

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect.—EMERSON.

"Peace on Earth."

CHRISTIAN preachers, such as the Rev. R. J. Campbell, as well as Christian laymen, such as Sir Oliver Lodge, are giving up the doctrine, and therefore the story, of the Virgin Birth. It is quietly assumed that all the rest of the story is true, but it is all a part of a great fairy-tale, and has no claim whatever to be considered historical. The whole narrative shrivels to nothing in the presence of scientific criticism. And one of its features is perfectly ridiculous in the light of human history. It is said that, on the eve of Christ's birth, angels in the sky sang to listening shepherds of "peace on earth." Christians have even borrowed a phrase from Isaiah and called their Savior the Prince of Peace. But this he has never been, nor have they been the real worshipers of such a character. We are told that 1909 years have rolled by since the so-called Prince of Peace visited our earth. The Prince, then, came long ago,—but where is the Peace?

Towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century Louis Blanc, the historian and social reformer, asked a somewhat similar question of the Christians of France. They told him that the Redeemer came eighteen hundred years ago. "Yes," he said, "and when may we expect the Redemption?"

"Peace" is a beautiful word, and it denotes a beautiful thing. But it does not belong to the Christians, and it has no special connection with Christ. One of the most truthful things he ever said—if he ever said anything—was that he "came not to send peace but a sword." It was religious bias that prompted Longfellow, after the powerful description of the horrors of war in his fine verses on Springfield Arsenal, to exclaim: "I hear once more the voice of Christ say 'Peace!'" Longfellow knew very well, though he did not at that moment remember, how the history of Christendom had been marked by persecution, quarrels, strife, and bloodshed. He knew very well that Springfield Arsenal was in a Christian country, that all its murderous weapons were made by Christians, and that if the Heathen wanted anything of the sort they had to buy of Christians.

That great and famous Christian statesman, William Ewart Gladstone, once boasted—not in the heat of oral debate, but in deliberate written controversy—that the practical force of this world was overwhelmingly in the hands of the Christian nations, and argued that this was a demonstration of the divine origin of Christianity. What he meant by practical force was naval and military power. The Christian nations could lick the Heathen nations whenever they pleased. This was true enough then, though Japan's crushing defeat of Russia has fal-

sified it since. But what an argument to advance in favor of the divine origin, and constant providential maintenance, of Christianity! The followers of the Prince of Peace had the true religion because they could whip all the rest of the world!

Now let us glance at the East of Europe, and then at the West. We see Turkey belying the foolish Christian assertion that Mohammedan nations are incapable of progress. By a bloodless revolution she has done in a brief space of time what Russia has not been able to do in a whole century of horrible struggle. And at the very moment when she is astonishing the world with her wisdom, energy, and self-restraint, Christian Austria takes advantage of her difficulties to grab fresh territory and endanger the peace of all Europe,—for a war in the East means Armageddon. In the West the most peaceful nation is "infidel" France, while the two most Christian nations, England and Germany, are glaring at each other and carrying on a ruinous competition in the costliest preparations for war.

All the talk in England to-day is about "Dreadnoughts." Parliament meets again after the Christmas holidays, and the "peace on earth" blarney, and the Prince of Peace gabble,—and soon gets into a fierce debate over the burning question of how many battleships shall be built in the immediate future. And the gentlemen engaged in this fierce debate are all professed Christians. Yet nobody laughs at the screaming farce. It must be admitted that some of the clergy are framing half-hearted expostulations; but what a contrast to the keen determination they display in fighting each other for the control of elementary education!

It is not our business to discuss what number of "Dreadnoughts" is necessary. The very fact that any "Dreadnoughts" are necessary at this time of day is a condemnation of Christianity. Some may say it is too good for this world, while others may say it is not good enough; but in either case it stands condemned as a miserable failure. It has had the grandest opportunity that any religion has ever had. It had Europe in its grasp for more than a thousand years; it had the control of education and the command of untold wealth; it had the rulers of men under its thumb, and it governed society from top to bottom. And what is the result? Europe is less peaceful to-day than she was under the great Roman emperors. She has fifty times as many fighting men, and spends a hundred times as much upon her armaments. And every country has its Yellow Press that can fill the people with the Jingo fever whenever it pleases; that is to say, whenever the psychological (and financial) moment has arrived.

Europe cannot afford to give Christianity another thousand years of power. What she wants is the spirit and discipline of Humanity.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Advance of Rome.

THANKS to the Rev. Joseph Hocking's address at the Free Church Council on "The Alarming Development of Modern Romanism," the question of Roman Catholicism and its methods has occupied much space in the daily papers during the past week. The assembly of Nonconformist ministers went wild with indignation on hearing of the advance of the Roman Church, which one would expect in the circumstances. Both Nonconformists and Roman Catholics are in the same line of business, the circle of possible customers is growing rapidly smaller, and to hear that a great rival firm is securing a larger number of purchasers naturally discourages the less successful competitor. So far the word "alarming" has a restricted, and purely trade, significance. It is alarming to Protestants, because it means their decrease. It is of no very great moment to Freethinkers, because they recognise that Roman Catholicism makes no headway against Freethought, but only serves to more clearly define the issue and strengthen the hands of the combatants.

A great many points were raised to cover this fundamental fact; but that this was the animating consideration was tolerably clear. Roman Catholic convents, it was said, ought to be under public inspection. Personally, I have no objection to this, provided the rule is made large enough to cover all institutions, of every description, whether they are in receipt of public money or not. But in connection with this it is worth noting that in China, when the authorities wished to have the Christian orphanages placed under public inspection, the desire was strenuously and successfully resisted by the Missionary Societies that were running them. Mr. Hocking told his audience that inside these institutions children can be born, women can die, there can be cruelty, crime, and outrage, and no one outside know anything about it. I do not suppose that anything of the kind does take place; but Mr. Hocking is a religious novelist who lives by exploiting the Protestant fear of Roman Catholic misdeeds, and knew his audience. There are some people who seem to live in a Eugene-Sue-Maria-Monk kind of an atmosphere, and who look on every priest as a criminal, every nun as worse than a criminal, and who see the trace of Roman Catholicism in everything unpleasant that happens. At any rate, this vigorous denunciation of the largest Christian Church in existence is not without interest to outsiders.

That the growth of convents and monasteries, the increase in the number of priests, and the growth of influence of the Christian Roman Church are all evils, I should be the last to dispute. But, in this country at least, I decline to believe, until some better proof is offered than the hysterical ravings of Mr. Hocking or Dr. Horton, that people are kept in monasteries or convents by physical force. Undoubtedly mental and moral pressure of an undesirable kind is brought to bear upon people to keep them from leaving the Church; but that is not a peculiarity of Roman Catholicism—it is a common feature with all forms of Christianity. And no legislation can alter this. The care taken by Protestants to prevent young men and women knowing the truth about their creed is illegitimate moral pressure of an indirect kind. The discomfort the heretic is made to feel in Protestant family circles, his boycotting in social and political circles, is illegitimate pressure of a direct kind. And in both cases the difference between Protestant and Roman Catholic tactics is one of degree only. If the Roman Church is more successful, it is only because it is better disciplined, not because it is less moral than Protestantism.

It is the mental and moral tyranny of Rome that has to be fought; and how can Protestantism do this when it is driven to the same policy in self-protection? The only check to Roman Catholicism is Freethought, and therefore the only way in which a Protestant can conquer a Roman Catholic is by

acting as some of the Japanese sailors did in the late war—make one's own death the price of the destruction of one's adversary. Afraid to do this, Protestantism is powerless to prevent the growth of Roman Catholicism, while in fighting Freethought it is driven to adopt exactly the same tactics it complains of in Roman Catholicism. It boycotts, it slanders, it suppresses, it distorts, it uses force where force avails, and cunning where force cannot be used. It claims that with a fair field it can beat Roman Catholicism. The best answer to that is in the statement of Mr. Hocking of its growth during the last forty years. In spite of Protestantism being in possession, it has gained ground. The inspection of convents will not stop its growth, nor will the propaganda of Protestant lecturers. This is merely fighting an absurdity with an absurdity, and can only influence those who like their foolishness to be of a kaleidoscopic character. Reason is the only weapon that can inflict injuries on the Church of Rome, and in wielding that weapon the Protestant is sure to damage himself as much as his adversary.

Mr. Hocking told his audience that every newspaper in England was under the control of Roman Catholicism, more or less; and he and Dr. Horton between them picture the English press as being dominated by Roman Catholic writers, who are themselves instructed by a mysterious Roman Catholic press-bureau. The game is, apparently, to suppress anything against Roman Catholicism, exaggerate everything in its favor, and generally cook the news in the interest of the Roman Catholic Church. Now, I do not question for a moment that Roman Catholics would do this if they had the chance. But they have not the chance to any greater degree than Protestants, and all they do in this direction is exactly what every Protestant paper in England is doing in defence of its own opinions. How often does the *Christian World* or the *Methodist Times*, or any other religious paper, give an opposite opinion a fair show? Or, to take another class, what kind of a chance do non-Christian opinions stand in the ordinary newspaper? Why, even news concerning the Secular Education movement is excluded. Societies like the National Secular Society never receive a mention—unless something may be raked up to their discredit. If one of its lecturers were to commit a murder or a burglary, the fact of his being a Freethought lecturer would be given every prominence. In any laudable direction he might perform the labors of Hercules, the papers would be dumb.

Now I do not believe this is so because there is a Protestant press-bureau hidden away in the recesses of Lambeth Palace that carefully plants some agent on every paper in the kingdom. Elaborate plots of this kind are too unworkable. Something of a much simpler and more automatic kind is needed. And this is found in two directions—in the fact that newspapers are run for a profit, and in the nature of the public for which they cater. Newspapers are run to pay, not to spread opinions, and if they are to pay they must serve up pieces of news that will tickle the palates of their readers, and avoid printing anything that will offend them. Consider, for instance, the publicity given to Mr. Hocking's attack on Roman Catholicism. It has not been reported so widely as has been the case, because newspaper editors and proprietors believe in his press within a press. But any talk about convents and monks and nuns appeals to the salacious Protestantism of the public, and it is too interesting an item to be missed. Why does the escapades of Miss Charlesworth have columns devoted to the telling, while a meeting of the British Association passes with a few lines, but for the same reason. Anything of a "spicy" character, provided it does not offend public opinion, is fairly sure of a show in the English newspapers. It is the purely intellectual that suffers by this condition of things.

