

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXVIII.—No. 38

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 1908

PRICE TWOPENCE

*They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee?
Better men fared thus before thee;
Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.*

*Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall!*

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

God's Day.

THE origin of a periodical day of rest from labor is simple and natural. It has everywhere been placed under the sanction of religion, but it arose from secular necessity. In the nomadic state, when men had little to do at ordinary times except watching their flocks and herds, the days passed in monotonous succession. Life was never laborious, and as human energies were not taxed there was no need for a period of recuperation. We may therefore rest assured that no Sabbatarian law was ever given by Moses to the Jews in the wilderness. Such a law first appears in a higher stage of civilisation. When nomadic tribes settle down to agriculture and are welded into nations, chiefly by defensive war against predatory barbarians; above all, when slavery is introduced and masses of men are compelled to build and manufacture; the ruling and propertied classes soon perceive that a day of rest is absolutely requisite. Without it the laborer wears out too rapidly—like the horse, the ox, or any other beast of burden. The day is therefore decreed for economic reasons. It is only placed under the sanction of religion because, in a certain stage of human development, there is no other sanction available. Every change in social organisation has then to be enforced as an edict of the gods. This is carried out by the priests, who have unquestioned authority over the multitude, and who, so long as their own privileges and emoluments are secured, are always ready to guard the interest of the temporal powers.

Such was the origin of the day of rest in Egypt, Assyria, and elsewhere; but it was lost sight of in the course of time, even by the ruling classes themselves; and the theological fiction of a divine ordinance became the universally accepted explanation. This fiction is still current in Christendom. We are gravely asked to believe that men would work themselves to death, and civilised nations commit economical suicide, if they were not taught that a day of rest was commanded by Jehovah amidst the lightnings and thunders of Sinai. In the same way, we are asked to believe that theft and murder would be popular pastimes without the restraints of the supernatural decalogue fabled to have been received by Moses. As a matter of fact, the law against theft arose because men object to be robbed, and the law against murder because they object to be assassinated. Superstition does not invent social laws; it merely throws around them the glamor of a supernatural authority.

Priests have a manifest interest in maintaining this glamor. Accordingly we find that Nonconformists as well as Churchmen claim the day of rest

as the Lord's Day—although its very name of Sunday betrays its Pagan origin. It is not merely a day of rest, they tell us; it is also a day of devotion. Labor is to be laid aside in order that the people may worship God. The physical benefit of the institution is not denied; on the contrary, now that Democracy is decisively triumphing, the people are assured that Sunday can only be maintained under a religious sanction. In other words, religion and priests are as indispensable as ever to the welfare of mankind.

This theological fiction should be peremptorily dismissed. Whatever service it once rendered has been counterbalanced by its mischiefs. The rude laborer of former times—the slave or the serf—only wanted rest from toil. He had no conception of anything higher. But circumstances have changed. The laborer of to-day aspires to share in the highest blessings of civilisation. His hours of daily work are shortened. The rest he requires he can obtain in bed. What he needs on Sunday is not *rest*, but *change*; true re-creation of his nature; and this is denied him by the laws that are based upon the very theological fiction which is pretended to be his most faithful friend.

The working classes at present are simply humbugged by the Churches. The day of rest is secure enough without lies or fictions. What the masses want is an opportunity to make use of it. Now this cannot be done if all rest on the same day. A minority must work on Sunday, and take their rest on some other day of the week. And really, when the nonsensical solemnity of Sunday is gone, any other day would be equally eligible.

Parsons work on Sunday; so do their servants, and all who are engaged about their gospel-shops. Why should it be so hard then for a railway servant, a museum attendant, an art-gallery curator, or a librarian to work on Sunday? Let them rest some other day of the week as the parson does. They would be happy if they could have his "off days" even at the price of "Sunday labor."

Churches and chapels do not attract so many people as they did. There is every reason why priestly Protective laws should be broken down. It is a poor alternative to offer a working man—the church or the public-house; and they are now trying to shut the public-house and make it church or nothing. Other people should be consulted as well as mystery-men and their followers. Let us have freedom. Let the dwellers in crowded city streets, who work all day in close factories, be taken at cheap rates to the country or the seaside. Let them see the grand sweep of the sky. Let them feel the spring of the turf under their feet. Let them look out over the sea—the highway between continents—and take something of its power and poetry into their blood and brain. During the winter, or in summer if they feel inclined, let them visit the institutions of culture, behold the beautiful works of dead artists, study the relics of dead generations, feel the links that bind the past to the present, and imagine the links that will bind the present to the future. Let their pulses be stirred with noble music. Let the Sunday be their great day of freedom, culture, and humanity. As "God's Day" it is wasted. We must rescue it from the priests and make it "Man's Day."

G. W. FOOTE.

Love and Home.

"On Sunday last, while three lonely working-women were at tea together, one of them spoke of these words in Psalm lxxviii. 6: 'God setteth the solitary in families,' wondering much as to their real meaning. There are so many lonely ones that one feels puzzled coming to a passage like that."

SUCH is the problem discussed in "The Correspondence of the Rev. David Smith, D.D.," in the *British Weekly* for August 6. The solution Dr. Smith offers is the evasive, illusory one with which we are all familiar. Admitting the existence of "the multitude of lonely souls that yearn for the tender endearments of home, and are doomed to solitude all their days," he says:—

"There is here one of the strongest arguments for Immortality.....I cannot believe that the Creator of this wondrous Universe is capable of such cruel mockery as to implant in our breasts those sacred instincts and passionate yearnings, and never suffer them to attain satisfaction. This life is not all; it is only the beginning; and all that we have dreamed of and thirsted after we shall inherit in unimagined fullness and sweetness, when we reach that undiscovered country, the home of our immortal spirits."

Of course, when believers in God are confronted with the privations and sufferings and sorrows of the present life, they are bound to seek shelter somewhere; and, after long experience of argumentative discomfiture and bewilderment, they have found what they regard as an impregnable position behind the dogma of a future life. In reality, this is the refuge of despair, and a virtual confession of defeat. The world to come was invented only when the theodiscists could no longer find a resting-place for the soles of their feet in the one that now is.

However, it is not with this purely imaginative solution of the problem presented that we propose to deal in the present article, but with the wholly irrelevant and unpardonable insult to Paganism in which Dr. Smith savagely indulges before touching the problem at all. He begins by stating that in Greek and Latin there is no word for "home," and that "the reason why the word is lacking is that the thing had no existence." It is love, he says, that makes a home, "and the house where love dwells is a home, be it a palace or a hut. And love is perhaps the only art which the ancient world, so wise and brilliant, never knew." Then follow these words:—

"This is a heavy indictment, but everyone who is acquainted with ancient literature will admit the justice of it. Take a single example: As soon as a child was born, it was brought and laid at its father's feet. If he 'took it up' (*sustulit, suscepit*), it was reared as his child. But he need not 'take it up' unless he chose. If it was weakly or deformed, or if he shrank from the trouble and expense of rearing it, or had already as many children as he wished, and objected to further subdivision of the inheritance, he let it lie; and then it was 'exposed'—i.e., thrown out to die on a mountain-side or some other desolate place, like the infant *Œdipus* on Mount Cithæron. If it were a female child, it might be destroyed out of hand like a superfluous puppy or kitten. St. Paul was only stating an actual fact without exaggeration when, in his terrific indictment of the heathen world, he said it was 'without natural affection' (*Romans i. 31*)."

The indictment is indeed extremely heavy, but is it supported by facts? Dr. Smith only echoes Paul; but was Paul right? Was the heathen world "without natural affection"? Was there no "home" in Greece and Rome prior to the advent of Christianity? Was love an unknown quantity in the ancient civilisations? Without a moment's hesitation we declare that a world "without natural affection" would be an impossible one, and that, consequently, it has never existed. Paul was guilty of the grossest exaggeration, as was also Petronius, as quoted by Alford in his commentary on Paul. Paul's expression is as unjustifiable as this by Petronius: "In this city no one brings up children, because a man who has heirs of his own is not invited as a guest at feasts or at spectacles." To see the absurdity of such a satire we need only remember that the population of Rome at that time was probably

between 1,200,000 and 1,500,000. As a matter of fact, as Mommsen says, "a house of his own and the blessing of children appeared to the Roman citizen as the end and essence of life." We read further that though in law the wife was the property of her husband, she "held a position of honor and influence higher than that of the Greek wife—at least, in historic times." Will Dr. Smith venture to tell us that such a wife had no love for her husband and her children, or that the husband was devoid of affection both for her and their offspring? Whatever Dr. Smith may say, history assures us that the home, both in Greece and Rome, was the root and centre of the national life. History talks eloquently to us about an ancient family of the name of Gracchus, the various members of which possessed a remarkably sweet and lovable nature. Has Dr. Smith the hardihood to maintain that Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus, and his wife Cornelia, were "without natural affection," or that their illustrious sons, who lived and died in the service of truth, justice, and humanity, were strangers to love? Cornelia gloried in her children, and pointed to them as her most precious jewels.

Far be it from us even to suggest that the Pagan world was free from inhumanity and cruelty, or that all its inhabitants were shining exemplifications of the moral ideal. There was doubtless much crime and immorality and injustice and barbarity in all directions, but is our modern Christendom entirely innocent in such respects? When you compare modern London with ancient Rome, do you find a heavy balance in favor of the former? Dr. Smith refers us to the infanticide that prevailed to such an alarming extent in olden times. He paints a lurid picture of a father "taking up," destroying, or deserting his new-born children just as he felt inclined; but the picture, as drawn, is monstrously false. What he seeks to prove is, that those Greek and Roman parents did not love their children; but the truth is that infanticide was generally resorted to through excess of parental affection rather than from the lack of it. Pliny the elder defends the practice as a necessary check on population, and Longus and Terence show us most clearly how it justified itself in the eye of the civilised conscience. Our only point at present, however, is that infanticide did not prove that heathen homes were "without natural affection," any more than Jephtha's sacrifice of his daughter was an evidence that he did not love her. All these customs must be judged in the light of the beliefs generally held in the periods during which they prevailed. Were we to take the story of Abraham's willingness to shed Isaac's blood on the altar as true, we would infer, not that he did not love his son, but that he loved his duty to God more.

