non-existence.

We are told that the verse, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," is "a deep where all thoughts are drowned." Quite so; but what is a man worth without his thoughts? It naturally follows that all who believe such a verse are idiots; and it is well known that the best Christians, in the New Testament sense, make the worst citizens of the earth.

We really pity some of the men of God. They must suffer from a strong sense of self-contempt when they reflect on the way in which they have to prostitute their talents for the sake of their business. There is the Rev. J. W. Jack,

M.A., of Argnask, Perthshire, for instance, who prints in his *Monthly Record* his sermon on "The World's Woes v. the Divine Goodness." The preacher assures his congregation, and his readers, that God's goodness stands every test of criticism. When he is reminded of the pain, misery, and degradation in the world, he replies that God is doing all that is possible; and also that the world's suffering is not really as bad as it looks. Olive Schreiner was romancing when she wrote of the ox dying in its yoke beneath its master's whip as "turning its anguish-filled eyes on the sunlight." Mr. Jack knows better than that: the anguish was mostly in the sensitive heart of the writer. But cannot the worthy (or unworthy) Mr. Jack see on reflection that his argument does not *destroy* the anguish? It only *removes* it from the dying ox to the tortured spectator. The anguish is still there. We have no hesitation in calling such arguments both contemptible and disgusting. Even the law of England—we are not up in the Scottish law—sends people to prison for inflicting upon lower animals the suffering which, according to Mr. Jack, is all-my-eye. It seems to us that to minimise and pooh-pooh the world's suffering, in order to defend the character of God, is one of the lowest depths to which a human intelligence can sink.

In noticing the death of Sir W. R. Cremer—plain W. R. Cremer seems, somehow, more appropriate to the man—the *Daily News* points out his great services to the cause of peace, and adds that the "impulse came originally from the international side of the early Socialist Campaign, and the Mr. Cremer of that day was the comrade of Marx and Lassalle." We note this specially as coming from the *Daily News*, and beg to point out that both Marx and Lassalle were pronounced Freethinkers. There *were* peace advocates before that day—also Freethinkers; but it is worth noting that here, as elsewhere, it was the heretics that led the way.

England, says the Rev. W. Goudie, is Christian only in name. "There is going on a return to paganism on the part of multitudes of the more privileged people, who are fleeing from their Churches, escaping from the Sabbath, putting away their Bibles, and, except for a few fragments of superstition, becoming pagans." We deeply sympathise with the reverend gentleman. Only a "few fragments of superstition" stands between him and destruction. The confession that if these multitudes had a *lot* of superstition the Rev. Goudie would feel reassured is quite charming in its frankness. Mr. Goudie must bear up under his misfortune.

The Bishop of Vermont, one of our American visitors, has his own way of proving that Christianity abolished slavery. The Apostles, he admits, proclaimed no sort of social revolution. On the contrary, "they told the slaves to accept their condition and make the best of it." But—here is where their humanitarian ingenuity appears—they set themselves to proclaim principles that made slavery absolutely impossible. After this, one cannot doubt the power of the Gospel or the comfort the Apostolic teaching must have given to the slaves around them. To these they said, "Be patient; we have a powerful teaching, so invincible that, some nineteen centuries after you are dead, certain Christians armed with our Gospel will enter on a war with other Christians—armed with the same Gospel—for the abolition of slavery. Both sides will support their positions with our teaching, but in the end slavery will be abolished. We shall have made it impossible—nineteen centuries after you are dead." To Roman, Jewish, and Greek slaves, such a message must have been like a much-advertised cocoa—grateful and comforting. What we should like the Bishop to explain is, how on earth the African slave trade ever got established in a world governed by a teaching that made slavery "absolutely impossible"?

The Bishop adds that he *might* show the same influence at work in the case of war, but—conveniently, perhaps—he passes on. Now we do not doubt for a moment that Christianity exerted the *same* influence on war that it did on slavery, and this is, so far as the abolition of either is concerned, none at all. Not even Mohammedanism has been responsible for more wars than has Christianity, and certainly those wars that have been initiated or inspired by Christian feeling have been conspicuous for their brutality and bloodthirstiness.

The Crusades are ample illustration of this. The sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, again, saw no wars quite so brutal and vindictive as those waged between Catholic and Protestant. Consider, too, the extent to which war and the preparations for war dominate the attention and absorb the energies of Christian nations. And not the least remarkable feature of the situation is that the people who clamor

for larger armies and navies, and who are most susceptible to the war fever, are those who also dilate on the peaceful proclivities of their religion. Really where religion is concerned it would seem as though no speech were too ridiculous for utterance, and no doctrine too stupid for belief.

When one notes the solemn manner with which Christian preachers manufacture and repeat legends of a semi-historical character, one's surprise at their circulating religious legends almost disappears. One of the reverend speakers at Whitefield's Tabernacle the other Sunday, to give one illustration, enlightened his audience as to the consequences of the Puritan settlement in America in the seventeenth century. Their watchwords, he said, were liberty, opportunity, intelligence, and integrity. These watchwords had given rise to four great institutions—the family, the public school, the ballot-box, and ecclesiastical freedom. We do not, of course, quarrel with the watchwords, nor do we attach very much importance to them. These words have been, and are, used by all parties, and ignored by each in much the same manner. Nor do we see any very clear connection between the premises and the conclusions; but one must not be too exacting with a religious argument. Still, we are a little surprised to learn that the Puritans in America gave rise to the family, being under the impression that this institution had been heard of even before the days of Columbus. On this, however, we do not dogmatise. Public schools, too, we were under the impression, had an independent origin. There *were* numerous public schools, with a large expenditure of public money, under the Pagan Roman Empire; and, while it is true they all disappeared under Christian rule, the fact is not one from which Christians will derive much credit nowadays. So far as freedom is concerned, there can be little question that a more intolerable tyranny than that set up by the Puritans in America, probably never existed. The Puritans clamored for freedom *here*, and immediately went a good one better in the act of suppressing it when the power was in their hands. As to the ballot, the speaker might reflect that the *secrecy* of the ballot is itself strong evidence of the little Christianity has done to develop real independence of mind and respect for opinion with the mass of the people. It may be—we believe it is—necessary, but that it is a confession of the absence of real mental freedom is indisputable. Still, it is news that the family, public schools, freedom, and the ballot were created by the Puritans. There is still room for a claim for them as the originators of the solar system, or even of gravitation.

