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Alas, move whithersoever you may, are not the tatters and rags of superannuated worn-out symbols (in this Ragfair of a World) dropping off everywhere, to hood-wink, to halter, to tether you; nay, if you shake them not aside, threatening to accumulate, and perhaps produce suffocation?—THOMAS CARLYLE.

Some Signs of the Times.

UNDER this heading I propose to deal with certain interesting matters, instead of writing an article on one definite topic, as I usually do.

Without touching politics, that are not my concern in this journal—which is devoted to Free-thought, and only refers to other subjects collaterally—I wish to say something about a passage in the Prime Minister's speech at the Guildhall. Mr. Asquith was obliged to make a statement with regard to the Eastern Question, and in doing so he could hardly avoid mentioning the recent revolution in Turkey. This is what he said:—

"We have been the witnesses in Turkey of one of the most amazing revolutions in the annals of history..... We recognise to the full the magnitude of the difficulties which had to be faced—the tact, judgment, prudence, and consideration with which they were successfully encountered and overcome; the happy absence of the violence and the vindictiveness with which changes so far-reaching and so fundamental have as a rule been accompanied; the sagacity, patience, and tolerance which have so far distinguished the new régime."

What a strange comment is this on a very old text! It has been asserted by Christian advocates—it has, indeed, been asserted at this year's religious congresses—that Mohammedan nations are doomed to stagnation and death, because Mohammedanism is hopelessly reactionary while Christianity is essentially progressive. There could be no hope for South-East Europe while the Turk remained there. When he could be driven, bag and baggage, across the Bosphorus, and Mohammedanism with him, the good Christians in Bulgaria, Servia, Roumelia, Macedonia, etc., would settle down for ever in the enjoyment of an earthly paradise. Meanwhile the Concert of Europe could do nothing to prevent these good Christians, without the slightest assistance from the unspeakable Turk, from turning Macedonia, for instance, into a bloody cockpit. Christians gratuitously murdered, tortured, and outraged Christians; yet they were the most peaceable people on earth, if properly understood—like Byron's pirate Lambro, who was "the mildest mannered man that ever scuttled ship or cut a throat." Year after year they went on slaughtering and tormenting each other, without the slightest provocation or the shadow of an excuse, and the Christian Powers could not, or rather would not, put an end to the disgusting performance. But the Young Turkish party, who are all Mohammedans when they are not Freethinkers, put an end to the bloody scene in the twinkling of an eye. They did it by holding aloft the banner of liberty and justice. They let it be seen that they were in earnest in every way. They were sincere in their profession of principles, and they were ready to die in defence of the flag they had unfurled. Theirs was a policy

of free citizenship; Mohammedan and Christian should stand on one level of political equality. This they said, and this they meant—and they threw their swords into the right scale. Peace, like a spell, fell upon the terrible scene. So august is the voice of lofty principle when it can make itself heard.

Christian advocates and missionaries may talk as much as they please in future about the absolutely unprogressive character of Mohammedan civilisation, but the public will know better, and refuse to be deceived. Those who knew history never were deceived. They are perfectly aware that a splendid Mohammedan civilisation existed when Christendom was in the intellectual and moral night of the Dark Ages. And many of them are quite convinced that the Concert of Christian Powers has, for a long while, simply hindered the natural development of the Turkish Empire. If the Balkan peoples are wise they will close up their ranks in a common confederacy with Turkey against the "Christian charity" of the great European Powers.

It is a big drop from the amazing revolution in Turkey to the latest news in connection with the Spaxton Messiah. I hope it is not necessary to convince my readers that I have no sort of sympathy with the men who went down from London to "bash old Pigott" and only succeeded in assaulting his secretary. Why three men should fall upon one, and knock him about in the name of religion and morality, would pass my comprehension if I did not know that the pleasures of malignity are often enjoyed under the cover of altruism. Pigott does not appear to have done these men any particular harm, except by living on the same planet in a way that fails to command their approval. It was mere hooliganism on their part to fancy themselves commissioned to execute the vengeance of the upper powers upon his sinful head. Moreover, it might occur to them that if they are really commissioned to deal in the some way with all the wicked and "beastly" people in England they are in for a remarkably extensive job. For my part, I conceive that Pigott has the same right as other professional Christians to the profits of religious imposture, and the same right as other Christians to have non-legal attachments to ladies who choose to have non-legal attachments to him. From the point of view of taste or morality, his conduct may be ever so reprehensible; but that does not justify his fellow Christians in playing the part of amateur and irresponsible policemen for his individual benefit. Freethinkers, of course, look upon his case with tolerable equanimity. They see no special reason for losing their tempers. Pigott's game is a very old one, and is still played, although less conspicuously, by a goodly number of pious charlatans.

The truth is that the newspapers which have been holding Pigott up to public scorn are mostly as honest as he is. They take him up about the same time every year—in the silly season—and make saleable copy out of him while he serves their turn. As soon as they find more profitable business they drop him and his "wickedness." No doubt the men who went down from London to Spaxton to "bash old Pigott" had their heads turned by the commercial morality of these representatives of our "glorious free press."

Pigott is really not a national menace. He is not as dangerous a person as the Archbishop of Canterbury, any more than a burglar is as dangerous as a fraudulent company promoter. He only acts within a limited circle of mischief. He gets a few people about him who flatter his vanity and minister to his wants, and he is satisfied. The Archbishop of Canterbury is a nationally established hypocrite, who receives £15,000 a year as the head fakir of the religion of poverty and renunciation. He is a highly respectable agent of the lowest spiritual debauchery. He carries the organised corruption of his dogmatic supernaturalism into our public school system, so that his dishonest and detestable business may secure a multitude of good paying customers, by visiting the folly of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth (or fortieth) generation. Compared with this colossus of successful imposture, Pigott is a miserable pigmy. And some of the newspaper editors who have been "going for" him know it as well as we do.

This naturally leads me to say a few concluding words on the Education question. I see it is announced that the two thieves—Church and Chapel—have at last agreed on the crucifixion of the children. I hope this is not true. I hardly see how it can be true. Even if it be true for the moment, I believe it cannot be so for long. Nor do I conceive it possible that a Bill, based upon a partial compromise, could successfully weather the storm of criticism in the House of Commons and in the country. We shall see—what we do see. In the meantime the friends of Secular Education should prepare to strike into the fray with vigor and decision. This is the opportunity of the Secular Education League.

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Science.

SIR OLIVER LODGE'S book, *Man and the Universe*, has furnished occasion for many laudatory articles in the religious and semi-religious press. There has been all the usual talk of the bankruptcy of Materialism, the vindication of the truth of religion, and the arrival of the long-expected millennium, in which the scientific lion and the religious lamb should lie down lovingly together. In some senses Sir Oliver Lodge richly deserves the eulogies that have been passed upon him. True, his statement of the religious implications of scientific teachings have been praised by those who had no right whatever to speak in the name of science. Theologians have praised his interpretation of science, and some scientists have praised his theology, which is, when one comes to think of it, rather an equivocal compliment. And certainly Sir Oliver's fine disregard of historic teachings, and his equally marked ignoring of the history of religion, to say nothing of his occasional misstatement of scientific teachings in the interests of religion, deserves recognition from hard-pressed current Christianity.

But I am not now concerned with Sir Oliver Lodge's book. The principal parts of this were noticed as they originally appeared in the reviews, and such revisions as have taken place are not of great importance. My concern is with an article, written *apropos* of *Man and the Universe*, by the Rev. K. C. Anderson. This gentleman evidently sees in Sir Oliver the man who will reconcile religion and science, which proves that the New Theologians, like the old variety of the order of *theologians*, are not over-mindful of the lessons of experience. For the number of people who have harmonised religion and science is simply incalculable. They are always with us, and they are always leaving us. Like the month of March, they come in like a lion and go out like a lamb. Each one of them is going to settle the controversy once for all, and each disappears leaving a yet larger measure of victory on the side of science, and a still longer record of defeat on the part of re-

ligion. But, hopeful ever, the hard-pressed religionist trusts that each new apologist will be successful, oblivious of the fact that all that any of them do is to vary the terms of an argument that in its essence remains unchanged. The Paleyan watch argument being discredited, one religious genius substitutes a motor-car for a chronometer, and thinks he has saved the situation. The motor being consigned to the argumentative scrap-heap, another genius suggests that the simile of a flower will do the trick. This being given up as useless, yet another suggestion comes that we must cease tracing "God" in anything in particular, and find proofs of his existence in everything in general. And all the time science advances, steadily reducing our conception of the universe to order, while the army of the religious lags in the rear, chanting its out-of-date science and still more belated religion.

Mr. Anderson commences with a statement that might be true if someone else had said it. "There are signs," he says, "that the long battle between Religion and Science is drawing to a close." This may be true enough, but Mr. Anderson means that these signs are that Religion and Science will adopt a common statement of faith concerning the universe. And this is not true. Such a consummation is as far off as ever. The scientific lion will only fraternise with the religious lamb on the conditions that usually govern the meeting of the two—the lamb must be inside. The scientific and the religious conceptions of the world are in irreconcilable opposition. And—in view of the intellectual antics of Sir Oliver Lodge, I wish to make the statement as deliberately as possible—there is not a scientist worth troubling about who reconciles these two views with knowledge derived from that department in which he is an authority. The biologist appeals to physics, the physicist to biology, and so on throughout the entire series. Either the vitalistic or the mechanical view of nature *may* be true; both cannot be, nor can any one person accept both without evidencing mental confusion.

Here is another statement of Mr. Anderson's that contains both truth and error. "It is not," he says, "religion and science that have been in conflict, it is crude science with matured science." True, so far as the latter portion of the statement is concerned. All along it has been the struggle of the more accurate knowledge, or science of the present, with the less accurate knowledge or science of the past. But it is quite wrong to say that, therefore, religion has not been in conflict with science. For this crude and primitive science is what we know as religion. The vitalistic theories of the universe that meet us at the dawn of history, and which, more profitably still, may be studied in the lives and thoughts of exciting uncivilised races, form the science of primitive days and thought, and the raw material from which all religions have been elaborated. Remove this and religion is left without any basis in history or in fact. Retain it and you can understand religion, and explain it—out of existence. Religion, in brief, is man's theory of the world elaborated at a time when the knowledge sufficient to form an accurate theory did not exist. And religions cease to exist the moment one tests them by the standard of the verifiable knowledge of to-day.