This becomes clearer still in the light of *Œdipus* on Mount Cithæron. Why did Laius so cruelly expose his infant son? Because he did not experience parental affection for him? By no means; but because an oracle had told him that he was destined to perish by the hands of this very child. A shepherd found the deserted one with his two feet tied tightly together, and called him *Œdipus* because his feet were so swollen. Then *Œdipus* was taken to the palace of King Polybus of Corinth, who adopted and brought him up as his own son. After many years, the young man consulted the Delphic oracle, and was told that he would slay his father and commit incest with his mother. In the belief that Polybus was his father, and from genuine affection for him, he did not return to Corinth; but on the road to Daulis, fate brought him face to face with Laius, whom he killed in a fight. Then he met the Sphinx who proposed her fatal riddle. *Œdipus* read it like an open book, and became King of Thebes, and in ignorance married his mother, by whom he had two sons and two daughters. Dreadful calamities followed. Thebes was devastated by a plague. On consulting the oracle, it became evident that the murderer of Laius had to be expelled forthwith. As soon as *Œdipus* discovered that he was the guilty

man, he put out his own eyes, and Jocasta, his mother and his wife, hanged herself. It was the tyranny of superstition, not the absence of "natural affection," that caused Laius to expose his infant son on Mount Cithæron, and it was through ignorance, not lack of love, that Œdipus slew his father and mounted his throne.

Let us trace the tragic story one step further. Dr. Smith will have his readers believe there was no parental and filial love in the heathen world. Look at Œdipus once more, expelled from his throne, exiled from his royal city, and doomed to a life of sad and weary wanderings in his self-inflicted blindness. If Dr. Smith is telling the truth, Œdipus went out alone, unpitied, unloved, and unwept; but Dr. Smith turns out to be a false witness, for Œdipus left Thebes accompanied by his daughter Antigone; and later he was overtaken by his other daughter, Ismene. And here is a touching little scene from Sophocles:—

"Ismene. Father—and sister! the two names to me
That are most dear! How hardly have I found
you,
And hardly can regard you now for grief!
Œdipus. O child, are you come hither?
Ismene. O my father,
Hapless to look on!
Œdipus. Are you here, my child?
Ismene. After much trouble, yes.
Œdipus. Touch me, my girl.
Ismene. I touch you, both of you.
Œdipus. Offspring of mine—
Sisters—
Ismene. Alas, what miseries—
Œdipus. Hers and mine?
Ismene. Yes, and my own, wretch that I am!
Œdipus. My child,
Why did you come?
Ismene. Father, in care for you.
Œdipus. You wanted me?
Ismene. Yes, and to bring you news
In person."

When at last the blind old man ceased to be, how passionately his two daughters mourned his loss. They were beside themselves with grief. "Back let us haste, dear sister," cried Antigone. "What to do?" inquired Ismene. "A longing is upon me," answered Antigone. "What?" demanded Ismene. "To view the earth-bound home." "Of whom?" "Our father—woe is me!"

Enough has now been said to show conclusively that Dr. Smith's endeavor to magnify Christianity at the cost of condemning Paganism has miserably failed. His assertion stands completely discredited. Whatever the heathen world lacked, it could boast of many beautiful and loving homes, and of multitudes of true-hearted men and women who gladly acknowledged reason as their king and love as their queen.

J. T. LLOYD.

Intolerance.

To meditate on human weakness and frailty has always been a favorite occupation with Christians. Unfortunately, the weakness that has formed the subject of their meditations has been that of other Christians. True, their own participation in the common failings of human nature has been admitted, but this has been a perfunctory admission, having no more real significance than the calling of oneself the prince of sinners. Any indication that a bystander really believed the description to be accurate would be resented as an insult. No, it is the faults of other Christians that are thought of, not their own. And if there is one thing in which a Christian delights it is to see other Christians pilloried for their faults. The glee with which Catholics and Protestants, Episcopalians and Nonconformists, detail each other's blemishes, or welcome an exposure of the other one's weakness, is surprising to anyone who does not appreciate the psychology of the average Christian character. To these the pietistic expressions of sorrow at a "dear brother's" lapse is

readily recognised as being only a cloak for the effusion of a nature warped by religious training.

The other day the *Daily Graphic* referred to the fact that in Nonconformist circles "the rank-and-file cannot listen with patience to men who have the courage to disagree with them." A religious weekly—Nonconformist in character, but at present suffering itself from this intolerance—quotes the deliverance of the *Daily Graphic* with approval, although there is no evidence that its own supporters are fundamentally more tolerant than are the orthodox Nonconformists. Still, it gives a chance of belaboring other Christians, and this is enough. I, of course, do not dissent from the opinion above expressed. Indeed, I have pointed out on many occasions that Nonconformists, while loud in their expressions of liberality, possess, on the whole, a narrower type of mind than either Churchmen or Catholics—in this country, at least. But I do not see why the inability to listen to hostile opinions should be taken as a special characteristic of Nonconformists. So far as one can see it is a characteristic of all varieties of Christians. One may as well be just while one can, and there is neither sense nor justice in making the Nonconformist bear the blame for what is a common Christian characteristic.

It may be true enough that intolerance is a common human failing. People are intolerant of hostile opinions in politics, in literature, even in science, but in none of these directions is intolerance encouraged. And the majority of people are not, in these matters, offensively intolerant. Personally, I have never yet met an audience of Christians that could listen patiently to hostile opinions; and, even though I could have faced every audience of Christians that ever assembled, from the first century to the twentieth, I should not expect any variation in this experience. All religion is more or less intolerant, and Christianity is rather more than less. And every Christian sect has expressed its intolerance in action to the exact degree of its opportunities. When Spurgeon said that his sect was the only one that had never persecuted, and this was because they had never had the opportunity, he was describing a fundamental characteristic of Christianity. All the talk about "irreverence," "ribaldry," "ridicule," even "indecent," are nothing more than excuses for the expression of that spirit of intolerance which religion keeps alive.

It is a curious thing, but religion is the one thing in connection with which intolerance is esteemed a virtue. The right to differ in politics, art, science, literature is generally conceded, and when intolerance is shown it is with a certain degree of shamefacedness. Not only is the right to differ granted, but a difference of opinion is recognised as a healthy sign. The very government of the country is based upon the possibility of people arriving at diametrically opposite conclusions, and their duty of expressing that difference in every legitimate manner. But, with religion, intolerance is proclaimed as a virtue. People express their resolve not to look at any view of things but their own, and their desire to suppress opinions with which they disagree, as though this were something to be proud of. In everything but religion refusal to examine all aspects of a subject would be recognised as due to a mixture of stupidity and pigheadedness. In religion it is glorified under the names of "sturdy faith," "unflinching belief," or "deep religious conviction." No doubt it sounds nicer to call pigheadedness by these terms, but they really mean the same thing.

This intolerance, be it noted, has been the one constant feature in the history of Christianity. Creeds have changed, dogmas have been discarded, beliefs cast on one side, but the intolerance of Christians has remained constant. The one thing that impressed the Romans when first brought into contact with Christians was their intolerance. Christians refused to eat at the same table with non-Christians, or to join in any of the amenities of social life in which they shared. They were not intolerant towards non-Christians only; they showed

the same intolerance towards each other. Difference of belief, so minute as to be almost indiscernible to modern eyes, served as the occasions for wholesale rioting in the public streets. Intolerance in religion, practically unknown in the old Roman world, was established as a ruling principle by Christianity; persecution became universal—the only question being who should be persecutor and who the persecuted. The best god for a man to have, said the Romans, is the god of his own country; and their Pantheon offered the same hospitality to other gods that the State offered to a foreign ambassador. The only god that a man may have, said the Christian, is my god; and every other was suppressed as a State suppresses an armed invader.

Thanks to Christian influence, this principle has taken so firm a hold on the human mind that men cannot now discuss differences in religion as they discuss differences in other directions. Disagree with your fellow on any other subject but religion, he will regret the difference, but part with unimpaired friendship. Disagree with him on religion, and all that is objectionable in his nature rises to the surface. He will asperse your character, question your motives, ruin you in business, drive you out of public life, imprison you if he can, boycott you if he can't; or, if it is quite impossible to punish you in this world, defer your punishment till the next, when he piously hopes it will have increased a hundredfold. And he will act thus, not in any consciously vengeful spirit, but feeling all the time that he is carrying out the dictates of the loftiest morality. In other matters there is at least a chance that a man may stand face to face with his worst passions, and that their repulsiveness may effect a cure. In religion they are obscured, cloaked by a training that is older than any living individual, hidden under plausible motives, acting like a traitor's stab delivered under the shelter of a flag of truce.

The facts are plain; it is a pretty problem for the religious man to answer why they should be so. Why should it be impossible to discuss differences in religion in the same spirit that other differences are discussed? An easy reply from the religious quarter is that religion is concerned with matters of such vital importance that we cannot bear to have them questioned. The reply is easy, but fallacious. One might retort by denying that religious questions are of first-rate importance. All the real business of life may, and does, go on as well in the absence of religious beliefs as in their presence. The real reason is that religion belongs to the more primitive part of our nature, and any attack on it rouses into activity the associated primitive feelings. In each of us there is the savage, held in check by more civilised habits and feelings. In the case of warfare we see how readily the bonds of civilisation snap, and how the primitive man stands forward naked and unashamed. So it is with religion. It has no real connection with civilised forms of thought, nor with those frames of mind that are the product of civilisation. The result is that when one attacks religion one is really fighting the latent savage that is in all of us. We are attacking an uncivilised and an uncivilisable thing, and the method of the defence is a true delineation of its character.

Among primitive peoples religion is not discussed; it is accepted. The gods are not believed in because reason demonstrates their existence; they are facts of the primitive environment, and facts too ugly and too dangerous to be made the subject of discussion. Men may discuss the justice of a chief's decision, the wisdom of certain courses of conduct, but they fear to question the doings of these mysterious powers who punish in secret, and against whom there is no appeal and no protection. All the early religions have this characteristic—they fear discussion because of the dangers it involves. Later, the danger of discussion is also realised, but from a different direction. It is not that the gods will punish because of the discussion, but because people may be led to disbelieve as a consequence. There is nothing sacred to discussion, and there is nothing

safe against its influence—save truth. To set up a thing for discussion admits the possibility of error, and the religion that admits this is doomed. It must claim certainty in a sphere in which certainty can never be attained. It must claim knowledge where knowledge is an impossibility. And to all such spurious claims and fraudulent pretensions discussion is the greatest of all correctives.

C. COHEN.

The Two Lords.

LORD BYRON and Lord Jesus—both Lords! Then, indeed, there must be something similar in their natures. Therefore, argues the subtle Mr. Cecil Chesterton, why should they not be both very good Christians? Similarly, no doubt, this worthy would argue: because Christi Minstrels have black faces and bang tamborines, therefore it is evident that Christ must have been a man of dark complexion, and probably was a skilled player on the Jews' harp.

We all know what it is like to bite on a stray stone in a slice of cherry cake, and so I think you all, my dearly beloved brethren, can, and must, sympathise with Mr. C. C., when, on Sunday morning last—or whatever day it is he sets aside for serious reading—whilst devouring the *Freethinker*, he bit upon Mr. Foote's lump of granite. The stray cherry-pip has often broken a tooth, so I cannot help feeling the above-mentioned rock must have completely broken Mr. C. C.'s Byronic jaw!