We are solemnly assured by a man of God of high standing that there lives at least one Christian who boasts that he is conscious of the distinct enjoyment of each of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Poor fellow! Why is his translation delayed? Earth is no fit place for *him*.

An enthusiastic vote of thanks was tendered to the President of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference for his official sermon, which Dr. Rigg pronounced the best he had ever heard at any Conference. The President acknowledged his deep indebtedness to the fathers and brethren for such an expression of their appreciation of his humble and imperfect service. Then he added: "I can only say that what I so imperfectly tried to say was given to me from a Higher Source." We ask two questions. First, was it quite honest of the President to accept thanks for that of which another was the author? Second, was it not blasphemy on Dr. Rigg's part to institute invidious comparisons between Conference sermons, all of which are presumably gifts from a "Higher Source"?

The Rev. William Goudie, a Wesleyan foreign missionary home on furlough, speaking at the Conference, said: "As he had gone up and down the country, there had come to him a full sense of the un-Christian condition of the land he loved. Again and again he had thought of the Hindus, and he had said, 'God help me if I had to take a Hindu up and down *these* streets, and then had to go out and preach the Gospel in *his* streets.' The land was Christian only in name." Mr. Goudie hit the nail straight on the head; and yet the reverend gentleman did not seem to realise the ineffable absurdity of expecting Christianity to succeed abroad when, after two thousand years' experience, it was, by his own admission, such a lamentable failure at home. Of course, it was not to his professional interest to see that.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference says that "The world's destiny is contained in Christ." Probably that is why we know nothing about it. As interpreted by the Church, the destiny of the world is as empty a dream as is the Eternal Christ himself. With an air of omniscience preachers talk glibly about things concerning which they

are totally ignorant, and their dupes are simply amazed at their inspiration.

In the East-end of London a great Church meeting was recently held, the motto of which was "The World for Christ." Would it not be wiser to begin in a humbler, smaller way, with, say, "The East-end for Christ," and stick to it until they achieve success, or are forced to confess themselves defeated?

Judge Murray, Acting Administrator of British New Guinea, pays Christianity a very left-handed compliment when he says that, largely as the result of missionary work, "it would probably be safer for a white man to travel unarmed from the Pararri Delta to the German boundary—far safer than to walk at night through parts of some of the cities of Europe and Australia." The judge evidently forgets that the cities of Europe are and have been for many centuries distinctly Christian cities. What accounts for the difference? Most certainly, not Christianity.

We are glad to see that the Carpenters' and Joiners' Society intend to press the matter of the alleged sweating in Salvation Army workshops. A committee has now been formed in order to "force the Army officials to submit to an impartial inquiry." We wish them every success. Unfortunately, our cowardly public press seems to shut out almost all that lets light in on the Army's doings. The Army is now fashionable, and the press is following its usual policy.

A representative of the *Christian World*, running round with General Booth on his motor-car mission, says that at one part of the journey, some seven miles, they travelled "at a nerve-shattering pace," about forty miles an hour. The reporter asked the Commissioner sitting beside him, "Do the police ever pull you up for scorching?" "No," he replies, "they wink at it with the General." William Booth thus laughs at the law, when he doesn't choose to observe it, and drives his motor-car at express-train speed along the public highways, to the grave danger of the public, and the police encourage the performance. Verily the Grand Old Showman can do no wrong.

Oh the unspeakable Turk! And oh the lovely Eastern Christian! According to the special correspondent of the *Daily News*, telegraphing from Monastir, the Young Turk party there had "refrained from injuring a single Christian." But the following statement of his shows how the neighboring Christians followed this good example:—

"A Greek band, forty strong, attacked the Bulgarian village of Ribarzi, and carried out a massacre, in which they slaughtered, in the most cruel manner, twenty Bulgarians and six Turks."

These Greek bands are the greatest scoundrels on earth. They roam about outraging and murdering, in the hope that by depopulating the country, they and their compatriots will be able to settle it themselves. And the Bulgarians whom they massacre in this way are Christians as well as themselves! This sort of thing has been going on for years. It is well-known to the "Nonconformist Conscience" and other branches of English Christianity, but all their denunciatory eloquence is still reserved for the unspeakable Turk, and the thrice-unspeakable Eastern Christian rapes and slaughters without a word of reproach.

Mr. J. D. Bouchier, who has lately returned from Macedonia, has made a careful statement to the Balkan Committee, and the following passage relates to these Greek bands:—

"The worst aspect of the situation is still the murderous activity of the Greek bands. There are now in Macedonia some 3,000 mercenaries, 2,000 of them Cretans and the rest natives of the Greek Kingdom, who are paid two francs a day. They have large financial resources, thanks to the wealthy Greek colonies in Alexandria, Liverpool, Odessa, etc., and money is the chief feature of their campaign. They bribe both the civil and military Turkish officials to favor their operations against Bulgarian villages. Lately the Greeks have carried out many assassinations, the tariff being £3 for a murder in Salonica, where the Russian officers are 'reforming' the gendarmerie, and £6 in Drama, where the British officers are engaged—a compliment to their efficiency. All this work of murder is directed by the Greek bishops and consuls, who appear to regard the Bulgarians as vermin to be exterminated."

Sweet Christians!

Here is a genuine conundrum. The Rev. F. R. Swan assures the readers of the *Christian Commonwealth* that the Eternal Spirit, that is, the Holy Ghost, is "behind Socialism." Now, this Holy Spirit has been in the Church ever

since Jesus left it, filling it to the brim, guiding it into all the truth, and presumably preventing it from ever going wrong; and yet the Socialism "behind" which he is said to be is vigorously opposed, even to-day, by the larger section of the very body of Christ known as the Church. Is it possible to give an intelligible and intelligent reading of such a dark riddle? Is not Mr. Swan writing sheer nonsense?