Mr. Anderson's conception of the nature of religion is, like his conception of science, with which I will deal presently, peculiar. He says: "The core of every form of religion the world has known..... is a more or less blind faith, that at the heart of the universe there is goodness, power, and love." Now this is simply not true. The idea of "God" as a governor of the universe is a late conception in the history of religion, that of gods as creators later still. The gods of primitive peoples are not creators—they are wielders of powers that exist; how they obtain such control the primitive believer troubles not at all. Neither are they all-powerful. They may be circumvented or coerced, as is shown by the part played by magic in primitive times. Neither do these religions teach that love and goodness is at

the heart of the universe. The gods are attended to simply because they are there. One might as reasonably say that the Russian peasant pays his taxes because he is convinced that love and goodness lies in the heart of his government. In both cases tribute is paid only because worse will result from refusal. Later religions do elaborate on the lines indicated by Mr. Anderson, but this is because the socialising and moralising forces of life operate and force a reinterpretation under penalty of extinction. What Mr. Anderson does is to take his own conception of religion and call that the essence of the subject. It is a common practice, and so lacks the element of novelty to atone for its futility.

Mr. Anderson's conception of science is also peculiar. There is, of course, the customary sneer at Haeckel. It is strange what an unscientific thinker Haeckel is, and what little scientific value his opinion possesses—to parsons. Thousands of local preachers, ministers of every denomination, Old and New Theologians, all have testified to the insignificance of Ernst Haeckel. There is a little compensation in the fact that this is not the view taken by men of science of their fellow-worker; but one cannot expect them to have the same conception of the real nature of science as have these devotees of the "spiritual life." Mr. Anderson quotes from a well-known writer the opinion that "the very strongest and deepest implication of science is this, that which asserts the everlasting reality of religion." This is given as the opinion of one who bears "as great a name in science as Ernst Haeckel." So says Mr. Anderson; and the name of this equal in the scientific world to Professor Haeckel is Professor John Fiske, of Harvard, U.S.A. Now, I have the utmost respect for Professor Fiske; but, unless we extend the meaning of science beyond that conveyed by Mr. Anderson, Professor Fiske is not a scientist at all. With the exception of his *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, a philosophical work, and a number of essays on evolution, his work has been entirely historical. At any rate, his fame rests on his volumes dealing with the earlier history of his own country. To cite, therefore, Fiske as the equal of Haeckel in biological science is either a lesson in misrepresentation or an exhibition of a want of knowledge. Or probably the truth is that anyone who agrees with Mr. Anderson is a scientific authority, and anyone who does not is old-fashioned or a charlatan. At any rate, they are not to be recognised by the New Theology, and are therefore anathema.

The above will give one a fair notion of Mr. Anderson's qualifications for passing authoritative opinions on science, or, for the matter of that, on religion. But if bad begins, worse remains behind. "At the beginning," we are informed, "science was materialistic, but when it matured and realised itself it became idealistic by discovering three facts—order, progress, and unity—which are the most conclusive proofs of the idealistic theory that could be adduced. By order is meant that the universe is governed by law."

There really was no need, except to satisfy the inveterate theological habit, to write the last sentence in order to emphasise a misstatement. The universe is not governed by law at all. Law in the scientific sense is an observed sequence. It does not express something governed and something governing; there are not two things, but only one. And the fact of natural law is not something that science discovered in its maturity; it is implied in every stage of human knowledge. Science itself is not something that human reason develops to; it is something that human reason starts with. The first man who observed that a piece of wood floated in water, that fire burned, that food nourished, or who made any of the countless observations of daily life, was commencing the scientific education of the race. The gods themselves are born of science, and finally killed by the instrument that gave them being.

C. COHEN.

(To be continued.)

The Substitute for Christianity.

WHENEVER the Christian religion is attacked by unbelievers, the usual retort is, "What do you offer as a substitute for it?" This question rests on the assumption that mankind cannot live without a religion of some sort, and that one religion cannot be justly removed unless another and superior one is in readiness to take its place. We contend, on the contrary, that religion, in the sense of intercourse with a supernatural realm, is not only superfluous, but also a foreign element which is inevitably a source of confusion and weakness. Some religions are, doubtless, worse than others, though even the very best, being unnatural, are necessarily more or less injurious; but our objection is not to any one religion in particular, but to all religions alike, because they are all equally rooted in ignorance and superstition. In this sense, therefore, we supply no substitute for Christianity. We do not wish to displace it in favor of any other religion whatever, old or new. Of course, there is much in every great religion with which we would never dream of parting. Almost every cult under the sun embodies more or less of essential truth by which it survives; but the truth added to it in process of development is by no means a constituent part of it. Some religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, are differentiated from many others by the adjective *ethical*; but even the three mentioned here can be traced back to a common and unethical origin. What we wish to accomplish is the rescue of ethics from its false alliance with supernaturalism, or the divorce of moral truth from its unfortunate union with religious belief. It follows, therefore, that the suitable substitute for supernaturalism is naturalism, for religious belief human intelligence, and for the love of God the good of humanity.

The Rev. H. H. Scullard, M.A., D.D., has recently delivered a lecture before the London Congregational Union Lay Speakers Association on "Christian Ethics." Naturally, his object was to establish the superiority of what he called Christian Ethics to all other moral codes. Having carefully read the lecture as published in the *British Congregationalist*, we do not hesitate to affirm that it comes far short of achieving the object in view. Dr. Scullard, like other theologians, mistakes rhetoric for reasoning and dogma for argument. While granting that "it is only fair to acknowledge the excellencies of pro-Christian and non-Christian ethics," as "a mark of respect for other earnest thinkers," he makes no secret of the fact that the chief value of "a method which will lead to comparison, and reveal the similarities and the differences," lies in its being "a means of showing the superiority of Christian ethics." Unfortunately, Dr. Scullard is content with throwing bald assertions at his audience, and with assuming the historical truth of supernatural Christianity. "If Christianity is in any sense original," he says, "it will not only proclaim a new manner of living, but a new way of regarding our relations to the Universe in which we find ourselves." But every student of comparative religion knows quite well that Christianity is in no sense original and proclaims no new manner of living, or of regarding our relations to the Universe. Dr. Scullard does not tell us what the new manner of life proclaimed by Christianity is, or what new light it throws on our relations to the Universe. But his omission to furnish us with such information is due to the non-original character of Christian teaching, not to any lack of ability in himself. He has simply undertaken an impossible task.

There are a few true statements in the lecture, but not one of them is of the least service to the cause which the lecturer has at heart. The following is a true statement: "Christian ethics do not rest on the same foundation as philosophical ethics." Christian ethics rest on the alleged authority of God, and philosophical ethics on the nature and requirements of society. The foundation of the former is

behind the veil, in the unseen depths of an imaginary eternity, while the foundation of the latter is in the natural order of the visible Universe. That statement is perfectly true, but its truth is an argument against the truth of the Christian religion, and in favor of detaching morality from supernaturalism. It is significant that this entirely true sentence is found in a mass of hopeless irrelevances concerning "Christ the Centre," matter, spirit, and personality. As a specimen of the lot take this irrelevancy: "Spirit is now no longer an ethereal, unintelligible, ghostly entity, since God is spirit, and He who was in the bosom of the Father has declared Him." Even if such a sentence could be proved to be true, which it never can, what on earth would it have to do with ethics? Dr. Scullard calls Christ "the ultimate mystery," and yet speaks of him as if he were the most intimately known personality in the Universe. This "ultimate mystery" explains every other mystery and solves every problem. "There is no dark subject of human thought which is not illuminated by the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," who is the "ultimate mystery."

What is man? Dr. Scullard says: "The contention of the Christian moralist is that man must not be regarded simply from the point of view of his 'natural' condition and 'natural' powers. As such he is neither a proper subject of Christian morality nor a capable exponent of its principles." In other words, in order to live the Christian life and observe the Christian morality, a man must cease to be a natural being, and become a supernatural one. He must be created anew, and undergo a second birth. In his natural condition and by the exercise of his natural powers, he may gain righteousness, and be a thoroughly good neighbor as well as exemplary in the discharge of all his domestic obligations, but he "is not moral in the Christian sense of morality." Now we know where we are. A righteous man, who fulfils all his duties in society, unless he is a Christian, is yet an immoral man. He may not be "utterly immoral," but he "is not moral in the Christian sense of morality." What the "Christian sense of morality" is we are not told, nor is it possible to find out without becoming supernatural beings, and even then it would not be possible to inform mere human beings.

Consistency is not a theological virtue. We have been assured that the righteous man is not moral in the "Christian sense of morality," which is equivalent to saying that in that sense he is immoral; and yet it is admitted that "Jesus did acknowledge the morality of the natural man, though he revealed to his disciples, and himself practised, a higher kind." What a pity Dr. Scullard does not define this "higher kind" of morality. Poor old natural man; in spite of his noble thoughts and splendid deeds, according to Dr. Scullard, he is still "evil," still deserving of the flames, still the object of heaven's wrath. Until he enters "the school of Christ" he is at best but a miserable sinner doomed to perish. But the curious thing is that the moment he believes in Christ and becomes a supernatural being, he is pronounced "moral in the Christian sense of morality,"—a spiritual man "created in Jesus Christ for good works." There is a more remarkable thing still. Though a Christian is a new creation, supernaturally born or made, the supernatural in him is not the unnatural, nor the anti-natural, and the morality that now adorns his life is declared to be "the perfectly natural morality, though of "a higher kind" than that of the natural man. As a matter of fact, however, Christian morality is not higher in kind than all other moralities, nor are Christians morally superior to all others. All the fine talk about a "new creation," a "new ideal," a "new criterion," and supernatural influences is mere moonshine, not only inconsistent with itself, but contradictory of all the facts of life.

Dr. Scullard indulges in most extraordinary observations concerning the "new criterion." "All conduct is to be judged not primarily by its intrinsic

reasonableness, nor by its effect on ourselves or on others, but by a new standard or court of appeal." This standard or criterion is said to be "the mind of Christ," in the light of which Hedonism, Institutionalism, and Utilitarianism retire into the background, ceasing to be "the final method of ascertaining what is right and what is wrong." If "the mind of Christ" dictates what is calculated to have an injurious effect upon the community, the believer's duty is to obey without question. Christ's "mind" is absolute law for all disciples. So Dr. Scullard teaches, although well aware that Christ's "words" are universally ignored by those who profess to be strictly guided by his "mind," as if his "mind" and his "words" could be at complete variance. In this connection Dr. Scullard does J. S. Mill grievous injustice by quoting him as acknowledging "the value of this criterion even for the unbeliever." John Stuart Mill was never guilty of such ineffable folly. The great logician did not even believe in the existence of "the mind of Christ" apart from the sayings attributed to him. He *did* state that "some of the precepts of Christ," contained in the Gospels, "carry some kinds of moral goodness to a greater height than had ever been attained before"; but he also maintained that "much even of what is supposed to be peculiar to them is equalled in the meditations of Marcus Antoninus, which we have no ground for believing to have been in any way indebted to Christianity." Having made that too generous concession, Mill went on to advocate the entire abandonment of supernaturalism, in the full confidence that the resources of Nature are amply sufficient to satisfy all the needs of this earthly life. Whatever might be thought of the utility of supernatural religion in the past, he maintained that the time had already come when it should be dropped in the interest of morality itself. Here is a sample of his reasoning on the subject:—

"It is impossible that anyone who habitually thinks, and who is unable to blunt his inquiring intellect by sophistry, should be able without misgiving to go on ascribing absolute perfection to the author and ruler of so clumsily made and capriciously governed a creation as this planet and the life of its inhabitants. The adoration of such a being cannot be with the whole heart, unless the heart is first considerably sophisticated."