Seldom have I seen such a truly Christian document as Mr. C. C.'s letter; it is as slippery as an eel; but this time it has been caught in spite of its slime, and properly stewed. In fact, so piquantly has it been cooked by Mr. Foote, that we have all relished it vastly; and though I fear my own dish will not be as savory, yet I trust I shall be excused giving the bones just one more boil.

It would be useless for me to quote further from Byron's letters and collected works, for this has already been done; but as I have in my possession a copy of two poems by Byron, which are not included in the complete edition, it may be of some interest to quote a few passages from them in order to help Mr. Chesterton prove his point.

The first is called "Don Leon," and for some time was supposed to have been destroyed by Thomas Moore when he burnt Lord Byron's private journal. It is a very outspoken piece of writing, not to say Rabelaisian; so far, this should prove that there may be something Christian about it. However, let us turn to it and see.

That Lord Byron adored priests we learn from the following:—

"Thou ermined judge, pull off that sable cap!
What! Cans't thou lie, and take thy morning nap?
Peep thro' the casement, see the gallows there:
Thy work hangs on it; could not mercy spare?
What had he done? Ask crippled Talleyrand,
Ask Beckford, Courtenay, all the motley band
Of priest and laymen, who have shared his guilt
(If guilt it be)....."

And—

"Could all the scourges canting priests invent
To prop their legendary lies, torment
My soul in death or rack my body here,
My voice I'd raise insensible to fear.

No parson of the quorum feels a blush
To claim the honors of the stinking brush:
Whilst at the scent unkenelled curs give tongue,
Until the poor misogynist is hung.

And base smell funguses insult his ghost
With sainted columns in the *Morning Post*."

That he was a firm supporter of the Christian faith is beyond doubt:—

"Who has not seen how Mother Church can press
Each vain tradition to her purposes,
And from the cradle to the grave supply
Proofs sacred of infallibility?
Would you be damned? a text conveys her curse;
Or rise again? you have it in a verse.

Her rites as means of revenue are prized :
 For mammon's sake our infants are baptised.
 With golden offerings marriages are made ;
 Woe to the union where no fee is paid,
 Who weds or fornicates, no matter which,
 Children begets, and makes the altar rich ;
 But, where no offerings to the surplice fall,
 The taste forthwith is anti-physical.
 Hell-fire can hardly expiate the guilt
 Of that damned sin—the Church's rubric bilked."

The second poem is entitled "Leon to Annabella." Its discovery is so romantic, that, before quoting from it, I venture to relate it here:—

"About a mile from the *Porta all'argine*, at Pisa, there used to stand a small peasant's cottage which was visited by an English gentleman, who resided some time in the above-mentioned city, for the purpose of pistol practice. To save the trouble of carrying his ammunition backwards and forwards, he left an old trunk in the garret of the cottage containing pistol balls, etc., wrapped up in apparently useless pieces of paper. On the Englishman quitting the country, the trunk became the peasant's property. He took it for a clothes trunk, and lined the bottom of it with the paper the pistol balls had been wrapped in, excepting one sheet, which, one cold day, he cut in half and pasted over a broken pane of glass in the window of his cottage.

Not very long after, another Englishman was accidentally drawn into conversation with the peasant, and the weather being hot, he entered the cottage and, whilst seated there, noticed some verses in English pasted on the window. He asked how the paper had come there, upon which the peasant related his story. This led to his obtaining the other fragments at the bottom of the trunk. Thus the recovery of the poem."

Marriage is considered a God-blessed union by the Church. "Whom God hath joined let no man put asunder." Lord Byron strongly supports this view in "Leon and Annabella":—

"I saw the ring upon thy finger shine ;
 If that could make a wife, I saw thee mine.
 The surplice man his mockery had done,
 And Mother Church of two had made us one.

Some lisp'ing fool, with empty dictums big,
 Proud of his L.L.D. and periwig.
 His mind was not the crucible to try
 The deep arcana of love's alchemy,
 Whose highest flight of genius seems to be
 To settle squabbles on a belfrey key.
 Shall dots like him a husband's rights define?"

Poor Mr. Chesterton! It looked such a nice clean slice of Madeira, didn't it? And it turned out such a horrid lump of concrete! The pity of it! However, as a true Christian you have done your best to claim a man because he happens to be great, and, as usual, you have succeeded in pointing out that he really was a far greater Freethinker than any of us ever suspected.

J. F. C. F.

HAPPINESS.

My eyes are level with the grass,
 And up and down each slender steep
 I watch its tiny people pass.
 The sun has lulled me half asleep.

And all beneath my breath I sing.
 This joy of mine is sweet to hold.
 Such treasure had the miser king
 Whose touch could turn the earth to gold.

Deep in the sunny grass I lie,
 And breathe the garden-scents, wind-driven—
 So happy, that if I should die
 They could not comfort me with Heaven.

—Nora May French, in the "American Magazine."

If you and I—just you and I—
 Should laugh instead of worry ;
 If we should grow—just you and I—
 Kinder and sweeter hearted,
 Perhaps in some near by-and-by
 A good time might get started ;
 Then what a happy world 'twould be
 For you and me—for you and me!

—Longfellow.

Acid Drops.

What a fine old tune that was—and, to a certain extent, still is! Blessed be ye poor! Woe unto you rich! And the rich heard it, and got richer; and the poor heard it, and got poorer; and all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Certainly this fine old tune is not quite as much appreciated as it used to be, but the clergy go on playing it for what it is worth, and some of them show how much they have profited by it. Here are three cases from quite recent newspaper reports. Rev. James Leigh Jones, of Montpelier-road, Brighton, left £30,650; Rev. Edmund Bonus, of Bitton Hill House, Bitton, near Bath, left £41,027; Rev. Henry Beanfoy Wilder, of Salham, Berks, left £52,141. Self-denying followers of the "poor carpenter of Nazareth"! Shall we say "Christian Socialists"?

Witty old Bishop South said that the interpretation of prophecy was a subject that generally found a man cracked—or left him so. Parodying this epigram, we may say that "Christian Evidences" is a subject that generally finds a man a blackguard—or leaves him so. A more disgusting set of dirty-mouthed scoundrels never disgraced the earth. This fact seems to be dawning—slowly, but still dawning—on the better sort of Christians. We are glad to see that a writer in the *Christian Commonwealth*, who had distributed copies of that journal in Beresford-square, South Woolwich, on a recent Sunday morning, has been drawing a little attention to this unsavory matter. Speaking of the various open-air meetings held in the Square, he says:—

"To the right is the platform of the Christian Evidence Brigade, railing at their friends the Secularists on the left, and often things are said which would be better left unsaid. Slang phraseology from a Christian Evidence lecturer is hardly the evidence likely to convince a doubter. "God," "Christ," "Buddha," "Blatchford," and "Foote" are names frequently heard."

"Slang phraseology" is not the worst offence of these Christian Evidence lecturers. Their stock-in-trade consists almost entirely of personalities and slanders. Mr. Bernard Shaw once described himself humorously as "a fluent liar." They are fluent liars without the humor. Perhaps this is what the *C. C.* writer refers to as things better left unsaid. The expression is a mild one, but it will do for a beginning.

The *Islington Gazette* should be thoroughly ashamed of itself. Someone has sent us a cutting from its issue dated July 29, containing a pretended report of what took place at Parliament Hill Fields on the evening of the N. S. S. Demonstration (Sunday, July 26). The report is obviously written by a Christian Evidence hand, and is replete with lies and misrepresentations, which are really too brazen and silly for correction. We do not intend to trouble about the moral atavism of the *C. E. S.* vermin. What we intend to do is to ask the *Islington Gazette* a straight question. Is it honest journalism to publish as a fair and independent report an account written by one set of men of their own triumphs and the ignominious failure of their opponents? If our contemporary answers this question in the affirmative, it places itself in a position which is fairly beneath contempt. If it answers the question in the negative, it accuses itself of a very serious offence. Which horn of the dilemma does it prefer?

There is this more to be said. The only possible answer to some of these Christian Evidence blackguards is a blow. Some of them are trying hard for it, and may succeed in obtaining it sooner than they expect. There are limits to what can be tolerated in public even from inveterate Yahoos. And we are bound to add that the *Islington Gazette*, by printing loathsome falsehoods about Freethinkers, written by Christian Evidence people behind the scenes, and published as a *bona fide* editorial report, is doing its best (or worst) to promote a breach of the peace in North London.

Dr. Wardlaw Thompson has spoken out clearly and courageously in favor of Secular Education in all Government schools; and as he is the Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, his words will carry weight. His reason, he said, had "brought him fairly to see that in a State composed of people of varied views of religious subjects, the best thing was for the State to provide Secular Education." That is common sense asking for common justice. When will the Churches be unselfish and honest enough to come round to this the only sensible and just point of view?

Mr. W. T. Stead has been making overtures to M. Stolypin in order to get the Salvation Army into Russia. Needless

to say, no reference was made to the exposures in this country of the Army's methods and its incriminating silence in the face of attacks. Stress was laid upon the fact that the Army would not interfere in politics, but would direct attention to the Gospel. The Russian minister promised to consider the matter, and we should not be surprised if he succeeds. M. Stolypin may be cute enough to perceive that if the Army could succeed in getting the attention of the peasants away from political reforms, and to dissipate their energies on religious preaching, it would be doing the bureaucracy no ill-service. At any rate, he may easily think the experiment worth a trial. What the real leaders of the Russian people will think is quite another question.

We noticed the other day, a long list of prominent preachers and the health resorts they are favoring with their presence. They have gone north, south, east, and west. None of them seem anxious for what they tell us is their real home—heaven. Perhaps it is because no return tickets are issued.

It is stated that during the reign of Queen Victoria, England made a profit of £200,000,000 on the opium trade with China. Then we cry out against the demoralising effects of opium in that country, and cite this as proof of the evils existing in a country that is not Christian. There is here the morality of modern Christian nations in a nutshell. Still the English people subscribed to send missionaries out to China, so that this was probably regarded as adequate compensation.

Among the various performances at the Methodist Conference is one called "A Conversation on the Work of God." Some of the things that were said during this conversation will bring anything but comfort to the minds of religious people. There seemed, indeed, a fair impression among the speakers that the "work of God" was proceeding but ill. The Rev. Frank Ballard, for instance, practically told the meeting that unless the preachers altered their methods they might as well shut up. Another speaker reminded the meeting that the spiritual tone of Methodism had never been so low as now. This was endorsed by the Rev. E. Lloyd-Jones who said that the whole of the Christian Church was in a critical condition. The danger was that the objections against the Christian religion were more varied and more powerful than they had ever been before, but the defence of the Churches was feeble. They had no Athanasius and no Butler. The Church once had teachers, it now had tapers. What it needed now was an Augustine or an Athanasius.