The first work of a newspaper is, then, to make its news as spicy and as sensational as possible. The second is to avoid offending readers. But our public has been so badly trained, and has so narrow an out-

look, that the publication of an opinion with which it differs it seriously affronts. Having read the newspaper for its *news*—that is, to read a number of sensational items it would probably be better for not reading—it next turns to the more intellectual portion of the paper, not to find material or suggestions for the formation of a sound opinion, but in order to see in print its own vulgar prejudices. The moment an opinion is read that conflicts with its prejudices, it declines to read further. Above all, if a judgment is given against its religious prejudices, the paper is doomed. It is, then, the church-and-chapel-fed bigotry that boycotts anti-religious news, and exactly what Mr. Hocking declares to be the policy of the Roman Catholic Church is the hereditary policy of English Protestantism ever since there has been a press to muzzle or coerce.

I agree with Mr. Hocking that Roman Catholicism is tyrannical, and that its growth in England is undesirable. I agree, also, with Catholics when they say that Mr. Hocking and his kind are intolerant, and that their predominance has been injurious to the best interests of the nation. Both are right, for the reason that Christianity and mental equality are absolutely incompatible. Mr. Hocking does well in pointing out that Roman Catholicism has increased. It will help to show people that there is a greater necessity for energetic Freethought propaganda than many people seem to think. But this growth cannot be checked by Protestantism. In every country in Europe Roman Catholicism has shown itself able to more than hold its own in face of that foe. The only effective enemy against the Roman Church is Freethought. And that is just as deadly to Protestantism as it is to the older folly.

C. COHEN.

History Repeating Itself.

CANADIAN Methodism is in a state of alarming convulsion caused by a bitter and brutal attack which an old and conservative divine has just made upon a young and somewhat advanced brother-minister. The "savage onslaught" appeared in the *Toronto Globe*, the leading newspaper of Canada, and was from the pen of the Rev. Dr. Carman, who has been General Superintendent of the Canadian Methodist Church for twenty-six years. The object of the attack is the Rev. George Jackson, B.A., who recently went over to Canada from Edinburgh, where for many years he enjoyed great popularity as the trusted representative of British Wesleyanism. Mr. Jackson's sin consists in denying the historicity and scientific accuracy of the first eleven chapters of Genesis and affirming that "a correct theory of the origin of the Universe, the origin of the human race, and the origin of sin is no part of the Christian faith." What Dr. Carman maintains is that to regard the first chapters of the Bible as unhistoric and unscientific "does not carry the judgment or command of the ripest scholarship and the best men." This is sufficiently absurd, in all conscience; but Mr. Jackson's position is more ridiculous still. What he believes is that the spiritual value of the Biblical narrative of Creation and the Fall does not depend upon its historical and scientific truth. Speaking of his opponents he says that "where they see history and science, as well as spiritual truth, I can see spiritual truth alone." But how on earth can "spiritual truth" inhere in historical and scientific falsehood? If man was not created in the image of God, what "spiritual truth" can possibly lurk in the statement that he was? Or, if man did not fall from his first estate into another of hopeless depravity and lostness, what conceivable "spiritual truth" nestles in the assertion that he did? This alleged discovery of spiritual truths in natural lies is one of the pitiable shifts of a discredited and decaying Christianity.

Theologically Dr. Carman is undoubtedly in the right. It is beyond controversy that Christianity was built up in the conviction that the Bible was a

revelation from God, both inspired and infallible; and on no other assumption does Christianity possess the least credibility. Milton was only expressing the faith of the whole of Christendom when he sang—

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat."

That is only an amplification of Paul's teaching in Romans v. 19: "As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous." Whether Paul was right or wrong, his view of the relation between the first and the second Adam was adopted by the entire Church. Christ came into a world of sinners to save them. He was in search of lost souls that he might find them and restore them to his Father's favor. Apart from the doctrine of the Fall and of Original Sin, Christ lived and died in vain, Christianity has no meaning, and the ministry of the Gospel is a complete farce. In other words, if the first two or three chapters of Genesis are not historically reliable, the foundation is knocked from under Christianity, and the whole structure is doomed. The Hon. S. H. Blake, President of the Toronto Y.M.C.A., is theologically justified, when, joining in Dr. Carman's protest, he says: "I am not going to agree to giving up the dear old Bible for any scientific-rationalistic-kaleidoscopic theory that Mr. Jackson may present." Dr. Carman and the Hon. Mr. Blake are consistent, while Mr. Jackson is not.

No rational justification of Christianity is possible. It contradicts reason at every point. It has always been its main boast that to the wise it is both a stumbling-block and foolishness. Indeed, according to its original promulgators, the intellect touches it at its peril. Paul tells us in so many words that the natural man cannot receive it, because unto him it is simply incredible. A supernatural man must be specially created and placed within the natural man, before it can be adopted and duly appreciated. But Mr. Jackson seems to think that the Christianity of Paul and of the orthodox Church is a building that can stand without a foundation. He knows full well that Genesis and science are antagonistic, and he gives Genesis the go-by and clings to science. When challenged he coolly replies, "Yes, truly, I have surrendered the *letter*, the *fact*, of Genesis, but I still retain its *spirit*, its inner, eternal meaning, and so remain an orthodox Methodist." Such is modernism in the Church. As soon as science has shattered the letter, it says, "O, the letter was never of any real value, and I cheerfully surrender it; it is the spirit within it that counts, and this I still hold." The truth, however, is that man either did fall in Adam, or did not. If he did not, will you tell us what spirit abides in the story of his fall, when its letter has been utterly discredited? That spirit is as unsubstantial as the ghost of Hamlet's father. The policy of abandoning the facts of theology when science attacks them is essentially dishonest, because in the absence of the so-called facts upon which it was founded, Christianity loses whatever semblance of reality it may have once possessed. Therefore we contend that, while not a single Christian doctrine is rationally credible, it is but sheer hypocrisy on the part of theologians to renounce the doctrines specially assailed by modern culture, on the plea that they never were essential parts of the Christian faith. They *were* essential parts of it until science proved that they were only fables. The Bible *was* the Word of God until criticism exposed the fallacy, after which it only *contained* it.

Orthodoxy is self-consistent and logical, its only fault being that it is belied by all the facts of life. If we take Christianity in its purest form, as presented by Paul or Augustine, or one of the schoolmen, the first thing that strikes us is the sublimity of its conceptions, or the boldness of its imagination. But when we begin to study the history of the Church, the sublimity of conception and the grandeur

of imagination give place to the fact of disappointment and disillusion. Christianity in practice has been a radically different thing from Christianity in idea. In idea, it is impressive, fascinating, magnificent; but in practice it is seen to be a dismal failure. Not one of its august claims has been verified. Not one of its "great and precious promises" has ever been fulfilled. The assertion that it has never bestowed any benefit on mankind may be an exaggeration, but it is absolutely undeniable that it has wrought an incalculable amount of harm. It may be true that Europe is more highly civilised, but he would be a bold man who held that it is also more thoroughly moralised than the rest of the world.

In his new book, *Psyche's Task*, Dr. J. G. Frazer sings the praises of superstition. He assures us that its influence on the growth of institutions has, on the whole, been beneficial. When the king was believed to be a Divine Being his authority was respected. The fear of ghosts was a far more effectual deterrent from murder than the dread of capital punishment. Professor Frazer adduces numerous illustrations from savage life of the truth of his thesis. Of course, he by no means denies the many base uses of superstition. But, in any case, what he says in eulogy of savage superstition is not applicable to the Christian religion. It is most significant, however, that what he does utter in dispraise of superstition is specially true of Christianity. We all know that one of the most vital dogmas of this superstition is that of Immortality. Well, Dr. Frazer deliberately declares that "no belief has done so much to retard the economic and thereby the social progress of mankind as the belief in the immortality of the soul, for this belief has led race after race, and nation after nation, to sacrifice the real wants of the living to the imaginary wants of the dead." Every impartial student of ecclesiastical history knows how terribly true that statement is. Speaking generally, it is impossible to affirm honestly that Christianity has ever made for the moral elevation of its professors.

We can now see clearly how laughably preposterous is the assertion that disbelief in the historicity of the opening chapters of Genesis is calculated to loosen moral bonds and debauch the public mind. Incontrovertibly it does produce doubters of the Divine origin and efficacy of Christianity, but that it will have any deleterious effect on morals is surely the vainest of dreams. We allege, on the contrary, that the complete discarding of supernatural religion would react beneficially on the moral and social life of Europe. Take Germany and Great Britain, two nominally Christian nations, and enumerate the benefits they have derived from their fidelity to the Christian faith. What has Christianity done for them after so many centuries? It has only led them to compete with each other as to which shall possess the bigger and more efficient navy. Where is the sense of human brotherhood based upon the Fatherhood of God? Christianity has not produced it, and we are firmly convinced that the disappearance of Christianity would tend to hasten its development. Religious belief has always fostered social disagreements and divisions and antagonisms. The present violent controversy in Canada, and the disgraceful scenes at the recent meeting of the Free Church Council, are cases in point. The same is true of the endless wrangle in Parliament and in the country over the educational problem. Religion is the chief bone of contention everywhere, and the chief barrier against national and international good fellowship.

It is sometimes objected that this is true only of organised Christianity. That may well be so, because there is no other Christianity. All churches are organisations, the City Temple quite as much as Westminster Chapel. It is about supernaturalism that people most pitiably and most constantly quarrel, and they fight over this so violently because it is the one subject upon which no knowledge is obtainable. It is not so long since men used to break one another's heads because they could not

agree on the doctrine of the Trinity. It follows that to drop the belief in supernaturalism would be to get rid of one fruitful cause of social disunion and moral delinquency, and to bring individuals and communities into closer and more fraternal touch.

J. T. LLOYD.

Obiter Dicta on Ghosts.

POLITICIANS mostly belong to the family of Pecksniff, and, therefore, it is with the greater pleasure that we read the amusing and critical speech on psychical research delivered by Mr. Augustine Birrell at Bristol. "An endless capacity for the interchange of platitudes" is Mr. Birrell's sarcastic comment on the spiritualistic conception of immortality. The sarcasm is amply confirmed by the absurd conduct of the "spirits" who are alleged to be "interviewed" in regard to their condition in the next world. When spiritualistic professors disturb the "ghosts" of great and good men and women, and persuade them to "revisit the glimpses of the moon" at psychical meetings, the results are most melancholy and unsatisfactory. Not only have the thoughts of the departed not grown finer nor more original, but invariably there is a vast change for the worse. The reported utterances of Burns and Shakespeare, for example, suggest that these great poets have taken to drink or are suffering from softening of the brain. They give no iota of information concerning the post-mortem existence, but seem preoccupied with composing puerile parodies of their previous utterances on earth.