Our contention is that morality is a natural product, inspired by natural impulses and governed by natural laws, and that until it has been completely divorced from all supernatural considerations it can never come into its own.

J. T. LLOYD.

An Old Friend in a New Dress.

SOME time since a clever attempt was made by Mr. Mallock to translate the poetry of Lucretius into the quatrains of Omar Khayyam. At first glance it seemed almost like a practical joke, this forcing of the classic writer into the arteries of the Oriental, this exaltation of a Roman poet above the singers of our own day. Moreover, why should it have been Lucretius of all Roman poets? Lucretius, like Horace, is "caviare to the general." He is essentially of his own period, race, and country. He speaks to Roman audiences, and is oblivious of foreign approval or censure. He is before all things a Roman gentleman who has imbibed the culture of Greece. And, with the charm of Athens on his lips, he sings of life and death, of joy and sorrow. But he jibes, too, stinging with his mocking banter the priests and the stupid people who believe in them. This seems far enough removed from the practical and strenuous life of to-day. Yet Lucretius is much closer to us than many a writer upon whose platitudes we batten with feverish eagerness.

This iconoclast had a boundless sympathy with his fellow-man. He was, in the fullest sense, a Humanitarian. His mission and his attitude are entirely

analogous to those of Voltaire. Across the gulf of twenty centuries we see him as the champion of reason, claiming that by it, and by it alone, we are to understand the Riddle of the Universe. He makes this claim in his "De Rerum Natura," just as it is made to-day, against all religion. He might have been an old-world Huxley confuting the arguments of an ancient Gladstone, or deriding the insolence of a prehistoric Wilberforce. Talk of prophecy! This old Roman poet, "dreaming on things to come," saw farther than any belauded prophet of a superstitious creed. Not with vague and misty language, like the oracles of religion, but with great exactness he anticipated Darwinism, the survival of the fittest, the indestructibility of matter, and many other points of the present-day science. Now and again his eyes flame with anger, as when he records, in lines of great beauty, the terrible guilt, prompted by religion, against the most sacred ties of human nature. No poet has presented us with a picture more finished and exquisite than that of the sacrifice of Iphigenia. It stands before us as if it had been transferred to canvas. It is a story "too deep for tears." We see the hapless maiden, trembling by the altar, without power of speech, the murderous priest, the sorrowing father, the strong men powerless, and the awful end. Lucretius concludes his account with lines that make us feel his heart throb with indignation as we read:—

"She died—
That so the ships the wished-for wind might gain
And air puff out their canvas. Learn thou, then,
To what damned deeds religion urges men."

Lucretius would not have fixed on the sacrifice of Iphigenia as an illustration of the terrible atrocities provoked by religion unless the fanaticism which had been present had been still active. Little did Lucretius imagine that the especial aspect of religion which he had selected to illustrate its hatefulness was on the eve of becoming the central dogma of a new creed, which was to overrun Europe and plunge it in intellectual darkness for many centuries. "Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark," says my lord Verulam. This, in common with many another fine saying of the moderns, was anticipated by Lucretius when he said: "Life is a struggle in the dark; and in the dark men are as children." Death, to Lucretius, is "dreamless rest." He might almost have written Whitman's "Come lovely and soothing death." He tells us in a very fine passage—

"Thou not again shalt see thy dear home's door,
Nor thy dear wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go;
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store
Thou hoardest for thine own, men say, and lo,
All thou desired is gone! But never say
All the desire as well hath passed away."

The most marked characteristic of Lucretius was his passionate ardor for knowledge. It was simply unbounded. His pathos and tenderness in contemplating the tragedy of existence have already been noticed. His was the tenderness of a strong character, self-reliant, and feeling sympathy with the weak and helpless, with the animal world as well as humanity. His allusions to children are exquisitely touching. His love of science, his austerity, the splendor of his genius, rank him among the immortals who, like fixed stars, shine for ever in the firmament. When we think of the present condition of priest-ridden Ireland, Russia, Spain, and his beloved Italy, when we reflect on the struggle of reason and religion written in blood and fire during the centuries, we feel it but just to acknowledge that this old-world Freethinker fought for Liberty. Lucretius helps us to understand the magnitude of the struggle between reason and unreason. In his days, each, as it were, armed with simple weapons, fought together. Now Reason, armed with weapons so much more formidable and deadly, marches to battle in the sure and certain hope of final victory. It is not strange, then, that we should turn with interest to this iconoclast who had, in the dark far-off days, so intimate a sympathy with the message of

Freethought. Lucretius is nearer to us than any other poet of antiquity, because his inspiration was kindled at the flame on the Altar of Liberty. That is the secret of his charm for us.

"Bird of the little, bright, grey, golden morn,
First of us all and sweetest singer born."

M.

Correspondence.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—On Sunday afternoon, November 1, Mr. B. Brown, Bristol Branch N. S. S., fulfilled an invitation to address the David Thomas Memorial Discussion class. Some members of the class seem to be under the impression that an Atheist cannot express himself except in coarse and blackguardly language; the result being that they were greatly upset at the idea of an Atheist being invited to speak in a church. The subject of the address was "Is the Belief in God Tenable?" The Rev. Donald Frazer presided, and seemed like a square peg in a round hole. He was apparently boiling over with indignation all the time. Mr. Brown acquitted himself very creditably, and there was a lively discussion. The chairman had the last opportunity of speaking, and the rev. gentleman could only meet Mr. Brown's argument by calling him a "fool" and an "ignoramus."

F. ROBBINS.

MR. GLADSTONE'S "PREVENTION OF CRIME BILL." IMPRISONMENT FOR EVER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR.—As the advocates of the "Crime Bill" persist in their misstatement that it "introduced the principle of an indeterminate sentence in place of a definite sentence," may I point out that the so-called indeterminate sentence is not to commence until the prisoner has endured the definite sentence (which may be any number of years between three and fifteen inclusive), which is supposed to be an equivalent for every crime of which he has been convicted? The indefinite sentence is to be added to all his definite sentences in case the jury finds him to be an "habitual criminal," and all these definite sentences, including the last, will have been passed with full knowledge of the prisoner's antecedents. Having endured the punishment which the judge—taking his antecedents into consideration—regards as a full equivalent for the crime, he is to undergo a further punishment for the good of the public. This is described in the text of Mr. Gladstone's Bill as "preventive detention," and such detention may go on for a lengthened term of years or during His Majesty's pleasure!

The "Crime Bill" provides first for a vindictive punishment and then for a preventive one. I doubt whether a vindictive punishment is justifiable under any circumstances; but what of the double punishment, which will be carried out under the present penal conditions?

HUMANITARIAN PRISON REFORMER.

P.S.—What is an "habitual criminal"? Few people know that the young man (aged twenty-one) recently sentenced by Sir Ralph Littler to three years' penal servitude and two years' police supervision for stealing apples to the value of one shilling, is an "habitual criminal." So with the man who got three years' penal servitude and two years' police supervision for stealing three hen's eggs.

THOSE WICKED CHINESE.

The European Powers have accustomed themselves, whenever any breach of order occurs in the great Empire of China, to send out troops—either one Power independently or several in combination—which troops restore order by means of theft, violence, plunder, slaughter, and incendiarism, and pacify the country with guns and cannons. The unarmed Chinese do not defend themselves, or defend themselves badly. They are slaughtered with agreeable facility. They are polite and ceremonious, but we reproach them with a want of goodwill towards Europeans. Our complaint against them is of the same nature as Monsieur Duchailu's complaint of the gorilla. That gentleman shot a female gorilla. She died clasping her young one to her breast. He tore the young animal from its mother's arms, and dragged it after him across Africa to sell in Europe. But it gave him just cause of complaint. It was unsociable. It preferred dying of hunger to living in his society, and refused to take food. "I was," he writes, "unable to overcome its bad disposition." We complain of the Chinese with as much right as M. Duchailu complained of his gorilla.—*Anatole France.*

Acid Drops.

Mr. Asquith seems to be under the impression that it is the duty of the classes to look after the morals of the masses—especially on Sunday. Everything must be done to keep the people from the national beverage on that day. It appears to be thought that this is the only day on which they have time to get drunk, and that they are sure to do it unless prevented. Mr. Asquith, therefore, like a true Nonconformist and Puritan, sets about preventing them. Public-houses are only to be opened for one hour in the morning and two hours in the evening. This was going to be applied to London as well as the provinces, but it was soon seen to be impossible there, as a statesman should have known beforehand. Consequently the "pubs." are to be opened for three hours on Sunday evening—with special provision for the cases of restaurants and hotels. We presume, then, that Sabbatarian statesmanship thinks it has circumvented the boozers by this arrangement. Well, we venture to assert that it leaves them an excellent opportunity of getting drunk twice every Lord's Day. And lots of them will take it.

How curious it is that just as the national drink-bill is steadily declining, and brewers and distillers are complaining of bad business, the Nonconformist government—for it is nothing else—feels called upon to worry the electors into greater sobriety. It is not so curious, however, that the worrying should be worst on Sunday. The soul-saving fraternity are at the bottom of this manœuvre. They fancy that by emptying public-houses they will fill churches. Well, we are confident that they are mistaken. Complete Sunday-closing prevails in Scotland, yet it does not arrest the exodus from the gospel-shops. And if figures go for anything it does not lessen the consumption of the "spirit" which most Scotsmen seem to prefer to the Holy Spirit itself.

The Manchester and Salford Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society (we stop to take breath) held a meeting lately, which was to have been presided over by Mr. W. Joynson-Hicks, M.P., but that gentleman was kept at Westminster by his parliamentary duties, and the chair was taken by Dr. Alfred Hopkinson, Vice-Chancellor of the University. The report showed a falling off in every way, in consequence of "bad times." Even the work of God suffers when man is hard up. An effort had been made—and it was backed up by the Bishop of Manchester—to establish a Bible Sunday among the churches, but it was a rank failure; for, although four hundred circulars were sent out, there were only thirty favorable replies. All this was very depressing, and the situation was only saved by "an inspiring address" from Mr. J. L. Paton, High Master of the Grammar School, who sang the praises of the Bible with all the flowing zeal of an auctioneer. Other books, he said, changed or disappeared; the Bible was the only book that was unchanged and remained. "Even Euclid had gone by the board," but the Grand Old Book stood as firm as ever. You couldn't have morality and character without it; you couldn't even understand English literature without it; it was—but we must really turn off the tap, for the same stream has been through the pipe so often before. Mr. Paton could only talk in that way to a believing audience. It was mostly "rot," and, as an educated man, he must have known it.