We sympathise with Mr. Jones in his cry for a man of genius to lead the churches. We do this the more cheerfully as no such phenomenon is likely to arise. The day has gone by when men of genius enter the Church, or when it develops geniuses from within. The time when either of these things occurred was when the churches possessed something like a decent intellectual life, or when it, at all events, dominated the intellectual life of the country. But every fresh scientific discovery, every new step in social development, meant the divorce of intellect from the Church, and the opening of new avenues of interest and occupation to men of ability. In this way progress not only attacked the churches in virtue of the more accurate knowledge that grew up concerning man and the universe, it undermined it by making it impossible for the best mental life of the nation to enlist in its service. The Church has had men of genius, but that was at a time when the mental outlook was limited, and human knowledge more imperfect than at present. Religion now is the happy hunting-ground of mediocrity, opening a career to minds enamored of petty distinctions and trivial things. And the masses are finding their religious leaders out. They are, in fact, not leaders but followers, pandering to every passing passion, and catering to every taste that seems to hold out a promise of even temporary prosperity.

The Rev. Dr. Horton recently occupied the City Temple pulpit and delivered what was described as an "intensely philosophical" discourse. The oration may have been "intensely philosophical," but what it gained in *intensity* it must have lost in *accuracy*. Fancy an Oxford M.A. deliberately telling an audience that in the "first century of our era the prevalent philosophical doctrine was Neoplatonism," when nothing is more firmly established than that Neoplatonism was founded by Plotinus in the middle of the third century. He also called Philo, of Alexandria, a Neoplatonist, when it is well known that Philo must have been dead at least two hundred years before Neoplatonism was born. But such reckless inaccuracy is characteristic of the Evangelical Pulpit everywhere.

The Rev. Dr. Horton admits that in moral teaching we have little to impart to China, that the "Chinese classics are morally so pure and elevated that they can be put into the hands of a young girl without injuring her modesty." Can the same be said of the Bible? Can a young girl read it from cover to cover "without injuring her modesty"? And yet Dr. Horton believes that the Chinese are a lost nation until they get the Bible and come to Christ, though "their civilisation, their virtue, if not their religion," are already of a very high order.

Christians are at last beginning to realise that the Bible is not a fit book to be placed in the hands of children. A London minister advocates the exclusion from all our schools of a large number of its obscene and immoral stories, and he gets the support of many clerical and lay brethren throughout the country. The wonder is, however, that these people have still the audacity to call and treat such a book as the Word of God, claiming that it is the only rule of faith and conduct. And yet their present action shows that we are nearing the end of the stupid and wicked Bibliolatory which has for so long been the curse of Christendom.

We are told that "Christianity, just because it is a Divine revelation, is so infinitely great and wonderful that its fulness cannot be comprehended by any human intellect." In other words, it is "so infinitely great and wonderful" that nobody knows what it is. And yet every parsonic Dick, Tom, and Harry imagines that he, and he alone, thoroughly understands it, while all who differ from him are in possession of a more or less spurious article, or of some valueless substitute. In reality, however, Christianity, just because it is *not* a Divine revelation, is neither infinitely great nor infinitely wonderful, but is just exactly what its human fashioners wish it to be.

A few weeks ago, A said to B, "Your friend C is a Sceptic, isn't he?" "Yes," answered B; "but he is a thoroughly good fellow, for all that." "A good fellow?" thundered A. "Did I understand you to say a good fellow? What on earth do you mean? A Sceptic a good fellow? Impossible, sir; impossible! How can anybody be good without believing in God and Christ? If I had my way, sir, all such scoundrels would be put to a violent and speedy death, and all Socialists as well, who imagine that they can govern the world better than Almighty God. I am amazed at you, sir!" Before he had finished speaking, A was in a towering rage, his eyes flashing fire, and his mouth emitting foam. And yet it is maintained that the age of persecution is *past*. Past? Why, in spirit, and as far as possible in action, the bulk of the Christians of the twentieth century are as brutally intolerant as those of any former period. Persecution will only die with the Christian religion.

A popular preacher cried out the other day, "God's worst is better than the Devil's best"; but the dear man forgot that, if the Bible is true, God has no "worst," and the Devil no "best." Such an exclamation was just neither to God nor to the Devil.

Here is another of the candid confessions which preachers sometimes make when off their apologetic guard. This comes, in a somewhat sensational form, from the Rev. F. C. Spurr, of the Maze Pond Baptist Chapel. "We call ourselves a Christian country," says this man of God, "we are nothing of the kind; we are largely a nation of idolaters. Ah! I see you are alarmed—you think I am guilty of sensational statement, of exaggeration; not in the least; I calmly repeat the statement, and proceed to the proof." We find no fault whatever with the confession, but beg to point out that it cannot be utilised as a reference or testimonial for the Christian Church. Mr. Spurr is, by his own showing, an agent of an institution that has proved a gigantic failure.

A Monmouthshire clergyman informed his congregation recently that he had attended the Keswick convention, where he enjoyed a delightful talk with God. He did not say whether the interview was official or private; all he could affirm was that it had taken place, and for this even he only gave them his bare word. What God said was unreportable, as it always is. Nor was any reason given why it happened at Keswick rather than at Monmouth or Newport. Does the Supreme Being prefer the Lake District to all other parts of England?

The Rev. Dr. Frank Ballard warned the Wesleyan Conference against forgetting its "relation to forty millions of people outside." The fact was that the sons of Wesleyan ministers and local preachers were turning sceptics. The last time Dr. Ballard gave a Christian Evidence lecture at

York it was the son of one of their own ministers who "was his strongest and most acute opponent to nearly everything that was Christian." Thus in spite of all the conferences and congresses and conventions and summer schools, the cause of Freethought is progressing and the fortresses of superstition are gradually yielding.

A writer in the *Christian Commonwealth*, describing how he met a poor, half-starved newspaper man who appealed to him for help, adds, "the appeal of his eye would have melted the stoniest Materialist." Bearing in mind how sensitive our contemporary is concerning orthodox references to the New Theology, it would not be amiss if a little discretion were manifested towards those who are neither orthodox nor New Theologians. To continually identify brutality and callousness with Materialism and Freethought generally, is a very old religious trick, and a dirty one at that. And it is surely a habit of which those who pride themselves upon the ethical superiority of their position should divest themselves as soon as possible. If we cared to follow this writer's lead it would be easy to retort that callousness to suffering has been more characteristic of Christians than avowed Materialists. They, at least, have never made the burning and torturing of people the occasion for a public festival, and have never light-heartedly consigned millions to eternal torment for a difference of opinion. Besides, the writer forgets that the misery he was contemplating is a product of a people who have been ostentatious in the display of their religious belief. And if their religious preoccupation has not been a condition of the existence of such abject misery, it has certainly never been strong enough to induce them to co-operate for its abolition. On the other hand, if the writer will look into the matter, he will find that Materialists have always striven for human betterment—not in the direction of soup distributing, they were usually wise enough to see the futility of this—but in that of disseminating sounder views of life and society, which is the only direction from which real help can come.

The Baptist remarks that "at the present time when such strenuous efforts are being made by Socialists, Agnostics, and Secularists to pour contempt upon all forms of religious work and upon the very foundations of belief it is something that there exists a society, well equipped intellectually to counteract the destructive influences of aggressive Atheism in the parks and open spaces of London." We hope our readers will hold tight, but the society referred to is the *Christian Evidence Society*! Well equipped intellectually! We wonder whether the writer has ever listened to a Christian Evidence lecture! Perhaps, though, he is poking fun, and we ought not to take him seriously.

Why on earth don't the well-paid praying machines of all the Churches do something practical? God knows, or should know, on their theory, the perpetrators of all the undetected murders. Why don't these two-legged praying machines beg him to divulge the identity of the murderers of Miss Sheriff, of Bournemouth, of Phillis Dimmock, of Camden Town—and of poor little Marie Bailes, of Islington? The men who committed those awful crimes are still at large. They may sit next to you in a train, a tramcar, or a theatre. This is a frightful reflection. It would be for the relief and safety of all of us if these monsters were placed under lock and key. Here is a chance for the clergy! A chance for God! Let them take the opportunity or cease humbugging and retire from business.

The Brussels correspondent of the *Morning Advertiser* reports a horrible affair which took place at Ghent Saint-Pierre. A young man, belonging to a well-known family, was found in his bedroom terribly injured. He was lying in a pool of blood. With a shoemaker's knife he had cut off his nose and right ear. He had slashed his wrists, inflicted a shocking wound in his abdomen, destroyed one eye, and attempted to cut out his tongue. He was just able to inform his parents that he had mutilated himself at the order of God, who had appeared to him and commanded him to punish himself for the sins he had committed. Revivalists should add this case to their catalogue of the blessings of religion.

A Wigan disciple of the meek and lowly Jesus warns the editor of the *British Weekly* that except he repents of having called the Church of Rome, the great whore, a part of the true Church, he shall surely perish with his deluded Papist. We tender Dr. Nicoll our sincere condolence. He must be trembling in his boots.

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey has been telling a Kilsyth crowd that "there is no music in hell." It might not be to the disadvantage of the neighborhood if he were compelled to verify the statement by personal experience.

Another of Dr. Jeffrey's statements was that "the Devil does not know a note of music." We doubt it. Probably the Prince of Darkness sings as he turns over his fried souls. The reverend gentleman may find it so some day.

The Rev. John Telford has just delivered the Fernley Lecture, a Wesleyan institution, in which he undertakes to prove that there are two Providences, an upper, or God's, and an under, or man's. The upper Providence is perfect—God sitting on his throne, and ruling all things well, while the under providence is thoroughly bad and disastrous—man sitting on his throne and setting both God and his ruling at naught. What Mr. Telford recommends is that the two providences should be amalgamated, or that God and man should enter into an intelligent partnership in the management of the Universe. What we recommend, on the contrary, is that, God's Providence, through some cause or other, having proved a disastrous failure, man should recognise no Providence but knowledge, and no Ruler but Nature as revealed both in his own constitution and environment.

Catholic Opinion indiscreetly prints an appeal from the Hon. Mrs. Charlton on behalf of the Palermo Branch of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The lady says that there is so much room for the work of this Society over there—"animals probably suffering more cold-blooded torture there than anywhere else." "I have travelled all over the world," she adds, "but I have never seen anything to equal the brutality and callousness displayed towards the animal creation throughout Sicily." But is not Sicily full of most bigoted Catholics? Why should cruelty to animals be so prevalent in a place inhabited almost exclusively by adherents of "the religion of love"? We know the answer to that question, but we should like the *Catholic Opinion* people to think it out for themselves.

The Servians—if we may trust a special correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*—are filled with a most curious piety. His account of them reminds us of old Lord Eldon. Somebody called him a pillar of the Church. "No," he replied, "I'm not a pillar, I'm a buttress, I shove it up from outside." In the same way the Servians are proud of their Church and support it handsomely, but they very seldom attend divine service. "The priests," they say, "are paid to do the praying; why should we trouble about it?" Hear, hear! And why should they pay for it?

