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With these things and these fellows, it is necessary to throw away the scabbard. I know it is against fearful odds; but the battle must be fought; and it will be eventually for the good of mankind, whatever it may be for the individual who risks himself.—BYRON.

The Gospel of Secularism.

A Speech in Public Debate.

BY G. W. FOOTE.

If there be a future life, then it is, so to speak, only a great to-morrow; and to leave it out of our calculations for the present would be the height of absurdity. Now Secularism is not called upon to assert that there is no future life. Men have many views about many things we may hold to be so highly improbable that it would be credulity to profess belief in them; and yet we are not called upon to deny positively the existence of such things. Professor Huxley once took this illustration. Suppose a man asserts that in some remote planet there is now going on a discussion on the Education Bill. I have no means of judging whether the man speaks truly or falsely, although I may have a very decided opinion that he is going very far beyond the bounds of his present knowledge. Well, as I have no information on the subject, I do not positively assert that there is no such discussion going on in that remote planet. But if the man asks me to take that discussion as the basis of my decision on public education, I should at once say to him, "My dear sir, I decline to do anything of the kind. I will not settle the education of this earth with reference to lunar politics." So I am not called upon to assert that there is no future life, although I frankly admit that I have no belief in any other life than this. I frankly admit that, to my mind, science reveals no secrets of futurity. I frankly admit that, so far as I know, the eternal silence of the grave has never been broken. If there be any mystery in death, the veil has never, to my knowledge, been lifted in the slightest degree. If I ask a thousand different men in different parts of the world what a future life is, I shall get as many answers as there are people, and as different answers as there are creeds. One man in one part of the world thinks the next life has plenty of good hunting. Another thinks it is full of peace and rest. Another thinks it has plenty of fighting. Another thinks it has interminable psalm-singing. Indeed, we find all over the world that men's conceptions of a future life are simply the reflection of their present life cast upon the infinite curtain of an illimitable future. Speculations and conjectures are all we have to proceed upon. I suppose even the devoutest Christian has sometimes doubts and searchings of heart as to whether the future life is after all fact. When I regard the sorrow in which Christians are plunged on the death of those who are near and dear to them; when I find they exhibit the same signs of woe as those who have no belief in the felicities of heaven; when I see that their grief is quite as profound as ours, I am forced to conclude, either that they do not in their heart of hearts believe what they profess with their

lips, or else that all the promises of theology fail men in the hour of their direst need. They look strong and protective when they are not required, but they betray in the hour of necessity, like broken reeds which pierce the hands that trust them. Of course, if my opponent can show conclusively that there is a future life, I shall have to take it into my calculations for this life. But as a Secularist I know of no future life, and I decline to base my philosophy upon anything but knowledge.

Next, I say that Secularism recognises no providence but science. The ages of faith are ages of ignorance—and ages of ignorance are ages of misery. What is it that really constitutes our modern civilisation? What is the vital principle of it, out of which all grows and develops? Science. Moral precepts were practically the same three thousand years ago that they are now. The dogmas of Christendom were formulated almost as they now stand fourteen centuries ago. It is neither the moral precepts of the sage, nor the dogmas of the theologian, that have made the tremendous changes which the western world at least has witnessed during the last two centuries. Science has been the vital principle of all that change. Why Science, even more than all the preachers and moralists in the world, is making mankind one great family, by increasing communication between nations, by carrying the products of one country for the consumption of another, and by internationalising ideas as well as things. It shows that the interests of all mankind are indissolubly bound up together; that we are all mutually helpful; and that by co-operation we may bless each other, instead of cursing each other by the narrow prejudices of patriotism, race and creed. Peasants to-day enjoy luxuries that were denied to kings centuries ago. If you compare the general condition of our own population now with its condition in the previous century, you are struck by a most remarkable change. Now the cause of this change is the growth of science, the spread of information, the ferment in the public mind, the consequent growth of new tastes among the people, and the advent of democracy on the scene as the outcome of it all. We sometimes hear it said that Christianity preached that God had made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth. We sometimes hear it said that Christianity preached the doctrine of the brotherhood of man effectually for the first time. We sometimes hear it said that Jesus Christ was the greatest and truest democrat that ever lived. But I know well that with all the centuries of the preaching of Christianity, democracy never appeared on the scene until the great French revolution; and the preparation for that was made in the studies of philosophers, who deluged the world with fresh ideas, bearing grand fruit in that tremendous crisis which rang the death-knell of all the feudalisms of Europe. I agree with Buckle that the Hall of Science is the Temple of Democracy. As a matter of fact we find that what the Christian may be the Secularist is sure to be. You may have a Christian on the side of right or of wrong in political and social questions. But when the history of our country comes to be written I think it will have to be recorded that in season and out of season, in prosperity and in adversity, in hours of sunshine and in hours of darkness, the strength, the vote, the voice,

and the pen of Secularism were all cast on the side of righteousness, liberty and progress.

If my opponent can point me to any providence but science, I shall be glad of the information. I know of none. God helps those who help themselves. And you know, as well as I do, that when people say "God help you," it is all over with you. I suppose my opponent will not deny that if there were any special providence in the world apart from man's knowledge of the laws of nature, there are many opportunities for its exercise without our ever perceiving it. How many doomed cities have been destroyed by fire or volcanic eruptions! How many ships have foundered, with praying hands uplifted, as hundreds of poor souls went down to a watery grave! How many mothers have bent over dying children, moistening their faces with tears, beseeching the great God in pity to spare the one beloved object, yet seeing the light fade from the dear eyes and the sweet lips close in death! Has prayer ever been answered? We know it never has. And I say the theologians know this quite as well as the sceptics, for they will not allow the question of prayer, as Professor Tyndall has asked, to be submitted to a scientific experiment. They prefer to let their dogmas float about in the vague region of sentiment, where no obstacle impedes, and where a man can be as erroneous and stupid as he pleases, without the least possibility of his errors and imbecilities being exposed by fact. Secularism recognises no savior but human effort. When men were on their knees praying to gods and ghosts the world never was saved. When men got tired of praying, raised themselves from their knees, assumed the proper attitude of men, looked nature in the face, and drank deep of her truth, although at first it was bitter—from that moment their deliverance began.

Nowadays we trust very little to supernatural agency. We rely upon ourselves. If we can save ourselves we shall be saved; if we cannot there is no hope for us. Instead of praying to God now we are studying science. We are learning how to secure good and ward off evil. We fling ourselves into political, social and religious movements, to break away the fetters of bygone times, or to preserve whatever is good in old institutions by pruning away the pernicious accretions that have gathered around them. This is how we try to reform the world. We no longer trust, but we act. We no longer pray, but we think. The age of faith is dying. The age of reason is dawning. The prophets of the past have been the dreamers about the future. The prophets of the future will be the students of the present.

Secularism regards the public welfare as the criterion of right and wrong. How many objections are raised to this doctrine from pulpits and Christian platforms, and how little departure there is from it in the business of life. Supposing any measure is proposed in the House of Commons: what is the sole criterion of its justice or injustice, of its rightfulness or wrongfulness? Simply the public good. And any person who in the House of Commons introduced another criterion would be thought either a fossilised old Tory, or a preposterous member of some unheard-of and incredible sect. Suppose a man got up in the House of Commons, believing that the Bible contains what is necessary for our guidance, and said, "Mr. Speaker, I object to this bill—the fourteenth of Matthew and the twenty-fifth verse is dead against it." Why I venture to think that his fellow-members would only consider it was proof positive that the poor man was gone at last. No other criterion than the public welfare is ever advanced in Parliament, or at any municipal meeting, or, indeed, in any places except those which are devoted to religious worship. Men prate on Sunday about a criterion of morality which they never think of applying on any other day of the week. If my opponent does not admit my criterion of morality, I will ask him to give me his. I can conceive no other criterion except the will of God, and that I consider is no criterion at all. The will of God must itself be justified morally before I am bound to obey it. God may command me to do a

wrong thing. It is, at any rate, within the bounds of possibility. I do not know that even deity is unchangeable, and if his character is reflected in the Bible he certainly is not. How do you know that God might not command me, as he once commanded Abraham to take his son Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice? You may say that Abraham was checked at the last moment. Yes; but in obedience to the command of God he put himself in the position of a murderer. His heart was tainted, and the word of command which arrested the murder did not prevent the deterioration of his character.

I say next, in pursuance of my program, that Secularism finds the ground and guarantee of morality in human nature. I do not purpose to trouble you with an abstract metaphysical discussion on morality, its origin, or its meaning. Generally you may rely upon it that metaphysics are good to be flung into the fire. As a great metaphysician, Bishop Berkeley, once said: the metaphysician raises a dust to cloud the eyes and then complains that we cannot see. Plain people get at the truth much better than metaphysicians. The best plan is the Darwinian or scientific method of ascertaining how morality originated. That will give you the key to everything else. I agree with Darwin—of course, very humbly and a long way off—that morality grows out of our social instincts. Man is a gregarious animal—that is men flock together. We find that twenty people can do a great deal more than one; nay, that twenty people together can do things that twenty separate ones could never do. How could I build my house; how could I make my clothes; how could I make my shoes; how could I do the thousand and one things necessary to my existence? I cannot. I depend upon others. They depend upon me. And by this co-operation we are brought into contact with each other. Now we do not need any divine revelation to show us the necessity of this. Many of the lower animals are gregarious, and wherever we find them herding together we find there is a kind of social law amongst them which they enforce upon each other. If you read the writings of men like Huber and Sir John Lubbock on ants and bees, you will find that, far below mankind, social laws are carried out where organisms herd together for the purpose of mutual protection and support. Now Darwin says that out of the social instincts, morality grows. As men advance in the scale of mentality, they look before and after. They estimate the consequences of their actions, and much of that evil which, as Hood says, is wrought by want of thought as well as by want of heart, is eliminated from our daily life. Then the growth of language enables each man to express to his fellows his desires, and it enables the community to promulgate the laws which it will insist on every member of society yielding obedience to. Next, there is the power of habit which you see exemplified all through our lives. You go to a committee consisting of half a dozen men you have never seen before; you associate with them for some practical purpose, but you cannot do that without contracting a sympathy with them, and it is that sympathy, or fellow feeling as we sometimes call it, which is really the basis of the moral relation between man and man.

With respect to conscience I hold that it is a growth. The conscience of a man in one country differs from the conscience of a man in another. It is no use preaching to the Hindoo Thug on the sacredness of life. Many of these Thugs have actually felt remorse when they have failed to commit a murder. What is remorse? Remorse is simply the uprising, after a moment of temporary depression, of a permanent social instinct which has been outraged by the revolt of an intermittent instinct. For instance, if a man, in giving way to a sensual appetite, violates a law which he permanently recognises as just; when the appetite is satisfied, it ceases to importune him, and then the voice of the permanent social instinct which he has outraged makes itself heard. He feels a conflict going on between one part of his nature and another, and this we call remorse.