Lady speakers are to the front now, and Mrs. Holt, the Lady Mayoress, joined in this feast of eloquence. She said that the Bible and the steam-engine were the chief instruments of civilisation,—which seems to halve the glory between God and man. Where the steam-engine went, the lady said, the Bible followed,—which gives man the front place in the salvation procession. His production leads, and God's production follows. We understand now why the Bible made such slow progress in former times. It had to wait for the steam-engine, which did not arrive until the eighteenth century. God took a lot of trouble over the Bible, but it couldn't be pushed round the world before James Watt came along. Poor God!

Where the steam-engine went, Mrs. Holt said, the Bible followed, and with the Bible went moral law and moral right. We have no doubt that she really believes so, but she is mistaken. If she took the pains to investigate she would find that moral law and moral right are better off in some "heathen" than they are in some Christian countries. There is far less crime in China than there is in England—far less in Burma than in Scotland—far less in Constantinople than in Manchester and Salford. Mrs. Holt might even learn, if she pursued her inquiries further, that moral law and moral

right were tolerably flourishing in the world before the Bible was heard of. She might also be led to suspect that they would be tolerably flourishing when the Bible was forgotten.

The *Freethinker* is not a political paper, and it has therefore no concern with the Woman Suffrage movement, or that department of it which is associated with Caxton Hall. But we have always denounced the policy of interfering with public meetings. Free speech, through the platform and the press, is the basis of all rational progress. Its preservation is absolutely vital. Better a thousand women, or men, in prison than that the primary principle of human civilisation should be endangered. We say this quite deliberately, and without a particle of personal feeling against any particular sect of women (or men) or earth.

Things have come to a pretty pass in England when we read that the Women's Liberal Federation is organising a meeting in favor of woman suffrage in the Albert Hall, and that it has "informally approached the Suffragette leaders with a view to securing a peaceful meeting." Fancy asking permission to hold a peaceful meeting! It is a national disgrace that such a state of affairs should obtain.

When the right of orderly public meeting is trampled under foot—it doesn't matter if the foot is under trousers or under petticoats—two sets of people stand to lose most. First, the representatives of unpopular causes; that is to say, the thoughtful minority, who are always hated by the mob—the mob of all classes. Second, women themselves, whose only chance, in the long run, lies in public order, peace, and safety. When it comes to hooliganism and mob law, the fair sex will necessarily have to take back seats. Nature has not built them for success in a competition of that kind.

"Nothing takes place without God," says Mr. Rhondda Williams, and by so saying makes God responsible for all that is—good and evil, right and wrong, truth and falsehood alike. Mr. Williams forgets, however, that his saying anything does not make it true. If he had said, "Nothing takes place without an adequate cause," he would have uttered sense; but what he does say is sheer nonsense, because founded on total ignorance.

Dr. K. C. Anderson, of Dundee, only exposes his own ignorance or disingenuousness when he claims that John Fiske is "as great a name in science as Ernest Haeckel." Scientists will only laugh at so absurd a statement. The divine is equally mistaken when he says that "Professor Haeckel is an exception in drawing the inferences of Materialism and Atheism from the science of the nineteenth century." Dr. Russel Wallace declared, only a couple of years ago, that there were not more than three or four men of science who were not of a wholly Materialistic and Atheistic tendency in all their teaching.

Dr. Anderson falls into another curious and inexplicable error. Denying that the Churches are in possession of a "Revelation," and affirming that "the Universe is God's revelation," he makes the entirely gratuitous inference that "the discovery of the world and the discovery of man—two phrases which sum up the scientific achievements of the last four centuries—are man's apprehension" of the latter revelation. Here, again, the scientists are dead against him. Of course, his authority is the eccentric Sir Oliver Lodge, who does not represent the attitude of present-day science to religion: yet he is the man by whom the New Theologians all religiously swear.

Mr. Bryan is a Presbyterian. Mr. Taft is a Unitarian. One has caught Christianity badly. The other has caught it mildly. We should like to think that this gave him the preference.

There is danger in being *too* good. One of the municipal candidates at Blackpool stated that he had never drunk, or smoked, or walked out with a woman in his life. Perhaps he also teaches in a Sunday-school. The electors gave him twenty-three votes. But that is not so bad in the circumstances.

"In spite of opposition," General Booth says he still believes in emigration as the great solution of the unemployed problem. Why, certainly. There is hardly an emigration agent in the country who would not say the same thing. For emigration spells business, and business spells profit. And to deport the unemployed is a very convenient method

of protecting the interests that might suffer if things were rearranged in a more satisfactory manner.

Speaking at a missionary exhibition at Leeds, Sir Robert Hart made one or two observations that should provide food for reflection for supporters of missionary enterprise. He hoped that the secular development of China would be favorable to Christianity. Under the circumstances one can appreciate this pious aspiration at its true value. But he went on to point out that the Chinese were essentially tolerant, a statement that throws the responsibility for aggressive anti-Christian feeling on the missionaries themselves. He also warned them that the Chinaman was "a man of brains," and advised missionaries to send their very best men to China. Well, the sight of the average missionary being sent out to convert a "man of brains," who is "essentially tolerant," and who is moreover armed with Western scientific knowledge, is distinctly amusing.

The truth is that the Chinese, like the Japanese, are ready enough to take secular knowledge from the West, but are finding little use for religious teaching. If they cannot get the former without being brought into association with the purveyors of the latter, they will take both, although only one will be retained. No less a person than the Rev. Wardlaw Thompson warned his society that, although many represented the present awakening of China as creating a desire for Christianity, it is really Western secular knowledge that the Chinese are after. From a paragraph in the *Christian World* we see, in confirmation of what has been said, a notice of a Chinese publishing firm which announces a lengthy list of translations from English into Chinese, in which theology is conspicuous by its absence. It would, indeed, be too much to expect, after Christianity has been discredited in the West, that it should establish a new empire in a civilised and enlightened East. Such a view is only possible to those supporters of missions with whom non-Christian is a synonym for heathen, and heathen a synonym for savage or uncivilised. Those who understand things can join with the educated Japanese and Chinese in a broad smile at Christian egotism and stupidity.

Yen Cheng Chuo, in *La Revue Generale* (Brussels), doesn't think his countrymen are going to take any stock in Christianity. China only wants one thing from Europe—the science which will give her an effective Army and Navy. Then, cries Yen Cheng Chuo, we shall "hunt you out of our land—you, your ministers, your missionaries of all denominations, your innovations, and your abuses." Perhaps this is why the Missionary Societies are making desperate efforts to raise big funds for their work in China. They must make all the hay they can while the sun shines—before the storm breaks out.

The Rev. David Smith advises that people should drop preaching "literary essays," and should speak to the people out of "the fulness of their hearts." It would be much more to the purpose if they preached out of the fulness of their heads. This would, of course, necessitate a preparatory process of loading up, but we fancy it would be profitable for all that.

"Nothing like religion for making money, particularly when it is printed," says one of the characters in one of Mr. Rider Haggard's novels. Undoubtedly this contains a truth, as many popular writers have discovered. The sloppy religious view is one easy to work and profitable. Mr. Wilson Barrett led the way with his *Sign of the Cross*, and he has had many imitators. Whether the plays are historically accurate, psychologically probable, or dramatically coherent, matters nothing. It is the sentiment that is every-thing; that is, the play must raise the sentimentalities of the average chapel goer, and success is assured. *Pete* at the Lyceum, and *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, are both instances of this. And, wonder of wonders, an advertisement is placed in the *Christian World* of one, while the *Christian Commonwealth* contains a displayed advertisement of the other. We have never observed in either journal an advertisement of even a Shakespearean play. But then one could not expect Shakespeare to exert as moralising or as humanising an influence as Hall Caine and Jerome K. Jerome.

Mr. Jerome says his object is to develop the latent power for good in man—a sentiment we fancy we have heard expressed before—and adds, there is latent good in all men, because "the monkey must have contained the man." If Mr. Jerome's knowledge of human nature is on the level of his acquaintance with biological principles, the Lord deliver us from both!

The President of the Wesleyan Conference says that one reason why the Turks hesitate to fraternise with Christians is that they fear such associations would lead to drunkenness. This might easily be the case, and drunkenness might not be the only evil result of such association. Anyway, the statement comes as a suggestive comment on the claims made for the civilising influences of Christianity.

The President also said that the maintenance of Bible teaching in schools is of "first-rate importance to the Church of Christ." This we quite believe, but whether it is of equal importance to the community is quite another question. Once "the Church of Christ" loses its hold on the children its days are numbered; but the day that this happens will provide a clear opportunity for providing the State with a generation that shall have its ideas and ideals clearly conceived and profitably applied.

One other word of advice to preachers, from the same quarter is worth noting. Preachers must speak, we are told, so as to convey the impression that they have a secret which appeals to all that is noblest and highest in human nature. Now, from a preacher's point of view, this is unquestionably good advice. Make the people feel that you are something of a miracle worker; that is the priestly profession in a nutshell. The medicine-man of a savage tribe does it. The Roman Catholic Church also, in a modified manner, endows its priests with miraculous powers. The Anglican Church still further modifies these powers, but follows on the same lines. Nonconformists, while rejecting miracle working by its priesthood, yet pretend to a spiritual "call" from God to assume the ministry. And when this is dispensed with there is the assumption of a certain mystical or spiritual development denied to ordinary beings. But the game is the same right through, from the savage to the present day preacher. And it is all such a transparent piece of humbug to those who understand the historic continuity of the process. Still it does impose on many, and so, to the preacher, the end justifies the means.

The twenty-third Psalm is being studied to-day in English speaking Sunday-schools throughout the world. Much devotional nonsense will fall upon millions of young ears. Until lately, it was the universal belief that the author of this Psalm was King David. All we can say is that the Lord was a very poor shepherd if David was one of his sheep. And although he has been at the job ever since, his sheep are as badly tended as ever. They are perpetually getting into all sorts of scrapes as if no one were in charge of them. In reality, this Psalm is one solid mass of sentimental rubbish.

"Christian union," said a preacher the other day, "is not a matter of men, but of God." That is why it is a thing perpetually eulogised, but never realised; a thing ever magnified in theory, but never carried into practice? And yet, at other times, God is described as helping only those who help themselves.

Jesus is reported to have said, "The kingdom of God is at hand." That was two thousand years ago; and the Rev. Mr. Jowett of Birmingham, has just written an article to convey the same information. "The kingdom of God" has the knack of ever coming and never arriving, of being always at hand but never in actual possession. How patient the Lord's servants can be when patience pays!