At Halifax Police Court, on August 1, a child maintenance case, it was stated that the defendant was, "at the time," a Salvation Army bandsman. Defendant promised to marry the applicant, but she found he had a wife and several children. The court made the usual order. And the Salvation Army will say nothing. These things only make a stir if the culprit is a Freethinker. Christian offenders are too common to excite comment. "A Secularist in the dock" would be an exciting line on a newspaper bill. "A Christian in the dock" would attract no attention.

"Ned Wright" was once a respectable burglar—a member of a profession that at least takes its risks. But he got converted and spent the rest of his life in the debasing profession of an evangelist. He was just concluding a mission in Cornwall when the Lord took him. What profession he follows now is unknown. He may be singing the Glory Song—he may be stoking.

The Matlock Golf Club held a meeting lately to discuss Sunday golf. Dr. Moxon did not intend to play on Sunday, but he was in favor of each member pleasing himself. Rev. R. Foster, a Congregational minister, said he regarded golf on the Sabbath as demoralising. Any other day in the week, no doubt, the game changes its character. Another minister, the Rev. J. Thomas, emitted a still more melancholy wail. He said he was almost heart-broken at some of the moral aspects of Matlock life. Probably the explanation is that the reverend gentleman's heart is very brittle. We hope he will be able to get it repaired. Meanwhile, we have to note that the club members, by a majority of two, voted in favor of Sunday golf. On that point the Sabbatarian action will probably have to seek the help of the Lord.

When a forest fire happens, all sorts of animals are made one company by fear. Hunters and hunted, panthers and

their prey, huddle together as if they were all vegetarians. Their differences are all drowned in a common terror. Thus it appears to be with the clergy of the various Christian denominations at Wigan. Alarmed at the spread of "infidelity" in the town, through the efforts of the N. S. S. missionary, they have joined their forces and started "The United Christian Lecture Committee." Seven "centres" are marked out, and five monthly meetings are to be held at each during the coming winter. We are glad to hear it. The more the clergy defend their faith the worse it will appear. They will find this out in time. But in the meanwhile they will do good by exposing the intellectual barrenness of their religion.

The Bishop of Sheffield regrets that "the admission of the clergyman into the sick room is so often regarded as a signal of the grave nature of the case, and that the prayers of the Church were looked upon almost as a sentence of death." In other words, when it comes to "God help you," you may pass in your checks.

A Taunton rector advocates, in the *Church Times*, what he calls "the right use of the intellect." Now, "the right use of intellect," according to him, necessitates the acceptance of Christianity as a direct revelation from heaven. That is to say, all who employ their reason, as the rector does his, in the service of belief, are true Rationalists, while all those whose reason has led them to reject Christianity are styled false Rationalists. What a wonderfully conclusive argument! How eminently honored Taunton is in being able to number such an infallibly wise parson among its benefactors. "Sir," says the rector, "you are in soul-destroying error." "How do you make that out, rector?" "Because you differ from me, sir."

The Rev. Dr. Ambrose Shepherd, of Glasgow, has published a book modestly entitled, *The Responsibility of God*. Well, if the God preached by such all-knowing people as Dr. Shepherd actually exists, he is responsible for everything, good or bad, right and wrong, and his guilt in respect of all the evils, sufferings, and sorrows of the world is past finding out. If such a God exists, he is the arch-criminal of the universe.

The Rev. F. B. Meyer has a charming explanation of the New Testament teaching, "Your Father will clothe you, oh ye of little faith." Jesus, he says, did not mean that God would look after the actual clothing; what he meant was that "God would provide the wool of which clothing would be made by the co-operation of shepherds, shearers, wool-merchants, shippers, spinners, tradesmen, and tailors." It hardly needed a revelation to tell us this much, anyway. We all know how the clothes are manufactured, and whether we are told or not that God sends the wool does not seem to add anything very important. Still, Mr. Meyer should know, as he is in the text-mongering business. And it would be absurd to expect that a clergyman would interpret a text dishonestly.

There is at least one Christian, however, whom Mr. Meyer's exegesis would not suit. This is a Sunday-school teacher of forty-five years' standing, who claims to have studied his Bible "intelligently." He writes, in the *British Congregationalist*: "If I did not believe that Jonah was swallowed by a big fish, that the sun really did stand still over Ajalon, and that Daniel and Job were real historic personages, then I should at once declare that the Bible was simply a bundle of anecdote like *Aesop's Fables*, and should leave church and Sunday-school for ever." This would indeed be a calamity! The presence of a teacher at once so well-informed and so religious must exert a powerful influence for good over the young people who are under his tuition. Presuming there are many more Sunday-school teachers of this type, we can dimly realise what the country owes them for their many years' work, and what a different state of things might have prevailed had they never given their attention to the task of training the young.

During the past twelve months over one hundred cycles have been stolen from churches in Surrey during service. The owners were inside praying, and left their cycles in the care of God. Now, if they had tipped a friendly policeman, best part of the hundred cycles would have been saved.

More "Providence." The great typhoon, which sank several European boats at Hong Kong, drowned thousands of Chinese. "For his tender mercies are over all his works."

Christians who talk so fluently about the non-progressive character of Mohammedan civilisation—which is such silly talk in the light of history—must be a bit taken aback at the present state of things in Turkey. What the Christian Russians have not been able to do with long revolutionary action, including frequent assassinations, the Mohammedan Turks have been able to do at one stroke. And while the Jews are still oppressed in Russia, and only the Holy Greek Church is really tolerated, in Turkey the Jews, the Christians, and the Mohammedans are all fraternising at the altar of political liberty.

A correspondent says, "You will soon be out of work, Mr. Foote." He encloses a leaderette from a Manchester paper, in which reference is made to "the Pharaoh of the Exodus, who, it seems, was not overwhelmed in the Red Sea or anywhere else." We are glad to see this old Bible story set down as a fable, but such scepticism still leaves plenty of "work for Mr. Foote."

Rev. George Wise, of Liverpool, writes to the local *Post and Mercury* that he is putting on his armor to fight Mormonism. He will have all his work cut out if he carries the Bible with him. There is not a word against polygamy from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation.

The paper in which Mr. Wise makes this announcement devotes a long leader to Mormonism. There seems to be a fear that Mormon propaganda will give English young men a taste for polygamy. But what is going to give them the means to maintain several wives? Most men in England find it hard enough to keep one.

Evidently the dear *Daily News* does not know everything about Atheists. An advertisement in the *Morning Post* lately asks for aid in "a militant crusade towards the overthrow of Atheism and Materialism." Perhaps it will be said that the advertiser is on the make. So he may be. But the fact that he puts down his money for such an advertisement shows he is aware that plenty of people (outside the *Daily News* office) are familiar with the fact that Atheism is spreading.

It is reported that General Booth is going blind. His followers have been blind all the time.

The Better Land.

Suggested by the popular poem by Mrs. Hemans.

"I HEAR parsons speak of a better land,
And a rest for every laboring hand;
Tell me, dear mother, where is that shore—
Where shall I find it and work no more?
Is it at home, this delightful ground,
Where the golden harps and angels are found?
Is it where 'General' Booth on his motor-car speeds,
Or in Rome where the Pope is counting his beads?
Is it at Shepherd's Bush, so fine and grand,
I shall find this adorable land?"
"Not there, not there, my child!"

"Is it far away on the Rio Grande?
In Ecuador or Basutoland?
Is it far away on Biblical shores,
Where unicorns fight and the dragon roars?
Or will it in drear Soudan be found,
Where British bones manure the ground?
Or on the banks of the sacred Nile?
Perhaps 'tis away on some coral isle,
With dusky groves and silver strand?
Is it there, dear mother, that beauteous land?"
"Not there, not there, my child!"

"Eye hath not seen that fair land, my child,
Ear hath but heard an echo wild—
The nightmare of an excited brain,
That dreamers have, ever again.
Far away, beyond the ken
Of sober, practical, brainy men;
Far away beyond the sight
Of men whose heads are screwed on tight;
Where the turrets of Colney Hatch do stand,
See the golden streets of that lovely land!
'Tis there, 'tis there, my child!" M.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, August 16, 6 p.m., Regent's Park, Freethought Demonstration.

August 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, £213 17s. 6d Received since.—Mrs. Crow, 5s.

W. J. PERRY.—We have seen the official document deposing Mr. J. T. Lloyd from the Presbyterian Church in South Africa—for "preaching Atheism." No other offence is alleged or suggested, and a hope is expressed that he will return to the true fold. This is a sufficient answer to the infamous statement, with which we will not soil our pages, made by "Mr. Green, a Christian Evidence lecturer," who would appear to be a worthy member of his fetid tribe.

R. J. HENDERSON.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

E. McNULTY.—We quite follow you, but this is not the time of the year for gratuitous exertion. When the sun shines and the sea calls we find all work a bother, but a lot of it we cannot escape, and all the rest we let slide until a more convenient season. To speak quite plainly, we take all the leisure we can get at this time of the year.

J. BLEVINS.—Shall be sent. We are always glad to receive names and addresses of likely persons to whom we may post the *Freethinker* gratuitously for six consecutive weeks. Pleased to hear you have been reading this journal for about two years, and that you can "honestly say you count from that time the emancipation of your life."

JAS. STEWART.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. TAPLIN.—Pleased to have your good wishes—and glad to hear your wife is a Freethinker as well as yourself. The baby girl will have a good chance. When she is old enough, tell her she had the benediction of an old soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity.

R. SPENCER.—Thanks. We saw "Adjutant" Gumbleton's "blasphemy" quoted in *John Bull*. We quoted Salvation Army "blasphemy" twenty-five years and a half ago, when we stood in the dock at the Old Bailey defending ourselves against an indictment under the Blasphemy Laws. The form you enclose runs "Received from William Booth" instead of "Received from the Salvation Army" because William Booth legally is the Salvation Army, every pennyworth of its assets being his personal property. Of course, there is a Trust Deed, but it merely makes William Booth answerable to William Booth.

H. H. SCHOLEY says: "I am one of a third generation of Freethinkers." He encloses some old newspaper cuttings, including a petition of his grandfather, Edwin Augustus Scholey, to Queen Victoria against the continued imprisonment of the *Freethinker* "blasphemers" in 1883.

D. V. GREY.—Thanks for suggestions.

F. E. WYKES.—Such cuttings are always useful, even if they cannot always be used at the very moment.

G. EHRLMANN.—Your cuttings are welcome.

ELIZABETH LECHNER.—Pleased to see our paragraph on the Bishop of Sacramento's preaching a borrowed sermon at Shrewsbury reproduced in the *Hereford Times*. We cannot help thinking that a good many local newspapers would find an "Acid Drop" of ours a welcome morsel to most of its readers.