Some men's consciences are really a curious compound. I was turning over the pages of Schopenhauer, a German philosopher, this afternoon. That great writer says—and I am sorry to say that I agree with him—that a great many men's consciences might be divided into one-fifth fear of man; one-fifth religious fears; one-fifth prejudice; one-fifth vanity; and one-fifth custom. A pure enlightened conscience is unfortunately rare. It can only exist where a man consciously makes the welfare of society his highest object, and deliberately calculates the consequences of his actions. Happily, however, such consciences become more numerous as false standards and illusory ideals disappear.

We may roughly lay down these as general motives. First, there is egoism; the contraction of a man's desires and aspirations entirely to his own personal pleasure, without respect to that of others. Next absolute malignity, which relishes the pain of others, seeks their misery, and eventuates in cruelty. Unfortunately this motive is very strong in some, and the best of us have a taint of it. Third—pity, benevolence, compassion, sympathy, or what else it may be called, which is really the cement of society, and the feeling upon which all morality is based.

We may also divide the virtues into two great ones: *justice*, which is the repression of one's egoism in the interest of the general social order; and *charity*, which is the individual, unsolicited exercise of the social sympathies. Comte, Spencer, and others call it the altruistic sentiment. Combined with a love of truth it leads men sometimes to gaol, sometimes to exile, and sometimes to the stake. They feel within them that burning enthusiasm for humanity, which swamps their lower appetites, and raises them into the loftiest region of morality; and their martyrdoms are as beacon-fires of warning and exhortation to generation after generation of their fellow men.

Are There Any Atheists Left?

YOUR very superior person and your very religious person have as least this in common—they are both equally prone to ignore facts that to others are obvious, and, as a result, both live in a world of their own creating. When the superior person happens to be also religious, the case assumes a serious complexion. An aggravated case of this description cropped up the other day in the columns of the *Daily News*. The writer, who is responsible for a daily column of notes on affairs in general, dealt with an assertion made by a certain Welsh Christian. This gentleman had asserted that every Atheist and Agnostic in the country is a Liberal in politics. Had he said the vast majority were, or that few of them are Conservatives, I should have been inclined to agree with him. Real Liberalism in religion is apt to go with liberal views in other directions, and certainly the vast majority of the Freethinkers of my acquaintance are in favor of advanced work in sociology as well as in religion.

The *Daily News* is a Liberal (politically) newspaper. It is also a religious newspaper—the religious newspaper, in fact. Being religious, it does not, therefore, care to be identified even in the remotest manner with so unpopular a phase of opinion as Atheism, and so it meets the statement with a labored jocularly characteristic of many writers who have to turn out columns of semi-humorous comments to order. The writer has heard of Atheists—he is evidently a well-informed man. He also knew one—his circle of acquaintances must, therefore have been large and varied. But, wonder of wonders, the only Atheist he ever knew believed Mr. Gladstone to be in the pay of the Pope! We presume this remarkable Atheist is now dead; they usually are in these cases, otherwise it would have been interesting to discover his reasons for so remarkable a conclusion.

The *Daily News* writer not only knew this wonderful Atheist—he evidently credited him with being the last one of his kind. For, says he—

“We had regarded them 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.’”

This, of course, settles the controversy. Atheists cannot be all Liberals, for the simple reason that they do not exist—for the *Daily News*. Nor am I much surprised at anyone who refrains from going beyond the columns of the *Daily News* for his knowledge of the world coming to this conclusion. For this pious paper carefully refrains from letting its readers know that any such persons exist. Their meetings are never reported, their writings are never reviewed. If an Atheist, so prominent in other directions that he *cannot* be ignored, dies, his opinions are alluded to as being advanced in matters of religion, or as not being orthodox, or in some one of the many ways favored by those who, while lacking the courage to tell a direct lie, have no hesitation in reaping profit by suggesting a falsehood. For business and professional reasons, Atheism is ignored. To notice it is to advertise it; and the religious man or woman must be encouraged to slumber in an atmosphere of carefully-cultivated delusion.

Now, if I really believed the *Daily News* writer to be as ignorant as he writes himself, there would be an easy way to enlighten him. He need only make an appointment with the present writer, and he would be pleased to introduce him to a fair number of Atheists any time he has a couple of hours to spare. But the truth is that those who write in this way are not so ignorant as they appear. To put it quite bluntly, they are carrying on the good old Christian policy of lying for the greater glory of God. And this particular lie has been told so often, and in such high places, that it is repeated now as a matter of course. It has taken rank as a religious truth, and a *religious* truth is one that, when divorced from religion, comes under an exactly opposite category.

One can readily believe that the *Daily News* writer hopes to find the fossilised carcass of the last Atheist—although time is much more likely to produce the fossilised body of the last Christian, lying, maybe, along with some decaying fragments of our only religious newspaper. But hope is not only often deferred; it is frequently destroyed. Emphatically it is so in this case. Tried by any reasonable standard, Atheism is stronger now than at any other period of human history. For obvious reasons, people have never been in a hurry to call themselves Atheists. Christianity made being honest too dangerous a procedure for it to be otherwise. But plenty have done so, and there are more who do so now than ever before. And only a few miles across the Channel, in France, where mental honesty flourishes better than with us, nearly seven millions of people wrote themselves down as adhering to a frame of mind which the sapient *Daily News* believes—or pretends to believe—is quite extinct. How many would write themselves down Atheist in this country if people were thoroughly honest, it is impossible to say with certainty, but in all probability the number would be nearly as large.

Why should there be this elaborate pretence of ignorance as to the existence of Atheism? In any honest view of the situation we have Atheists as members of the Government, Atheist members of Parliament, Atheist men of letters, Atheist men of science, and legions of Atheists in the ordinary walks of life. The reply would probably be that most of these people call themselves Agnostics. Probably so; and it should give some of these a little uneasiness to note how their use of that “blessed word” helps the pietistic mind to maintain its position in society. But Agnosticism is Atheism masquerading under a new name. There is no vital distinction between the two. Either a man does believe in a God or he does not. If he does, he is a Theist, and his particular form of Theism is comparatively unimportant.

If he does not believe in a God he is an Atheist, and any fancy name he chooses to select is only an indication of his unwillingness to run the risk of offending religious respectability. It is curiously suggestive that Agnosticism should have grown up and flourished in English-speaking countries where a peculiarly self-righteous and hypocritical form of Protestantism flourishes. In France, or Italy, or elsewhere, the issue is faced in a much more satisfactory manner. In these countries scientists do not spend their time inventing a new name wherewith to disguise their heresy. If they care to express their opinions they do so; and the people, apparently, think none the worse of them for so doing.

If the number of Atheists, under various aliases, is large, this is only because Atheism is the logical ultimate of modern scientific thought. From one department after another the conception of God has been steadily excluded. Physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, have absolutely discarded the idea of God, and even in sociology it is steadily losing ground. The only science in which the idea of God has any place whatever is the science of anthropology, and it is there only as a curious product of human mental evolution, to be analysed, explained, and ultimately to be valued because of the light it casts on the myth-making power of the human mind. In the whole range of modern life and thought there is no serviceable purpose served by the conception of God. Its main function is to provide a living for the clergy, and to serve as decoration for political appeals to a misguided people. Atheism has triumphed, and is triumphing, because life itself is fundamentally non-Theistic.

Underlying the religious talk of the non-existence of Atheism is the fear of what may come from acknowledging its existence. These people not only know that Atheism is more widespread now than ever before, they are afraid to discuss it. Challenged to meet Atheists in open discussion, the reply of one clergyman after another is that only harm can result from such a meeting. From their point of view the objection is sound enough, for a discussion means opening the eyes of religious people to the real strength of the Atheistic position. So they consider it wiser to adopt the policy of ignoring the existence of a position they are not strong enough to destroy. And, thanks to the hypocrisy of the British press, this policy can be pursued with a fair measure of success—for a time. But for a time only. The forces of life are insistent and universal; and, while these people are encouraging those who look to them for guidance to live in a fool's paradise, the development of thought takes its course, and the tendencies that have reduced the many gods to one, and modified that one to the extent of making it a mere abstraction, will one day abolish it altogether.

I have not very much fear of finding the last Atheist labelled as a "unique specimen" in the Natural History Museum. It is far more probable that some newspaper of the future may contain a notice like the following:—

"INTERESTING DISCOVERY.

At the meeting of the Anthropological section of the British Association yesterday, Professor Blank gave an interesting account of a small tribe found on a little-visited island in the South Pacific. The tribe numbered some 200 persons, and was found practicing certain rites that were believed to be quite extinct. The central belief of these rites appeared to be that the cosmos was controlled by a being possessed of all the qualities of human nature, to whom prayers were constantly offered that he might manage affairs wisely and well. They also believed that in some obscure manner this being, or a portion of him, took on human form and offered himself as a sacrifice to placate the Supreme Ruler. Blood-sacrifice seemed to be an essential portion of the creed, and much of the ritual had reference to washings in blood; but whether this was literal or symbolical is not quite clear. They also believe in an underworld, to which offenders are sent to suffer excruciating torments for ever; with an over-world, designed for the benefit of the elect. Having but an imperfect conception of natural causation, they believe in the possibility of altering the course of nature

through their petitions to the heavenly chief. Their funeral customs pointed clearly to the belief in a double or 'soul,' which was quite independent of the body and survived its disintegration. Among the fragments of a literature preserved by these people are copies of a newspaper, which, although published as late as the early part of the twentieth century, appears to have been quite ignorant of the real nature of the discoveries made by the scientific world of that date. This alone is interesting in showing how, among even a comparatively civilised people, traces of a lower culture-stage survive. During the discussion that ensued it was suggested that, while the ideas described were ultimately derived from the most primitive times, they were probably immediately due to the presence of a few 'medicine-men' sent out by certain Western agencies about the beginning of the twentieth century, before the complete abandonment of such savage beliefs in that part of the world. These men had thus been cut off from their base, and their complete isolation from civilisation, due to the remote position of the island, accounted for their survival. It was also suggested that, in the interests of scientific research, these people should be left undisturbed in the practice of their curious rites, as they would thus serve as a living link between ourselves and our savage ancestors."

C. COHEN.

Sunday Observance.