The dear *Daily News* (in Monday's issue, and Monday's issue is always extra pious, perhaps on account of Sunday's interval) pretends to believe that Atheists are so scarce that you have to hunt about to find one. "The only Atheist we ever knew," it says, "believed Mr. Gladstone to be in the pay of the Pope." This is good enough, in its way, but our Nonconformist contemporary improves on it in the next paragraph. "We had regarded them [Atheists]," it says, "as practically extinct. We never visit the Natural History Branch of the British Museum without hoping to find a case with the label: 'Atheist. Unique Specimen found in ashpit at Bordesley. Lent by the Bishop of Birmingham.'" What exquisite taste! How worthy of the Nonconformist Conscience! And what miraculous ignorance! Fancy the editor of a London daily paper not knowing that there are Atheists in existence! Why, they sit in Parliament, and are active in every advanced movement; and they swarm, often more or less under the rose, in the ranks of science, art, and literature. If the *Daily News* really wants to be assured that Atheists are still extant, we shall be happy to introduce the editor to dozens, or scores, or hundreds, or even thousands.

"Father into thy hands I commend my spirit." These were the last words of the horribly depraved Saxon murderer—young, beautiful, and a devil—who was guillotined a few days ago. She had no morals, but she had plenty of piety, and it sustained her to the end. Such is the noble power of religion!

The Keswick Convention showed a marked decline in attendance this year. No less than 200 boarding-house keepers are groaning over their unlet rooms. Last year the railway company dealt with 4,000 packages of luggage in advance; this year the number dropped to 1,600. Ichabod!

What a silly lot of men of God met at that Keswick Convention! A local paper reports a prayer offered up by one of them. He told the Lord how little they could do to "stem the tide of infidelity," and respectfully begged the Lord to "hurry up," for "We can't get on if you don't." So their prospect of "getting on" with the job is not very bright. Is it?

Mr. David Irvine has been writing in the *Musical Standard* on "Pessimism and Art." His second article may be profound, but it is not too intelligible. He seems to be a sort of a Freethinker with a detestation of Freetthought. Just hear him:—

"The orthodox religionist fancies that if the material and historical version of Christianity is destroyed Christianity will be lost. All we shall lose will be the theologian, and that will be a gain. The unphilosophic and inartistic Rationalist fancies that his persistent attacks will result in the destruction of Christianity. Unfortunately, he has never given himself the trouble to explain what he means by Christianity in the philosophical sense."

Mr. Irvine does not state what *he* means by Christianity, and without his own definition this passage is sheer jargon. We infer from a later sentence that he regards Christianity as a valuable piece of mythology. But the Christ-myth is a poor one beside (say) the Prometheus-myth. And perhaps the world, in the long run, will do away with myths altogether, and trust to poetry instead.

A correspondent writes to the *Christian Commonwealth* saying he would like to hear two sermons on the New Theology, and asking where it would be best to go. Now, we are a trifle curious over this careful specification of the number of sermons this correspondent feels able to bear. Does it mean that two are as many as he thinks he will be able to stand? If so, does the inability to stand a greater quantity refer to the mental quality of the listener or to the character of the sermons? It is a curious request, and suggests some curious reflections.

The Scripture Knowledge Institution, which carries on Muller's Orphan Houses at Bristol, has issued its sixty-ninth annual report. This is the Institution that never advertises, but lives only on prayer. An annual report, of course, is not an appeal; and press paragraphs, stating that you never advertise, is not an advertisement. When it comes to raising the wind Christians are the "slimmest" people on earth.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

August 9, Freethought Demonstration, Victoria Park; 16, Freethought Demonstration, Regent's Park; 23, Freethought Demonstration, Brockwell Park.

September 6, 13, 20, 27, Queen's (Minor) Hall.

October 4, Glasgow; 11, Leicester; 18, Manchester; 25, Stanley Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £207 2s. 6d Received since.—R. D. Scoular, £1 1s.; W. Dodd (2nd sub), £1; F. Robbins, 5s.; C. Heaton, 5s.; H. Jessop, £2 2s.

GEORGE THOMAS.—Thanks for your good wishes. For the cutting, see "Acid Drops." When your Christian friends say they are sorry for you because you are a Freethinker, you might tell them that, strange as it may sound in their ears, you are sorry for them because they are Christians. It may take the cheek out of them a bit.

G. B.—It is amusing. Thanks.

J. BATES.—Our latest time for such things is the first post on Tuesday, and your postcard was stamped "11.30 a.m. Jy. 21."

J. T. GRIFFITHS.—It is not information that we could very well use, but we have no doubt as to its truth. See "Acid Drops" on the general matter. Thanks.

D. KEMP writes: "I have read the *Freethinker* now for about twelve months, and I look upon it every week as part of my existence." This correspondent is thanked for cutting.

EDWARD JACKSON.—We dealt with the man some four or five years ago. In himself he is an insignificant person, not worth a frequent advertisement in our columns.

J. R. SMITH.—We are perfectly aware that human sacrifices were not confined to the early worship of Jehovah. But how do several blacks make one white? What you say about Abraham and the commanded sacrifice of Isaac should be sent to one of the comic papers.

J. BROUGH.—Pleased to hear from you again, and to learn that you are doing your best against *Christian Socialism*. Thanks for cuttings.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

T. E. RAYMOND.—Pleased to hear you became a regular subscriber through a friend handing you a copy of "that most admirable paper the *Freethinker*," and that you have benefited by reading our *Bible Romances* and attending the Freethought meetings at Sheffield. We have read the book you refer to in the original French.

LAKESIDER.—Thanks for your encouraging letter and cuttings; also for your wish to promote the circulation of our "splendid paper."

E. GWINNELL.—Thanks for the reference.

J. O. BATES.—Too late for this week. In our next. Thanks.

R. D. SCOLAR, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "I trust you may have many years of health and prosperity in which to continue your splendid work."

J. G.—Ingersoll's lecture on Burns has not been published in England. We have thoughts of issuing it.

H. JESSOP writes: "I have tried in various ways to advertise your splendid paper. Is it possible to get you down to lecture this winter?" We shall try to fix up a Sunday visit to Leeds, which is near this correspondent's address.

W. DOYLE.—We are neither for nor against Socialism in the *Freethinker*. Certainly, we want Socialists (and other people) to be Freethinkers; but whether Freethinkers should be Socialists is a question with which we have no concern in this journal. It may be a very important question, but it is not our question.