Our scepticism with regard to the "spirit messages" is not mitigated by the supposition that the authors of "Tam o' Shanter" and *Hamlet* may conceivably pass their tremendous and enforced leisure rapping at the undersides of tables or scratching incoherences into locked slates for the professional purposes of spiritualist professors. It is too significant that the "spirits" are more deeply preoccupied with things temporal rather than with matters dealing with their alleged post-mortem existence.

Mr. Birrell, then, cannot be accused of undue levity when he smiles at the idea of an immortality of platitudinous nonsense. Nor, in our case, is the matter placed in any more favorable light by suggesting that even Cæsar and Napoleon may fill in their eternal leisure with discords on concertinas or solos on dinner gongs for the delectation of select circles of psychical students.

We can afford to smile at the crude conceptions concerning immortality of our spiritualistic friends. Yet we venture to remind Mr. Birrell that cruder conceptions regarding another world are held firmly enough by tens of thousands of people who profess and call themselves Christians. At the worst, the Spiritualists merely wish to meet their lost friends and relatives in another existence. They do not insult and imprison the people who differ from them in this world and threaten them with everlasting agony in the next like the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. If Christianity be true, Burns and Shakespeare, in company with many millions of other unhappy human beings, are now howling in unutterable torment. We frankly dislike both the Spiritualistic and the Christian views concerning immortality, but we confess that the Spiritualist conception is far less brutal and degrading than that held by the orthodox Christians. Of the two things, we prefer legerdemain to vivisection.

VERDANT GREEN.

But as grief must be fed with thought, or starve to death, it is the best plan to keep the mind so busy in other ways that it has no time to attend to that ravaging passion. To sit down and passively endure it, is apt to end in putting all the mental machinery into disorder.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

Masses for the Dead.

A CONSERVATIVE estimate of the total paid out for masses for the dead by Catholics in America places the amount in round figures at \$60,000,000 per annum.

Protestants and others not familiar with the sources of income of the Roman Church are often astonished to observe the phenomenal growth of Catholic churches and institutions that spring up in their midst, little dreaming of the influence at work by which laymen are induced to pour a constant stream of treasure into the coffers of the Church to secure prayers for the commutation of eternal punishment for departed friends and relatives.

It is a strange paradox that priests succeed in convincing parishioners that it is the most pious for whom the most prayers should be said (Pope Gregory is still being prayed for), and it is not uncommon for wealthy Roman Catholics to bequeath very large sums that avaricious priests, who would otherwise neglect the task, should be induced to keep up the prayers that are supposed to mitigate the severity of endless burning.

There is an ever-increasing number of Catholics who are beginning to doubt whether the priests make good—whether their prayers are really effective in cooling the purgatorial fires.

The number of Catholics "from Missouri" are constantly on the increase; and as modernism replaces medievalism, as Americanism triumphs over foreignism, it is being more and more demanded of the priesthood to "show me"—they want to know what they are getting for their money.

Catholics are wanting more precise information in regard to the Purgatory Country—is it laid out like burial lots, with a grate under each apartment to be turned off or on according as prayers reach the main office; or are the sinful beggars classified in great herds under varying degrees of heat, and snatched from one group and temperature to another in accordance with the prayer-bulletins sent in by the priests?

Not only are rational Catholics going to demand a complete knowledge of Purgatory, its regulation, the system employed, what kind of heat, whether coal, wood, gas, electricity, hot air or hot water are used, but they are going to demand some substantial evidence of the method by which the priests have gained all this information; they are going to insist upon authentic records as to the reduction of temperature in the apartments or sections in which their loved ones are confined; and, failing to produce such records, and failing to furnish complete reliable evidence of having carried out their contract and accomplishing what they promised, they are going to prosecute the priest for obtaining money under false pretences.

Now and then we hear of clairvoyants, fortune-tellers, astrologers, mental healers, Christian scientists, and even graduated physicians being prosecuted for mal-practice or for obtaining money under false pretences, and a study of social evolution shows that all of the professions—doctor, lawyer, priest, and teacher—are but the natural evolution and differentiation of the office of the ancient high priest, whose function originally included all the four professions above named; the tendency of modern thought, which is manifesting itself everywhere, is to demand the preacher "makes good" his promises, as well as his brother parasites who live upon the labor of others.

An exceeding kindly and inexperienced Catholic woman of sixty-eight years, who had lived a life of hardship and poverty, recently came into possession of some \$3,000 of society insurance through the death of her only son, and within six months \$1,400 of this had been paid out for masses for the rest of the soul of the immaculate and perfect husband who had died thirty years before.

A poor widow in Chicago, who for twenty years had earned her living by washing, and who had managed to hold on to a small piece of property that was wanted as part of a building site, received \$1,800, which, in her old age was all she had, and within three months \$400 of this had already been paid out to priests for prayers to keep several of her pious and goodly relatives from burning.

A maiden lady of seventy, who had given her life to be the housekeeper for her brother—a priest—on his death received \$5,000 as her share of his large estate, the balance, some \$300,000, going to the Church. Within a few months she had spent the full amount in prayers to secure a better temperature for her holy brother; but, in consideration of her liberality, she was furnished transportation and was placed in a ward in a Catholic institution for the aged, where she died within two years under conditions that were pathetic, in that the demands of the new environment were entirely different from the life she had led as a free spirit in the household of her brother, where her duties in the garden, going to market, preparing meals, and arranging the affairs of the household, were so entirely different from the institutional atmosphere that was forced upon her in her old age.

The above are but a few among thousands, and what are growing to be millions, of instances of inexperienced, simple-minded, and trusting people paying out their hard-earned monies for an absolutely untrue, unreliable, and foundationless benefit; and if the Protestant majority in this country does not soon arouse itself to the need of stopping this form of theft, this method of filching from the trustful by means especially organised to transfer the earnings from the pockets of those who toil into the coffers of those who have always lived upon the labors of others, then it is going to be the province of the more intelligent Catholics themselves to initiate laws that will demand the prosecution of priests for obtaining money under false pretences, or else force them to prove in court, by sound evidence, that they perform what they promise.

The testimony given by reliable Philipino witnesses before the Taft Commission gave ample evidence of the total depravity, the entire absence of honor or decency on the part of the Friars in the Philipines.

Our higher intelligence makes it impossible for the priesthood in America to go to the extremes of rascality that were found to prevail in the Philippine Islands prior to American occupation; but, notwithstanding the vast improvement in behavior which a more intelligent public opinion in America enforces, still, in the selling of indulgences, in the acceptance of money to the extent of \$60,000,000 per annum under agreement to pray departed souls out of Purgatory, we may observe a systematic process of thieving under the label of respectability and with the sanction of tradition that amounts annually to a larger sum than the total legally-punished embezzlements, thefts, misappropriations, and burglaries, all other sources combined.

Let the prayer-making priests be forced to prove that that they furnish good value for funds accepted, or suffer prosecution for obtaining money dishonorably the same as other offenders.—To-Morrow (Chicago).

For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct bears along,
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift flash of right or
wrong;
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Humanity's vast
frame
Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the gush of joy or
shame;
In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim.
—James Russell Lowell.

Idols and dogmas in place of character; pills and theories in place of wholesome living. See the histories of theology and medicine.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

Acid Drops.

Rev. R. J. Campbell delivered two addresses at Wolverhampton lately, and judging from the *Birmingham Daily Mail* report there was not very much in either of them. In answering a question, he stated that he was a member of the Independent Labor Party, but "if such membership tended towards Atheism he should not be in it." Of course not. But why does he keep on talking Christianity at Independent Labor Party meetings? If the Atheists returned the compliment there would be "ructions." Mr. F. J. Gould, for instance, who belongs to the Independent Labor Party at Leicester, and sits as a Labor member on the Town Council, is, in our opinion, a much abler and more accomplished man than Mr. Campbell, but he doesn't talk Atheism at political meetings. He has better manners, and a better sense of fair-play, than Mr. Campbell has.

Mr. Campbell also repeated at Wolverhampton his old statement that "there is not a single Agnostic on the Labor benches of the House of Commons." We have asked him before, and we ask him again, how on earth he knows this? Even if it were true, which we are not exactly admitting, it would not prove what Mr. Campbell is driving at; for the Labor men who get returned to Parliament are naturally the "safest" in all but Labor matters. A thoroughly outspoken, much more an aggressive Freethinker would seldom be put forward as a Labor candidate in England, on account of the religious prejudice that would be raised against him. For even Socialism, as well as Labor, is not without its "respectabilities."

The program of the London Church Pageant seems to be now complete. It goes back to the days of Constantine and ends with the acquittal of the Seven Bishops in 1688. One of the living pictures will be the trial of Wycliffe and another the execution of Laud. Of course there will be no pictures of the burning of the Jesuits and other Catholics, the massacres of the Jews, the torture and slaughter of heretics, or the imprisonment of "blasphemers." The pageant is thus a very one-sided affair. But it will probably catch on and raise the wind for the Church. The performances are to take place in Fulham Palace Grounds from June 10 to 16. Seats are to be provided for 6,500 spectators, and 78,000 tickets are printed. The prices range from 3s. to 21s. each.

During a lively scene at a Glasgow Town Council meeting one member shouted with regard to another: "He could not address an envelope; he is only a Jew." We presume the member who indulged in that elegant exclamation is a Christian. We beg to remind him that Jesus Christ was only a Jew. We don't know whether he could address envelopes.

Joseph was a Jew. Mary was a Jewess. All the twelve apostles were Jews. When the cashier rattled and another member was added to the "twelve" in his place, the new comer was a Jew. When it was found necessary to add a thirteenth member, another Jew was found in Paul. We might almost call Jehovah himself a Jew. We say nothing about the third member of the Trinity. Perhaps he was Scotch.

An Anglican clergyman, the Rev. C. H. S. Matthews, has written a book called *A Parson in the Australian Bush*. We have not read it, but judging by a review in the *Daily Chronicle* the author has no exalted opinion of the work of the Church out there. Rough bushmen look upon the Church as simply "on the make." "You only come about once in seven years," one of them said to Mr. Matthews, "and you wouldn't come then if there wasn't any money in it. You're all on the make, the whole — lot of you, and for all the good you do when you do come, you might just as well stay at 'ome." The common idea is that "the parson is a 'bloke' who comes for a collection." Which seems pretty near the bull's-eye.