THE British people, in common with most Continental nations, are rapidly secularising the Lord's Day by converting it into Man's Rest and Recreation Day. This is a process which, of necessity, involves the complete overthrow of the Christian Church, and particularly of the priestly or clerical profession. Perceiving that, if the process continues, such an outcome is ultimately inevitable, Christian leaders, pretending not to be influenced or prejudiced in the least by any personal and selfish considerations, declare that the secularisation of the Sabbath is a symptom of national decay, and can only end in direst national disaster. One prominent clergyman recently said that "the national attitude towards Sunday observance threatens vitally our national existence." This reverend gentleman pathetically adds: "Do not imagine that I am going to indulge in a lament over people's absence from church or chapel. I want to go deeper, to ask what Sunday is for, and what use people are making of it; and it is when I try to formulate answers to these questions that my heart begins to fail me through fear."

The preachers base their whole argument for the religious observance of Sunday on the assumption that religion is an essential condition of national prosperity; and this assumption again they make to rest on another assumption, equally unverifiable, namely, that only religion "guarantees ethical vigor." "Loss of insight into Divine truth," they assert, "is followed by ethical atrophy." Religion means the vision of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and the contention is that where this vision is lacking "there is moral decay." This is a mere assumption, an assertion unaccompanied by a single scrap of evidence. Here is the assertion in all its nakedness, and simply to cite is to refute it: Without religion "the people lose their cleanness of life, their purity of heart, their self-control, their courage, their sagacity, their devotion; and when these qualities are ebbing away, no power on earth can prevent national disaster." It follows from this that the loss of Sunday as religion's field-day carries with it the eventual loss of religion itself, and, consequently, of all that makes life worth living. Such is the Christian argument, in a nutshell.

In a published sermon by the Rev. J. E. Roberts, M.A., B.D., Dr. McLaren's successor at Union Chapel, Manchester, it is bluntly stated that if Sunday "is not kept as a holy day, the vision fades, and the people perish." "How can it be otherwise?" Mr. Roberts asks.

"What other opportunity for spiritual and moral culture is comparable with Sunday; not with any particular day, but with that day which by common con-

sent is freed from the claims of ordinary business? If people do not get the vision of God clarified and strengthened then, whenever can they hope to secure the blessing? If the people of Great Britain let this precious opportunity slip, they will endanger their vision of God, and then they will sow the seeds of national decay."

Mr. Roberts puts the cart before the horse. The loss of religion does not follow, but precedes, the secularisation of Sunday. The Secular Sunday is the result, not the cause, of the death of Christianity. The vision of God fades, and God's day naturally dies out. When God goes, all God's things spontaneously take their departure.

Mr. Roberts treats Sabbath and Sunday as if they were identical. He speaks of the emphasis which the Bible lays on keeping the Sabbath, and of the valuable promises attached to its observance. He tells us that God "insists" on the day being kept holy; but surely the preacher knows that Sunday is not a Biblical institution. Sunday dates no further back than the Council of Laodicea in 368, or Constantine's legalising of it in 321. The Sabbath was and is an exclusively Jewish ordinance, and Christians have never observed it. Mr. Roberts says: "The common idea that Sunday is intended to be a day of rest is quite unscriptural." We challenge him to prove that rash assertion. For the observance of Sunday the Bible contains no direction, while the Sabbath is again and again described as a day of rest and feasting. To hallow the Sabbath meant to abstain from all work and be merry.

"The special ritual at the temple prescribed for the Sabbath by the Pentateuchal law was not regarded as any part of the hallowing of the sacred day; on the contrary, the rule was that, in this regard, 'The Sabbath was not kept at the sanctuary.' Strictly speaking, therefore, the Sabbath was neither a day of relief to toiling humanity nor a day appointed for public worship; the positive duties of its observance were to wear one's best clothes, eat, drink, and be glad (justified from Is. lviii. 13)."

In the New Testament the Sabbath falls into the background. As it was then observed in the Jewish Church, Jesus is reported as condemning it, while the apostle Paul regarded all days as alike. From the very beginning, therefore, the Christian Church was not strictly Sabbatarian, and its constant tendency was to minimise the importance of Sabbath observance, and concentrate its attention on the Lord's Day. Now, the curious thing is that the Lord's Day was a popular institution under Paganism, long prior to the Christian era. What is beyond controversy is that Mr. Roberts has no right whatever to pronounce Sunday a Biblical institution, and that the law of the Jewish Sabbath has no application to Christians. This is absolutely beyond dispute; and it follows that to speak in the name of the Bible while enforcing Sunday observance is to throw dust into the eyes of credulous and wholly uncritical congregations.

Now, what are the facts deplored by Christian ministers? Fact number one, according to Mr. Roberts, is this: "That very large numbers of the people seldom enter any places of worship." Fact number two is thus stated: "That what are called the upper classes are turning Sunday into a day of pleasure-seeking." We will not follow the preacher into his scathing denunciation of golf and tennis, garden and dinner parties, whist drives, bridge parties, which are said to be the "accepted program for Sunday afternoons and evenings," but will take our leap from the Upper Ten to the working-classes, to find fact number three staring us in the face—which is, that the laboring people, sick and tired of the ecclesiastical clubs, are taking to political and social clubs, at which "Sunday is a prominent day for whist drives, concerts, variety entertainments, brake parties, comedy performances, living pictures, launch parties on the river, and various gatherings," but at which "not a single word is uttered about religion, about God, about things eternal and spiritual." Now we are confronted with fact number four—which is, that "the present attitude of the middle classes towards Sunday observance is dis-

quieting." Then comes an impassioned diatribe against Sunday trading and Sunday newspapers.

These are the facts which are said to be hurling Great Britain to its total ruin. That they are symptomatic of the decay of supernatural religion we readily admit. That political and social clubs are successful rivals of the heavenly ones is equally undeniable. Nothing can be more true than that the Christian religion is in an exceedingly parlous condition. The parsons have eminently good reason to feel disquieted and alarmed, for "not only is there danger that their trade come into disrepute," but also that the temple of the Most High God "be made of no account," and that he himself be deposed from his magnificence, whose terror has darkened the earth for so long a time. What Mr. Roberts dreads, however, is not the discrediting of his calling, not the disappearance of the Church, not the bowing out of the Deity, but the coming to disaster of the nation when it knows not God; and this, we are assured, no power on earth can prevent. On this point Mr. Roberts is sublimely dogmatical. Is he right?

Prophecy is easy and cheap. Any fool can be an eloquent prophet. But prophecy is as worthless as it is easy. Were we inclined, we could indulge in a radically different prediction, and feel pretty certain of its being fulfilled. But we will make our appeal to history instead. It is well known that the decay of religion, so feelingly bemoaned by the preachers, has been going on for at least a hundred years. Church and chapel attendance has been steadily falling off during that period, and the membership of Christian communions, so far from keeping pace with the growth of the population, has in many instances been actually decreasing. What effect has this undoubted decline of religion had upon the manners and morals of the people? A hundred years ago drunkenness almost took rank with the virtues. Drinking alcoholic liquors was a fine art in high repute. To-day, drunkenness is universally frowned upon, while the drinking habits of the people generally have enormously improved. A hundred years ago prostitution was of treble its present proportions. Even during the last forty years, which have been very disastrous years for religion, crime in our country has positively diminished by twelve per cent. Can these results be construed as proofs that in proportion as the nation abandons religion it is hastening to its doom? Morally, this country stands higher to-day than it ever did before, while religiously it stands much lower. How does Mr. Roberts explain such facts as these, and, face to face with them, how can he conscientiously affirm that, without faith in God, "the people lose their cleanness of life, their purity of heart, their self-control, their courage, their sagacity, their devotion"? He is speaking from deep-rooted prejudice, while ignoring the knowledge so easily acquired.

We repeat that the secularisation of Sunday, so far from being symptomatic of national decay, is an encouraging sign of national growth and development. It may eventuate in the extinction or total transformation of the Church; but the history of the last few decades conclusively shows that, to say the least, it is not accompanied by the degradation and demoralisation of the people. J. T. LLOYD.

We congratulate the Rev. A. Boyd-Carpenter, M.A., upon his amazing ingenuity. Referring to modern critics, he says: "They have cut away from the Gospels the miraculous element, they have cut out this and cut out that in their extreme criticism, but one thing they have never been able to do—that is, to get rid of Christ." But this is the very thing they have succeeded in doing. They have utterly discredited the Christ of every school of theology. Throwing common sense down the wind, Mr. Boyd-Carpenter represents Christ as saying, "Take from me all that you like to take," the curious mathematical result being that the whole, after its ruthless removal, still remains in all its ancient integrity.

Acid Drops.

The Prince of Wales, according to Reuter, figured in a "delightful incident." He paid a visit to the pilgrimage village of Sainte Anne de Beaupré, known as the American Lourdes. Hundreds of pilgrims, many of them on crutches, surrounded his motor-car, cheered him, and kissed his hands. But it is not reported that he cured any of them, although a royal touch used to be considered very medicinal. Inside the church, Cardinal Mathieu showed the Prince stacks of crutches, spectacles, and surgical appliances which had been cast off by recovered pilgrims. His Royal Highness went away "deeply touched." Everybody mixed up with the affair must have been a bit "touched."

Going to a peace meeting to kick up a row is quite a brilliant idea. The ladies who compelled the men to carry them out from the Queen's Hall meeting of the Peace Congress addressed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer are to be congratulated on their originality. Mere men are not equal to these things. Seriously speaking, we have more than once given our opinion as to the policy of interrupting speakers and creating disorder at meetings, and there is no need to repeat it *in extenso*. We simply say again that the right of orderly public meeting is far more important than the vote itself. It is one of the main pillars of a free society.

We have received a funny cutting from the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*. It appears that the Bond Congress met at Robertson early in June, and during the morning session on June 5 the following incident occurred:—

"A long debate ensued over a motion directed against the compulsory extermination of locusts. Various delegates declared that it was impossible and sacrilegious to exterminate locusts, seeing that they were a plague sent by a higher Power."

Mr. Olivier, of Moltano, reminded the meeting of the proverb about "work and pray," but the pious Boers were not to be put off in that way, and the motion against the "sacrilegious" interference with the proceedings of a "higher Power" was carried by a great majority.

Another cutting from the same paper contains a letter from Mr. J. P. Rossouw, of Porterville, C.C., to *Ons Land*. This gentleman says that educating children to become lawyers or teachers is "altogether in conflict with the Bible," which declares that we must earn our bread by the sweat of our brows. The state of affairs in South Africa can only be improved by obeying the Holy Scriptures. "I hope that all people will realise their failings," the Boer gentleman says, "and acknowledge their sins before God; and then only can we hope for better times." What a sweet innocent! We did not think there were so many of them off after the war, with all its disillusionment.