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

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

The first of the new series of open-air Freethought Demonstrations, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, took place at Parliament Hill Fields on Sunday even-

ing. The weather was perfect, and the crowd was big and enthusiastic. Addresses were delivered from the brake which Mr. E. Wilson kindly provided (with a fine pair of horses). Mr. F. A. Davies acted as chairman, and the other speakers were W. Heaford, C. Cohen, and G. W. Foote. Three rousing cheers were given by the immense meeting at the close of the proceedings. Everything was done by the Christian Evidence people to spoil the Freethought Demonstration, but they miserably failed. The result, as far as they were concerned, was ignominious. We may add that there was a very good collection and an excellent sale of the *Freethinker*, Miss Vance, Miss Stanley, and other ladies being very active amongst the audience.

The second of these Demonstrations takes place at Victoria Park on Sunday evening, August 9, at the N. S. S. Branch stand, which happens to be the most convenient spot for the purpose. The full list of speakers on that occasion will be announced in our next issue.

The third and fourth Demonstrations take place on Sundays, August 16 and 23, at Regent's Park and Brockwell Park respectively.

Mr. Wishart, who is still "missioning" on behalf of the N. S. S. Executive, has been doing some successful work at Nelson, which has caused much discussion in that rather sleepy town. At his last lecture the crowd was large and somewhat rowdy. Friends of the Salvation Army did not like the way in which it was dealt with. Once the platform was nearly "rushed," but the good advice of a Christian Town Councillor helped to restore order.

The *Searchlight* (Waco, Texas) reproduces our article on "The Logic of Persecution," and "commends it to *Searchlight* readers as worthy of careful perusal." It also reproduces an article on "The Resurrection of Christ" written some years ago by our old friend, Mr. J. W. de Caux, and hopes its readers will make a special effort to bring it before their Christian friends.

Mr. W. W. Collins's new journal, the *Examiner*, published at Christchurch, New Zealand, is always welcome, but it reaches us irregularly. The June number contains some references to the late "blasphemy" prosecution. Mr. Collins remarks that "Mr. Foote, President of the English National Secular Society, and Editor of the *Freethinker*, never does anything by halves. When he lent the weight of his powerful influence in the recent Boulter case, a marked change was at once apparent in the conduct of the prosecution." It is also noted that "Mr. Cohen, of the *Freethinker* staff, has done valuable service in calling attention to the manner in which the London poor are exploited in the name of religion." We are glad to see that Mr. Collins still delivers Sunday evening Freethought lectures in the Choral Hall to large audiences.

A member of the Edinburgh Branch would be pleased to hear from a Freethinker in Dalkeith, or any other place near Edinburgh, who could arrange for meetings at which Freethought lectures could be delivered on Saturday evenings. Communications can be addressed to the Edinburgh Branch secretary, Rationalist Club, 12 Hill-square.

The Annual Excursion of the Newcastle Branch will be held to-day (Sunday, August 2). The place chosen this year is at Rowland's Gill, where previous excursions have always been successful. Train leaves Newcastle Central Station at 2.30. Tea has been arranged for at one shilling per head (children half price) at Mr. Penny's house, "Rose Banks," whose grounds on the River Derwent will be thrown open to the members for the day.

Mr. Foote meant to attend the Peace Congress, in spite of the dog-days, but on looking through the official program he was astonished and disgusted to find how much there was of playing into the hands of the Churches. This sort of thing is becoming an intolerable nuisance, and Mr. Foote dis-countenances it by declining to put himself within its reach. The only other course would be to attend the Congress and raise a protest, but that would lay him open to grievous misrepresentation. The Humanitarian League has printed several hundred copies of Mr. Foote's *Shadow of the Sword* for distribution at the Congress. "President of the National Secular Society" goes after his name, and below it the words "Reprinted from the edition of 1896." So the Congress delegates will see that "infidels" were for peace before the Churches took it up.

God, the Czar, Tolstoy—and Another.

THAT the Christian farce is becoming daily more contemptible and ludicrous must be apparent to the most casually observant Freethinker. That it fails to strike all but the most prosaic of Christians is a source of endless wonder to the present writer. One cannot take up a paper nowadays without being confronted with some fresh evidence of the way in which Christian principles and their advocates are contributing to the gaiety of nations. Thus the following excerpt from the *Daily Chronicle* of July 20 is a fair sample of what one may read or hear every twenty-four hours with striking regularity:—

"Tolstoy's great appeal in *The Daily Chronicle* provoked a dramatic outburst by the Rev. Dr. Brook, president of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, in the course of a sermon at Southport yesterday.

The appeal, said Dr. Brook, was made to Christendom by one of the greatest living men in word pictures. He made the horrors live before them and demanded the attention of the world to the judicial murders which had been taking place in Russia on a wholesale scale for nearly two years.

'We cannot keep silence in answer to such an appeal,' Dr. Brook declared. 'The Tsar and his advisers will themselves one day have to stand before the Judge of all the Earth, and account for all the blood they have unrighteously shed. We of the Free Churches, representing more than half the Christian community in England, cannot but express our reprobation and abhorrence of the inhumanity which Tolstoy describes.

May the great King of Kings cause the smouldering indignation of the civilised world to burst into flame that shall penetrate the darkest places of Russian bureaucracy and constrain the rulers to end the series of futile and atrocious cruelties.'

That Freethinkers are familiar with these constantly recurring appeals of Christian ministers to "the great King of Kings" goes without saying. Any one who so chooses may read them every Monday morning for the trifling expenditure of one halfpenny. That these appeals are barren of results needs very little intelligence to perceive. The reason for this it is not the object of the present writer to inquire into in this article. It may be that the individual prayers of the faithful reach their destination in a decomposed and thoroughly unpalatable condition. Or possibly the King of Kings is an indifferent linguist. Maybe if some glorified "Sutton & Co." were to come along and undertake the delivery of these "loquacities" in parcels of 50,000, ready translated into Yiddish, there might be some appreciable result—if only in carriers' share lists.

But to return to the purveyors of humor (Christian variety). The Rev. Dr. Brook has perpetrated a "dramatic outburst" against the horrors of the Holy Czar's autocratic and Christian government, and now the "Nonconformist Conscience" is reconciled to the King's visit to his royal nephew.