"Peace on earth." That is what Christ came to bring. The clergy were all telling us so lately—at Christmas. Now that parliament is sitting again the whole talk is about "Dreadnoughts," and one Christian nation's chance of protecting itself against other Christian nations. Peace on earth! And Christ came to bring it nearly two thousand years ago. What a sanguinary farce! If the so-called civilised world had any sense it would hiss Christianity off the stage—and take care it never came on again.

Mr. F. E. Smith, K.C., is a Church-and-State Conservative, we believe. We are not surprised, therefore, at his

saying that—"Whatever else the election [at Croydon] was fought on, it should be fought on this issue: eight "Dreadnoughts" this year." This is so like a good Christian. But why stop at eight? Why not make it thirteen? One for Jesus Christ, and one each for the twelve apostles—including Judas.

Mr. George Jebb, the Mayor of Boston, who is a prominent layman of the Church of England, was invited to perform the opening ceremony at a bazaar in aid of the Methodist New Connexion Church at Boston. He accepted the invitation, but wrote:—

"I hope you will understand that I come merely in my civic capacity to express the equal toleration of the State for all religions, just as—to use an extreme illustration—I should feel bound, if required, to open a Jewish, Mahomedan, or Atheistic bazaar. My wife is not quite in the same position. She is, by way of compliment, called the Mayoress, but she has, in fact, no official position as such. What is a duty with me might with her be an act of disloyalty to her Master."

We are glad to see that the Mayor of Boston is liberal-minded enough to recognise, and act upon, the principle that the State owes equal toleration to all forms of religion (or irreligion). But this does not satisfy the Rev. J. H. C. Bevington, the pastor of the Methodist tabernacle. He withdrew the invitation on the ground that he and his friends did not want "a civic patronage which does not heartily recognise our efforts to do good." The reverend gentleman's rather waspish letter wound up with the following sting in its tail: "I regard it as deplorable in these days of religious co-operation that anyone could be found to maintain your exclusive and illogical attitude." This sounds very grand, but it is all humbug, unless the writer means that the Mayor should co-operate with every organisation in the town, and extend his "hearty recognition" to all of them, including the Atheists. It is a million to one the reverend gentleman doesn't mean that.

The President of the Wesleyan Conference is of opinion that "the first thing to do is to keep pious fudge out of the Church." We are in complete agreement with him, because we know that when "the pious fudge" is all out of her, the Church will have to close her doors and retire from business, "pious fudge" being her only stock-in-trade.

According to the latest revised version of Christianity, as supplied by the Rev. George Jackson, now of Canada, "a correct theory of the origin of the Universe, the origin of the human race, and the origin of sin is no part of its faith." The Rev. Dr. Carman prefers the old version, which is Paul's version, and he characterises the new version as only capable of doing the nefarious work of "loosening moral bonds, debauching the public mind, and producing doubters." As Dr. Carman is the General Superintendent of the Methodist Church in Canada, Mr. Jackson's position is not likely to be a bed of roses, although we utterly fail to see how the opinion quoted can produce such disastrous results.

Professor Peake told the Free Church Council at Swansea that "the grace of God works through very imperfect statements of redeeming truth." Will Dr. Peake tell us why "the grace of God" cannot work without any statement of "redeeming truth" at all? If there be a God, why does he not save people apart from the mediation of preachers and missionaries? Nay, more, if there be a God, will the Professor account for the fact that there are sinners who need salvation? Would not a perfect Deity have created, or evolved, a race of perfect men and women?

The Rev. Dr. Horton has a knack of distorting facts in the most shameful fashion. Speaking on Prayer at Swansea, he said that there is "a greater readiness to admit its validity to-day than there has ever been," which is as false a statement as could be made. The majority of people do not pray at all. Even of Church members but a small portion ever pray. Then the reverend gentleman holds Professor Huxley guilty of suggesting that the efficacy of prayer should be tested at some hospital. It was not Professor Huxley that made the suggestion.

Dr. Horton commits the grave blunder of describing Sir Oliver Lodge as "the man of science who occupies the same place as Professor Huxley, as the public orator of science." Professor Huxley *did* occupy that position with distinction; but Sir Oliver Lodge does not occupy it at all. It is as an amateur theologian, or as a spiritualist, that Sir Oliver Lodge comes before the public in the capacity of orator. He is a distinguished physicist; but, as a physicist, he has never defended prayer, or any other dogma of the

Church. Sir Oliver Lodge is a scientist who frequently abandons his own department to dabble in religion.

But Dr. Horton sins against the truth more grievously still. Not satisfied with confusing Huxley with Tyndall, and making a false comparison between Huxley and Lodge as public orators, he goes on to affirm that the *science* of Huxley's day is now "superseded." We invite the reverend gentleman to verify that assertion, and until he does so we are bound to characterise it as a pious invention. We confidently declare that the science of the twentieth century is a triumphant fulfilment and vindication of that of Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall, and that its whole tendency is anti-theological and naturalistic. How ineffably absurd, therefore, is the following exclamation of Dr. Horton: "A deeper thought and a fuller knowledge makes science speak with the lips of an apostle, 'I desire that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands without wrath and disputing.'"

"Half the world is waking up from the slumber of ages, and is pathetically asking for Christ," cried a well-known preacher in an official sermon. His very next sentence was this: "Civilised cities of unprecedented magnitude have outgrown the shepherding of the Churches, while at the same time curiosity concerning the things of the world unscen spreads on every hand." The first clause in each sentence is wholly true, but the second is as completely false. Neither China nor Japan, nor yet India, asks for Christ at all, though the Churches are doing their level best to force him upon them. Nor is it true that the bulk of non-church-going people in the large cities of Christendom display any lively interest in spiritual things. It looks as if parsons were incapable of facing the facts and speaking the truth.

Rev. F. L. Wiseman, addressing the annual meeting of the Birmingham City Mission, said that—"We were at the present time in the full flood of a great Christian revival." Rev. Joseph Wood, addressing the Midland Christian Union, in the same city, made a very different declaration. "In proportion to the population and wealth of the country," he said, "we are nothing like so strong nor so numerous as we were a hundred years ago. I could prove that by the statistics of Birmingham if it were necessary. London is worse. Need I recount to you the churches with a morning congregation of 20, 10, 6? Need I recount the story of closed churches?.....Is it pessimism to note the desperate efforts of churches by ignoble means, pierrot entertainments, dramatic performances, dances, whist drives, bridge parties, to augment their income?" Mr. Wiseman and Mr. Wood cannot both be accurate, for they contradict each other. We hold that Mr. Wiseman sentimentalises and Mr. Wood faces the facts.

Rev. Dr. P. M'Adam Muir, of Glasgow Cathedral, has been delivering the latest course of Baird Lectures lately, on "Modern Substitutes for Christianity." Hardly anything, of course, could be more farcical. The reverend gentleman was naturally bound to think very little of the said Substitutes, and he passed them under review with an affection of criticism which was only the expression of a religious and professional prepossession. The last lecture on "The Tribute of Criticism to Christ," if we may judge by the report in the *Glasgow Herald*, was full of the hysterical eulogy which Christian orators pour forth so readily on that subject. Strauss and Renan, it was said, had assailed the Figure of Christ in vain; the world was more and more fascinated by it, etc., etc. All of which is perfectly false and could only be asserted in a Christian pulpit, where reply is impossible and even contradiction is not permitted. Dr. M'Adam Muir ought to see, and perhaps does, that the "Figure of Christ" is growing ever vaguer and vaguer to believers, and more and more unhistorical to unbelievers, while the ideal it embodies becomes more and more unsuitable to the more complex civilisation of to-day. We may add that it is absolutely ridiculous to represent modern sceptics as looking to Christ and saying "O come let us adore him." We ask for the name of one modern sceptic of any recognised position in the world of thought who takes up that attitude. Dr. Muir is like awildly infatuated and madly jealous husband, who fancies every man is in love with his wife. Dr. Muir thinks all the sceptics are in love with his Christ. They are not.

Burglars visited Southmead Laundry, near Bristol, and opened a large iron safe, which contained nothing but books. They left a note saying: "We are extremely disgusted; we shan't come back!—Sykes & Co." Just like Christian Powers when they collar a heathen country and find it doesn't pay through the cussedness of the inhabitants.

Rev. Dr. Horton has the common Christian idea of accuracy. He made a public statement that the *Academy* had passed into Roman Catholic hands. This being as publicly denied by the editor and proprietors, the reverend gentleman apologises for his erroneous statement. But how did he come to make it? "I was told so," he says. Any evidence is good enough for what the common garden Christian likes to believe.

Dr. Horton would have been well within the limits of truth if he had merely stated that the *Academy* shows a strong Catholic bias. Some of its articles are either written by Catholics who are allowed their full fling, or by Protestants who are so much like Catholics that the difference is hardly worth estimating.

There has been a Mission at the famous Catholic Church of St. Joseph's, Highgate-hill, London. According to the *Islington Gazette* this Mission was an unqualified success, and the missionaries carry away with them "the heartfelt gratitude of the people of Highgate." We looked through the report of the Rev. Father Hilary's last discourse to see what the people of Highgate had to be grateful for, and we found that they had been promised unlimited hell if they didn't accept what he preached to them. He spoke of the Clock of Hell which, when the poor lost souls cried out "Oh God! Oh God! am I to be for ever and ever in hell?" went on ticking, "For ever, never; never, for ever; for ever and ever and ever." God is going to leave millions and millions of his own creatures in everlasting torture, including lots of men, women, and children who live in the neighborhood of St. Joseph's Church. That is what the people of Highgate are grateful for. Father Hilary will be wanted again—especially in the cold weather.

Brighton has decided by 31 votes to 10 on the Town Council not to have Sunday afternoon and evening concerts on the Pavilion Lawn in the summer months. All the men of God in the town have been up in arms against this wicked proposal. They are the real Protectionists.

Mr. W. T. Stead has an extremely robust faith in some directions. In the *Review of Reviews* for March he gravely relates how Christian Scientists operated on a horse. Veterinary surgeons had given the animal up and advised an immediate and painless death. Christian Science treatment was then administered to the four-legged patient who, in a few days, was in the hunting field as if it had never been ill. We suppose the same treatment would be successful on donkeys. Perhaps more so.