T. H. ELSTON, who has had to resign the secretaryship of the Newcastle Branch, owing to a removal, says that he sees more and more what a degrading thing Christianity generally is, and adds: "How grateful we should all be that there are some men of courage (that is the main thing) left, like you and your able assistants, who will not be frightened or flattered into saying anything but your own thoughts in the way that seems to you best."

C. E. GORON.—Atheists have nothing to lose, if there be a God and another life, as long as they are honest men; for a God who could punish honest men would be a Devil, and in that case Christians would be "up a tree" like other people.

N. LEVEY (Edinburgh).—Glad you found such a good helper in Mr. Stewart at Dalkeith.

H. G.—See paragraph. Thanks. Pleased to have your "many, many thanks" for what you call "the brilliant manner" in which we carry out our "mission in life."

G. ROLEFFS.—Mr. Foote will visit Liverpool at almost any cost. Our propaganda must not be silenced during the winter months. Go on looking for halls. Success often crowns the last effort of perseverance.

H. S. WISHART.—Glad to see you have so far got the better of the Wigan bigots; also that the Liverpool Branch meetings are so successful—too successful for some peculiar ill-wishers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

There was an immense crowd around the N.S.S. platform in Victoria Park on Sunday evening. The said platform was a brake (with pair of horses) kindly provided by Mr. E. Wilson. The occasion was a Freethought Demonstration under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive. Mr. Silverstein acted as chairman, and the speakers were F. A. Davies, A. B. Moss, C. Cohen, and G. W. Foote. Miss Vance, Miss Stanley, and other ladies, were busy taking up the collection. Before the brake drove away, three cheers were given for all the speakers, and an extra three cheers for the President.

Another Freethought Demonstration will be held this evening (Aug. 16) in Regent's Park, near the Fountain, opposite Gloucester Gate entrance. Mr. Wilson's brake will be the platform again, and the speakers will be F. A. Davies, A. B. Moss, W. Hcaford, C. Cohen, and G. W. Foote. As the evenings are drawing in now, the Demonstration will start at 6 o'clock punctually.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd delivers two addresses to-day (Aug. 16) at the "Annual Services" of the Failsworth Secular Sunday-School. South Lancashire "saints" will please note.

There will be no lectures under the N.S.S. Branch in Liverpool to-day (Aug. 16). The Branch goes for its annual picnic. The party leaves Woodside Ferry, Birkenhead, at 1 p.m. for a drive to Thurstaton. Tickets of Mr. G. Roleffs, 49 Whitefield-road.

At Leeds on Friday (Aug. 7) Mr. Auberon H. Fisher, son of Mr. Greeves-Fisher, one of the Old Guard, made his debut as speaker. He gave a very clear address on "Science and the Bible," and answered all questions in a manner which evoked applause. After "criticism" from a parson and an ex-soldier, Mr. Wishart called on Mr. Fisher to reply. This was done in a manner that surprised all; the "saints" were pleased, and the parson fell in reputation. Showing this, he tried to rush the platform at the end, but the chairman prevented it. The ex-soldier said he was sorry and surprised to see one so young "blaspheming" in public. Mr. Fisher, with coolness beyond his years, replied that he was surprised and sorry to see one so old holding such ridiculous ideas.

Secular Thought (Toronto) reproduces our article on the death of Gerald Massey. We are glad to see our Canadian contemporary flourishing, or at least subsisting, in spite of all difficulties. Mr. Ellis must be gifted with remarkable pertinacity.

We strongly desire to see Mr. Manson's book on *The Salvation Army and the Public* extensively circulated. The new, up-to-date, sixpenny edition places it within everyone's reach. We have arranged with Messrs. Routledge, the publishers, with Mr. Manson's concurrence, to let copies of the book be sold by the Pioneer Press at 2 Newcastle-street, E.C. Orders should be sent direct to the Manager there. Every Freethinker ought to purchase, read, and keep by him a copy of this remarkable exposure of the Salvation Army. At this price the idea of profit to the author is entirely out of question. His object is evidently to let the public have the truth at cost price, so that it may spread from one end of the country to the other. We appeal to Freethinkers to assist in promoting this laudable object. Let them do their utmost to get this book into the hands of the people.

A Plea for Peace.

Passages from Mr. Foote's pamphlet, *The Shadow of the Sword*, written twenty years ago, and recently reprinted specially by the Humanitarian League for distribution at the International Peace Congress.

THE man-eating monster of fiction is terrible enough to romantic young minds under the spell of the story-teller, but he is almost genial and harmless in comparison with the real ogre of war. Generation after generation this frightful monster gorges himself on human flesh and blood, solacing his intervals of satiety with the wine of human tears. And every time he prepares for a fresh repast, he demands a larger provision for his ravenous appetite.

* * * * *

Awful as is the ogre's blood tax, his impositions between meals are even worse. In the palmy days of the Roman empire, less than four hundred thousand troops sufficed to preserve the peace of the world; and, if we except petty frontier tussles with barbarians, they often did so for thirty or forty years together. But Europe has now its standing armies whose total is reckoned in millions, and the peace is broken three or four times in half-a-century. Let it also be remembered that the Roman soldier was a worker as well as a fighter, helping to carry the practical civilisation of Rome wherever her eagles floated. Our high roads, the arteries of pedestrian and vehicular circulation through England, were first made by the imperial legions who used the pick and the spade more frequently than the sword. But the armies of modern Europe are all idlers. Their sole business is destruction. In peace they consume without producing, and in war they devour like the locust and the caterpillar. They are not the lame, the blind, the maimed, and the imbecile, but the young flower of the male population, withdrawn from productive industry and the refining influence of domestic discipline, and supported by the labor of others while they "learn the art of killing men." We shall consider this economical aspect of the subject more fully presently; meanwhile let us deal with the causes of war.

"A background of wrath," says Carlyle, "which can be stirred up to the murderous infernal pitch, does lie in every man, in every creature." True, and this fierce instinct may be held to account directly for the combats of animals, for primitive human fighting, for duels among "civilised" peoples, and for street fights and all personal brawls. But it accounts only indirectly for modern warfare. "Civilised wager of battle" is the game, not of peoples, but, to use Earl Beaconsfield's phrase, of "sovereigns and statesmen"; though sometimes, it must be confessed, the people are egged on by what are perhaps the vilest specimens of the human race—truculent journalists, who gain fame and profit by pandering to the most disgusting hatreds. Cowper long ago remarked that war is a game which kings would not play at were their peoples wise. The fact is, our brute instincts, racial prejudices and national vanities are systematically traded on by our rulers. Nothing is so cheap and easy as a "foreign policy," as nothing is so hard as a domestic one; and nothing so diverts attention from home affairs as the simple expedient of a foreign broil. If declaring war lay with Parliament, the juggle would be more arduous. But it does not. The Government hurries us into war before we can discuss its policy, and when the matter comes up for debate, not only have things gone too far for interference, but the question resolves into one of confidence in the ministry, instead of approval of the particular measure. By that time also the beast in us has tasted blood. The savage thirst for more is upon us. Illustrated papers and daily war correspondence familiarise us with slaughter, and the sane voice of the keepers of reason is drowned in the clamor of the wild beasts of passion, scenting carnage and carrion.

Eighty years ago Nelson told his seamen that they had but one duty—to love old England and hate every Frenchman like the devil. Such a sentiment was of course loudly acclaimed, but it was after all a cultivated sentiment. When Pitt began operations against France he found it necessary to tune the pulpit, and bribe and intimidate the press in England. In due time his policy was successful. The people were grossly abused, and after a few years' fighting, when their blood was up, they were ready for anything in the shape of war. France merely stood to them as a synonym for enemy. They cursed and hated Frenchmen with the spirit of a bull rushing at a red cloak, the cunning matador who flourished the scarlet having his own ends to serve through the creature's madness.

* * * * *

The world's peace will never be secure until the Democracy takes the reins of power into its own hands. Parliaments will be less ready to declare war than Governments. Men will vote against war when the decision lies with them, who would not vote against their party when hostilities have begun, and it is too late to undo the mischief without overturning the Ministry. The formalities of public debate would also allow a pause for reason to assert itself. The first passionate impulse of revenge would have time to subside, and wisdom, justice, and humanity would gain a hearing.

* * * * *

The constitutional power of the Sovereign to declare war is, of course, never exercised without the advice and consent of his responsible ministers; in other words, the King no more actually declares war than he actually appoints bishops. The Cabinet is really supreme, and these officials take advantage of a constitutional fiction to carry matters with a high hand. In domestic business they are obliged to consult Parliament before they can move a step; in foreign affairs they act first and consult it afterwards. Even then it is only because they need its endorsement for their acceptances. A vote of censure may be moved and may be passed upon them, as we all know; but what Ministry fears such a contingency? * * * * *

No doubt the upper classes furnish good fighting men, just like the lower classes, for brute courage is common enough, and, as John Bright said, any quantity of it can be got for a shilling a day. Yet Tommy Atkins dies as well as his officer, only he has nothing to do with the war except risking his life, all the direction and all the glory and profit resting with his superiors.

Go through the Peerage and see what an enormous number of military and naval posts are held by its scions. They command our forces, they get the lion's share of pay, they shine in the Gazettes, and they receive all the honors and rewards worth having. Poor Tommy Atkins dies unannaled and unknown, or, if he survives, has to content himself with the reflection that virtue is its own reward. His wife and children (if the celibate rule of the army for *privates* allows him those luxuries) are left to semi-starvation or vice or crime, unless they gravitate to the workhouse. Tommy had much better be at home earning an honest living, as he himself generally knows; but he goes abroad to fight the battles of the upper classes because their villainous laws have starved him into the able-bodied citizen's last resource.

* * * * *

Mr. Bright once said that without declaring all wars unjustifiable, he would like to see a single war justified. It was a request very difficult to comply with. Every war we enter upon is perfectly righteous, but somehow the historian afterwards writes them all down as crimes or mistakes. Self-defence is a natural instinct; it never can be eradicated, and it never should. But it implies an aggressor; and consequently all justification of war on the one side only serves to heighten its guiltiness on the other.

A great conqueror is only another name for a great criminal. Nature quietly buries and conceals every trace of his ravages. Would that the world could as soon forget him, or remember him only to condemn.

Priests may consecrate our banners, without regard to the merits of the side on which they are ranged, or the awful scenes over which they float; every regiment may carry its chaplain for ghostly succor; and the Church may solicit God's blessing on every bloody enterprise we engage in. But the teachers of religion cannot decree right and wrong, nor have they any magic to transform crime into virtue. "The primal duties shine aloft like stars" beyond the reach of chance and change, however momentarily obscured by clouds of incense from a thousand altars. And if the ministers of the Prince of Peace cannot see the monstrous wickedness of war, there happily remains enough instinctive justice and mercy in the breasts of heretics to brand it as a capital crime against humanity.