Dr. Horton said at Brighton the other day that "the Church had never yet given either its head, or its heart, or its will to the great task" of saving the world. That is one way of explaining the failure of Christianity. What about God's head and heart and will? Have they, too, been absent from the task?

The Rev. Dr. Guinness Rogers concluded his Merchants' lecture the other day "with a glowing expression of his own faith in the undying power of the Christian Gospel." Such "glowing expressions" are daily occurrences; but what is the good of them? The Gospel does absolutely nothing. The same is true of the Savior proclaimed in it, and of the Holy Spirit who is supposed to administer it. "Undying power" eternally locked up is no better than no power at all.

The Rev. E. Shillito thinks that Christians are not proficient enough in the high art of hating. Modern saints are altogether too tolerant. "We seem to have lost," he says, "the capacity for good, thorough, uncompromising hatred." We believe the reverend gentleman is mistaken. Christians are still notoriously good haters. The only thing they seem

to have lost is permission to express their hatred in the grand old way. They still burn their heretics—metaphorically. They still behead unbelievers—with the axe of slander. No, Mr. Shillitoe, you have not lost your old art; you are only a little more restricted in the practice of it. What you have never yet learned is the art of humanly loving.

Rev. H. F. Tracey, vicar of Dartmouth, in his parish magazine, which is largely quoted from in the local *Mercury*, complains that Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons, and Canons, as well as Freethinkers, throw doubts upon or explain away the "historic facts stated in the Creed." "So much is it the case," he says, "that the author of *The Churches and Modern Thought* has no need to quote atheistic and free thought writers to prove his theory that Christianity is no longer worthy of credit. He contents himself with quoting extracts from Anglican divines of the present day! This is no secret. Anyone can get the book and read it for himself." The worthy Vicar adds, that the sooner "a categorical reply" to Mr. Vivian is offered "by competent hands, the better." We quite agree with him. But the reply is not likely to be forthcoming. Some who might reply are incompetent, and therefore useless; those who are competent know that silence is the best policy—for their threatened business.

The *Christian World*, referring to the split in the New Theology camp, makes the following sorrowful confession: "Unfortunately it is only too evident that the bitterness in the present conflict it even more intense than it was last year." We are not in the least surprised, inasmuch as "the unkind breach that has fallen between" Mr. Campbell and Dr. Warschauer is in consequence of a trifling divergence of views as to the nature and character of God, about which neither of them possess the tiniest scrap of knowledge. Ignorant dogmatism has always been the most fruitful cause of passionate controversy. Less than four hundred years ago, Servetus was burnt alive at a slow fire because he dared to differ from Calvin on the doctrine of the Trinity. Calvin's spirit is still abroad.

A pious egotist informs the Almighty that his right hand is filled with plenteousness, his left hand with abundance, and that on his head is the diadem of grace; and for these wonderful gifts he returns most fulsome thanks. This is an instance of Christian humility glorifying itself in Christian selfishness. What about the crowd of unfortunate people whose two hands are quite empty, and on whose heads are no diadems? Is not God their Father too?

Again and again have we been told with pride how completely Uganda has been regenerated by the Gospel of Christ. But now the Bishop of Uganda admits with sorrow that such is not the case. There is still "a dark and seamy side to the life of the Baganda, which to outward view is so light and joyous. There is still to be found sensuality, drunkenness, and cruelty." At missionary meetings, when appeals for funds are made, Uganda is pointed out as a country in which Christ has gloriously triumphed.

There was a fine old shindy over a coffin at Castleconnell, Co. Limerick. Mr. John Enright, an hotel-keeper, died, and of course there had to be a funeral. As he had been a churchwarden in the Protestant Church of Ireland, it was going to be a Protestant one. But the local Catholics decided otherwise. They pretended that Mr. Enright, before his death, was induced by his mother to join the Roman Catholic Church. Accordingly, on the day of the funeral, the coffin was forcibly taken from the Protestant rector and the burial party by three hundred men armed with sticks, and was buried without any funeral service. That is how the Catholics act in Ireland where they rule the roost. Here in England, where they play the part of the under dog in the religious struggle, they whine about fair play and plead for toleration.

We quite agree with Canon Ross Lewin, the Church of Ireland Rural Dean, that this forcible abduction of a corpse is a very scandalous affair, though we cannot quite follow him in his political use of it as an argument against Home Rule. In the present state of Ireland every priest is able to pose as a patriot. He doesn't really want Home Rule, but he professes to, and that is good enough in the circumstances. Without entering into a political discussion, as such, we must say that it seems to us that Home Rule would soon make a difference in Ireland. The Catholic Church would no longer be able to trade upon Irish patriotism. It would have to be a religious body pure and simple. And the natural reaction against its tyranny would go on in

Ireland as it has gone on in France, Italy, and Spain. We regard this as axiomatic.

The *Transvaal Leader* of October 6 contains a column headed "Hymn of Death." It appears that a gang of twelve Dutch-speaking Transvaalers, on the evening of September 30, were engaged upon the construction of the new Belfast-Leydenburg railway. A terrific storm broke out, and the men took shelter in their tent. Just after midnight the storm increased in violence; the tension was awful, and one man suggested that they should sing a hymn. "The party," the report says, "joined in the singing of a Dutch hymn, and it was while doing so that a blinding flash of lightning struck the tent. Two men were killed instantaneously. One of them was the man who had suggested the hymn." A clear case of Providence—if there is any Providence at all! The local clergy ought to make it the theme of a thousand sermons. But will they? We wonder.

Canon Barnett has made a discovery which is not exactly original. He finds that the mass of the people are thoughtless. "We ourselves," he exclaims, "are on strike against thinking." If by "we ourselves" he means the Christians, he is quite right. We have been saying the same thing for ever so many years—more than we care to count.

Rev. P. N. Waggett, of St. Edward's House, Great College-street, Westminster, who is, we understand, one of the few clergymen that have had a good scientific training, and was once a professor of biology, writes to the *Church Times* deprecating the idea that there is no real danger ahead from the rocks of "infidelity." This is what he says:—

"Christians have very much exaggerated the degree in which Religion and Science have come to terms of peace. Great numbers of thinking and educated men are alienated from us to an extent which is not suspected in many quarters. Now quite apart from the apologetic work itself, it is of real importance that we Christians should become aware of the actual extent and character of that conflict which constitutes the occasion for Apologetics. Are we in a fool's paradise about this?"

The reverend gentleman evidently thinks there is a probability of this question being answered in the affirmative. He proposes to get some Christians together who know something of science, and afterwards to "persuade some non-believers to meet" them. The result should be interesting. In the meantime the unbelievers can afford to smile.

"Lay Worker," in the *Birmingham Post*, calls attention to some of the silly hymns in the Diocesan Mission Hymn Book. He quotes the following sample:—

"In the bleak mid-winter,
A stable-place sufficed,
The Lord God Almighty,
Jesus Christ,
Enough for Him whom Cherubim
Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk,
And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him whom Angels
Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
Which adore."

It appears to us that this about takes the cake.

Rev. R. J. Campbell is going the round with his addresses. He has reached the Theosophists, to whom he lectured on "Christian Mysticism." When will he lecture to Freethinkers on "Christian Evidence"?

"As things are," the *Christian World* sighs, "we are heading straight for secular schools." How sad! But one man's meat is another man's poison—and *vice versa*.

The C. W. says it "hoped for a middle course which would have kept the Bible in the schools and the priest outside." This is like soup without a spoon.

Thomas Stenner, a well-known religious enthusiast, is in trouble at Bristol, being remanded on "a charge of grave impropriety" with a lad of twelve. There is no particular excitement in the city. People are too familiar with such charges against such persons.

Christmas is coming along again. The mystery of the Incarnation will once more be celebrated with eating, drinking—especially drinking—singing, dancing, and kissing under the mistletoe. Such is "spiritual" religion.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

November 22, Stratford Town Hall; 29, Liverpool.

To Correspondents.

- O. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—241 High-road, Leyton.—November 15, Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society; 22, Fails-worth; 29, Birmingham.
- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—November 15, Stratford Town Hall.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND:** Previously acknowledged. Annual Subscriptions, £279 16s. 8d. Received since.—C. J., 10s.; J. A. T., 5s.; W. Bailey (2nd sub.), £1.
- E. T. C.**—Received.
- G. R. BALLARD.**—There must be something to criticise. This tract is sheer silliness.
- H. G. S.**—Pleased to hear from a South African reader and admirer. See "Acid Drops."
- F. J. VOISEY.**—See paragraph. Thanks.
- G. L. SIMMONDS.**—We have had a man selling the *Freethinker* in the streets of the City of London for some time—over twelve months, in fact; so you see we are not quite as conservative as you imagine. We will consider your other suggestions. Thanks.
- F. S. H.**—We have written on the cutting. See "Acid Drops." There was no time for what you suggested. Sorry.
- G. WARD.**—We do not wonder at your writing to the local press to know why no notice was taken of Mr. Foote's great meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall, when, as you say, the hall "was packed to its utmost capacity." But we fear you will get little satisfaction in that quarter."
- A. HOPKINS.**—Mr. Shaw was alluding to the Lamarckian theory, which the late Samuel Butler spent so much time in defending, and which virtually explains evolution as the result of a striving of the organism towards an end, even if not in view. Darwin deals with it in his *Origin of Species*. We were not defending Natural Selection on moral grounds. That is no business of ours. Our point was that, under Darwinism, all living things on this planet are our relations. We are included, as they are, in the general life of the world.
- SHEFFIELD ETHICIST.**—We wish your fellow members a more robust tone. The tendency of Ethicists everywhere is to defer too much to Christianity and "Respectability." Still, we do not wish to have any quarrel with them. We suppose they act as they are built. Pleased to hear that you, for one, look forward with enjoyment every week to the *Freethinker*. After all, this journal *lives*, which is more than can be said of any Ethicist paper yet invented.
- J. H. EVANS.**—Pleased to hear that an article of ours in *John Bull* drew you to the *Freethinker* and the National Secular Society.
- W. P. BALL.**—Much obliged for cuttings.
- ATONEMENT.**—Off our special line.
- S. FELLOWS.**—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- CONSTANCE BROOKS.**—Glad you managed to get Bradlaugh's article on Atheism reproduced in the *Blackpool Times*. Sorry we have not time just now to hunt up that quotation from Goethe. The question of crime in France is not so simple as the persons you refer to imagine. Crimes of violence, and hooliganism generally, are bred in big cities. France as a whole is not affected; the evil is chiefly found in the worst quarters of Paris. We cannot deal with the subject further in this column, but may be able to deal with it at length elsewhere at an early date. Glad you think the *Freethinker* "splendid."
- A. SIMSON.**—Thanks, but we do not see that they merit our attention.
- E. C. CORNETT.**—Why should a badge be aggressive? It is not meant as a Donnybrook Fair challenge, but as a symbol for friendly recognition.
- W. C. BETHELL** says that one of his workmates gave him a copy of the *Freethinker* eighteen months ago; he has been a regular reader ever since, and wouldn't be without it now for anything. This ought to stimulate our friends to go on giving or lending this journal to outsiders; the cheapest and most effective form of advertising.
- J. G. BARTRAM.**—Tuesday morning is too late for paragraphs. We have strained a point this time.
- W. BAILEY**, sending a further subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund, which he says "ought to be made up immediately." "Surely," he adds, "a few other saints might make a further dip into their pockets to relieve you of a little anxiety." This correspondent wishes we would make up a list of "the best hundred books." We will think it over.
- LETTERS** for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LIBRARY NOTICES** must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- ORDERS** for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- 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.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote had good audiences at Nelson on Sunday, but not such bumpers as the Branch committee say he would have had were it not for the cotton strike. Many men and women would have bought tickets for the lectures if their purses had not been depleted by the industrial strain—and they were too proud—Lancashire is proud—to avail themselves of the free seats. Mr. Foote's lectures were extremely well received, particularly the evening lecture, which created a great impression and was enthusiastically applauded. Mr. Dyson presided in the afternoon, and Mr. Page in the evening. Both lectures were followed by questions and discussion.