Mr. Alex. Fullerton, in the *Theosophic Messenger*, calls Mrs. Besant "the most Exalted Personage on earth next to the Masters." Note the capitals. How we are getting on! J. C. himself takes quite a back seat when Mrs. Besant appears.

Mrs. Besant herself has been writing in the *Theosophist* on "The Search for God." We do not gather that *this* Exalted Personage has been found. What is certain is that the people who pretend to know a lot about him are getting found out. The know-alls are turning out to be know-nothings.

"The Future of Man"—rather a prophetic subject—was the theme of Sir Oliver Lodge's recent address at the Sparbrook Men's Meeting. Incidentally he referred to work for better social conditions on this planet as "practical Christianity," though it might be more accurately called practical humanity. Sir Oliver Lodge added that—"There were many who were working heartily towards this end and dissociated themselves, sometimes rather noisily, from any form of Christianity. They were anxious not to be thought of as Christians. He fancied that if it were possible to put the question to Christ himself, he would recognise them as Christians though they did not recognise themselves." We presume this is an indirect reply to Mr. Foote's criticism of Sir Oliver Lodge in one of his last lectures at the Birmingham Town Hall. Now we venture to remind the distinguished professor that he is not, in this case, displaying the best controversial manners. It is a distinct offence against good manners to tell your intellectual opponent that he is really on the same side that you are, only he doesn't know it. There is a certain insolence in such an attitude. And we think the Professor would recognise it if the tables were turned. Supposing we were to say that Sir Oliver Lodge was a very able man, and a very well-meaning man, but that he really didn't understand his own position, and that he was an Atheist without knowing it. Would he not regard such a statement as an impertinence on our part?

Those who dissociate themselves from Christianity are not half as "noisy" as the Christians themselves. Anyhow, we beg to assure Sir Oliver Lodge that their rejection of Christianity, in any shape or form, is deliberate and final. They regard it as false and pernicious, and it is no use bullying them or soft-soaping them; they refuse to be driven, and they decline to be caught.

A writer in the *American Review of Reviews* calls ex-President Roosevelt "the best expression of Christian American manhood." Perhaps that is why he sticks to his three lies in three words about Thomas Paine, whom he calls a "filthy little Atheist."

It is interesting to learn that Roosevelt is of opinion that "the religion of Jesus is a necessary instrument in the redemption of Africa." But is not "redemption" a misprint for "exploitation"? There seems to be a mistake somewhere.

Dr. Campbell Morgan says that the Holy Ghost is present in the Church "in all his fulness." It is not the Holy Ghost's fault that the world is not saved; it is his misfortune that he is limited in by the Church. It is not we that need more of the Spirit of God; it is the Spirit that needs more of us. That is a terribly lame excuse for the failure of Christianity. One so easily sees through it. Omnipotence could not be limited by worms of the dust. An infinite and eternal Savior could not be hindered in his work by frail creatures of a day. It is because monarch reason is asleep that the fallacies of the pulpit are tolerated by so many.

The Christian spirit is still the same. A popular preacher exclaims, "Do not repine or murmur at your lot in life. Always remember that He has appointed it, and placed you there." A more damnable and damning doctrine was never preached. That it is Biblical only adds to its condemnation. And yet there are those who would have us believe that Christianity means Socialism.

There is a parish magazine in Birmingham called the *Sign*, which has a "Correspondents" column edited by the Very Rev. Provost Staley. This gentleman, being asked where the soul goes to at death until the day of judgment, replies that "We have very scanty information upon this point in Holy Scripture," and winds up by saying that "We need to exercise much caution and restraint in thinking and speaking of so mysterious a subject as the life of the soul after death." Evidently the clergy know no more than the rest of us. All they can do is to guess. And other people can do that as well as they can—and save the money.

Some of the newspapers have been announcing that Johnson, the black pugilist who defeated Burns at Melbourne, has become a Bible Christian and has already been booked to preach. Other papers report that he is trying to arrange a fresh fight with Jeffries. This may concern the Christians. It doesn't matter to us.

A paper called the *Modern Man*, in the middle of an article on the press reports of divorce cases, represents the Rev. A. J. Waldron as referring to the lectures of "the atheists of the public parks" as "the blasphemous filth poured out by these brutes," and as dreading the result to innocent children who "gathered round these ranting ruffians." No Atheist will trouble much about this. It is Pastor Waldron's way. He is full of Christian charity, and "acts accordin'"—and his pleasant, polite manners are proverbial. But we venture to inform the *Modern Man* that Freethought papers do not report divorce cases. They leave the monopoly of that profitable business to the Christian press—morning and evening, and in between. Newspapers that all belong more or less to Church or Chapel, and "draw the line" at the wicked *Freethinker*, turn an honest penny (or halfpenny) by printing "what the French maid saw in the bathroom," and similar stimulants to pious concupiscence.

Mr. C. T. Studd, the old International cricketer, has taken to work in the Lord's vineyard, which is possibly more profitable. His address on "Playing the Game," delivered before a Y. M. C. A. meeting at Canterbury, is reported in the local press. He had a good deal to say about China, which he has visited. He said that the Chinese were "fine men physically," while on the intellectual side if his auditors would "spend one year in the middle of China they would come back with as much cuteness as over they would get in ten years in a lawyer's office in England." But the Chinese were not like the English who "ruled a quarter of the world"—and (the speaker might have added) comprised

more thieves, gamblers, drunkards, paupers and prostitutes than any other nation of the same size in the world. Mr. Studd pointed out that the great difference between England and China was that "England had got the Bible and China had not." We presume this accounts for the physical, intellectual, and, we venture to add, the moral superiority of the Chinese. It seems desirable, therefore, that instead of our sending missionaries to the Chinese to induce them to accept the Bible, the Chinese should send missionaries over here to induce us to give the Bible up.

We have been favored with a copy of the Pastoral Letter for Lent of the Catholic Bishop of Galloway. This reverend gentleman calls upon the faithful to shun those who are guilty of "foul concubinage" by marrying outside the Catholic Church. He is also very anxious that working-men should not fall the "prey of purely secular organisations." At the end of the letter is a list of "dispensations." The faithful are told when they may eat meat or fish during Lent; even dripping and lard are mentioned, and (oh comedy!) the permission to eat butter is "extended to the use of butterine and margarine." Fancy a lot of grown-up people allowing a pious old gentleman to order them how to regulate their meals! And fancy a God who dictates his worshipers' bill of fare! Talk about "blasphemy"! Freethinkers are not in it with Catholics.

Another haunted house has cropped up at the little village of Copmere, some three miles from Eccleshall, Staffordshire. You never find a haunted house in the main street of a big town. Ghosts like plenty of elbow room and not too much light.

Here are two sentences from one and the same article in the *Daily Chronicle* :—

- (1) The maintenance of our naval supremacy is one of the primal duties of a British Government.
- (2) This race in armaments is a melancholy commentary on Christian civilisation in the twentieth century.

Beautiful!

Mr. Samuel Wilders Mayes, a well-known resident of Barrow-on-Soar, committed suicide by lying on the rails in front of a train, which cut him in two. He was an active worker in the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion and steward to the Loughborough Circuit quarterly meeting. He had been suffering from some affection of the head, which was bandaged when he destroyed himself. Consequently there does not appear to be any moral to the incident—as there would be if he had been a Secularist.

BLIND FAITH.

How many Christians try to verify the dogmas of their faith? How many of them think out the question whether Christ is God? How many of them think out the question of whether the miraculous stories of the New Testament have any truth? How many of them think out the question of whether Jesus Christ was born without a father? Or whether he rose from the dead, or whether, during the crucifixion, there was a wholesale resurrection of dead saints? How many of them take the trouble to think whether Jesus Christ could have ascended into heaven from two different places and at two different times? They are told in their childhood to believe these things, and they never afterwards criticise Christianity. It is for this reason that the faith of nine hundred and ninety men out of every thousand is determined, not by their own reason, but by the geographical accident of their birth and the education they have received. If faith without knowledge is credulity, this is credulity. To believe because our teachers taught us, without giving us any foundation for it; to go on believing it without ascertaining or acquiring after evidence; if this is faith, and it appears to be, then it is credulity, and such a faith must be rather a curse than a blessing.—G. W. Foote.

WHERE THE MIRACLE CAME IN.

The preacher tried to explain to an old lady the meaning of the scriptural expression, "Take up thy bed and walk," by saying that the bed was simply a mat or rug easily taken up and carried away. "No, no," replied the lady, "I cannot believe that. The bed was a regular four-poster. There would be no miracle in walking away with a bit o' mat or rug on your back."

Mr. Foote's Engagements

April 4, 11, 18, 25, St. James's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 28, Holloway; April 4, Forest Gate; 25, Greenwich.
- THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £153 13s. 6d. Received since.—W. Bailey, £6; J. G. Finlay, £1; S. Valentine Caunter, £1 1s.; Two Readers at Point, Natal, £1.
- R. J. HENDERSON.—Hope you are better now the arctic weather has retired.
- R. H. SIDE.—The wonder is that you wear so well at your great age. We are glad to know that you do avoid gratuitous risks. Miss Vance sent you the tickets in a formal way.
- E. F. OSBORNE.—Always glad to receive raw material for one of our paragraphs.
- J. G. FINLAY (Pretoria), sending his subscription to the President's Fund, hopes "the amount asked for may be exceeded, in spite of the bad times."
- W. P. BALL.—Thanks for ever-welcome cuttings.
- W. H. DEAKIN (Bombay) sends us £2 "for the fighting fund for Camberwell." The Dulwich Baths protest meeting alone cost us nearly £5.
- G. PHILLIPS.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- H. B. DODDS, secretary, Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch, asks us to announce that the bazaar initiated by Mrs. Hutton in aid of the Lecture Fund has been put off to the back end of the year, owing to the necessity of making the most of the contributions, and the desire to ensure success by holding it in conjunction with the Branch's annual "social."
- W. HALL.—We had noted the announcement of Professor Frazer's new book; but thanks, all the same.
- W. PARKER.—Glad to hear you find the *Freethinker* so useful and "enjoy it immensely." You must bear with the bigotry of the people about you as good-temperedly as you can.
- KATHOLIKOS.—It seems to us that your reply as a Catholic to Sir George White as a Protestant, as to the alleged resistance by Romanism to the placing of the Bible in the hands of the people, should appear in a Catholic or a Protestant journal rather than in our columns. It would be a different thing if you were replying to something that we had said.
- R. ROGERS.—Pleased to receive your hearty thanks to the *Freethinker* staff for what you call "their noble work." Mr. Foote visits Manchester with tolerable regularity twice during the winter.
- J. H. CARTER.—Pleased in one sense to hear that you are looking forward to a second volume of Wheeler's *Footsteps of the Past* "with impatience"—but sorry in another sense, for you will be disappointed. Joseph Mazzini Wheeler was for many years our sub-editor. He died nearly eleven years ago, before he could see a second volume through the press.
- H. H. LEAK.—Don't try to prove a negative. The facts of Thomas Paine's death may be found in our *Infidel Death-Beds*. We cannot always be printing them in the *Freethinker*.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- 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.