"Providence" has been active in Italy. Snowstorms in July for a special treat! Chiasso was flooded a foot deep. Shops, warehouses, and the railway track between Porto Ceresio and Milan were swept away by mountain torrents. In the Ligurian province many bridges and houses were washed away, and hundreds of cattle and pigs were destroyed. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

Asia Minor was also visited with stormy weather in July. The floods at Tokot drowned about 2,000 people. Other places likewise suffered severely, people being washed away, and houses, crops, and cattle destroyed. "I the Lord do all these things."

As is well known, Christianity originated in the East. Then it entered the West; but almost in proportion as it prospered in the West it decayed in the East. It is now practically extinct in the Orient, and in the process of extinction in the Occident. As it decays in the latter a stupendous effort is being made to re-establish it in the former. But the attempt is doomed to fail, because now at length the East, as well as the West, is eagerly absorbing modern knowledge, which is everywhere the sworn and relentless enemy of supernatural beliefs.

To-day, Sunday-school children throughout the country are being told wonderful tales about the anointing of King David at Bethlehem. It was the Lord who anointed him. They will be assured that, when anointed, David was adequately equipped for all the duties of kingship. "And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward" (1 Samuel xvi. 1-18). Now, having been

thus anointed, adequately equipped, and Spirit-filled, what did David do? He simply live the life of a cruel, deceitful, licentious, and savage chief. He lied and robbed and killed without a scruple. His treatment of the King of Gath, of Nabal, and of Uriah, stamp him as a scoundrel of the deepest dye. Who can read such passages as 2 Samuel xii. 26-31, 1 Kings ii. 5-9, and many others of like import, and believe that he was filled, and led all through his life, by the Spirit of a God of truth and love? Is it any wonder that so many Sunday-school scholars turn sceptics when they dare to think for themselves?

Mr. R. J. Campbell says of the International Congregational Council: "I have not the slightest doubt that John Knox would doom the whole International Congregational Council which met in Edinburgh last week to the bottomless pit, and if he had the same power in Edinburgh now as he had then he would probably anticipate the divine decree by clapping every man Jack of them into a filthy gaol." We do not at all question the accuracy of the judgment, which only serves to show what broad human tolerance and sympathy has always characterised Christian leaders. All that need be added is that Christians would act in much the same manner now had they the opportunity. In general the measure of their tolerance towards those who differ with them is in exact proportion to their inability to give their religious feelings full expression.

Mr. Campbell asserts that no man can tell what Christianity is. He is quite right, so far as Protestant Christianity is concerned; and yet he imagines that *he* both knows and can state what it is, while the millions of preachers who differ from him are declared to be guilty of grossly misconceiving and misrepresenting it. Now, one thing is perfectly clear, namely, that if Christianity is correctly interpreted by Campbellism, it has either no future at all, or a confused, troubled, and disastrous one.

The Rev. Dr. E. C. Moore, of Harvard University, declares that Christianity is "an Oriental faith" which has undergone Hellenising, Romanising, and Teutonising processes, and is destined to pass through many more such changes in the future. But such a declaration is fatal to the usual claim that Christianity is, in its very nature, an absolute, universal religion. Dr. Moore goes further, and maintains that it is a missionary's first duty, when he enters a foreign land, to naturalise, nationalise, and in other ways adapt his religion to the intellectual and moral conditions of the people. But how on earth can you naturalise and nationalise the alleged stupendous miracles upon which the Christian religion is made to rest? In no country, and among no people under heaven, can Virgin Births and Resurrections be presented as natural events.

The Rev. Dr. Hillis came all the way from Brooklyn to London to tell us that all through the ages God has been making desperate efforts to speak to us, and that, as a matter of fact, he does speak to us unceasingly, only we are too deaf to hear him. Of course, Dr. Hillis is *not* deaf, and he undertakes to report what the Lord says. The curious thing, however, is that God and Dr. Hillis hold precisely the same opinions on every subject, which looks rather suspicious, to say the very least.

By some unnamed authority, Dr. Hillis attributed certain strange actions to the Deity. One of them was the selection of Abraham Lincoln, an unbeliever, to free three millions of negro slaves. Lincoln was an admiring student of Volney and Paine, and his wife stated that he had neither faith nor hope in the Christian sense; and yet, according to Dr. Hillis, this was the man whom God chose to act for him in the most momentous crisis in American history! If there be a God, we cannot conceive of him demeaning himself in such a fashion, neither can we understand why so distinguished a Divine servant did not believe in his Master.

Before the close of his sermon, Dr. Hillis corrected himself. After all, God does not speak to-day, and has not spoken for nigh on twenty centuries, for he "hath unrolled his soul and spoken his latest and last and profoundest thought about man in Jesus Christ, hanging on his cross, and springing from Olivet back into the open sky." How astoundingly dramatic! Perhaps this American divine may live long enough to correct himself on this point also.

"Kindness to animals, evidently, is not a tenet of the Salvation Army. A horse which was attached to a Salvation Army wagon, and which refused to pull its load, attracted the attention of policeman William Stetter at

Sixth-avenue and Thirty-second-street one morning last week. Stetter investigated and found the animal suffering from sores—two under the collar and two under the girth. The policeman promptly arrested the driver, who gave his name as Maurice McKohan of 335 West Forty-eighth-street. His business, he said, was collecting paper for the Salvation Army. Magistrate Wable, in the Jefferson Market Police Court, held him in \$500 for trial on a charge of cruelty to animals, and in default of bail he was committed to a cell. As the horse is not a Christian and has no soul, the Salvationist must have wondered what all the fuss was about. Christ never suffered for horses. They must suffer for him."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

It is stated in a Christian paper that the Rev. Dr. Warschauer is publishing a new book in September—"Jesus: Seven Questions." A Christian is the author of the book, hardly anybody but Christians will read it, and no doubt it is written for them. Yes, nineteen hundred years after Jesus lived and died, and revealed "the only true religion," his own followers have to ask each other questions about him. There is nothing settled yet. What a pity he ever came at all! Or that, having come, he didn't reveal his own revelation.

We see that Dr. Warschauer preached at the City Temple lately, his sermon being printed in the weekly organ of the *New Theology*. He spent a good deal of his time in praising Zola and Mazzini—the latter a Theist, the former an Atheist; and he wound up by quoting a "great scripture" from George Eliot—a Positivist, who had no belief whatever in God or a future life. *New Theology* people are getting on. But when are they going to be straightforward?

The *Christian Commonwealth*, which prints and praises Dr. Warschauer's sermon, savagely pitches into the editor of the *British Weekly* for calling the Modernist movement an "essentially infidel movement," and declaring that if the Modernists had their way "the esoteric doctrine of the clergy would not differ widely from that of the late Dr. Martineau." Now if this be true—and it is true—it could hardly be expressed less offensively. But the *New Theology* organ goes into hysterics of anger. This is how it foams at the mouth:—

"On this we would like to say that the person who has the deplorable taste to refer to the saintly and venerated James Martineau—the greatest religious thinker of his age—as an infidel, thereby writes himself down as outside the pale of ordinary civilisation.

Good Lord! How they love one another! But the *New Theology* is most at fault. James Martineau's character is really not in question. The point at issue is what did he preach and teach? To call him a Christian, which we understand he did not call himself, is a gross abuse of language. Dr. Robertson Nicoll is substantially right. The Modernist movement is essentially an "infidel" movement, and the *New Theology* is the name that Modernism goes by in England. Why quarrel over the word "infidel"? The *Christian Commonwealth* doesn't object to using the word against more thorough-going unbelievers. Why not face the real question? Is the *New Theology*, or is not, anything but an accommodation of "infidel" conclusions to the exigencies of well-paid orthodox pulpits?

The Rev. Mr. McCorkindale, of the Knoxland Parish Church, Dumbarton, talks quite sensibly until he touches religion. In a published sermon his views on the thinker's unsolved problems, and the man of action's incomplete record, are sane and sound; but when he comes to the "saint's unachieved ideal," his lucidity and sweet reasonableness disappear. He regards the incompleteness of life here as "the prophecy of another, where our ideals will be realised." Mr. McCorkindale forgets two things of supreme importance. The first is, that "a saint's ideals" are purely artificial, and do not make for mental health; and the second, that ideals are life's stimulants. They are never realised. Their realisation would be the worst thing that could happen. It would rob life of all its sweet enjoyments. Max Müller's words may be taken as an axiom: "The dream of the reality is better than the reality of the dream."

Mr. Charles Alexander, of the Torrey-Alexander religious-theatrical combination, has written to the religious press to say that he has no intention of conducting a mission in London during the forthcoming winter. He is too experienced, he says, to think of holding another mission so soon after the last. We are not at all surprised at the reason, only at its publicity. Evidently the last was not favorable enough to invite an early repetition. Or perhaps Mr. Alexander thinks it wisest to wait until people have for-

gotten the last. Meanwhile Mr. Alexander has plenty of engagements elsewhere; so he is, we presume, happy. That is the beauty of religious folly; it is so universal that those who live upon it run small danger of starvation.

Mr. William Watson has written a poetical attack on the new Cathedral at Liverpool. He suggests that no money should be spent in this direction until all the children of Liverpool are shod and fed. Of course, the clergy do not agree with Mr. Watson's sensible suggestion. They profess to be greatly concerned at the existence of poverty and misery, but they never put half the spirit into their removal that they do into raising funds for new chapels and churches. Even the *Christian World* thinks it would be dangerous to agree with Mr. Watson; it thinks the right point of view is to judge the act of devotion by its spirit. Of course, those who give towards new and expensive churches may be animated by the best of motives—although these are often very mixed. But this is emphatically not the point at issue. The point is whether the interests of society are best served by building cathedrals, or by devoting that money and energy to providing better houses, better food, and better clothing for those who are unfortunate enough to need them? The reply of real reformers can hardly be open to doubt.

We have only one other word to add. Suppose this and other new cathedrals offered no posts to which payment was attached; suppose it was proposed to build a cathedral which should be dependent upon voluntary services for the sermons and prayers, would there be the same eagerness for their construction? We seriously question if there would be under these conditions. Underlying all the professions of zeal for the glorification of the Lord is the professional feeling that here are more posts being created and more stipends to draw. The feeling may not be always present in consciousness, but it is there. And there is nothing new in discovering that such feelings are cloaked and disguised by a class cant.

Miss Jessie Ackermann, a famous American globe-trotter, informs us that in South America religion is at a discount everywhere. "The men are completely lost to the Church, so widely have their views changed." "With this drifting from the Church, there has come an increased disregard for the Lord's Day," golf, horse-races, bull-fights, and other entertainments being patronised rather than Divine services. What is true of the men is almost equally true of the women. They too "have given up churchgoing, and are interested in social and philanthropic problems rather than in religion."