Let us consider the nature of this "outburst." It consists, I think, of a somewhat parrot-like repetition of the noble words of the greatest Christian in all Russia, plus a lot of pious and sickly nonsense about the certainty of the Czar and his co-degenerates having, sooner or later, "to stand before the Judge of all the Earth." What will happen when that interesting event occurs we are left to conjecture. But in the meantime Freethinkers may constitute themselves judges of the conduct of the Christian Czar and his handkerchief band of apostles. For there is only one Judgment Day in the Freethinker's calendar: the day when the Christian superstition, with all its concomitant evils, and its accursed trinity of priesthood, kingcraft, and statecraft, shall stand arraigned in the dock, with Knowledge and Truth on the bench, and Science in the witness-box. And when the blight of Christianity takes its place among the limbo of explained phenomena and discovered error there will be no czars to mumble prayers to a humorous God, what time he tortures and murders his subjects; and no presidents

of Evangelical Free Church Councils to bluster humorous sermons to a humorous congregation upon the Czar's relations with "the great King of Kings."

The cream of the joke, of course, is to be found in the last paragraph of Dr. Brook's rodomontade, in which he expresses the pious hope that the King of Kings may work some magic upon "the smouldering indignation of the civilised world." Mere laymen, unversed in the subtleties of the clerical mind, may question the advisability of such a roundabout course as that suggested by the rev. doctor for curing the cancer of Russian misgovernment. Ha, ha! that's where *faith* comes in—without which we are doomed to be damned. Besides, the respective merits of the long tour and the short cut can only be fairly judged if one happens to know whether God is paid by the hour or by the job. If the former, then by all means he is right in working upon the "smouldering indignation" of Cockney parsons. If the latter, he must be a very indifferent workman.

The humor of it! Here is an omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and infallible God, who orders and watches over the destiny of mankind, coolly looking down upon a tragedy of life and justice unsurpassed in the annals of history, and making no sign that he is in any way displeased. A little popinjay of a parson comes along, and, doing his best to look as though he meant it, says, in a voice quivering with home-made emotion: "O thou great all-wise, all-powerful, all-compassionate Father, cause"—not the holy Russian torturers to be stricken dumb just as they are about to give an order for the knout; not the arm of the flagellator to wither as he raises the thong; and the hand of the executioner to rot as he fumbles with "the well-soaped noose"; not the damping of the powder, the blunting of the sabres and the blinding of the eyes of the blood-intoxicated Cossacks in their wild-massacre-mission; not the petrification of the Czar and his camarilla of Grand Dukes and "decorated" homicides; in short, not any method of twice-one-are-two simplicity to an all-powerful and benevolent despot; but—"the smouldering indignation of the civilised world to burst into flame that shall penetrate the darkest places of Russian bureaucracy and constrain the rulers to end the series of futile and atrocious cruelties."

I have said it is humorous; but it is also *tragic*. Here is a Czar who is nothing more nor less than a low, common murderer; a man whom the late Mr. Charles Peace might be ashamed to associate with. His hands are soaked in the blood of innocent men, women, and children. He is the bloodiest monster in Europe. He is also—a *Christian!* God's Russian ambassador! He is murdering a nation. Not the mere scum, bear in mind, but the intellect of the nation, side by side with the common thieves and murderers. The noblest men and women of all Russia are in her prisons, her fortresses—and her graves! And this man is a Christian. And other, and less important, Christians pray to an all-powerful, all-merciful Father—the Judge of all the Earth, the great King of Kings—that he may stir up the "smouldering indignation" of peoples and governments who, in degrees of wickedness, are only a little less vile. The humor and the tragedy of it!

So much for the "Little Father" and the "Great Judge." Space forbids me to deal with the recent noble outburst of a great *Man*; that, I am sure, will have been read by Freethinkers with tenderness and reverence. All whose minds are attuned to the spirit of compassion will have read with pity and indignation the long story of judicial murder in that unhappy and Christian country. "The priests of the bloody faith" have blessed the Czar and his methods of barbarism, and practically every other nation has a skeleton in the cupboard. And what can Freethinkers do, anyway? They can but ponder over their helplessness, mournfully, and sadly murmur, with Christina Rossetti:—

"Does the road wind uphill all the way?
Yes! to the very end;
Will the journey take the whole day long?
From morn to night, my friend."

But when, at last, night falls, obscuring as with a mantle the record of Christianity, the first dawn that breaks thereafter will herald the advent of a new era, wherein superstition will be but a memory, and Progress the grand ideal.

It will be good to live in those days.

A. ALDWINCKLE.

Work of Freethinkers.

BY DR. J. E. ROBERTS,

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

It is a fair question, and often asked—What have Freethinkers done? A question just as fair, and as often heard—What has Freethought yet to do? What is its mission still?

It is essential to have a clear conception of what Freethought is. In an important sense the term is unique and distinctive. The name of any system of religion or philosophy and its distinctiveness is at once apparent. If one speaks of Brahmanism, the mind recalls the oriental theories of the conflict between good and evil, between light and darkness and the ultimate absorption of the soul into Nirvana. If one speaks of Buddhism, the mind recalls the theory of karma and reincarnation. Should one say Islamism, the mind recalls that there is one god and his name is Allah and Mahomet is his prophet. Or, say Christian Science, and instantly you think that "matter is mortal error, mind is all," and Mrs. Eddy is it. If one names orthodox Christianity, you instantly think of an inspired Bible, the fall of man, the vicarious atonement, and the crucified Christ. And so the name of each religious system of philosophy implies a set of dogmas, a body of doctrines, a plan, a scheme, a theory, authoritative, unchangeable, rigid, not open to question, not susceptible of proof, not amenable to demonstration, a set of doctrines which you must believe or accept. Freethought is a term implying no fixed dogmas, no set of doctrines, no scheme, no ultimate in the thinking of men. It is rather a method, a movement, a progress, a mental attitude. It is intellectual modesty and reticence. Here in this world, where mystery, baffling and inscrutable, meets us at every step, where the tap of the sparrow's bill breaking through the shell is as inscrutable as the advent of a Socrates or a Christ, where the bursting bud and the springing grass are as inexplicable as the leading forth of Arcturus and his sons, where the "subtle spirit of the season's change" is no less veiled than the sweet influences of the Pleiades—here in this world, where we see the picture but not the painter, movement but not force, products but not the producer, effects but not the cause—here in this world of mystery and amazement, the Freethinker stands reverent, rapt, reticent, hopeful, eager, alert, open-eyed, silent, and unafraid. The orthodox is a believer, the Freethinker an investigator. One has faith and repose, the other has doubt and conflict. One accepts the authority of dead men—the longer dead and the more dead the better—the other accepts the authority of living men—the more alive the better. One is beguiled by the past, the other allured by the future. One has the dust of the sepulchre upon his lips, the other the light of the dawn upon his brow.