Easter Eggs for Freethought.

EASTER is the most important Christian celebration. The birth of Christ was a common event; it meant nothing in particular, and led to nothing in particular. His death was the making of Christianity. The story of the crucifixion and the resurrection has been the great motive power of Christianity. Paul appears to have known nothing of the pathetic narrative of Christ's last hours, but he seized upon the resurrection as all-important. "If Christ be not risen," he said, "then is our faith vain, and we of all men most miserable."

Now I want English Freethinkers, or at any rate the readers of this journal, to mark the Eastertide by doing something for their own cause. Easter offerings will be taken up in all the churches. Let us take up one in the *Freethinker*.

May I venture to suggest that Freethinkers have not yet mastered the art of giving? Some of them give liberally, and give always; but many give nothing, and thus miss one of the pleasures of life,—though it is not included in Lord Avebury's catalogue. I do not say that this is their fault. Some of them have only a little to give, and perhaps don't like giving it; others live at a distance from any Freethought organisation, and are a bit lazy and procrastinating, like most of us, and hate the trouble of forwarding a donation, though they would "part" cheerfully enough if anyone were at hand to take it from them. Now I beg the indolent ones to make an effort for once, and I offer the poorer ones an opportunity of contributing without looking mean or ridiculous.

It is a long while since I had a SHILLING MONTH in the *Freethinker*, and I propose to have one in April. Between April 1 and April 30—and the nearer the first date the better—I ask the readers of this paper to send me any number of shillings, from one to a million, for Freethought. Let none of them be ashamed to send one shilling; let none of them hesitate to send any number of shillings. The little donation will be accepted; the big one will not be returned.

Those who send me shillings can write me a letter at the same time, if they have anything to say, and I will read their communications attentively.

Now for what will be done with the money. I propose to pay over one half the total to the National Secular Society, which is really in want of the sinews of war. I propose to devote the other half to the *Freethinker*, in advertising it, and pushing its circulation in other ways. I may add that I am losing money every week now that the responsibility for the paper and its adjuncts rests entirely upon me.

We ought to raise five thousand shillings easily in this way, and I hope we shall do it.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

London Freethinkers—east, west, north, and south—are earnestly invited to take note of the course of Sunday evening lectures by the President of the National Secular Society during April at the beautiful new St. James's Hall in Great Portland-street. This is a grand opportunity, and the London "saints" should strain every nerve to make the most of it—so that the fine hall may be crowded every evening. Each of them should make up his mind to come to as many of the four lectures as possible, and to bring as many friends with him as possible. Mr. Foote will do his part by putting his very best work into his lectures. And it is hoped that this may be a stepping-stone to future courses of lectures in first-class halls, and even theatres; in which courses other lecturers, as well as Mr. Foote, will be able to participate. So much depends on *this* course. That is why we invite the active co-operation of the whole Freethought party in the metropolis.

In spite of the miserable weather, there was a very much improved attendance at the Woolwich Co-operative Institute on Sunday evening, when Mr. Foote delivered the third and last of the course of lectures there under the auspices of the Secular Society, Limited. The audience was a fairly large one, and included a gratifying proportion of ladies; and it was thoroughly interested from beginning to end. Mr. Alison made an excellent chairman. He strongly invited discussion, but none was forthcoming. Some of the local

Christian champions seem to find it much easier to answer Mr. Foote in his absence.

The weather was all against the last "social" at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, on Thursday evening, March 18, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive. London was in a filthy condition, and those who did attend the "social" had to travel home through pelting rain. In the circumstances the assembly was quite as large as could be expected. But a good many familiar faces were absent, some of them unfortunately through indisposition in consequence of the severe weather obtaining more or less since Christmas. Mr. Foote and Mr. Cohen were both present, but Mr. Lloyd was unable to attend. Miss Helen Foote, Miss Florence Foote, and Mr. A. B. Moss contributed to the evening's entertainment. One provincial "saint" present was Mr. Joseph Bates, of Boston, who had been invited up to London to have a talk with the President over the state of affairs down there—of which our readers will probably hear more in next week's *Freethinker*.

We may just mention the fact at once that the local bigots, who have been working hard to get Mr. Bates out of the town, hoping thereby to stifle the N. S. S. Branch, have at last succeeded in doing him all the injury they could. Pressure was brought to bear upon Mr. Bates's employer, who had absolutely no fault to find with him and wished to retain his services; but the pressure was at length made irresistible, and in order not to lose important customers, Mr. Bates's employer had eventually to discharge him. The Branch naturally appealed to the N. S. S. President, who requested Mr. Bates to come up to London (of course at the Society's expense) and see him. Mr. Foote was not likely to let Mr. Bates and the Boston Branch be extinguished in that way. He determined to try the experiment, if possible, of stationing Mr. Bates in the district as a Freethought missionary. This will be considered at the N. S. S. monthly Executive meeting a few days after this paragraph is penned.

Here is another extract from a reader's letter: "I have recently taken your champion little paper, and am writing to thank you and your colleagues for the instruction I have received therefrom. I think it is fine, and was agreeably surprised to find the paper far above my expectations from a logical and scientific point of view."

"I have taken the *Freethinker* for a few months," another reader writes, "and have learned a great deal from it; in fact, I think it one of the finest publications for the money. I am a young fellow of twenty-one, and feel ashamed to see so many young fellows reading either the Bible or the Yellow Press. It would do some of them a bit more good to read your paper."

We are glad to see our veteran friend Mr. J. W. de Caux's pen at work in the local press again. He has been tackling the Rev. G. P. Tonge this time. The reverend gentleman complained that people went golfing on Sunday instead of going to church,—his own church in particular, we presume. Mr. de Caux asked him who made him a judge of how other men should spend their Sundays. This elicited a reply from "Inquirer," who may be Mr. Tonge in disguise. At any rate, he asked for "an answer, and to the point." And he got it. Mr. de Caux showed him, in a long letter, that there was really no such thing as Christianity at all nowadays; the men in the pulpits were ashamed of it, and the men in the pews went off to enjoy themselves instead of listening to hypocritical sermons.

Love works very strange transformations in young women. Sometimes it leads them to try every mode of adding to their attractions—their whole thought is how to be most lovely in the eyes they would fill, so as to keep out all other images. Poor darlings! We smile at their little vanities, as if they were very trivial things compared with the last Congressman's speech on the great Election Sermon; but Nature knows well what she is about. The maiden's ribbon or ruffle means a great deal more for her than the judge's wig or the priest's surplice.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*.

To love is to know happiness but not contentment, rapture but not peace, exhilaration but not satisfaction; for contentment means inertia, peace means stagnation, and satisfaction means satiety, and these three cannot exist where Love is. Love and action are co-existent, and where Love is there is no repose, but there is rest even in its restlessness, ecstasy in its misery, hope in its fear, joy in its sorrow, and sweet in its bitter.—*Ella Wheeler Wilcox*.

Self-Denial Week.

[Socrates stood in front of St. Clement Danes, and contemplated the scurrying crowds of people around him.]

Socrates.—"For centuries I have been worrying Psychopompus to let me come back to earth and continue my famous Dialogues; and here I have been three days in London, and cannot find anyone to talk to. Everybody is too busy. It was different in Athens. There, everyone was unemployed, and was ready to enter into discussion upon any conceivable subject; but here the people think of nothing but work. I wonder what they do it for?"

[He walked along the Strand, when suddenly his attention was arrested by a woman standing before a large building, holding a box in her hand. She was certainly not beautiful. She might even be called repulsive. Her awkward figure was enveloped in a rusty blue dress, and her ugly face was surrounded by a still more hideous blue bonnet, on which was a bright red ribbon, bearing the words "Salvation Army." The box seemed to contain something heavy; for she shook it now and again, and produced a rattling noise; and Socrates could see printed on the front of it, in large letters, "Self-Denial."]

Socrates.—"Strange that these modern people should advertise their self-denial by standing in a public street and shaking a rattle. Very strange. I should like to ask the woman what it all means; but one cannot start discussions here, with all these people rushing about."

[At this moment he noticed a motor-bus standing still because the police were holding up the traffic across Wellington-street. For three days he had been trying to get a ride in a motor-bus; but had not succeeded because they would never stop long enough to let him get in—in fact, born Londoners have complained of the same difficulty. This was an opportunity too good to be lost, so he climbed in and sat down. The conductor demanded to know where he wanted to go. Socrates had not the faintest idea; but he held out twopence, and the conductor seemed satisfied and gave him a blue ticket in exchange. The bus thundered along, and Socrates was surprised to see that every quarter of a mile or so there was a woman in blue, standing in the street, and shaking a box labelled "Self-Denial." He was about to make inquiries of the other passengers, when the bus stopped with a sudden jerk; the conductor put in his head, glowered at Socrates, and said: "Your ticket don't go no further." It might have been expressed differently; but Socrates took the hint and alighted. He was now in another part of London, where the streets were wider, and there were fewer people; but in the distance he saw another Self-Denial Damsel shaking her box. He accordingly walked up to the lady and addressed her in his best Athenian style.]

Socrates.—"Fair virgin; may I —"

Self-Denial Damsel.—"Ha! ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! ho! Ha! ha! ha! ha! You are a funny jossier. If I were not saved I could tell you a story."

Socrates.—"Pray do not let the fact of your being saved interfere with my hearing the story."