As Miss Ackermann is herself a profoundly religious woman, we may safely regard her report as substantially correct. While "this wholesale desertion of the Church is more marked in the Spanish-speaking Roman Church than elsewhere," it is found that "Protestant places of worship are by no means crowded out. Going to church with many of the English-speaking people is a mere incident: they take it on the way to tennis or golf; and they seem quite free from any burdensome sense of duty or responsibility in the matter."

We are often asked, "Is Freethought making any real headway in the world?" Miss Ackermann's testimony shows clearly that in South America it is triumphant all along the line. We know also that in North America, throughout the Continent of Europe, and in Great Britain, Freethought has been first flooding, and then emptying, the Churches. At present, it is the emptying ordinance that is the more conspicuous.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference makes the startling announcement that "the ascended Christ reigns over and shapes the history of the world by his indwelling life." Then hands off, and quickly, Mr. President. How dare you and your friends talk about your plans and programs, your schemes of social reforms and reconstructions, and your impudent methods of soul-saving and heart-cleansing when, according to your own assertion, the whole business is already in the all-good and all-powerful hands of the ascended Christ? Pray, give him a chance to prove that he is there and answers to your description of him. Can't you keep silent and still just for one year? Try it, for a change. Perhaps others than the ascended Christ would have reason to give you thanks.

The Sisters of St. Anne at Gerace, in Calabria, carried on a foundling hospital. During 1907, out of 144 baby inmates no less than 143 died. A government inquiry revealed an extraordinary state of things. Two dying infants were left

in the same cot, without nourishment or attendance, for twenty-four hours. A single nurse had the suckling of fourteen babies daily. No wonder the institution has been transferred to lay hands!

The vicar of St. Marly-le-Bow says that Jesus "seemed to live and move and have his being in an atmosphere of unearthly purity." Will Mr. Hutton kindly tell us what he means by "unearthly purity," and how it can be of the least use in this earthly life?

Rev. Henry John Harvey, a well-known Congregational minister in Essex, threw himself under the Yarmouth express at Colchester station. As luck would have it, he fell between the rails and was uninjured except for a slight wound in the head. The case was heard in camera at the magistrates' court, and the reverend gentleman was handed over to the care of his friends, who took him away in a motor-car. Had he been a Freethought lecturer, he would probably have been treated more severely, besides being held up to scorn in the religious newspapers.

According to the newspapers, this intended suicide had a "miraculous escape." But if "Providence" saved him from death, it might as well have saved him from making the attempt to destroy himself. "Providence" seems always to act at the wrong moment.

When a white man assaults a black woman he commits an offence. When a black man assaults a white woman he commits a fiendish crime. That is how the whites look at it. They are all good Christians, of course, and the black man is their brother—in church, but it doesn't work out that way outside. He is a damned nigger there—and damned niggers mustn't presume to behave sexually with the freedom of the white images of the Creator. The other day at Grenville, near Fort Worth, Texas, a negro lad of seventeen, being lodged in the prison for an alleged assault on a white girl, was taken out by a white crowd, dragged to the public square, and tied to a stake. Cordwood was piled round him and saturated with kerosene, then the pile was set light to, and the flames shot up several yards. Screams of agony came from the black lad, but death silenced him in a few minutes. During that time white men, women, and children uttered shouts of joy. This sublime spectacle occurred in a Christian country—nearly two thousand years after Christ.

Spiritists do very wonderful things—under their own conditions, and every sensible man knows what that means. They are talking a great deal just now about raising objects without contact. They say it is a positive fact that this can be done. Dr. Gustave le Bon, the famous philosophical scientist, takes note of this boast in *Le Matin*. Very well, he says, if this can be done it proves the existence of a new force, and may lead to fresh discoveries. He therefore offers a prize of 500 francs to any medium who, without touching it, shall raise a sphere or cube placed upon a table an inch or two, so that a photographer of *Le Matin* shall take a snapshot of the performance. Of course, it must be done in the presence of competent witnesses. Which means, of course, that it will never be done at all. We know those "meejums."

We note a remarkable case of "Providence" in the *Daily Express*. A missionary in South Laos, near Annam, transcribed part of the Bible into the native character, and sent his work to London to be printed. He had spent infinite trouble over the work, and special type had to be made for it. When the proof sheets were ready they were forwarded to the Laos, but before they arrived the missionary and his wife had both died of cholera. Good old "Providence"!

Mr. F. J. Gould, seeing that "one hundred heroes, otherwise known as passive resisters," had written an urgent letter to the Prime Minister on the Education Bill—probably to stiffen his back against those wicked Churchmen—Mr. Gould, we say, wrote another letter to Mr. Asquith pointing out that "Simple Bible Teaching" is "in effect as denominational, that is, representative of specific sections of the religious public, as the Catholic or Anglican." Mr. Gould did not break Mr. Asquith's windows, or ring a muffin bell when he was reading Shakespeare, so the Prime Minister, through his secretary, only "begged to acknowledge receipt of your letter." But these things get into the papers—some papers—and produce a certain effect nevertheless.

We commented recently on the manner in which history is written, or manufactured, to substantiate Christian claims

and Christian prejudices. The unfortunate aspect of this matter is that many writers, and a still larger number of readers, go on repeating this manufactured history, even when their general sympathies are not with Christianity. As an example of this we call attention to a recent book on *Humanity and its Problems*, by Mr. Alfred Hook. The book is planned on lines that are generally sound, but in one part at least the author falls under the influence of common Christian notions as to the relations of the early Christians to the Pagan civilisation. In this he is too much inclined to take for granted the moral bankruptcy of Paganism and the moral excellence of the early Christians. His remark that "for the first century the Christians were distinguished by a high moral purity," while they were "surrounded by a population to whom the qualities of gentleness and unselfishness were still foreign," is one that shows the power of generally accepted statements over a writer's knowledge and power of reasoning.

The conception of *any* society as being morally bankrupt is a scientific absurdity. It overlooks the real nature of morality, and assumes it to be something added to social life, instead of its being something involved in the social structure itself. It also ignores the truth that the form of morality is everywhere conditioned by surrounding circumstances, and so tests all by an artificial standard of excellence. Just as the narrow type of Christian judges all people by whether they do or do not conform to the formula of his creed, so many writers who retain the religious spirit judge all people by their own social standard. This is, of course, flattering to oneself, since one's own society is necessarily the only one that comes up to the accepted ideal. This principle, foolish enough in all cases, is particularly so when dealing with civilised antiquity. The idea, for example, that unselfishness and gentleness were unknown in the Roman world is simply absurd. There was not, probably, the maudlin talk about these qualities that there is with us; but this would seem to be about the principal distinction. The strong sense of duty to the State that was taught, the stories that have reached us concerning individual sacrifices to this end (whether they are legendary or not matters nothing in this connection), are decisive on this point. And certainly Christian moral teaching has never reached so "unselfish" an expression as the Pagan teaching that men should act virtuously as the vine produces grapes, asking nothing beyond the power and opportunity to produce the proper fruit. And as to gentleness, the man who can believe that any number of human beings can live together *without* exhibiting this quality needs to carefully revise his conception of human evolution.

Finally, the conception of the early Christians as being "distinguished by a high moral purity" is pure myth. The only evidence on this head is the testimony of Christians themselves, and even they give evidence in a quite opposite direction. None of the Pagan writers were struck by this superior moral purity, which, in an age of alleged moral corruption, should have stood out with challenging prominence. It is significant, too, that all writers agree—Mr. Hook, in fact, cites from several to this effect—that towards the end of the second century the "high moral purity" began to decline rapidly, and the Christians were soon as bad as the Pagans. Afterwards, as all students are aware, they became worse. In the fifth century the morality of the surviving representatives of Paganism was certainly superior to that of the average Christian. Now, the curious thing about all this is that the only period during which superior moral excellence is claimed for Christians is that during which little or nothing is known about them. So soon as we get anything like definite historical information concerning them we find them indistinguishable, morally, from the people around. When Christians emerge in the light of history their own writers never cease lamenting their shortcomings. In brief, the moral excellence of the early Christians is pure myth—as mythical as Mr. Campbell's early Christian social enthusiasm. Primitive Christianity was neither a moral nor a social crusade, as such. It was, what many of the Pagans said, a senseless superstition, lower in many respects than the last forms of the Pagan religions, strengthening many superstitions that might otherwise have died out; an intellectual retrogression that paved the way for the darkness and demoralisation of the after-centuries.

Rev. D. Ballard tells the Wesleyan Conference that the Church must be modern as well as spiritual. Sugar with the lemon!

Mr. W. T. Stead's friendship for the Czar is greater than his admiration of Tolstoy. But he overdoes it in saying that Tolstoy's recent protest "does the cause of humanity harm." How could it do that?

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, August 9, Victoria Park, 6 p.m., Freethought Demonstration.

August 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, £211 16s. 6d Received since.—J. F. Aust, 5s.; Nottingham (4 months' sub.) £1; G. L. Alward, £1 1s.

GERALD MASSEY FUND.—W. Mumby, 10s.

C. J. M.—The whole subject of the City churches is scandalous. It shows what humbug Christianity is when such a state of things is tolerated. It is more than enough to make J. C. cry "What the deuce did I die for?"

JOHN HUNT.—We have looked through W. Wheaton's pamphlet and see nothing in it worthy of criticism.

J. F. AUST.—There are ever so many Freethinkers who never subscribe at all. The finances of the movement would much improve, as you say, if all did something. Glad to hear you have never missed a copy of the *Freethinker* for thirteen years. Our circulation is not what it ought to be, but few papers have so many deeply attached readers.

F. G. PORTSMOUTH.—Pleased to have your very interesting and encouraging letter. Your friend is quite wrong as to there being no Freethinkers of the third generation. We know plenty, but your friend might say "Who are they?" if we mentioned any of them, so we refer to the Bradlaugh and Ingersoll families in disproof of his statement. Our own family doesn't run to the third generation yet.

W. J. CLARKE.—Charles Bradlaugh's works that are still in print can be ordered from our office. We thank you for your efforts to promote our circulation, and are glad you like the *Freethinker* so much. But we fear you would have small success in trying to form a Society in Belfast at present. We advise you to go on pushing this journal, etc., until the prospect becomes more favorable.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

J. F. C. F.—It ought to have gone in this week, but we had to make up the present number early on account of the Bank Holiday. Shall appear in our next.

H. J. H.—He may be worthy of respect personally, but we don't think he will do much good on those lines.

T. DEARDEN.—We hope the situation is not as bad as you believe. Probably the talk about reviving the "blasphemy" law is only brag intended to frighten.