The work of Columbus was assuredly that of a Freethinker, though Columbus was a Catholic. The Church had taught that the world was flat, and nearly everybody believed it. They said if you went far enough you would fall off. It was four-square. There were mountains at the edges, and the mountains supported a crystalline dome or firmament. That was the universal belief of the Church and nearly so of the world. But Columbus was not quite satisfied with it. So he got together some sailors. He took them from the prisons and the galley-ships, because there were none, or but few,

that were willing to risk the voyage, and the government of Spain would liberate felons and criminals and convicts if they would join the crew of this adventurous sailor, and so he recruited his ships from among the convicts. And there is another interesting thing about that. One-fifth of them were Jews. And that came about in this way: The Jew was the man that the religious government of Spain hated and imprisoned when it didn't kill him. He was not in the prison as a criminal. He was there as a victim of religious intolerance. He suffered in the cause of liberty and Freethought. Well, Columbus sailed; sailed out and sailed on and on, and he didn't fall off. It is said that when he reached the new continent he knelt down upon the sand and gave thanks to the Virgin Mary. That may be true, or it may not. But what he did accomplish was to turn upside down the Biblical cosmogony, make the teachings of the Bible and of the Church about the world an absurdity for all time. Mary may continue as an object of adoration world without end, but she could not qualify in a district school as a teacher of geography. Columbus did more than discover America. He discovered Biblical criticism. He put up an incontestable fact against an undemonstrated theory. He discovered vastly more than he knew.

Under the teachings of religion the world was a thing of miracle, and men lived in an age of credulity, faith, and fear. Then there came a traveller, an investigator, a thinker, a man that was not religious. He was too busy in God's world finding facts to tarry at the altar of the priest worshipping phantoms, and so he went up and down the world, across the seas, into new continents, climbed mountains, descended into mines open-eyed, eager, inquisitive. The world to him was a problem to be solved, and when he had finished the enormous labor of a long and toilsome life, Humboldt said, "The universe is governed by law." Exit gods, exit spirits, ghosts, goblins, devils; avaunt fear, recede miracles. Man, the thinker, in a universe intelligent and sane, is now come into a new and better kingdom. That was the work of Humboldt. He was a student of the earth. And men began to find out that plague and pestilence and disease were not inflictions of Providence. They came to look in the gutters and the stagnant pools and filthy wells and noisome fens and bogs for the cause of sickness and evil and suffering. Instead of looking to the great God as the author of those things, they commenced to look into their own squalor and filthy surroundings and unsanitary conditions. The world is governed by law. Man for the first time stood free and unafraid in a world that was intelligent and sane.

And then there was the great school of men at whose head stand Kepler and Galileo, who turned their glasses upon the heavens and inquired about the so-called firmament there, only space, illimitable, vast, mapless, unthinkable, and worlds—worlds without end. Then when men went on to teach that this was the centre of God's creation, and man was the end and the aim of all Infinite creative activity, and of so much moment in the sight of the Infinite that one of the gods exiled himself from heaven and came down here and died—when men went on to teach that, it began to seem absurd. Under the teaching of astronomers and the explorers of the skies, this world, instead of being the centre, and all the rest of the universe waiting upon it like little torch-bearers, became less than a grain of sand, a speck, a mote in the sunbeam, and man, as compared with the universe, infinitesimal, insignificant, puerile, and small. It was astronomy that took the pride and egotism out of the teachings of orthodoxy and made its theories absurd.

Then there came later the modern school with Darwin and his confreres at the head, studying the world, the rocks, the deposits, the mysterious strata of the earth's crust, who came at last with their conclusions that never have been challenged, that the old world has been carried in the arms of space for countless millions of years.

Then there was another phase of the great movement made by speculative thinkers. Spinoza stands at the head of them. Bruno belongs to the same school. They were idealists. They could see enough to see, they could know enough to know that the world is a great appearance, a phantasm, that the real thing, the substance, the essence, the reality, is something veiled. We see the shadow but not the substance. If there is a God, then he is in all the material frame of things; but what we see is but the flowing robe of the invisible, but the adumbration of the infinite. It was Pantheism. That was the doctrine of Spinoza, and it was the doctrine of Bruno, and it is the doctrine that modern thinking seems to be trending towards.

Now came the work that helped on Freethought. Men commenced to go to these places. Commerce and emigration tended to popularise the discovery of Columbus. The Church sat back in its easy-chair and said: "Why, there are not any people on the other side of the world, even if it is round." The Church dies hard, and hangs on to its dogmas as long as it can. They proved from the Bible there were no people on the other side of the world. It was as clear as crystal. "Why," they said, "the Bible says Christ is to come pretty soon," and "everybody will see him, because the Bible declares they will see him." Now, if there were any people on the other side of the world, they couldn't see him when he came. But the people said, "The Church notwithstanding, we will go to the other side of the world and cultivate our fields, and if Christ wants to see us when he comes he can come on that side, too." It was emigration and commerce and the needs of the human world that popularised the great discovery. And on the side of the intellectual, in the thought-life of the world, there was the incomparable champion of men, Voltaire, and the sweet and deathless singer of immortal song, Robert Burns. Nobody, unless it was a Scotchman, could have gone to church and remained solemn if he recalled Holy Willie's Prayer. And not long after him there came the beautiful, gifted, erratic, many-sided, sad-souled Shelley, singing the songs of Freethought, the hope of human brotherhood. Later, and in our own time, one of the greatest influences for popularising Freethought was a minister of whom it was said by a great orator that a greater preacher never stood within the pulpit's narrow curve. That man was Henry Ward Beecher. I remember, when I was a boy, to have had a very pious relative, a devout Presbyterian, and the time was early in Beecher's career at Brooklyn. Nearly all of the orthodox people swore by Beecher. It happened that he commenced to write a serial story for the *New York Ledger*. Now, the *New York Ledger* was looked down upon and condemned by all really good, pious church members, because it printed novels. In those days novels were wrong; they were just falsehood, and it was a waste of God's time to read novels, and so this pious relative of mine, because Beecher wrote a story, subscribed for the *New York Ledger*. Every week when it came she would take her holy scissors and cut out the Beecher story, and burn up the rest of the paper. Well, time went on, and Mr. Beecher grew more and more liberal, more and more free, more and more fearless, and then the orthodox people began to doubt, to hesitate, to murmur, then openly to condemn, but still he went on broadening and brightening and enlarging, until finally he got so bad that when the *Ledger* came to the pious relative she took the same scissors and cut out the Beecher contribution and burned it up, and kept the *Ledger*. But there he stood, too big, too vast in his intellectual proportions, too rich and prodigal and tropical in the wealth and wonder of his great heart to be held within the confines of any pulpit, or any creed, or any church. Hundreds and hundreds of ministers and churches felt the influence of that great man like the influence of a day in June, and the frost and snow of their orthodoxy