S.-D. Damsel.—"Well; when I was a girl we lived in the country, and there was a captain there—a Captain Fraser—and he fancied himself a lot because he had been in the King's Army; and one day my uncle, who was a hearty, jolly sort of man, saw Captain Fraser looking at a cricket match; so he walked up to him and slapped him on the back, and called out, 'Hullo, old chappie!' Captain Fraser drew himself up, glared at uncle, and replied, 'Mr. Hardbake, I may be old, but a chappie, never! Well, that rather tickled us girls; and we were always saying to one another, 'I may be old, but a chappie, never;' or words to that effect; and, one day, we all went to a picnic; and there was the curate, and the parson, and the squire, and a lot of first-class people. It was a beautiful day when we started, with the sun shining lovely; so we put on our best hats and our lightest blouses, and went and enjoyed ourselves immensely. About an hour before we started back home, it came on to rain, and rained harder and harder; and we had none of us brought our water-

proofs or umbrellas; so my cousin Carrie went up to the curate and asked him to lend her his umbrella, because she had forgotten hers. 'And so you have brought nothing,' said the curate; 'Ah, foolish virgin!' To which Carrie promptly replied: 'Mr. Curate, I may be foolish, but a virgin, never!'

Socrates.—"A most interesting story—most interesting. It may even be humorous; but I am afraid that as a stranger and a foreigner I do not quite grasp all the allusions in it."

S.-D. Damsel.—"So you're a foreign bloke, are you? I thought you looked queer. What place do you come from, then?"

Socrates.—"I come from Athens."

S.-D. Damsel.—"From Athens? Athens? I fancy I've heard the name before. But where is it? Is it in France? or Germany? Or is it in America?"

Socrates.—"In none of those places. Athens is in Greece."

S.-D. Damsel.—"In grease? Grease! Grease-ca-se! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Oh! don't make me laugh, or I shall drop this blooming box."

Socrates.—"Pardon me if I have made any mistake in the way I addressed you; but that is our custom in Athens. May I ask what they call you here?"

S.-D. Damsel.—"Oh! in the 'Army' they call me 'Happy Eliza,' because I laugh at any bally thing."

Socrates.—"A most charming disposition. It is always a pleasure to me to meet anyone who can so easily extract merriment from the dull affairs of life."

S.-D. Damsel.—"None of your blarney, you honey-tongued old rascal; but just put something in that box."

[She held out her box as she spoke, and a new light began to break on Socrates. Evidently these women were collecting money for some object. He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a few coins, and began selecting what he thought would be appropriate. But the Self-Denial Damsel grew impatient.]

Happy Eliza.—"Don't sort them over like that, you old miser! Shove in the lot. You'll never miss it."

[Socrates did so, and continued:—]

Socrates.—"Now I have contributed, may I ask what the collection is for?"

H. Eliza.—"It's for the Salvation Army Self-Denial Week."

Socrates.—"So I see. But who is practising the self-denial?"

H. Eliza.—"Why, the people who give us the money, of course. Some of them walk, instead of riding in taxicabs; and then they give us what they save. Some of them give up eating meat, and give us the money they might have paid the butcher. And some of them leave off washing, and give us what they would have spent in soap."

Socrates.—"Ah! it struck me that a good many I have seen in London were sparing themselves the use of soap; but I see by your bright face, Mistress Eliza, that you are not among them."

H. Eliza.—"Oh, no! Not me! I'll go about with a clean dial whatever happens. No self-denial in soap for me."

Socrates.—"But who are these people who are practising self-denial; are they good people or bad ones?"

H. Eliza.—"Oh, good people, of course. The bad ones give nothing. Now, you look a good old sort. Suppose you put something more in the box."

[Socrates made a further contribution, and remarked:—]

Socrates.—"These women in London are just like those of Athens: always pestering one for money."

H. Eliza.—"You giddy old goat! I see you know all about the girls."

Socrates.—"But let me understand you, Mistress Eliza. You persuade all the good people in England to practise self-denial, and give you money; but, having got it, what do you do with it?"

H. Eliza.—"Oh, we use it for the work of the Salvation Army. You see we have several Wings.

There is the Rescue Wing. I like rescue work; it's spicy. You see, when a girl has been cuddling the boys too much, and a baby is expected, we take charge of her and see her through; and when a girl has been enticing men in the streets, and has made herself ill with drink and excitement, or finds she isn't attractive enough for the business, and wants to reform, we take charge of her, and put her in the right way."

Socrates.—"But stay, Mistress Eliza. Surely you do not mean to say that these young women have been practising self-denial."

H. Eliza.—"Self-denial! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! Hee! hee! hee! hee! hee! hee! You are a silly cuckoo. Of course they haven't been practising self-denial. They have been running after the men because they like it, and because it is an easy way of making money. Self-denial, indeed! Why, it's self-indulgence!"

Socrates.—"Well, then, it seems to me that you are trying to encourage immorality by reducing its penalties. If the women of London find they can take their first steps in vice with the full certainty of assistance in escaping the consequences, they are hardly likely to trouble about preserving their virtue."

H. Eliza.—"Perhaps not. But that's not the only thing we do. We visit the prisons; and when a prisoner has served his time, and comes out again, we meet him and give him food and tools and clothes, and things. You can't find fault with that."

Socrates.—"I'm not so sure. The criminal has taken money from the honest man. He is maintained in prison at the expense of the honest man. And then he comes out again, and you re-equip him at the expense of the honest man. Thus there are three separate acts of robbery, and in each case the honest man suffers. You have no guarantee that you have reformed the criminal; he may only be availing himself of your assistance until he has an opportunity of starting thieving again. But you hardly understand my meaning, Mistress Eliza. What I want to know is, has the thief been practising self-denial?"

H. Eliza.—"Lord, no! He has spent all his own money, and then he has tried to get hold of other people's without working for it."

Socrates.—"Precisely. Therefore you are doing your best to encourage self-indulgence in the criminal at the expense of the self-denial of the honest and virtuous."

H. Eliza.—"Oh, but we help honest people as well. When a man has a wife to keep, and a large family, we do our best to assist him."

Socrates.—"But what business has he with a wife and a family if he cannot support them? Is a wife a necessity or a luxury?"

H. Eliza.—"If a man gets me for a wife he'll have a luxury, won't he?"

Socrates.—"No doubt, my good woman. But even supposing he takes a wife, why must he burden himself with children that he cannot properly maintain?"

H. Eliza.—"Why must he have children? Why, what do people get married for? Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! ho! Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! Hee! hee! hee! hee! hee! hee! Oh lor', oh lor', oh lor', you'll kill me with laughing before you've done."

Socrates.—"I fail to see that it is any laughing matter, Mistress Eliza. If a man cannot keep his body in soberness, temperance, and chastity, but produces children he cannot maintain and clothe and educate, he is a criminal of the worst kind. He expects people who do practise chastity and continence and self-denial to bear the burden of his vices; he brings innocent beings into the world that can only grow up into thieves, loafers, beggars, drunkards, wastrels, and rascals of all descriptions."

H. Eliza.—"You can string words together, you old clapper-tongue. But why don't you go and talk to the 'General'?"

Socrates.—"To whom?"

H. Eliza.—"To 'General' Booth. He's the head of the 'Army,' you know."

Socrates.—"Does he practise self-denial?"

H. Eliza.—"Not much! He rides about the country in big motor-cars. He travels all over the world in first-class trains and steamships. He is welcomed with brass bands, and has audiences with kings. He is always seeing his own name in the newspapers, and has reporters following him everywhere. He and the rest of the Booth family have everything they want. What do you think?"

Socrates.—"But how does the Booth family support the expenses? Have they private property of their own, or do they earn sufficient by their own exertions to pay their way?"

H. Eliza.—"Neither. Every stiver they get comes out of the 'Army.'"

Socrates.—"And out of the Self-Denial Fund?"

H. Eliza.—"Of course."

Socrates.—"Then it seems to me that the Booth family exist by practising upon the self-denial of others. None of these pretended forms of charity are new. They have been tried for ages, with the invariable result of increasing the evils they are aimed at. In fact, they are always being preached by those who desire to gain profit or advertisement by the exploitation of poverty, misery, vice, and crime; and, as a consequence, the pity and sympathy which might, if properly directed, do much to lessen the sufferings of the world, are diverted for the benefit of charlatans and the profit of impostors. Evidently the world has not grown either better or wiser than when I lived at Athens, and I shall go straight back to Hades."

H. Eliza.—"Ta ta, old ugly mug, ta ta. Put something in the box before you go."

C. E.

The Spirit-Mongers.—II.

BY J. P. BLAND,

Lecturer at Paine Memorial Hall, Boston.

(Concluded from p. 187.)

BIOLOGY, also, presents two objections to our Spiritualist brethren that they cannot, apparently, satisfactorily answer—namely, those of heredity and of man's animal origin. Let us briefly consider these objections. Heredity, as we all know, is the tendency of all living creatures to repeat themselves in their issues. It is a fact or uniformity of procedure, which operates just as much and as surely in ourselves as it does in all other forms of life. As Leslie Stephen puts it, "Each one of us starts as a little lump of humanity, every characteristic of which is determined by the characteristics of the parents." Or, as Huxley states it, "This character—this moral and intellectual essence of a man—does veritably pass from one fleshly tabernacle to another." But in what form does it pass? It passes over, as we positively know, as physiological substance possessed of psychological possibilities, these possibilities eventuating, under normally favoring conditions, into psychical realities; the essential characteristics of the whole being primarily determined by those of the physiological units with which the individual began. Now, all these things are apparently clearly true, and Galton has given us his estimate of the proportions in which we inherit our physical and mental traits, respectively, from our parents, our grandparents, and our remoter ancestry. But their scientific doctrine of heredity, resolving, as it does, man's individual nature into a fundamentally organic aggregation of physiological cells or units, these units coming, directly or indirectly, from many sources, utterly negates the possibility of Spiritualism's soul or spirit entity.

And biology's other blow, its philogenetic one, is no less severe. Man, as we now know, has sprung from the lower creatures. As Haeckel tell us: "Our human body has been built up slowly and by degrees from a long series of vertebrate ancestors, and this

is also true of our soul." Or, as Grant Allen gives it with reference to man's mind or spirit, "Psychology has traced the origin and development of mind, without a single break, from its first manifestation in the polyp, or jellyfish, to its outcome in the soul of the poet and the philosopher." But the implication of this is self-evident, and it is to the effect that if man has a spirit that survives his body's death, then, too, must the lower creatures from which he has sprung have kindred spirits and kindred destinies. In fact, biologically and psychologically considered, there is no reason that can be advanced in support of man's personal immortality that cannot be equally advanced in support of that of his sub-human ancestry; the difference from first to last being but one of degree, and this difference in no way warranting any division of this biological and psychological tree into mortal on the one hand and immortal on the other.