Mr. Foote is having a Sunday at home with his family today (Nov. 15). He lectures on the two following Sundays at Stratford and at Liverpool. After that he will probably not do any platform work till after Christmas. His literary and other work has been thrown behind by his late heavy lecturing and travelling—the latter being increased, of course, by his residing out of London, which he always has to reach first when he is journeying to any part of the provinces. He hopes to get through a lot of pen-work in December.

Mr. Cohen lectures this evening (Nov. 15) for the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society in the Tyne Theatre, Newcastle. On Monday evening he delivers a Freethought lecture for the N. S. S. Branch in the Co-operative Hall on "Christianity, the Churches, and the Social Problem."

The second of the Stratford Town Hall course of Sunday Freethought lectures will be delivered this evening (Nov. 15) by Mr. J. T. Lloyd, who ought to have a big audience and the heartiest welcome. Mr. Foote winds up this course of lectures on the following Sunday evening.

After long search a hall was found at Liverpool for a Sunday's lectures by Mr. Foote. The question arose about a charge for a portion of the seats, and somehow or other the secretary was drawn into a kind of negotiation with the police, who appeared to think that they had an authority in the matter. An application to the magistrates was being engineered for a "permit" to sell tickets for reserved seats, and the magistrates required to know the subjects of Mr. Foote's lectures before they would decide. This, of course, necessitated writing to Mr. Foote, who promptly declined to send his subjects just then, or to be a party to going to police and magistrates for permission to do what the law of the land gave him and his friends a perfect right to do. Moreover, as the application to the magistrates ended by what was virtually a censorship over Mr. Foote's lectures, he felt that this was a thing he could not stand at any price. It involved a principle most dangerous to the rights of citizens. It conceded to constables and magistrates an authority in matters of opinion and propaganda. Mr. Foote refused to have anything to do with such a proceeding, and the application was accordingly dropped. His view of this affair was laid before the last meeting of the N. S. S. Executive, and was unanimously endorsed.

The present state of the law as to Sunday meetings is perfectly clear. According to Mr. Justice Collins's judgment in the Queen's Hall case, any number of seats can be charged for as long as it cannot be proved that there are no free seats. The provision of some free seats, therefore, constitutes a free admission. Payment for the other seats is not a payment for admission, but for a special privilege. The police may believe otherwise, but they are often mistaken. And in the case of the Liverpool police, we suggest that they should cease devoting time and energy to the petty persecution of the citizens called Secularists, and devote it all to discovering real criminals, especially those (or the one) who waylay and murder children.

Our readers will note a fresh "bargain" advertisement in this week's *Freethinker*. James Thomson's *Satires and Profanities*—handsomely printed on very good paper and neatly bound—is reduced from a shilling to threepence. Those who buy it at the price will, we think, congratulate themselves on obtaining about the very best threepenny worth of reading they ever saw or heard of. This is not mere journalism; it is literature. Thomson enjoyed writing the superb pieces in this collection. "His satire," as we wrote twenty-four years ago, "was always bitterest, or at any rate most trenchant, when it dealt with Religion, which he considered a disease of the mind, engendered by folly and

fostered by ignorance and vanity. He saw that spiritual superstition not only diverts men from Truth, but induces a slavish stupidity of mind, and prepares the way for every form of political and social injustice. He was an Atheist first and a Republican afterwards. He derided the idea of making a true Republic of a population besotted with religion, paralysed with creeds, cringing to the agents of their servitude, and clinging to the chains that enthrall them." Some finicking critics thought his satires too severe. They, the puny weaklings, presumed to criticise his taste. But he told such people plainly, and especially the good Christians among them, why he went his own way in despite of their frowns. "Your composite theology," he said, unlike the old Pagan theologies, "is still alive, is insolently aggressive, its lust for tyrannical dominion is unbounded; therefore we must attack it if we would not be enslaved by it. The cross is a sublime symbol; I would no more think of treating it with disrespect while it held itself aloft in the serene heaven of poetry than of insulting the bow of Phœbus Apollo or the thunderbolts of Zeus; but if coarse hands will insist on pulling it down upon my back as a ponderous wooden reality, what can I do but fling it off as a confounded burden not to be borne?" As for the cry of "blasphemy!" Thomson declared that the crime was only possible to believers. "For the Atheist," he said, "God is a figment, nothing: in blaspheming God he therefore blasphemes nothing."

Some of our readers know, but all do not, that James Thomson, who wrote these Satires and Profanities, was the author of that famous poem, *The City of Dreadful Night*. It is the poem of Pessimism, and, as such, will always hold a high place in English literature. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that Thomson's genius was always in the pessimistic mood. It had its joyous moods, and in them it produced delightful poems, such as *Sunday at Hampstead* and *Sunday up the River*. In the mingling of moods it produced the satirical pieces in this collection. But whatever may be thought of Thomson's temperament, or of this or that portion of his work, the fact remains beyond all question that he was a true and lofty poet. All good judges, from George Meredith downwards, agree upon this point. Moreover, it must be admitted that Thomson was the only nineteenth century English poet, with the single exception of Shelley, who dared to express all his convictions, however shocking they might be to orthodox and timid people. This courage gives him a special distinction.

We have withdrawn the list of "Clearance Sales" for a week or two. A fresh lot is being got ready, and it cannot be done until we have some further deliveries from the binders. Meanwhile we may repeat that the object of these "Clearance Sales" is to realise a little ready money, which is so badly needed in carrying on the *Freethinker* and its adjuncts, and to make the necessary room for other publications which are in hand, some of which will be announced very shortly. One of them, we may state now, is a popular edition of Mr. Footo's *Bible Heroes*.

Mr. Richard Green, an old friend of ours, and long a stalwart Secularist, is the new Mayor of Lynn in Norfolk. The local *News* congratulates him warmly. "There was a time," it says, "when his views on religious questions procured him insults and contumely from the authority over which during next year he will preside with dignity and ability. Mr. Green has long since lived down these attacks, and there is no member of the Corporation who is more respected and esteemed by his colleagues to-day."

Instead of selling our back numbers as waste-paper, we are trying to get them all distributed as "specimen" copies. We shall be glad to hear—preferably through our shop-manager, Mr. W. A. Vaughan—from "saints" in all parts of the country who will undertake to distribute these "specimen" copies judiciously, and especially at public meetings. A parcel of any reasonable size will be forwarded to any such applicant. One of our friends at Stockport distributed a lot at a Socialist meeting. He was frowned upon by the officials, but the people received them gladly, and the *Freethinker* was "all over the show." We hear from other quarters that the distribution of these "specimen" copies is doing a great deal of good.

Mr. E. Belfort Bax, writing on Mr. G. K. Chesterton in the *New Age*, says that—"The enormous bulk of thinking persons have practically, if not nominally, left the ideal symbolic systems called religions, which have been handed down by tradition, completely, and for ever far behind them. The attempt to resurrect these corpses has never yet amounted to anything more than the ghastly and fatuous pastime of trying to produce the semblance of life out of the twitchings effected by a galvanic battery."

A Freethinker's Confession.

The Conclusions of South Carolina's Famous Governor, Daniel H. Chamberlain.

When the late Daniel Henry Chamberlain, a former governor of South Carolina, died in April, 1907, he left a paper in which he had set down his conclusions on the subject of religion. The paper was printed in the *North American Review*. In the *Review* it is preceded by an extended sketch of the author's life. Governor Chamberlain was born in West Brookfield, Mass., June 23, 1835, was graduated at the Harvard law school, and adopted the law as a profession. He served as a captain in the Civil War, 1864-5, as a delegate to the South Carolina constitutional convention in 1868, as attorney-general for South Carolina 1868-72, and as governor 1874-7. He was at the head of his profession as a lawyer. He ranked high in executive and administrative ability, and was a master of expression both as speaker and writer. During his life he was not publicly known as a Freethinker, which is to be regretted; but at its close he made amends by acknowledging his unbelief and stating the reasons which had impelled him to reject Christianity. Like Paine's *Age of Reason*, his "confession of faith" was written in the shadow of death. The following is one of its most important passages.

THREE fundamental concepts—(1) reason, human reason, one's own reason, the final arbiter or touchstone of truth, not for other men, but for each one's self, for every individual person; (2) the vast realm of the unknowable, a realm infinite in comparison with our knowledge and science; and (3) the all-embracing law of evolution, sweeping over the whole world and ruling all things within our ken—these three are the instruments, guides, and measures by means of which I have tried to fix my beliefs and mould my moral and intellectual life.

I need hardly say that, working by these rules, the great task has been to cast off, put aside, root out preconceptions fixed in my mind by my previous course of life and thought, by all the associations of the past years—beliefs once dear and undoubted, conclusions long cherished and interwoven in the very fibre of being. That this has not been at all times a pleasant task I need not aver; but through it all the clear light of truth, the comfort of deep conviction, have been solaces and compensations which have for the most part made the way not only plain, but pleasant.

The elimination of accident, Providence, so called, and miracles, works momentous changes in many directions, but especially in religious or theological matters. For example, as I have already observed, while it does not exclude the idea or belief or posit of a First Cause or Power, it does, to my mind, exclude the idea of a presiding or controlling Deity, to use the common locution, who continually watches over the universe, exercising the function either of keeping the machinery of the universe in working order or putting it in order on occasions. Especially does it exclude, once for all and peremptorily, the idea of an anthropomorphic God or Deity, a person or individual who rules all things, animal and human, visible or invisible, earthly and spiritual. Such a God, the God now conceived of, believed in, and worshiped by the vast majority of human beings, evolution forbids. Equally certain, the central ideas of the Christian religion become impossible of rational belief when tested by the essential principles of evolution. I mean such ideas as sin, redemption, conversion, salvation, atonement, the person, office and the work of Jesus Christ, the Trinity—in a word, the whole circle and array of dogmas and beliefs which make up a Christian religion, as well as a large part of carefully-developed other great religious systems of the world.