began to thaw and melt and dissolve, and here and there a patch of green or a crocus or a violet appeared to tell that even in the heart of that cold, arctic creed there may be the bud and blossom of spring.

Then there came another emancipator, master of them all, king of the platform, the incomparable Ingersoll. It needs always to be borne in mind that that man was not a discoverer, not a bringer of new truth, not the writer of great and unthought things. He was the very opposite of that. He came at a time when hundreds and thousands of American people were feeling and thinking thoughts and sentiments they dared not speak. Men had been taught for many generations that to question the Bible was to invite a stroke from God's clenched fist. Men had been taught for hundreds of years that to deny or doubt the existence of God was to invite a flash of death from out the sky. Men could not believe in the atrocities pictured in the old Mosaic records, but dared not say so. Then there came a man fearless of men or gods, indifferent to criticism, unstayed by opposition or rebuke, a man with lips of fire, a heart of June, who put into matchless beauty of immortal speech the best that the best of the world had ever thought and felt.

But let no one think that the work of Freethought has been accomplished by men without paying the price. This world has a reward for its progressive men, for its leaders. It has paid them all substantially in the same coin. For Jesus, a Radical and a Freethinker, it had the cross and the soldier's spear. For Socrates, a thinker and Radical, it had the hemlock. For Bruno it had the fagots and the death by fire. For Galileo it had the twelve years of imprisonment, until the old man, grown deaf and sightless, pressed in vain his white wan face against the prison bars and asked only the boon of death. It had for Kepler, the greatest, because the first discoverer in the mystery of planetary laws, suppression, threat, fear, so that the old disheartened man kept for nineteen years the manuscript of his marvellous discovery, and never gave it to the world until he felt the approach of death, and knew that in a moment he would be beyond—forever beyond—the cruel clutch of a persecuting, tyrannical Church. For Voltaire it had opposition and infamy. For Thomas Paine, the man of our own land, one of the master-builders of American Independence, for Thomas Paine it had, and it still has, pious lies and holy slanders. Perhaps Ingersoll was the only man that lived to conquer, by the resistless force of his genius, the opposition of the Church, and was able to die at last with the slanderous lips of orthodoxy closed in decency and respect.

What has Freethought yet to do? There is just one thing that Freethinkers ask of the Christian Church—just one—and they will keep asking until that request is granted, either voluntary or under legal compulsion—there is just one thing that the Freethinkers ask of the church of every name, Catholic and Protestant—just one thing, that it pay taxes as honest men pay.

One of the positive works of Freethought is to enhearten men that have been emancipated from the Church, to appeal to them from the viewpoint that it is cowardly to selfishly enjoy the fruit of other men's toils without using the new opportunity for a better progress and the further emancipation of the human world. A part of the work yet to be done is to persuade men that the universe is governed by law, that if we have given up a belief in Providence and an interfering God and a reliance upon miracle, we have at least reached the conviction that all the good men desire is a possible result from an intelligent apprehension and application of the laws that are moving about us all the time. Health, happiness, prosperity, morality, progress, civilisation—all of these—none of them are accidents or the work of caprice. They come, and they always come, as men are intelligent, industrious, devoted, high-minded, clean-hearted, and sincere.

Correspondence.

BYRON AND CHRISTIANITY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I notice that in your "World of Books" you quote with approval a passage from an article in the *Humane Review*, wherein Lord Byron is classed as a "sceptic." I do not quite know what a sceptic means, but, as the word appears to be used in contradistinction to a Christian, may I point out that Byron explicitly avowed his adhesion to the Christian Faith? In a letter to Moore, dated the 8th March, 1822, he says, in defending his *Cain*: "I do assure you that I am a very good Christian." In an earlier letter to the same correspondent, dated March 4, he declares: "I am no enemy to religion, but the contrary. As a proof, I am educating my natural daughter a strict Catholic.....I incline myself very much to the Catholic doctrines." In the same letter he says of Shelley: "With his speculative opinions I have nothing in common, nor desire to have." If more evidence is needed I will call Shelley himself—assuredly no very willing witness. "Pray assure him," he writes to Horace Smith, on April 11, 1822, in reference to the same letter of Moore's to which the above relates, "that I have not the smallest influence over Lord Byron in this particular [religion], and if I had I certainly should employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity, which, in spite of his reason, seem perpetually to recur." Byron had an irrepressible sense of humor and a fine combativeness which delighted in shocking people, but I do not remember any passage in his works where the religious dogmas of Christianity, as distinct from the follies and hypocrisies of religious people, are assailed. I fancy you must give up Byron.

With the other names in the list you quote I am not concerned. I notice that Darwin and Huxley are included. Doubtless these two great men taught "fondness of and consideration for animals," as, I suppose, all sane men, Christian or Pagan, always have done. But I may remark that both were defenders of Vivisection.

CECIL CHESTERTON.

11 Warwick-gardens, Kensington, W.
July 21, 1908.

A Heart's Cry.

(From *The Dead Friendship and Other Poems*, by Litchfield Woods.
Glasgow: Frederick W. Wilson & Co.)