NOTTINGHAM.—It is all right. Thanks. Sorry to hear you have not been well, and hope you will soon be yourself again.

D. MAPP.—Ingersoll's collected works are only published in the Dresden Edition in twelve handsome volumes at £5. Separate works of his are published at our office.

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

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

The second of this season's Freethought Demonstrations, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, takes place this evening (Aug. 9) at 6 o'clock in Victoria Park, at the Branch lecture station, near the fountain. The list of speakers includes F. A. Davies, A. B. Moss, C. Cohen, and

G. W. Foote. East London "saints" should give this Demonstration all the publicity they can, and secure a record gathering.

In spite of the hot weather, the second of the new social gatherings organised by the N. S. S. Executive, which took place at Anderton's hotel on Thursday evening, July 30, was quite successful. From 8 till 11 o'clock a large number of Freethinkers, including a gratifying proportion of ladies, conversed with each other, and occasionally listened to excellent vocal or instrumental music. Instead of breaking up with "God Save the King" the party dispersed after "Auld Lang Syne."

Mr. H. S. Wishart, who is "missioning" under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, informs us that his lectures at Rochdale have stirred up the local bigots, and that they have succeeded, though by a narrow majority, in getting the *Freethinker* excluded from the Co-operative Society's reading room. A local man of God appears to have been the moving spirit in this wretched business. We hope the more tolerant and self-respecting members will speedily undo the miserable work of this person and his supporters.

Mr. Wishart also sends us press cuttings which show that the Salvation Army, failing to answer his criticisms, have roused the bigotry of the town against him. Disorderly scenes have been witnessed, and it is broadly hinted that the crowd would have dealt with Mr. Wishart in their own (Christian) fashion if he had not been protected by the police. It seems that this protection is not to be continued, and one of the local papers chuckles over the fact, and practically incites the mob to violence in the interest of "religious susceptibilities." We hope we need not say that Mr. Wishart will have every possible assistance from the N. S. S. headquarters in London.

According to the local *Guardian*, Mr. Joseph Bates, who was at first chased like a mad dog by the orthodox crowd, has at length been able to hold an orderly meeting at Boston. He tells us himself that the situation is improving. He has distributed a large number of "specimen" copies of the *Freethinker*, and these have made some impression. Mr. Bates's address is 3 Red Lion-street, Boston, where he will be glad to hear from district "saints" who can assist him in the work.

At Bolton and neighboring places, a propaganda has been carried on for some time by Mr. J. McClellan, of 1 Byron-street, who lectures and distributes literature. He gets a supply of "specimen" copies of the *Freethinker* and sells them at a penny each—which, he says, ensures their being read, and the proceeds are a little help to him in his work. He says he can dispose of nearly twelve dozen in this way weekly. People are asking when Mr. Foote is coming along. At Blackburn they are looking for a suitable hall. Of course, Mr. Foote will be happy to preach the gospel of Freethought there or elsewhere.

The Liverpool Branch has its annual picnic on Sunday next (Aug. 16). The party leaves Woodside Ferry at 2 p.m. for a drive to Thurston, where they will address themselves to a knife-and-fork tea. The price of the tickets is 2s. 6d. They are obtainable of Mr. G. Roleffs, 49 Whitefield-road.

Mr. Moses Harman, being a free man again after his last term of imprisonment in America, the home of liberty, etc., etc., has changed his weekly *Lucifer* into a monthly *Eugenics*, and shifted from Chicago to Los Angeles, probably on the principle of "the further West the nearer freedom." We are far from seeing eye to eye with this brave old man in many things, but we admire his courage, we cheerfully admit his right to differ from us whenever and wherever we differ from him, and we repeat that his prosecution for "obscenity" because of his ventilation of sex questions in perfectly chaste language is an infamous scandal which all the boastful screaming of "the Bird o' Freedom" will not prevent thinking people from remembering. We are glad to see that Mr. Bernard Shaw has sent Mr. Harman a cheque for twenty pounds with a characteristic letter. "Your imprisonment," Mr. Shaw says, "was quite the most monstrous achievement of the 'Nation of Villagers' within recent years. Unfortunately, there is one subject on which Americans seem invincibly ignorant; and that one subject is America. They never know of anything that happens in their own country until an Englishman writes a book calling their attention to it. Nothing else can penetrate their chronic ecstasy of self-satisfaction in which they tolerate the welter of official despotism and unofficial anarchy which

so revolts foreigners who really know what happens in the United States of Arcadia."

The late Sir Randal Cremer, M.P., who founded and for so long sustained the International Arbitration League, had a Christian funeral, but that was not arranged by himself. As a matter of fact, he was well-known to be a Freethinker. Nearly all the pioneers are Freethinkers. We are glad to see that the League's Council, in its resolution on Cremer's death, indulges in no pious verbiage. Here is the resolution in full:—

"Realising the utter impossibility of expressing, in adequate language, their sense of the loss which the cause of international goodwill and agreement has sustained by the death of William Randal Cremer, his colleagues on the Council of the League, which he founded and served with such whole-hearted devotion for so long a period, must content themselves with the bare record that he won for himself a world-wide reputation as a constructive peace advocate; that in the House of Commons he achieved a substantial success on behalf of international arbitration; that the Inter-Parliamentary Union—the greatest of the instruments of peace—was created by him; and that to his pioneer work the agreements with France and the United States owe so much.

With little but an undying faith and an overmastering enthusiasm, William Randal Cremer has placed our day and generation under a lasting debt of gratitude by his labors for the triumph of reason over force, and the ultimate reign of peace and fraternity amongst the nations."

This strikes the right note.

We remember one of Bradlaugh's old St. James's Hall meetings at which Cremer was one of the speakers, and we recollect his stating that he had circularised all the Nonconformist ministers of religion in the London area in favor of the peace movement, at the time when British guns were firing away in Egypt, and that only two (we think) of these apostles of the Prince of Peace returned an answer. All the Dissenting men of God but two quite silent! And Bradlaugh the Atheist held a peace meeting in Hyde Park and was nearly killed by the Jingo!

SEERS AT SEA.

Agreeably to the law of supply and demand, prophets have in all times arisen to prophesy events, smooth and otherwise, at absurdly cheap rates, considering the value of their services. From the days of the Augurs, who could not look one another in the face without laughing, down to those of the modern fortune-teller, who smiles in her dainty sleeve, an unbroken line of inspired personages has existed. The entire universe has been ransacked for information of coming events. The stars which glitter millions of miles afar have been considered as deeply interested in the career of Mrs. Jones, and the sediment at the bottom of a teacup has been full of portents for Miss Robinson. Comets have been imported into our solar system by "Our Heavenly Papa" for the purpose of warning us of approaching disaster, and insects are commissioned to prepare us for dissolution by "tapping" in the woodwork of houses. Dogs kindly consent to hold conversations with their friends in the "wee small hours" for the same purpose. This "supernatural" control, according to the prophets, is to be bribed. Savages have a business habit of keeping their "rain doctors" and prophets to their contracts. They are expected to bring rain when it is wanted, and if they do not the consequences are summary and unpleasant. But the clergy in civilised countries offer prayers for rain or fine weather, without any attendant risks and dangers. The civilised dupes allow them to play their little game on the principle of "Heads I win, tails you lose." If the prayer is unavailing, they ignore the mistake; if successful, they put it to the credit of the Church and advertise it exceedingly. An amazing example is to be found in Baxter's *Forty Coming Wonders*, which appeals to a more respectable audience than *Old Moore* and *Zadkeil*. For more than forty years this book has been before the public. Few prophets would find it easy to go on decade after decade, delivering a succession of prophecies foredoomed to failure. But the countrymen of "General" Booth are most greedily credulous. Baxter announced the ascension of 144,000 Christians without dying on March 5, 1896; and the great Persecution from August to January, 1901. The battle of Armageddon was fixed for the same year. The Second Advent of Christ was included in the time-table for April 11, 1901, probably a misprint for the 1st, a more appropriate date. Savages prophesy one way, and the followers of Jesus another; but the nature of the act, and the results, are very much the same.—M.

The Keswick Convention.

IT was with a sense of surprise, not unmixed with amusement, that I lately found myself travelling with a band of the pious to the Keswick "Convention." Needing a short holiday, I had started rather suddenly for a fortnight's sojourn in Cumberland, and when I got into the train at Euston I was puzzled to account for the number of parsons that infested it—the station and the train positively swarmed with parsons, some starting themselves, some seeing others start, but all alike wearing that look of comfortable prosperity which is so characteristic in this country of the apostles of the suffering Christ. On inquiry, I learnt from a porter that it was the opening day of the Keswick Convention, and I realised that I, a heretic and Freethinker, had unwittingly walked into the habitations of the godly, and was destined to spend a day, at any rate, in somewhat uncongenial company. Myself a pilgrim to the mountains, I had fallen among pilgrims of a very different school; but I comforted myself with the thought that in seven hours I should be free again, and I recalled to mind that delightful double-edged text which assures us that "one day in Thy courts is better than a thousand." Yes, that at least is a scriptural saying which I have never felt the least inclination to disbelieve!

So the train sped on its course, and I was interested to watch the faces and bearing of my fellow-travellers—the smug, self-satisfied expression, which spoke of the soul at perfect peace with its God, and the entire assurance of manner which assumed that no one could have any other object in going to Keswick than to worship at the shrine. Large, prosperous, bull-necked men of God walked the corridors to the luncheon-car and hustled for tea-trays at the stations, living witnesses of the creed that it is much more blessed (where tea-trays are concerned) to receive than to give.

"But you will attend some of the meetings, I presume?" said a religious journalist who sat opposite to me, and who was concerned to hear that my business was of so pagan a nature as mere communion with the hills and clouds and streams. "May I hand you this syllabus of the Convention for 1908?" I thanked him, and was glad of the opportunity to discover what, indeed, had set me wondering not a little—why so many pious folk should be thus hurrying to a small market-town in the Lake district, when there are such ample facilities for prayer and praise nearer home.

"Dear friends and fellow-servants of Jesus Christ," began the preface to the booklet, "we send you an invitation to attend the thirty-fourth Convention. The Church of Christ lies under a great reproach. It professes so much, it seems to accomplish so little. It claims to make saints, yet its members are, in too many cases, indistinguishable from the world."

Glancing round at the reverend gentlemen who had booked seats for Keswick, one certainly could not deny that worldliness, rather than saintliness, was the salient feature of their countenances, and I looked with renewed interest at the syllabus to see what remedy was suggested for this disappointing fact.

"This reproach," it continued, "must be wiped away. The shame of our failure falls upon our Lord.....What the Lord has done for others in the past He is ready to do for us to-day. So great a blessing is not lightly won. There must be whole-hearted surrender, whole-hearted faith. We must come in the spirit of prayer and expectation. He will not disappoint us if we come aright."