In this general result my reason has forced me to concur and believe. This has, of course, involved the abandonment of many specific beliefs which are fundamental in the scheme of Christianity and other widespread religious systems. For example, the Christian religion, it is claimed, is authenticated by a book called the Bible. This book is held by Christians generally to be a true and inspired supernatural revelation of a God who rules all things according to his sovereign personal will and pleasure, who is omni-

potent over all things, omniscient, everywhere active, on whom our lives, all life, momentarily depend, who sends or withholds the gifts and operations of nature—the rain, the fruits of the soil, seed-times and harvests—and without whose personal permission and aid nothing exists, or is, or can be done. Many Christians, probably a majority now, certainly until very recently a great majority, believe the Bible to be plenary inspired—that is, that the men who composed it were miraculously guided to write nothing but the absolute truth. Evolution cuts up all such notions by the roots; the Bible becomes, like other books, valuable so far as by the test of human reason it records truth or teaches morality or influences to good living. The Bible still towers in the world of literature above nearly all other books. There are passages in its so-called historical books which portray, as are portrayed almost nowhere else, the characters of great and just men. There are touching idyllic stories, as of Esther; lofty psalms, like many of David's; the magnificent poem of Job; uplifting and moving chapters, as in the major prophets, Isaiah and Ezekiel; these all will justly keep the Bible, the Old Testament at least, one of the priceless literary documents of the world.

Not so much can be said for the New Testament. Discarding its claims to supernatural inspiration and infallibility, it becomes only the record and exposition of an impossible supernatural religion. The personality and influence of Jesus Christ, alleged God and man, son of a Judean peasant, yet son of God; put to death on the cross, yet one of the Trinity in Heaven—this grotesque conception, with all its concomitants, goes to the limbo of impossible beliefs. Aside from its fate when brought to the test of evolutionary truth, there was never offered to the human mind, as I think, a scheme of thought or a conception called religious, so unreasonable and preposterous in all its main features, as the so-called plan of salvation set forth and expounded in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. It is the marvel of marvels that it has won credence, still more, wide credence, among the most intelligent and cultivated nations of the modern world. For what is the plan? It presupposes that Sin, so-called, has been permitted by God to come into the world, thereby fatally tainting the whole, every member of the human race; that God himself, though infinite in power, could not pardon or forgive sinners until atonement had been made; that man was absolutely unable to make atonement; that, in this dilemma, Jesus Christ, Son of God, co-equal member of the Godhead or Trinity, volunteered to come into this world and to take upon himself the sins, or the effects and penalties of the sins, of the whole race of men, past, present, and future; that he came to Palestine on this errand in the guise of a child, miraculously begotten of the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Trinity, and a virgin peasant of Judea, lived in obscurity and silence for thirty years, then announced his mission and preached his message for three years, then gave up his life upon the cross, returned to life in three days, and shortly after visibly ascended to Heaven and resumed his seat as a member of the Trinity; that he sits there forever, exercising the functions and powers of God; that this atonement for man's sins was accepted by God, the Father, First Person of the Trinity, as adequate; that henceforth all who put faith in Jesus Christ—that is, all who believe in him and what has now been stated of him—will be saved from all consequences of their personal sins, and after death be admitted to Heaven, to be happy forever; and that even those who lived before Christ, and never heard of him, will likewise be saved by virtue of his death; and that thus, and thus only, has a way been opened by which the human race can be saved from the consequences of their own voluntary sins.

I do not see how any intelligent person can, unbiassed, consider this "plan" and not reject it as utterly impossible, and as the height of unreason; and yet millions to one accept it, pin to it their

hopes and faith, and live and die in unwavering belief of it.

A word further deserves to be said as to the New Testament as the support of the Christian religion. Many, or some, champions of Christianity, especially of its theological or dogmatic claims, its creeds and rubrics of belief, rely largely upon the Epistles of the New Testament as proofs of its divine or supernatural origin, authority, and power. But when evolution has swept away the foundation of the supernatural, the Epistles are reduced to mere human documents, to be looked at and passed upon as one would do in the case of confessedly secular documents, such as the classical writings and texts of Greece and Rome. So considered, they seem to me, especially the Epistles of Paul, a mere tissue or congeries of assumptions and claims, manifestly untenable. I never could see the validity of Paul's dogmatic statements, on which the Church has depended almost as much as on the recorded words of Jesus Christ himself. Paul was a conscious or unconscious metaphysician, who sought to develop a theology, supposedly logical, under which to bind the Church of Jesus Christ. He deserves little respect for his efforts to pour the whole of Christian truth—the simplicity, the natural, undogmatic ideas and teachings of Jesus Christ—into the shallow moulds of his dogmatic statements.

There is another topic closely connected in the minds of most with religious beliefs, though it is more properly a scientific subject—the immortality of the soul, or simply immortality. It is a Christian doctrine, but it is also a belief developed and matured long before Christianity. It is not taught, if it is assumed or implied in the Old Testament, but it was a favorite belief or theme of speculation with the Greek philosophers before Plato, but especially with Plato himself, and the men of his day and later. As upon other themes, Plato is easily the most persuasive advocate of the belief or doctrine. I am apt to pick up my Jowett's *Plato* whenever my mind is turned to this subject, and re-read, for perhaps the hundredth time, the "Phaedo." It richly repays the reading, whether one accepts its conclusions or not, for its wonderful beauty, even in Jowett's translation; but no one can really know its artistic and æsthetic charm except by an easy and familiar acquaintance with it in its original tongue. Its argument, too, is, for me, as good and strong as any I know.

The really strongest argument for immortality is, to my mind, the widespread, almost universal, longing and hope of mankind that it may be true. If we could accept Paul's dictum—faith is "the evidence of things not seen"—we might at once pronounce the doctrine of immortality to be proved; but, plainly, Paul's dictum is of little or no validity or force.

Looking for proofs or evidence on this topic, we see that evolution has nothing to tell us. It is, as it must ever be, matter of pure speculation, with no data or facts as a basis or starting-point.

There are one or two considerations which have always deeply impressed me in my reflections on the subject. One is the broad fact that, in all the experience of mankind, no authentic voice has ever come back to us from beyond the grave. All the yearnings, the hopes, the agonised prayers of all the world of humanity have drawn no response. If behind a thin veil the spirits of the departed are, and have always been, living and watching sublunary scenes, is it not well past belief that no sign or sound has pierced the veil?

Another important consideration has impressed me—the overwhelming improbability that the whole human race should have been, or should be, preserved forever. Statisticians tell us that probably no less than two hundred and eighty billions of human beings have passed across the stage of human life since man was developed as we now see him. The process goes on, and no end can be predicted. Is it probable, even possible, as matter of reason, that such a stupendous, well-nigh inconceivable,

mass of human beings, good, bad, and indifferent should be endlessly preserved? One is forced to cry out, "Cui bono?" and no answer can be given which does not posit an anthropomorphic God. As Emerson once said of almsgiving, "The worst of charity is that the lives you are asked to preserve are not worth preserving."

I cannot help thinking that one who should read these lines might ask me questions. One might well be this: You have put aside ordinary beliefs and constraints; how do you maintain what you, in common with others, would, I suppose, call "morals," "moral standards," "rules of good conduct," conduct which Matthew Arnold calls "three-fourths of life and duty"?

The question deserves answer. Man's moral sense is the result primarily of evolution. "The moral sense," in view of evolutionary philosophy, "is not ultimate, but derivative, having been built up out of slowly organised and duly transmitted ancestral experiences of pleasure and pain." Here is the rock on which I rest and risk all—a slowly developed sense which is intended, if one may use the word in this connection, and fitted, to lead men to good conduct, as well as a test and touchstone when doubts arise of what is good conduct. What can be safer? It is not the shifting sands of men's opinions, "apparitions of a day," or the precepts of a book, or the rubrics and decrees of a church, but the granite rock of experience, running continually through all the ages and periods of the existence of this frame of things. "Here I stand; I can do no otherwise."

Another possible question might be: How do you feel that your present conclusions have affected your moral character and your happiness?

It is certainly difficult for one to pass judgment on one's character, but here I answer, frankly and confidently, that I feel that my moral sense and nature have been uplifted, purified, and strengthened by my present conclusions as I have now stated them. I feel it. I think I know it. Moreover, I do not believe anyone who knows me has suspected or marked any falling off in my later years.

As to happiness, I can speak more safely. I know that my present views have added to my happiness. I cannot say, as Newman said, after he had reached the haven of the Romish Church: "I have since had no trace of doubt, but only the most perfect certitude"; but I can at least say that I know of no earthly inducement which could lead me to go back to what now seems to me the darkness and unrest of former days and beliefs.

I have had no little difficulty in fixing upon a truly descriptive title for these lines. "Atheist," "Infidel," "Unbeliever," "Agnostic," all are objectionable as hackneyed, cant words. "Atheist" is too narrow. I am much more than a mere Atheist, for I reject the whole Christian religion. "Infidel" and "Unbeliever" are indefinite, almost meaningless; neither etymologically nor according to usage do they describe me. "Agnostic" is also too indefinite. I think we know many things, though ignorant of many. If the word meant only that we did not know all, or comparatively much, I might adopt it as others have done. At last it has seemed to me that "Freethinker" was the truly descriptive phrase.

There are two things in the world that can never get on together—religion and common sense. Religion deals with the next life, common sense with this; religion points to the sky, common sense to the earth; religion is all imagination, common sense all reason; religion deals with what nobody can understand, common sense with what everybody can understand; religion gives us no return for our investments but flash notes on the bank of expectation, common sense gives us good interest and full security for our capital. They are as opposite as two things can possibly be, and they are always at strife. Religion is always trying to fill the world with delusions, and common sense is always trying to drive them away. Religion says live for the next world, and common sense says live for this.—G. W. Foote.

The Christian Religion.—III.

By COL. ROBERT G. INGERSOLL.

(Continued from p. 717.)

CAN we believe that God ever said of anyone: "Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow; let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of desolate places; let the extortioner catch all that he hath and let the stranger spoil his labor; let there be none to extend mercy unto him, neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children." If he ever said these words, surely he had never heard this line, this strain of music, from the Hindu: "Sweet is the lute to those who have not heard the prattle of their own children."

Jehovah, "from the clouds and darkness of Sinai," said to the Jews: "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me..... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." Contrast this with the words put by the Hindu into the mouth of Brahma: "I am the same to all mankind. They who honestly serve other gods, involuntarily worship me. I am he who partaketh of all worship, and I am the reward of all worshippers."

Compare these passages. The first, a dungeon where crawl the things begot of jealous slime; the other, great as the domed firmament inlaid with suns.