TIME was, dim years of numbing pain
Ago, oh God, thou wast my staff,
Ah, fragile staff, that broke in twain
'Neath the drunkard's curse and the harlot's laugh,
When the ways of the world I stumbling trod;
Those shuddering ways with horror fraught,
I asked ye for little and ye gave me naught,
Was it right, was it just, oh God?

"Thou art mighty, Lord, thou art swift to save,
Thou could'st with a breath the clouds disperse."
I trembled, my fainting heart misgave,
The harlot's laugh and the drunkard's curse
Smote me, oh Lord, with a dreadful rod.
In agony of mind I peace besought,
I asked ye for little and ye gave me naught,
Was it right, was it just, oh God?

I threw out my hands in yearning keen,
And blindly groped in a voiceless void,
No hand was stretched from the vast unseen,
No angel wings my form upbuoyed,
And it fell back to earth a writhing clod.
Lord, gaze on the ruin thy hand has wrought,
I asked ye for little and ye gave me naught,
Was it right, was it just, oh God?

The hand that soothes is the hand that sears,
The lips that bless can also curse;
I looked through a mist of blinding tears
At the work of thy hands, thy universe.
"Lord, thou could'st save but by a nod,"
I cried, with desolate woe distraught;
"I asked ye for little and ye gave me naught,
Was it right, was it just, oh God?"

CHEERING.

Mother (in a very low voice): "Tommy, your grandfather is very sick. Can't you say something nice to cheer him up a bit?"

Tommy (in an earnest voice): "Grandfather, wouldn't you like to have soldiers at your funeral?"

Sleep Enough.

(A farmer's idea of everlasting bliss in the world to come.)

Oh, I hate this gitten' up, gitten' up, gitten' up—
Oh, I hate this gitten' up wus'n dirt!
I would like to lie in bed till the evenin' sun was red,
And if folks would think me dead 'twouldn't hurt.

I've been a gitten' up, gitten' up, gitten' up,
I've been a gitten' up, forty year,
Since I used to live at hum, and my father used to come,
With his finger and his thumb on my ear.

I've been a gitten' up, as I'm bound, as I'm bound,
For I reckernise the fact, as I'm bound.
Gitten' up before the fowls, with my eyes like hooter owls,
When the voice of duty yowls, "Hustle round!"

And I've hustled round an' sparred, an' hustled round! an'
hustled round!

And I've scratched and fit, and tore, and hustled round,
Till I'd like to take a berth in the cemetery earth,
And just sleep for all I'm worth under ground.

I will lead a righteous life! righteous life! righteous life!
I will lead a righteous life if I bust!

An' when Gabriel sounds his trump, startin' sinners on the
jump,

I'll wait the final dump full of trust.

I will go to Angel Gabe, Angel Gabe, Angel Gabe,

I will go to Angel Gabe an' I'll say,

"Don't you go for to salute! I'm a common kind o' coot!
Just a ornery galoot, plain as hay!

"You don't need to make no show! make no show! make
no show!

You don't need to put on style, not for me!

I don't want no harp or crown, nor no shinin' golden gown,
For my taste is all low down, like I be.

You just put me anywheres! anywheres! anywheres!

So 'tis somewheres I can sleep, sleep to stay!

Any shakedown you kin fix, where 'tis allus half-past six,
Where it gits to that an' sticks all the day.

An' jest send a nigger kid, nigger kid, nigger kid—

(If there's colored Angels here, as I 'spose)—

Send him twice a day to shake at my shoulder till I wake,
And bid me make a break for my clothes.

Then I'll sort o' groan and yawn, groan and yawn, groan
and yawn,

And I'll roll upon my back half a turn!

Then remember pretty soon, reckernise the octeroon,
And just tell that angel coon, 'You be darn!'

Then I'll hear him crawl away, crawl away! crawl away!

An' he'll tell me as he goes, 'Don't you stir!'

Then, I'll snuggle down just so,

Where 'tis sleepy warm below,

An' a-murmurin' as I go, 'Thank you, Sir.'"

—Truthseeker (New York).

WHAT ARE THE WILD WAVES SAYING?

It is very hard that young children should be pursued in their holidays and hunted out of seaside resorts by religious cranks, whose ideas of "God" would disgrace a North American Indian. Every year sees a migration of the better-class English parents to Continental watering-places, simply on account of so many English seaside resorts being pestored with these howling dervishes, who snivel and whine on our sands, and seem to take a delight in being miserable, and whose object in life is to convert our bright-faced, laughing youngsters into sullen-faced little prigs. There is sometimes a pathetic sequel to the teaching of these ignorant open-air preachers. A delicate, sensitive child of our acquaintance had a most horrible nightmare after listening to one of these savages, and hearing some nonsense about a monster, to whom the preacher gave the name of "God," who was to burn the children in "hell" for their childish faults. That way lies madness, as every doctor knows. Freethinkers should at least see that their children are not contaminated by contact with the savagery of the "religion of love." M.

ICONOCLASTS' CRICKET CLUB SEVENTH MATCH
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PLAYED on our ground on Sunday, 26th inst. Result:—Hanover won by 41 runs. Our bowling and fielding were excellent, but all our best batsmen failed in unaccountable manner, and the whole side was dismissed for 42. There were again many spectators.

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

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.**OUTDOOR.**

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

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, J. W. Marshall, "Christian Iconography."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, W. J. Ramsey.

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

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

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

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): Thursdays, at 8.15, meets for discussion.

OUTDOOR.

BURY: Fair Ground, Tuesday, August 4, at 7.30, Mr. 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, Sunday, August 2, Sidney Wollen, 3, "Hell and its Inhabitation"; 7, "An Exposure of the Clergy."

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

LEEDS: Friday, July 31, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Woman and the Curse of Christism."

WIGAN: Sunday, August 2, Market Steps, at 11, "Evolution and Life"; 3, "Christism and Slavery"; 7, "Secularism the Only Morality."

BOLTON: Monday, August 3, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Slavery and Christianity."

NELSON: Tuesday, August 4, Secondary School Ground, at 7.30, "Thomas Paine, Hero and Pioneer."

BURNLEY: Wednesday, August 5, Market, at 7.30, "Useless Christianity."

ROCHDALE: Thursday, August 6, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Faith and Disease, Faith and Poverty, and the Salvation Army."

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