But here the logic of the writers seemed to me to be at fault; for if thirty-three Conventions had already been held, with no better result than to leave the worshipers "indistinguishable from the world" and their Church "under a great reproach," how in reason could it be expected that the thirty-fourth Convention would succeed where its pre-

decessors had failed? The failures in the past may, of course, have been due to the lack of "whole-hearted surrender," but then, for the life of me, I could see no sign of "whole-hearted surrender" in the parsons around—unless, perhaps, to a sort of "good living" other than that to which the syllabus referred.

Arrived at Keswick, I soon established myself in my cottage lodging, on the slope of a neighboring hillside, well out of sight and ear-shot of the psalm-singings and the intercessions. The little town for a whole week was a pandemonium of "religious exercises," and the ravens and I had the holy places of the mountains to ourselves, while the prayer and praise went on in the sweltering plain below. During the greater part of the time the weather was perfect; a spell of brilliant summer sunshine, with a rapture of glory on the hills, and not a soul was out on the hills to witness it but myself. In the midst of my enjoyment of that wonderful sanctitude of Nature I could not but think with sadness of the criminal foolishness, and waste of human energy, involved in a "Convention" such as that which yearly brings its crowds of votaries to Keswick, for no better purpose than to shout or sing in company what has already been sung or shouted millions upon millions of times with no benefit whatsoever, but rather with untold loss to human dignity and self-respect. Here is a world where so much needs to be done to lessen in some degree the awful sum of ignorance and suffering; but instead of sanely addressing themselves to a calm, deliberate, and rational removal of social wrongs, these pious people expend their thoughts and powers in a frenzy of foolish talk, which, as they themselves admit, leaves them quite undistinguished from other folk, while it must necessarily subtract very largely from the world's available amount of serious endeavor. Apart even from the wrong done to intellectual truth, the sheer waste of time in these religious practices is, to me, a most afflicting spectacle—the sight of thousands of men and women neglecting the higher aims of life in order to call and cry to a God who, if he *did* exist, would assuredly feel the most lively wrath and indignation at their childish importunities.

S.

Anatole France.

M. ANATOLE FRANCE, the most distinguished of living French writers, is an essential product of modern France, in spite of his cosmopolitan culture. He is representative of the Freethought tradition in French literature. His forerunners are Rabelais, Moliere, and Voltaire; his immediate predecessor is Ernest Renan. And, like Renan, his books are full of a splendid irony. The note of irony is never overdone. "Do not forget to put some vinegar on your salad," said Count Mouravieff, when cautioning a writer against excessive panegyric. "Never forget to put some sugar in your vinegar" is a maxim of which M. France stands in no need of reminder. No juster or more significant characterisation of this writer can be made than that he is a penetrating and acute critic of contemporary civilisation. He is typical of this century, with its intellectual scepticism, its profound social and religious unrest. The relentless thinking, the large perception of humor, which stamp Anatole France are interpenetrated with the ironic consciousness of the twentieth century. In the limning of character, the mordant strokes of a Gerome, shaded by the light pencil of a Caran D'Ache, pronounce him to be a realist of a satiric portraiture. If he is a *Voltaire de nos jours*, it is a Voltaire into whom has passed the geniality of a Renan. It is a mellowed and transformed Voltaire, with the physique of a Falstaff, looking upon a madder and a merrier world with the same laughing eyes that we know so well.

Anatole France was born in a bookseller's shop, and during the most impressionable years of his life was surrounded by old folios, illuminated manu-

scripts, and artistic missals. He drew in at every pore the lore of literature, and splendid use he made of his intimate knowledge. To-day he is the greatest living writer of French, a magnificent scholar, a student of the byeways of knowledge, psychologist, publicist, humorist, and wit. When, by a natural fitness of things, he became librarian at the Senate, the environment was suitable for changing the young bookworm into a delightful writer. M. France was never a hustler. He was near forty years of age when his first notable work in fiction, *Le Creme de Sylvestre Bonnard*, was published. This was a triumph indeed. It was crowned by the Academy, and M. France had taken the tide at the flood which was to lead him on to fortune. In 1889, he issued his incomparable collection of stories, *L'Etui de Nacre*, a book which filled his rivals' breasts with joy for its workmanship and despair at their own ineptitude. Masterpiece then followed masterpiece until to-day we are all reading M. France's latest work, *La Vie de Jeanne d'Arc*. He has all Thackeray's love for digression, but, unlike the great English author, he does not look on life from a club window. This amiable weakness gives a panoramic quality to his novels. He will even put charming little essays into the mouth of a character at a dinner party. There is a conversational essay on Napoleon, delivered by one of M. France's puppets, which makes one cry for more. And there are other interludes dealing with Architecture, Paganism, and Christianity, the ferment of the great Revolution, which are pages of unadulterated delight.

M. France is not only a great and distinguished writer with a European reputation; he is also a brave soldier in the Army of Liberty. When Zola's call to arms, which heralded the Dreyfus struggle, rang through Europe, Anatole France was one of the earliest to respond, and to fling himself with his good sword into the midst of the fray. This, after all, is the thing that matters. To us Freethinkers, M. France does not appeal primarily as a brilliant writer. His fundamental claim to our attention consists in his noble effort towards the destruction of false ideals and of the illusions that beset the mind of man.

M.

Crucify Him.

IT is an almost universally admitted fact that through the long line of human history every reformer has been met with the cry given in the caption of this article.

"Crucify him."

This has been the answer of orthodoxy to all who have dared to oppose it, even as the Scribes and Pharisees of Palestine are said to have urged it against the Jewish Carpenter. Assuming, for the mere sake of argument, that the events related in the four Gospels are true as far as they concern the life of its central figure, it will be conceded that the preservers of the ancient Jewish faith, unwilling to admit of any change therein or departure therefrom, fearful of the march of human progress, actually connived at the death of the Jewish reformer and were loudest in their cries of "crucify him." Modern clergymen are splendid imitators of that ancient priesthood, for with every suggested change in the existing order of things they cry out in alarm and insist that the authorities shall immediately crucify the one who suggests or instigates it.

Let it be said of a man that he is an infidel; that he is not prepared to swallow every draught prescribed for him by the preachers; that he does not accept as true all that is found between the lids of the orthodox Bible, and the Church ministry, instead of trying to convince him by kindly arguments that he might be in error, at once begin a bitter war of denunciation and misrepresentation. They open the sluice-gates of their vindictive and malicious hatred and deluge that man with a torrent of Christian calumny. The infidel may be honest, sincere,

brave, and charitable, but he commits crime, in the eyes of the clergy, the moment he denies or questions their authority, and with them it is made the one sin of all sins, more offensive than the one spoken of as being against the Holy Ghost. His fault, if fault it be, lies in the fact that he has called in question the legitimacy of the preacher's business, and he may expect no mercy, not even simple justice, at their hands.

Religion may be capable of many things, but it never made a truly pious man liberal in views and charitable in sentiment. The more piety the harder the heart.

The same thing is equally true in politics. The plutocrat dreads the reformer and the reformer must struggle under the most adverse circumstances created through and by the plutocrat. Once let a man depart from the political shibboleths of the day and set or run with a new party and the adherents of the old faith immediately seek to "crucify him" upon the altar of political iniquity. Whether in politics or religion the feeling is the same, and the man who embarks upon the self-appointed mission to bring about or induce a change, realises before he makes the start that he has got to face the monster of custom and stand-still advocates. If an infidel aspires to public office the place hunters will strive to crucify him with the cry of "anti-Christ" or "infidel." If he starts up in business they will try to work a systematic boycott upon him by bushwhacking. If he prints a book or paper the public is warned not to read it, lest, perhaps, they happen to learn something.

Crucify him.

It is the only argument of faith against fact. It is the only weapon in the hands of fools who are unable to combat successfully against the growing intelligence of the people.

Crucify him.

The end and the triumph of all Christian argument.—*Blue Grass Blade* (Lexington, Kentucky).

The Work Must Go On.

THERE are men who go ahead of their time without pausing to think whether they are ahead or behind.

There are others who get ahead of their time consciously and sit down to rest under the delusion that the whole world has arrived.

Thomas Paine was one of the first kind. More than one hundred years ago he uttered truths which only the few are acknowledging to-day.

And the second kind, because they agree with Paine, and observe that a small number keep them company, are saying that it is no longer necessary to circulate what Paine wrote; that the day of polemical criticism of the Bible and the Christian faith is past; that in the present enlightened era everybody accepts Paine's conclusions as correct, and that the destructive critics may now turn their attention to something else.

These are the most dangerous advisers that Free-thinkers can consult.

If they think that orthodoxy is dead, let them try to get an expression to that effect from any of the leaders of public opinion. Passing by the ministers, let them apply to the editors of their favorite newspapers for a public verification of the statement that the old faith is no longer held. Then question the President of the Republic, the vice-president, the senators, the representatives, national and State, or even the candidates for these offices. Inquire whether they believe in the Bible, in the creation story, in the divinity of Jesus, in the miracles.

The result would be disappointing to the optimists who have taken so much for granted. They would not find one in a hundred who would even admit his disbelief that the narrative of Adam and Eve is historical. The most of them would declare that they still find both religious and historical truth in

the story of Jonah and the whale. Any of them could be got to deliver an orthodox discourse before a Young Men's Christian Association, and to declare that the Scriptures are the depository of all truth worth having, and that the Church holds the key by divine appointment.

As a matter of fact, modern thought has not touched the mass of the people or the men from whom they take their opinions. Unbelief is not recognised at all except for the purpose of repudiating it. The trust of the unreflecting millions in the Bible is implicit. They do not know what it says, but they believe it.