War is just in self-defence, or in defence of a neighbor unjustly attacked. We are not of those who believe in the refusal of aid between nations in all circumstances. The sword may be, for some time yet, as necessary as the lancet, but it should never be drawn except against the enemies of mankind. "The blood of man," said Burke, "should never be shed but to redeem the blood of man. It is well shed for our friends, for our country, for our kind. The rest is vanity; the rest is crime."

When any of these great duties call us we should be ready to defend them; and if ever England were menaced by a brutal invader, the most peaceful citizen might well wish her to be animated by the same brave spirit that whipped the pride of the Armada and drove the hectoring Dutch fleets from the English seas. Nay, to defend the nation's liberties in the dark hour of extreme peril, one might hope that her sons would make ramparts of their bodies, and if they could not make a pact with victory, make a pact with death; that her daughters would gladly resign their dearest in the spirit of the Spartan mothers of old; and that the very children might, like Hannibal, be dedicated to a righteous revenge.

We are then far from loving peace at any price. But there is little need to denounce such an impossible doctrine. It is not that way our danger lies. Our fighting instincts, inherited from savage ancestors, are too strong for us to submit tamely to aggression, even if the law of self-preservation did not prompt us to defend our own.

If this sort of thing must go on for ever, one might feel inclined, with Huxley, to welcome the approach of any comet that could sweep this earth, and its millions of pestilent cutthroats, into eternal oblivion. No wonder the great, strong, implacable genius of Swift brought in war as one of the worst vices of the Yahoos. Gulliver's master, among the Houyhnhnms, thought he must be saying the thing that was not, when he counted the number of those who had been killed in battle. And when he described the weapons and manœuvres of warfare, and related such incidents as "plundering, stripping, ravishing, burning, and destroying," the Houyhnhnm commanded him to be silent, and expressed a belief that the Yahoos did not really possess any reason, but only "some quality fitted to increase their natural vices."

What should we think of a man in private life who whipped out a sword every time he quarreled, and tried to cut his opponent's throat? He would soon be relegated to the prison or the asylum. What, also, do we think of a man who sticks to his opinion, however rash it may be, and refuses to abandon it because he has once taken it up—as though his

infallibility were the chief thing in the universe, to which all else must be subordinated; and who would sooner be ruined than confess to a mistake? We consider him a dolt, a mule, a vain idiot. And if he refuses to submit his differences with others to friendly or legal adjudication, we regard him as still worse; for we naturally think with Grotius that "the party who refuses to accept arbitration may justly be suspected of bad faith."

Now, what peculiar logic is there that can render the folly of an individual wisdom in a nation, or transform private wickedness into a national virtue? We have not the slightest doubt that quarrels between nations will eventually be settled as quarrels between individuals are settled now, by appeal to an acknowledged tribunal. That is the certain tendency of our age.

Napoleon himself, in the solitude of St. Helena, dreamed of "the application to the great European family of an institution like the American Congress, or that of the Amphictyon in Greece;" and he asserted that "this agglomeration of European peoples must arrive, sooner or later, by the mere force of events." How many eminent men have since expressed the same view! Victor Hugo uttered the right great word "The United States of Europe." A recognised international tribunal, a high court of nations, would allow of a great reduction in the armies of Europe. Public opinion would restrain the fractious; or, as Tennyson says, "then the common sense of most would hold a fretful realm in awe." Even the most selfish State, in its moment of intensest excitement, would shrink from violating international law if the outrage brought upon it swift punishment by the armed comity of Europe. Gradually, with the cessation of war and the growth of peaceful sentiments, Europe would become ashamed of its barbarous past; and we might reasonably hope that the benign process would continue—

"Till the war-drums throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world."

Who can point to a single particle of good which our lavish expenditure on war and warlike preparations has conferred on any human being, except generals, army contractors, and bondholders? When the little boy, in Southey's poem, wants to know what the battle of Blenheim was all about, and what benefit resulted from the rival armies leaving their empty skulls as memorials to future ages, old Kaspar is nonplussed.

"'Why, that I cannot tell,' said he,
'But 'twas a famous victory.'"

A famous victory! Yes, the adjective is thrown over it to hide the misery and folly. "Glory" is the bait on the despot's hook; the gilded fetter on a strutting slave; the plume in the helm of a mailed freebooter. True and lasting glory is only won by the victories of peace. "These are matters so arduous," as Milton told Cromwell, "that in comparison of them the perils of war are but the sports of children."

Christendom is armed to the teeth; and as Sir Henry Maine too truthfully observed, "During the last quarter of a century, a great part, perhaps the greatest part, of the inventive faculties of mankind has been given to the arts of destruction." The workman in the factory and the peasant in the field know that they may at any moment be summoned from their peaceful vocations by the trumpet of battle. They know also that war has become more and more scientific, that horrid explosives have made it more ghastly, and that they would be marshalled for hideous slaughter, where each man sees the comrade fall at his side but not the enemy that strikes him dead. Some of them who sicken at the prospect, not with coward fears but with manly

disgust, might almost cry with Shakespeare's North-umbreland:—

"Let heaven kiss earth! Now let not Nature's hand
Keep the wild flood confined! Let order die!
And let this world no longer be a stage
To feed Contention in a lingering act;
But let one spirit of the first-born Cain
Reign in all bosoms, that, each heart being set
On bloody courses, the rude scene may end,
And darkness be the burier of the dead!"

Europe is the modern Damocles. The ancient bearer of that name envied the wealth of Dionysius of Sicily, who jestingly gave him a taste of royal pleasures. Damocles ascended the throne and gazed admiringly on the wealth and splendor around him. But looking up, he perceived a sword hanging over his head by a single hair. The sight so terrified him that he begged to be removed from his position. Europe likewise sits at its feast of life, but the fatal weapon suspended overhead mars its felicity. Serpents twine in the dance, arms clash in the song, the meats have a strange savor, there is a demoniac sparkle in the wine, and a poisonous bitterness in the dregs of the cup. All is darkened by the Shadow of the Sword.

Tax Exemptions in Toronto.

WHEN such people as the Mayor of Toronto and members of the Board of Control and the City Council begin grumbling about the immense amount of property within the city limits which is exempt from taxation, we may be quite sure of two things: first, that the matter is a very important one; and second, that public sentiment is beginning to turn in favor of a rational settlement of it. It may be conceived that the men to whom we have referred may be chiefly hankering after the handling of more money, which may possibly mean for them and their friends more "graft"; but they would not risk the loss of their positions by expressing such opinions unless they thought the public would back them up.

A good many arguments are put forward to justify this system of tax exemptions, but in our opinion they are far more than offset by the considerations that the exemptions serve the sinister purpose of hiding many gross abuses from the public eye, that they tend to encourage hypocrisy and false returns of property valuation, and prevent the taxpayers from knowing what their expenditure really stands for.

Many large areas of vacant land are held for years in the name of some church, so as to escape taxation until the price is sufficiently high to justify a sale; and much real estate is exempt from taxation on the ground that the businesses there carried on are for the public benefit, whereas they are private speculations, such as boarding schools, simply using the name of a sect or a church to secure business, or so-called "charitable institutions," often rather a means of securing salaries for a few officials than serving any good public purpose.

Tax exemption is generally regarded as the remittance of a sort of fine which does not affect the public purse. There is, unfortunately, a wide-spread sentiment—often expressed—that a man who evades the payment of his fair share of taxation is doing a good piece of business. This seems to be the idea of the churches especially; but if such conduct be regarded in its true light—as, in short, a means of robbing the rest of the community by a small section for its own benefit—the feeling might be very different.

This tax exemption system is forced upon Toronto, as well as upon other cities, by Acts of the Legislature, under which, upon payment of a nominal fee, an institution can secure a charter as a charity or a "seminary of learning," and thus at once become entitled to exemption from taxation, though as a public institution it has no more significance than a boot and shoe store or a grocery on the same street. There is a case right in front of the Legislative buildings in Toronto, where a Conservatory of Music—a purely private business—is carrying on a large boarding-house for the convenience of its pupils under one of these charters, and the general public has to subsidise it to the extent of some hundreds of dollars per annum. The latest case we have heard of in this line is that of an "incorporated" fencing and boxing school which applied for exemption, the Board of Control pitifully admitting that it had no power to refuse the application.

As might be expected in a city which is the headquarters of all the leading Protestant sects in Canada, the churches are the worst grafters in this tax-exemption line. Out of a total of nearly \$30,000,000 of assessed value of exempt properties—vastly below their real value, of course—the

churches are answerable for over four-and-a-half millions, the Anglicans heading the list, which is as follows:—

| Sect. | No. of churches. | Assessed value. |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Church of England | 36 | \$1,100,568 |
| Methodist | 32 | 1,050,964 |
| Presbyterian | 28 | 955,808 |
| Roman Catholic | 14 | 602,938 |
| Baptist | 17 | 362,836 |
| Congregational | 7 | 219,982 |
| Other sects | 45 | 354,860 |
| Total | 179 | \$4,657,956 |

This means that at 18½ mills per dollar, the current rate of taxation, the churches of Toronto are subsidised by the taxpayers to the extent of \$86,172 per annum, or an average cash payment to each church of \$481! Do the taxpayers really understand that their hard-earned money is disposed of in this reckless and shamelessly unjust manner?

About three years ago the Jarvis-street Baptist Church, which for some years had set an example of honesty to the other churches by paying its share of taxes, ceased this plan of interpreting the Scriptural injunction to "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," basing its action upon the fact that the City Council had granted to the Anglican Church a valuable site for a new church on the island. No one can wonder at this action of the Baptists, for, besides being subsidised by remission of city taxes to the extent of over \$20,000, the Anglican Church has received some hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Clergy Reserves, the rectors of all the old parishes receiving from this source additions to their salaries of over \$1,000 each. The Church of England in Canada, like its mother church in Britain, is nothing but one huge parasitic growth, and to help it by remitting its share of taxation is not so much like greasing a fat sow as like banqueting a highway robber.

Among the other tax-exemptions, perhaps those on the properties of the Ontario and Dominion Governments are the least objectionable, and yet it is clear that with them, as with some others, it would greatly facilitate a fair adjustment of property values in other cases if all real estate was assessed and taxed on the same basis, and if, instead of remitting the taxes in a loose way, definite sums were agreed upon and paid for whatever services were rendered on either side. In some cases injustice is done to some localities by the refusal or neglect of the Provincial or Dominion Government to perform its duty as an owner of real estate.

When it is remembered that these Government properties have a total assessed value of \$5,234,000, and that they occupy large areas in the central parts of the city, interfering greatly with urban intercommunication, their importance to the city will be understood.