II.

Waiving the contradictory statements in the various books of the New Testament; leaving out of the question the history of the manuscripts; saying nothing about the errors in translation and the interpolations made by the fathers; and admitting, for the time being, that the books were all written at the times claimed, and by the persons whose names they bear, the questions of inspiration, probability, and absurdity still remain.

As a rule, where several persons testify to the same transaction, while agreeing in the main points, they will disagree upon many minor things, and such disagreement upon minor matters is generally considered as evidence that the witnesses have not agreed among themselves upon the story they should tell. These differences in statement we account for from the facts that all did not see alike, that all did not have the same opportunity for seeing, and that all had not equally good memories. But when we claim that the witnesses were inspired, we must admit that he who inspired them did know exactly what occurred, and consequently there should be no contradiction, even in the minutest detail. The accounts should be not only substantially, but they should be actually, the same. It is impossible to account for any differences, or any contradictions, except from the weaknesses of human nature, and these weaknesses cannot be predicated of divine wisdom. Why should there be more than one correct account of anything? Why were four gospels necessary? One inspired record of all that happened ought to be enough.

One great objection to the Old Testament is the cruelty said to have been commanded by God, but all the cruelties recounted in the Old Testament ceased with death. The vengeance of Jehovah stopped at the portal of the tomb. He never threatened to avenge himself upon the dead; and not one word, from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse of Malachi, contains the slightest intimation that God will punish in another world. It was reserved for the New Testament to make known the frightful doctrine of eternal pain. It was the teacher of universal benevolence who rent the veil between time and eternity, and fixed the horrified gaze of man on the lurid gulfs of hell. Within the breast of non-resistance was coiled the worm that never dies.

One great objection to the New Testament is that it bases salvation upon belief. This, at least, is true of the Gospel according to John, and of many of the Epistles. I admit that Matthew never heard of the atonement, and died utterly ignorant of the scheme of salvation. I also admit that Mark never dreamed that it was necessary for a man to be born again; that he knew nothing of the mysterious doctrine of regeneration, and that he never even suspected that it was necessary to believe anything. In the sixteenth chapter of Mark, we are told that "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned"; but this passage has been shown to be an interpolation, and, consequently, not a solitary word is found in the Gospel according to Mark upon the subject of salvation by faith. The same is also true of the Gospel of Luke. It says not one word as to the necessity of believing on Jesus Christ, not one word as to the atonement, not one word as to the scheme of salvation, and not the slightest hint that it is

necessary to believe anything here in order to be happy hereafter.

And here I take occasion to say, that with most of the teachings of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke I most heartily agree. The miraculous parts must, of course, be thrown aside. I admit that the necessity of belief, the atonement, and the scheme of salvation are all set forth in the Gospel of John,—a gospel, in my opinion, not written until long after the others.

According to the prevailing Christian belief, the Christian religion rests upon the doctrine of the atonement. If this doctrine is without foundation, if it is repugnant to justice and mercy, the fabric falls. We are told that the first man committed a crime for which all his posterity are responsible,—in other words, that we are accountable, and can be justly punished for a sin we never in fact committed. This absurdity was the father of another, namely, that a man can be rewarded for a good action done by another. God, according to the modern theologians, made a law, with the penalty of eternal death for its infraction. All men, they say, have broken that law. In the economy of heaven, this law had to be vindicated. This could be done by damning the whole human race. Through what is known as the atonement, the salvation of a few was made possible. They insist that the law—whatever that is—demanded the extreme penalty, that justice called for its victims, and that even mercy ceased to plead. Under these circumstances, God, by allowing the innocent to suffer, satisfactorily settled with the law, and allowed a few of the guilty to escape. The law was satisfied with this arrangement. To carry out this scheme, God was born as a babe into this world. "He grew in stature and increased in knowledge." At the age of thirty-three, after having lived a life filled with kindness, charity and nobility, after having practised every virtue, he was sacrificed as an atonement for man. It is claimed that he actually took our place, and bore our sins and our guilt; that in this way the justice of God was satisfied, and that the blood of Christ was an atonement, an expiation, for the sins of all who might believe on him.

Under the Mosaic dispensation, there was no remission of sin except through the shedding of blood. If a man committed certain sins, he must bring to the priest a lamb, a bullock, a goat, or a pair of turtle-doves. The priest would lay his hands upon the animal, and the sin of the man would be transferred. Then the animal would be killed in the place of the real sinner, and the blood thus shed and sprinkled upon the altar would be an atonement. There was always a certain ratio between the value of the animal and the enormity of the sin. The most minute directions were given about the killing of these animals, and about the sprinkling of their blood. Every priest became a butcher, and every sanctuary a slaughter-house. Nothing could be more utterly shocking to a refined and loving soul. Nothing could have been better calculated to harden the heart than this continual shedding of innocent blood. This terrible system is supposed to have culminated in the sacrifice of Christ. His blood took the place of all other. It is necessary to shed no more. The law at last is satisfied, satiated, surfeited. The idea that God wants blood is at the bottom of the atonement, and rests upon the most fearful savagery. How can sin be transferred from men to animals, and how can the shedding of the blood of animals atone for the sins of men?

The Church says that the sinner is in debt to God, and that the obligation is discharged by the Savior. The best that can possibly be said of such a transaction is, that the debt is transferred, not paid. The truth is, that a sinner is in debt to the person he has injured. If a man injures his neighbor, it is not enough for him to get the forgiveness of God, but he must have the forgiveness of his neighbor. If a man puts his hand in the fire and God forgives him, his hand will smart exactly the same. You must, after all, reap what you sow. No god can give you wheat when you sow tares, and no devil can give you tares when you sow wheat.

There are in nature neither rewards nor punishments—there are consequences. The life of Christ is worth its example, its moral force, its heroism of benevolence.

To make innocence suffer is the greatest sin: how then is it possible to make the suffering of the innocent a justification for the criminal. Why should a man be willing to let the innocent suffer for him? Does not the willingness show that he is utterly unworthy of the sacrifice? Certainly, no man would be fit for heaven who would consent that an innocent person should suffer for his sin. What would we think of a man who would allow another to die for a crime that he himself had committed? What would we think of a law that allowed the innocent to take the place of the guilty? Is it possible to vindicate a just law by inflicting punishment on the innocent? Would not that be a second violation instead of a vindication?

If there was no general atonement until the crucifixion of Christ, what became of the countless millions who died

before that time? And it must be remembered that the blood shed by the Jews was not for other nations. Jehovah hated foreigners. The Gentiles were left without forgiveness. What has become of the millions who have died since, without having heard of the atonement? What becomes of those who have heard but have not believed? It seems to me that the doctrine of the atonement is absurd, unjust, and immoral? Can a law be satisfied by the execution of the wrong person? When a man commits a crime, the law demands his punishment, not that of a substitute; and there can be no law, human or divine, that can be satisfied by the punishment of a substitute. Can there be a law that demands that the guilty be rewarded? And yet, to reward the guilty is far nearer justice than to punish the innocent.

According to the orthodox theology, there would have been no heaven had no atonement been made. All the children of men would have been cast into hell forever. The old men bowed with grief, the smiling mothers, the sweet babes, the loving maidens, the brave, the tender, and the just, would have been given over to eternal pain. Man, it is claimed, can make no atonement for himself. If he commits one sin, and with that exception lives a life of perfect virtue, still that one sin would remain unexpiated, unatoned, and for that one sin he would be forever lost. To be saved by the goodness of another, to be a redeemed debtor forever, has in it something repugnant to manhood.

We must also remember that Jehovah took special charge of the Jewish people; and we have always been taught that he did so for the purpose of civilising them. If he had succeeded in civilising the Jews, he would have made the damnation of the entire human race a certainty; because, if the Jews had been a civilised people when Christ appeared,—a people whose hearts had not been hardened by the laws and teachings of Jehovah,—they would not have crucified him, and, as a consequence, the world would have been lost. If the Jews had believed in religious freedom,—in the right of thought and speech,—not a human soul could ever have been saved. If, when Christ was on his way to Calvary, some brave, heroic soul had rescued him from the holy mob, he would not only have been eternally damned for his pains, but would have rendered impossible the salvation of any human being, and, except for the crucifixion of her son, the Virgin Mary, if the Church is right, would be to-day among the lost.

(To be concluded.)

Religious Mania in Switzerland.

A STRANGE case of a family suffering from religious mania is reported from the Swiss village of Oftringen.

There are eight grown children in the family, and recently they were converted by an itinerant preacher. Thereupon the whole family began to neglect their farm and domestic duties, and to spend the day and night in prayer. The cattle were neglected, and would have been starved had they not been fed by the neighbors.

One girl named Bertha declared that she was the bride of Christ, and always went about clad in a garment of white. Strange rites, too, were practised. Once at midnight the whole family, dressed in white clothes, assembled around a wood-pile altar in a field and burned a white calf, meanwhile dancing around the burning pile. This was called "immolation."

Then Bertha expressed a wish to be immolated, and it appears that an attempt was made to crucify her. The police, however, got to know of this, and arrived in time to prevent further mischief. Bertha was found ill in bed with nail-wounds in her hands. She and two sisters and a brother were promptly removed to the lunatic asylum at Koenigsfelden.

It is recalled by the veterans that fifty years ago in the Canton Thurgau a girl was crucified by a religious sect in a burst of madness.

—Morning Leader.

The visions of the philosopher have in all ages aroused men of action, who have set to work to realise them. Our thoughts create the future. Statesmen work after the plans we leave behind us.—*Anatole France.*

People think the confessional is unknown in our Protestant churches. It is a great mistake. The principal change is, that there is no screen between the penitent and the father confessor.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

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.

STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, J. T. Lloyd, "Is Man a Free Agent?"

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, Miss Kathleen B. Kough, "Does Christianity Degrade Women?"

OUTDOOR.

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.

BOSTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Corn Exchange, Market-place): 7.30, Joseph Bates, "The Inutility of the Salvation Army: A Critical Examination of its Religious Work." Vocal and instrumental music.

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Concert by Councillor F. B. Grundy's Concert Party.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Discussion Class; 6.30, Social Meeting.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Central-buildings, 113 Islington): Sidney Wollen, 3, "The Crimes of the Popes"; 7, "Missionary Societies and their Degradation of the Heathens."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): H. S. Wishart, 3, "Fatalism, Determinism, and Rev. Dr. Warschauer's Ignorance"; 6.30, "Christianity's Surrender to Freethought." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Darn Crook): Monday, November 16, at 7.30, C. Cohen, "Christianity, the Churches, and the Social Problem."

NEWCASTLE (Rationalist Literary and Debating Society, Lockhart's Cathedral Café): Thursday, November 19, at 8, J. Tullin, "Do Sunday Lectures Aid the Growth of Rationalism?"

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