And still another difficulty presents itself when we consider the great practical possibilities of Spiritualism, were it true, and the exceedingly meagre and unsatisfactory results it has yielded. Thus we are told that our departed are all about us; that they know both the things that are here and those that are constantly happening; and that these things which they know they can make known to us. Now all this opens up an unlimited prospect for the delivery here of what I may call spirit goods; but have any really ever yet reached us? Our professional mediums have for more than fifty years essayed to diagnose for the doctor, prospect for the miner, detect for the law officer, and find for the loser; but has this been done with anything approaching success, and has it not rather resulted in something like universal failure? Franklin was long lost in the Arctic wastes, and Livingstone in the African wilds, and all the mediums in all the world, with the whole realm of spirits more or less at their service, could not and did not tell us where to find them. When Peary left the other day for the North Pole, to pass for long beyond the bounds of our knowledge, did anyone engage some medium to keep in touch with him till he return? And yet, were Spiritualism true, that would be a most sensible thing to do. Not long ago, one of our best-known mediums was practising in this neighborhood, and she was publicly asked to locate two poor children who were then lying, lost and dead, not far away; and, though she tried, she utterly failed to do so, as did also all the other scores of professional mediums in this vicinity. But why? This same medium, far above the average in ability, and whom I cite simply because the facts in her case are commonly known, this same medium, I say, whose speciality is the reading of sealed letters, was offered \$2,000, some three years ago, to read one such under the most ordinary and unexact of test conditions, and refused to attempt it. During the past fifty years there has been no time in our city when there have not been numbers of mediums who have been regularly and professionally engaged in publicly reading sealed letters; and yet when once \$500 was offered here to any medium who would read a single word in a closed envelope, there were no acceptors. The inference is inevitable. The fact is that if, as is alleged, the spirits about us see what there is here, and can and do tell us of it; then, instead of these mediums being, as not a few of them are, on the poverty line, they might, by locating for us our still undiscovered mineral and other subterranean wealth, they might, I say, become opulent as are our Astors and Vanderbilts. Further yet, there is the utter and complete failure of Spiritualism to make good its earliest promises, that it would bring us into communication with the great and good of all the bygone ages. The failure here, if possible, is even more flagrant and disappointing than elsewhere. For, were Spiritualism true, then might we tap at will all the precious fountains of wisdom, knowledge, and moral inspiration that have passed on before, from Moses to Lincoln, Plato to Emerson, Aristotle to Darwin, Eschylus to Browning, and Demosthenes

to Ingersoll. And, if we may believe our Spiritualist friends, all these and thousands more of the mighty dead, have returned to us and have brought us their weighty messages; and yet the whole has not added one particle to our wisdom, one iota to our knowledge, or given to us so much as a single immortal line. The output from these spirits of the great departed has not only been really pitiable, but it has been, for the most part, positively contemptible and disgusting. Let me give you a case in point. While I am now speaking to you here, in another hall but a few minutes' walk from here the uniquely peerless Ingersoll is also supposedly speaking. And not only is he at this moment supposedly speaking here, but it is quite possible that at this moment, too, he is supposedly speaking in some half-dozen of our other American cities. But what will he say here to-day, as judged by his previous outputs here of this sort? Nothing! Nothing whatever that is of the remotest possible consequence to anyone. This dead Ingersoll will be no more like the living one than a Jew's harp is like our heavenly symphony orchestra, or than a choirboy is like Caruso. In fact, it sometimes seems as if some check should be put on the doings of these serio-comical stunts—that to death's traditional terrors have added yet one more; and which, however well-intentioned, not infrequently are both a reflection on the sanity of the dead and an insult to the intelligence of the living.

But we are frequently told that we really can't know about Spiritualism till we investigate it for ourselves, and many of us have done so, to our disappointment. But those who thus tell us do not seem to sufficiently bear in mind that this matter has been investigated again and again, and yet again, by those, too, who were specially qualified for the task; and that no such investigation, from that made in Buffalo in 1850 to that conducted for more than a score of years by the English Society for Psychical Research, has ever yet pronounced in favor of Spiritualism. President Richat, of this last-named Society, not long ago told its members that, after forty years of investigation, Spiritualism still remained unproved; while Sir William Crookes, one of the best-known of living investigators, has also told us that "nothing is proved." The whole matter may be fairly summed up by saying that, scientifically considered, Spiritualism has no warranted existence, and that, phenomenally considered, it has utterly failed to prove its right to exist.

It thus seems as if the spirit-monger of every sort is doomed to go the way of the God-monger of every sort, and that both are destined to final extinction. But their passing affects not life's realities, however much or little it may affect our beliefs concerning these realities; and, meanwhile, whatever great nature has in store for us will surely be ours. Meanwhile, too, if we are wise, we shall keep on walking by the light of knowledge, and not by the mists of faith; holding ever fast to the blissful future's only key, which is the wisely happy living of to-day.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

REPENTANCE.

Suppose a pious bank-director builds churches out of the proceeds of fraud, and is so holy that he will not read the papers on Monday because they necessitate Sunday labor; suppose he wrecks thousands of families, and sends honest men to suicides' graves because their strength of mind is not sufficient to bear up under ruin; suppose he makes orphans and widows eat the bread of sorrow moistened by tears; and suppose he at last repents and gets pardon from Christ. Is that any satisfaction to those he has ruined? Will it undo the misery? Will it re-unite the broken homes? It cannot. This doctrine of repentance is one of the most iniquitous that ever was preached. Men should look before rather than after. They should realize that all their actions produce inevitable consequences. They should understand that the misery which results from wrongdoing can never be washed away, even by an ocean of tears.—*G. W. Foote.*

The Moral of Revivalism.

Yes, the successful men of business and all those who hope in future to become successful men of business; also the office-holders and all who hope sometime to become office-holders—all these have good reason to welcome the evangelist who comes preaching the gospel of submission to the "powers that be"; submission to an alleged Supreme ruler that "doeth all things well," and who will reward his faithful followers in the next world for all the hardships and privations to which they have been unjustly subjected while here.

Yes, these "curbstone" supporters of Christian theology, while often laughing in their sleeves at the absurdity of the whole thing—to say nothing of the immorality, the horrible injustice of the "plan of salvation by faith" in the blood of the son of a revengeful, blood-loving deity,—all these successful money-getters and place-holders feel themselves obliged to welcome and pay the perambulating preachers of the gospel of fear, and the more sensational, more lurid, this gospel the better. Hence the well-known fact that a preacher without a hell to scare people into the church can never get up a revival such as those engineered by Torrey, "Billy" Sunday, Moody and Sankey, and men of that stamp.

—*Moses Harman, in "Eugenics," Los Angeles, California*

The Manitoba School Question Once More.

It was significant that, before leaving London, England, for Canada in January, Archbishop Bruchesi told the *London Times* that "the last had not been heard of the Manitoba school question in Canada." A dozen years ago Mr. Laurier bamboozled the Liberals with the idea that he had made a permanent settlement of the whole matter, but circumstances that have arisen since, as we have pointed out, show conclusively that there was an understanding between the Dominion government and the Catholic hierarchy that at a suitable time Manitoba's hand should be forced and the settlement upset. An opportunity prevented itself when the two new Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were carved out of the Northwest territories and the boundaries of Ontario and Quebec vastly enlarged. Had Manitoba submitted to the Catholic demands, and placed the education of one-half of her children under the uncontrolled direction of the Catholic priests, her boundaries also would have been extended. But the time was not yet ripe.

The latest phase of the matter is now looming up in the Dominion Parliament, a new Bill being about to be introduced by the government to settle once more the question supposed to have been settled a dozen years ago. This settlement is to give to Manitoba a large extension of territory and right of way to the sea—on condition, however, that she accepts the Catholic terms. If not in full, then, we suppose it will be—so much concession so much territory; but, in any case, the irreducible minimum the Catholics and the government will accept will be—that in all the added territory the Catholic claims shall be agreed to. In order to avoid the risk of an ugly defeat at Ottawa, the Bill is to be sent first to Winnipeg, and if an arrangement can be arrived at acceptable to the Catholics, and which can be pushed through the Manitoba legislature, the Bill will be brought back to Ottawa and passed with a loud flourish of trumpets as a triumph of statesmanship. If no arrangement can be come to—if the Manitobans refuse to give way to the Catholic demands—then the Bill will be dropped as quietly as its predecessors have been. In either case, Manitoba and some of Ontario will remain the only parts of Canada east of the Rockies not afflicted with separate State-supported but priest controlled Catholic schools, in which education is the smallest item of school work.—*Secular Thought.*

Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft
Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes
And fellowships of men, and see ill sights
Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
Must bear Humanity in fields and groves
Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow, barricaded evermore
Within the walls of cities—may these sounds
Have their authentic comment; that even these,
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn.

—*Wordsworth*

The supreme self-indulgence is to surrender the will to a spiritual director.—*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.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Forest Gate Public (Lower) Hall, Woodgrange-road): 7.30, A. Hyatt, "Jesus, the Day Star on High." Selections by the Band before lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Alma Hall, 335 High-road, N., three doors from Commerce-road): 7, A. Lewis, "Secularist Propaganda still Necessary."

COUNTRY.

FAILSWORTH (Secular Sunday School, Pole-lane): 6.30, Frank Rose, "Stop the Strike."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Mr. Lindsay, "A Defence of Gambling"; 6.30, Mr. Guillermo Azor, "A Modern Heathen."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, W. A. Rogerson, "The Earthquake in Messina." With Lantern Illustrations.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7, Financial Business.

PAMPHLETS by C. COMEN.

- Foreign Missions, their Dangers and Delusions 3d.
Full of facts and figures.
- An Outline of Evolutionary Ethics ... 6d.
Principles of ethics, based on the doctrine of Evolution.
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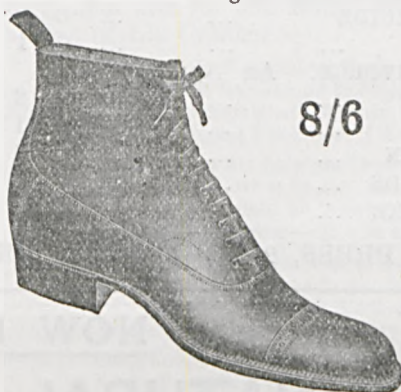
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