There are to-day all the possibilities for a religious crusade, for the persecution of unbelievers, that have existed at any time in history. The masses are uninformed and bigoted, the leaders hypocritical and self-seeking. This is not an age of Rationalism. It is an age of credulity, and credulity is always intolerant. People believe in fakes and frauds because their minds are infirm, and they resent investigation and criticism as a cripple resents having attention called to his deformity. We have the facts, but we have not the ear of the multitude. With their added knowledge, with their advanced position, Freethinkers have as much work to do now as they ever had, and as their knowledge broadens they are not likely to be out of employment for centuries to come.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

Huxley has told us that, when he was young, geologists and biologists could not follow to the end any path of inquiry without finding the way blocked by Noah's Ark or by the first chapter of Genesis. It was, then, a serious matter for a man to be suspected of doubting the literal truth of the talking snake in the fabled Garden of Eden. At the present time it is difficult to persuade scientists to worry themselves in any way with Adam and his "rib," or Noah and his floating menagerie. They look at you with a smile, and say they have more important matters to attend to than the legends of the ancient Hebrews. One consequence among many of this unquestioning belief in Genesis is worth remembering. Sir James Simpson, with whose name the use of chloroform will always be associated, had an enormous amount of prejudice to overcome before women in childbirth were allowed the use of anaesthetics. The clergy, whose intelligence never permits them intelligently to follow the course of science, alleged that medical men had no right to interfere with a curse laid by our "Heavenly Father" upon all women because of the trivial disobedience of "our general mother" in Eden. The legend of Adam and Eve has been productive of enormous evil. But the western mind is gradually freeing itself from the trammels of Hebrew Old Clothes. Adam and his "rib" wife, the talking snake, and the Jehovah of the Jews, are at last being driven out from the Garden of Eden, not by a fabled angel with a flaming sword, but by Charles Darwin, with that far more potent weapon, a steel pen. The clergy and their dupes alone fail to recognise this—

"In religion,
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it, and approve it with a text."

M.

DESIGN.

Is it possible to see "design" in the fact that every animal lives upon some other—that every drop of every sea is a battlefield where the strong drown the weak? Over the precipice of cruelty rolls a perpetual Niagara of blood. Is there "design" in this? Why should a good God people a world with men capable of burning their fellow-men—and capable of burning the greatest and best? Why does a good God permit these things? It is said of Christ that he was infinitely kind and generous, infinitely merciful, because when on earth he cured the sick, the lame and blind. Has he not as much power now as he had then? If he was and is the God of all worlds, why does he not now give back to the widow her son? Why does he withhold light from the eyes of the blind? And why does one who had the power miraculously to feed thousands, allow millions to die for want of food? Did Christ only have pity when he was part human? Are we indebted for his kindness to the flesh that clothed his spirit? Where is he now? Where has he been through all the centuries of slavery and crime?—*Ingersoll*.

The World of Books.

The August number of the *Positivist Review* opens with an excellent article on "Comte and Carlyle," by the late Dr. J. H. Bridges. Mr. Frederick Ryan, whose name will be familiar to some of our older readers, contributes an interesting article on "Michael Davitt." He has great admiration for Davitt, both as a man and as an Irish patriot, but he regrets that Davitt did not think out the religious problem, though "there are reasons for believing that had he lived he would have ended in a vague humanitarian theism," and "Michael Davitt could not play the bigot either in religion or in anything else." Mr. S. H. Swinny, the editor, writes very suggestively on "Government, Parliament, and Country." His strong observations on the Nonconformists and the Education Bills, for which the present Government is becoming quite famous, are reproduced in another part of this week's *Freethinker*. Mr. Frederic Harrison reviews Mr. Bonn's *Modern England*. The Editorial Paragraphs contain some sensible criticism of that extraordinary measure the Daylight Saving Bill.

* * *

Spirit, Matter, and Morals is the title of a little volume by R. Dimsdale Stocker, published by A. Owen & Co. (1s.). It comprises three essays on "Spiritualism and Ethics," "Materialism and Ethics," and "Rational Ethicism." The first essay criticises the pretensions of Spiritualism, and dismisses them as ridiculous. The messages which mediums believe or pretend that they receive from dead people in the "spirit world" are declared to be of no value whatever. "When," the author asks, "has Spiritualism been the means of enlightening mankind upon any problem of serious moment? or when has it contributed to any important scientific discovery?" It seems pretty certain that Mr. Stocker does not himself believe in a future life, but he does not say so explicitly. He does, however, deny its necessity in the sphere of ethics. "To be on the side of virtue," he says, "to have cast in one's lot with righteousness and truth, duty and courage, this it is to have tasted immortality whilst yet in the flesh." No doubt this is perfectly true, in a certain meaning of the words; but it is useless to expect that believers in the orthodox doctrine of conscious personal life beyond the grave will be caught by such ambiguous expressions. Living one's self after death, and living indirectly through one's posterity or one's species, may both be called "immortality," but obviously they have nothing in common except the mere abstract idea of continuance.

* * *

In the second essay Mr. Stocker appears to accept the philosophy of Tyndall's famous Belfast address. He emphasises the great scientist's question, "Divorced from matter, where is life?" He alleges that the two antithetical terms "matter" and "spirit" have "proved the most prolific source of confusion and superstition." He advises everybody to read Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, that "most masterly exposition of scientific monism." Yet he proceeds to affirm that "Neither God, creation, nor immortality need receive rejection at our hands." Our readers will not be surprised, after this, to hear that Mr. Stocker is an "ethical religionist." In the third essay he protests against the "erroneous impression which appears to have obtained currency among the more unthinking" that Ethicism is "nothing but a diluted species of free-thought—a kind of attempt to establish secularism upon a respectable footing, with a view to consulting the susceptibilities of those whose concessions to good taste have forbidden them from following in the footsteps of the late Charles Bradlaugh and Mr. Foote." This rather clumsy sentence, which suggests more perhaps than Mr. Stocker really meant to convey, is one that we shall not quarrel with; for classing us with Charles Bradlaugh is an honor that overbalances the implied censure. Mr. Stocker pays the inevitable penalty of this kind of thing. He goes on to talk of Freethinkers (Rationalists, he calls them) as too often posing before the world as "individuals of the Gradgrind type, from whom every vestige of emotion and imagination have departed." Mr. Stocker must know this to be untrue if he has read (say) the *Freethinker* or listened to leading Freethought lecturers. The fact is, we take it, that he strikes the common Ethicist attitude of carrying favor with the orthodox by affecting to despise pronounced Freethinkers; and in doing this he is bound to misrepresent them. For they are really not despised by Ethicists; they are rather envied. Nothing could be more absurd than to call men who forego all the world's prizes for the sake of principle "Gradgrinds," unimaginative, and unemotional. Of course there is emotion—and emotion; imagination—and imagination. Sentimentalists too often flatter themselves that they are the people of emotion and imagination. But they are not. They shrink into their

natural nothingness when a big, strong, sincere man stands forth to meet a great situation. Bradlaugh, for instance, told the House of Commons when he addressed them at the bar—"My constituents may dismiss me, but you never shall. The grave alone shall make me yield." Few words, but high, noble, and pregnant; the words of a great potent nature, dilating in the storm and absolute master of all its resources in the midst of danger. Unimaginative and unemotional, forsooth! Why, there is more true imagination and emotion in those sixteen words of Bradlaugh's than in all the lectures and all the essays of all the Ethicists on earth. Shakespeare himself might have thrilled to hear them.

* * *

Mr. Stocker does not quite recover himself. He is unsatisfactory through all the rest of that third essay. He concludes with a sentence which is Theistic or nothing. Yet at bottom we feel that he is *not* a Theist. We therefore close with this suggestion. Let him purge his little book of foolish and insincere reflections on Freethinkers (or Rationalists), let him address his readers frankly instead of beating about the bush, and thus render it really worth perusing. For he has evidently read and thought, and his sentences on the rôle of "death" in the drama of superstition (in his first essay) show that he might easily reach and keep to the root of the whole matter.

Correspondence.

HELPING THE "FREETHINKER."

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have the pleasure of informing you that Messrs. Wyman & Sons have decided to make the *Freethinker* a free paper—i.e., on sale or return; and in a week or two, when the present stock of order-sheets are used up, the asterisk * (non-returnable mark) will be taken off the weekly order-sheets.

As Messrs. Wyman & Sons control all the bookstalls of the Great Western Railway, the London and North-Western, and North London, Baker-street, and Waterloo Railways, besides the thousands of newsagents they supply all over the country, it is easy to see what a far-reaching result this will have upon our circulation if the members of our party will now make a united effort.

I trust, therefore, that every reader of the *Freethinker* will—1st, order an extra copy weekly (I have doubled my order); 2nd, order, if possible, through Wyman & Sons, at the bookstalls or the agents they supply; 3rd, where out of reach of Wyman & Sons, urge the newsagents to take the matter up with their wholesalers—say W. H. Smith & Sons, Horace Marshall & Sons, etc.; tell them plainly if they won't supply it on free sale Wyman's will, and that unless they do it Wyman's will have all their orders for everything; 4th, let me urge it upon all our members to give, not only the *Freethinker* order to Wyman's, but all the trade they can, and so encourage Messrs. Wyman for the lead they have given.

A thoroughly united effort now will completely break the barrier, and the trade boycott will be a thing of the past. To use a well-known phrase, "The flowing tide is with us." Let us see to it that we make it flow on to a full and high tide.

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"SIN" AND SENSE.

The Aryan nature as we have noted it in India and in Greece is not easily made to think darkly about sin. The emphasis which Christianity has given to this so-called "fundamental" is being gradually thrown from us. We are not becoming less moral, but simply asserting in higher terms the old Aryan healthymindedness which looks upon prudery and emphasis of the failings of human nature as much a sin as that which it condemns. The fact is that those who have never been in bondage to the sin notions of Medievalism have for many years "laughed at a fall" in order to "get up and begin again." And when we think of the thousands who are kept in the bondage of old bygone forms and beliefs in our churches, when we remember that the great stay of orthodoxy is its unnatural view of sin, we must long more than ever for the day when the rising world shall realise that the things we leave behind us are not to be cursed, but kept in their place. Sin is a return to the first steps of the ladder, and it should be the aim of all the teachers of men to direct the attention of their fellows to the rungs above far more than to the steps below.—E. A. Rumball, "Open Court," July.

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, F. A. Davies; 6.15, Freethought Demonstration—Speakers: Messrs. Foote, Cohen, Davies, and others.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, W. J. Ramsey. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, W. J. Ramsey, "Charles Bradlaugh as I Knew Him."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, F. Vickers, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, R. Rosetti, "The Pagan Origin of Christianity."

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, Discussion Class.

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN: Mr. McClellan, a Lecture.

BOSTON: Bargate Green (near the Cannons), 2.30, Joseph Bates, "Death!"

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

LEEDS: Town Hall Square, Friday, August 7, at 7.30, Auberon H. Fisher, "Science and the Bible."

WIGAN: Market Steps, Wednesday, August 12, Mr. McClellan, a Lecture.

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

LIVERPOOL (corner of Shiel-road and Boaler-street): Sunday, August 9, at 3, "Woman Cursed by Christianity"; 7, "Christism and Slavery."

BOLTON: Monday, August 10, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Woman and Christianity."

LEIGH: Tuesday, August 11, at 7.30, Preliminary Visit.

ROCHDALE: Wednesday, August 12, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Christism the Curse of Woman." Thursday, August 13, at 7.30, "How Christianity Didn't Free the Slaves."

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