Next to the churches, however, the universities and their affiliated institutions are the worst bloodsuckers among those that are fast making Toronto one of the dearest cities in which to live. In addition to the large amount of real estate and the heavy subsidies given in cash by the Provincial Government, exemption from taxation subsidised these institutions to the extent of over \$44,000 per annum. And to what end? Do the citizens of Toronto, whose money is squandered in such a reckless fashion, understand that this money is given in aid of schools and teachers who are almost entirely identified with the churches? Fancy a university the faculty and students of which almost to a man—and woman—could go into rapturous enthusiasm over the platitudes and crudities, the solecisms and bigotry, of a William Jennings Bryan! Why, if the university could afford to pay his salary, Billy Sunday or Revivalist Torrey would seem best suited to the mental status of the Toronto University people, backed by the elite of our provincial society, and yet Toronto citizens subsidise this university by a cash allowance of \$44,000 a year, as if they were not, like an Old Man of the Sea, already overburdened.

The public and separate schools are assessed for a total of \$1,554,000, making their tax exemption amount to \$28,749. In this case, of course, there would be simply a small matter of bookkeeping apart from the effect upon the equitable assessment of other properties. But just look at the difference in the justice of these last two exemptions.

In the case of the public schools, only a simple scheme of education is attempted or is possible. Perhaps, indeed, it is too elaborate to be as useful as it might be; but, as far as it goes, it is considered to comprise the essential groundwork of mental culture for the masses. But it is rightfully regarded as a necessary factor in the national life and progress, though we hope to see it wonderfully improved ere long. And towards this great work the tax exemption subsidy amounts to about 65 cents per head of the scholars.

The universities and colleges, however, are strictly class institutions, supported largely by donations from the wealthy supporters of the churches, but mainly established and maintained by large grants of public lands and grants of public money. In this latter view they are on the same plane as

the public schools, and if they were thrown open to successful pupils of the latter not much could be urged against them as class institutions; but the fees required are prohibitory for the masses, although they represent but a fraction of the total cost of the so-called education imparted. From these facts it can be seen that the universities and colleges are charity schools mainly supported by the churches for the conversion of short-brained youths into the professional parasites called preachers whose duty it is to try and stop the progress of intellectual development. And to support this pauperising system, the citizens of Toronto are compelled by tax exemption to contribute a sum equal to over \$15 per head of the college students!

Toronto has often been called a city of churches, and few cities, we imagine, can make as good a claim to such a title. It has a church building for every 1,500 individuals in the city, and it is easy to understand why the McCaul Methodists found it impossible to carry their mortgage debt, and were glad to sell their church at one-half its cost to the Jews for a synagogue. One can understand, too, why the Revivalist is a necessary aid to the preacher in reviving the religious fervor of the laity. Salvation may be nominally "free and without price," but that is only the pulpit faker's gag. Like every other thing in the world, if you want it you must pay for it. And the fact that so many Billy Sundays and Torreys are on the job proves that the mass of people are beginning to look for solid value for their good money, and justifies the confidence of the Mayor and City Council of Toronto in questioning the justice of the system we have referred to. Religious superstition may still have an immense hold upon the people, but the day is rapidly approaching when the schoolmaster's facts must overpower the preacher's fictions.

—*Secular Thought* (Toronto).

Correspondence.

A NOTE FROM SOUTH AFRICA.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

[We print this letter from South Africa in full, as many of our readers will probably be glad to see it. We do not print the writer's full name and address.]

DEAR SIR,—I take the liberty of addressing you to inform you how much I appreciate your paper, the *Freethinker*. Like thousands of others, I was groping in the dark in regard to religious beliefs. But I obtained a copy of your paper some months ago, which, after reading it, cleared the air considerably about my doubts on religion.

Since then I have taken it regularly, and find it an intellectual treat.

However, I don't wish to say too much on that score; what I wish to inform you about is—the number of revivals taking place here in Johannesburg. About two years ago we had the one and only Gipsy Smith, who, I believe, made more conversions on that memorable occasion than the sum-total of all the members in the Churches to-day. About a month ago we had the Rev. F. B. Meyer here on a fortnight's mission. But I did not take the trouble to go and hear him.

Now we have Mr. Fred B. Smith, who has been boomed and extensively advertised as the general secretary of the International Y. M. C. A. Committee of the United States and Canada. He is described as an eloquent speaker, and a leader of men.

I went to hear him this (Sunday) afternoon in the Empire Theatre, Johannesburg. My opinion of him was decidedly unfavorable; he talked the usual kind of twaddle.

By way of comparison, he said, let us take two imaginary young men—one a Christian and the other a man of the world. Of course, the Christian man was praised as a model of goodness and virtue, whilst the other was denounced as possessing all the vices which he could enumerate.

Mr. Smith told his audience that any fool (I thank him) could be an Atheist, but it took a strong, manly, and courageous man to be a Christian. Finally, he wound up his lecture by slandering Colonel Ingersoll, mimicking his gestures, and trying to ridicule him. It happens that Smith went to hear Ingersoll lecture at Chicago several years ago, for which poor Smith paid 3s. for admission.

As Mr. Smith humorously remarked, he has been wishing he had that 3s. back again ever since.

About the only thing he heard of any sense from Ingersoll—waving his arms about in a grotesque manner—like a windmill (mimicking Colonel Ingersoll)—was "Force and Matter," etc., etc.

But, Smith inquired of his audience, how came this Force and Matter? where did it originate? who created it? And consequently it was easy for him to prove that God made the universe, and that God was the motive power.

How absurd! I don't mind so much his vaporings, but I do protest against this Smith cruelly slandering the dead. I might say a good deal more, but I have no desire to bore you.

In conclusion, I beg to tender my humble wishes for long-continued success. May the doubts and superstitious fears of those who seek for the truth, but find it not, come into contact with your movement. Let the religion of humanity be our guide and mainstay through all generations.

H. R. S.

THE NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE.

Strictly, at a General Election, the voter has generally only three courses open to him; he can vote for the Conservatives or for the Liberals, or he can abstain. It was only in a few constituencies that he had at the last election still another course open to him—to vote for a member of the Labor Party. Therefore, in general, he could only vote on the one question, whether the Government of the country was to be entrusted to the Liberals or the Conservatives. The promotion of particular measures under our present system depends not so much on the votes given at the poll as on the choice of candidates by the local party leaders and organisations, and on the pressure brought to bear on the candidates when chosen; and the result does not always represent the real wishes of the mass of the voters. This is one of the difficulties which always confront a Liberal Government, and never more so than in the present instance. Particular sections of the party, in their zeal for their own particular ends, secure an influence in the choice of candidates out of all proportion to their numbers or real weight in the community; and they thus impose their policy on the whole party. The chief offenders in this respect are the Nonconformists and their friends, the Temperance Party. The Free Churchmen, who had undoubtedly suffered much injustice in the villages, where the only school was under the control of the Church, succeeded in forcing the education question to the front. They even tried to persuade the public that it was the great question on which the Election was fought, and they succeeded in obtaining pledges that it should be dealt with in conformity with their views. But there is a point beyond which the most clever manipulation of electoral forces is useless. Shrinking from "Secular Education" they threw justice overboard and scouted logic. Their movement stood revealed as an attempt to remove their own sectional grievances without any care for those of others, or even of bare consistency. A more "unprincipled" movement it would be impossible to imagine. And so far, in spite of numbers and of promises, they have failed to obtain their desires.—*"Positivist Review," August.*

ICONOCLASTS' CRICKET CLUB.

EIGHTH MATCH played on Sunday, August 2, v. South London Club and Institute. Iconoclasts lost by 51 runs. A very enjoyable game against strong opponents. Scores: Iconoclasts, 59 and 61 for 5 wickets; South London Club and Institute, 110.

NINTH MATCH played on Sunday, August 9, v. His Majesty's Theatre. Iconoclasts won by 86 runs. Scores: His Majesty's Theatre, 84; Iconoclasts, 170 for 8 wickets. Our men played grandly, especially G. Harvey, who took 6 wickets for 11 runs, and hit up 43 in very short time. Our opponents won the toss (as usual), and made 88 for 2 wickets. After that they collapsed, and were all out for 84. We hit off the necessary runs for the loss of only 1 wicket. Thereupon one batsman slogged recklessly, and the play was very amusing. The weather was glorious. Can any man outside a lunatic asylum object to such recreation on a Sunday?

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

PROGRESS.

"Yes," said Mrs. Malaprop, "my boy is doing first-rate at school. I sent him to one o' them alimentary schools, and his teacher says he's doing fine. He's a first-class sculler, they tell me, and is head of his class in gastronomy, knows his letters by sight, and can spell like one o' them deformed spellers down to Washington."

"What's he going to be when he grows up?"

"He wants to be an undertaker, and I'm inclined to humor him, so I've told the confessor to pay special intention to the dead languages," said the proud mother.

—*Harper's Weekly.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S.: Victoria Park (near the Fountain), 3.15 and 6.15, G. A. Aldred.
 CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S.: Station-road, 11.30, F. A. Davies. Brockwell Park, 3.15 and 6.15, Guy A. Aldred.
 KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S.: Ridley-road, 11.30, C. Cohen, "What is the Use of Religion?"
 NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Parliament Hill, 3.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.
 REGENT'S PARK: Freethought Demonstration, 6.
 WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S.: Outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford, 7, Mr. Ford, a Lecture.
 WEST LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.: Hyde Park (near Marble Arch), 11.30, a Lecture.
 WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S.: Beresford-square, 11.30, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S. (Rationalists' Club, 12 Hill-square): Thursdays, at 8.15, a Social Meeting.
 FALLSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): Annual Services, 2.45 and 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Secularism and Character-Making" and "Life's Safety-Lamp." Hymns, etc., by Choir.

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN: 3 and 7, Mr. McClellan, Lectures.
 BOSTON: Barge Green (near the Cannons), 2.45, Joseph Bates, "Noah and his Wonderful Ark."
 EDINBURGH BRANCH N. S. S.: Dalkieth (main street), Saturday, August 15th, at 6, Lectures. Sunday, August 16, The Meadows, 2.30, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.
 LEEDS: Town Hall Square, Friday, August 14, at 7.30, Geo. Weir, a Lecture.
 WIGAN: Market Steps, Wednesday, August 19, Mr. McClellan, a Lecture.

H. S. WISHART'S LECTURES.

ROCHDALE: Friday, August 14, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Evolution and Morality."
 LEEDS: Saturday, August 15, Town Hall Square, at 7.30, "Good 'God." Sunday, August 16, Woodhouse Moor, at 6.30, "How Christianity Didn't Free the Slaves."
 BRADFORD: Monday, August 17.
 NELSON: Tuesday, August 18, Secondary School Ground, at 7.30, "Christianity and Slavery."
 BURNLEY: Wednesday, August 19, Market, at 7.30, "Salvation Army a Fraud."

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