

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*It is not growing like a Tree
In bulk, doth make men better be ;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sear :
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night ;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see ;
And in short measures, life may perfect be.*
—BEN JONSON.

The Utility of Falsehood.—II.

MR. STEAD'S charge that Atheists seem fond of "the practice of flinging the baby into the gutter with the soap-suds" is quite ridiculously untrue. We believe he knows that Atheists value morality (if that is what he means by "the baby") as much as Theists do. Turning one's back on the gods leaves one no less face to face with one's fellow men; giving up heaven and hell does not destroy the reality of earth; and if there is no future life the value of the present life rather increases than diminishes, since it becomes our all in all. And as morality is but the permanent laws of social and personal health, of body, mind, and character, it is difficult to see how the rejection of supernaturalism can affect it detrimentally; for, after all, life and speculation are two very different things.

Let us go back to something that happened in connection with the Torrey matter a few years ago. Mr. Stead did a brave and honorable thing when he backed up our challenge to the American revivalist who had grossly slandered Thomas Paine and Colonel Ingersoll. We thanked him for his gallant action then, and we thank him again now. But that is by the way. Our object is to call his attention to the Open Letter we addressed to him in reply to his suggestion that the loss of the supernatural sanction of morality might, in time, tend to immorality. We pointed out, first of all, that it was morality that purified religion, and not religion that purified morality; that in every age a developing ethic had been obliged to oppose the crudities of inherited faith; and that this opposition of morality to religion had been a vital element in every progressive movement of mankind. We ventured to quote a striking and powerful passage from one of Mr. Stead's own teachers, the great John Ruskin: a passage which every religious advocate, whether lay or clerical, ought to have constantly before him:—

"For there are many religions, but there is only one morality. There are moral and immoral religions, which differ as much in precept as in emotion; but there is only one morality, which has been, is, and must be for ever, an instinct in the hearts of all civilised men, as certain and unalterable as their outward bodily form, and which receives from religion neither law, nor peace; but only hope, and felicity."

We also quoted a longer passage from Ruskin, in which he denied that the loss of belief in the gods amongst a really civilised nation would "shake its will or alter its practice." In support of this we wrote ourselves as follows:—"If men can be moral

without the fear of hell, why cannot they be moral without the hope of heaven? If the Devil is not necessary to morality, why is God? Why should a man ill-treat his own children because he has lost his belief in a celestial father? Why should he go home and cry 'There is no God,' and knock his wife down to prove that he believes it? Is there really any connection between such opinions and such actions? And why should a man be cold and callous because he has no belief in a future life? Will he not rather cling all the more tenderly to those he loves and may lose? Is it not the dark background of death that gives the subtlest beauty to the foreground of life? Is it not true, as Ingersoll said, that love is a flower which grows on the edge of the grave? And was it not the wisest of all men who said 'Conscience is born of love'? It is in our human relationships that morality is born, because love resides there. Take away sex, take away parentage, take away the prolonged helplessness of infants, take away sociality with all its material advantages and ideal inspirations, and what morality would remain for religion to boast of? We are necessarily human beings first, and religionists afterwards; and morality belongs to the first stage instead of the second."

Mr. Stead was too occupied to reply to us then. We believe he was called away to Russia on some urgent business. But why should he present his old argument again precisely as though he had never heard anything against it? Even if he chooses to ignore our reply, he has no right to ignore Ruskin's challenge. We will go the length of saying that to keep on repeating a thing, without paying the slightest heed to serious contradictions and confutations, while it is a common device of mere partisan advocates, is quite unworthy of a man like Stead.

We will now deal with another point in Mr. Stead's article. The high priest in *False Gods* tells Satni, the aggressive young Atheist, that the multitude have to be treated like intellectual children. It was no good teaching them that pollution of the Nile would poison them; consequently the Nile had to be deified, and the pollution of its waters made a sin against the god. Similarly, the Jackal, being a useful scavenger, had to be deified, lest its destruction should breed a pestilence. This imposes on Mr. Stead a good deal easier than it imposed on Satni. He hails it with delight, and improves upon it in the following fashion:—

"What the High Priest said about the great god Jackal was perfectly just and true. The Egyptian substitute for a Public Health Act was to deify the jackal. And from the point of view of social welfare and the effective discharge of the simple sanitary duties on which physical health depends, the deification of the jackal was much more an effective method of attaining the necessary end than the publication of a code of sanitary regulations drawn up by the Chief Medical Officer of the Local Government Board.....After all, the ancient habit of our ancestors to improvise a deity whenever it was necessary to convince the half-humanised multitude of the existence of a categorical imperative emanating from the law of the universe, and enforced by the nature of things, was not only natural, fit, and proper, it was literally the only way by which the idea of the duty of implicit obedience could be impressed upon the mind of man."

Now if Mr. Stead really means all this he should agitate for all matters of public hygiene being trans-

ferred to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Children should be taught the laws of hygiene in school, not in the name of Science, but in the name of the Lord. The Thames Conservancy should hand over its functions to the Bench of Bishops—or perhaps to the Bishop of London, the Rev. John Clifford, and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, as representing the three great branches of the “deification” business. We foresee a lot of fresh work for Mr. Stead as soon as he has done with “Julia” and the ghosts of Gladstone and Disraeli in relation to the Budget. But that is for the sweet by-and-bye. In the meantime we may be allowed to wonder why Mr. Stead has forgotten the contents of John Morley’s book *On Compromise*, to which he refers with so much approval and admiration. John Morley replies to Mr. Stead by anticipation. Let us hear him:—

“For all good habits in thought or conduct there are good and real reasons in the nature of things. To leave such habits attached to false opinions is to lessen the weight of these natural or spontaneous reasons, and so to do more harm in the long run, than effacement of them seems for a time to do good. Most excellences in human character have a spontaneous root in our nature. Moreover, if they had not, and where they have not, there is always a valid and real external defence for them. The unreal defence must be weaker than the real one, and the substitution of a weak for a strong defence, where both are to be had, is not useful, but the very opposite.”

We see no necessity to add a word to John Morley’s reply. It is quite sufficient as it stands to settle Mr. Stead’s hash.

We beg to remind Mr. Stead of another passage in John Morley’s book *On Compromise*:—

“The law of things is that they who tamper with voracity, from whatever motive, are tampering with the vital force of human progress. Our comfort and the delight of the religious imagination are no better than forms of self-indulgence, when they are secured at the cost of that love of truth on which, more than on anything else, the increase of light and happiness among men must depend. We have to fight and do life-long battle against the forces of darkness, and anything that turns the edge of reason blunts the surest and most potent of our weapons.”

We endorse every word of this fine passage. It goes to the vital root of the matter. You will never save the world by lies and hocus-pocus; truth is the only useful thing in the long run: and every man who doubts it is a natural Jesuit.

Mr. Stead makes a still more startling reference to John Morley. He quotes what he calls “Morley’s famous protest against Satniism”—or aggressive Atheism. He does not enable his readers to find the passage in Morley’s voluminous writings. We happen to recollect it, however, and we found it in a few seconds by pulling *Voltaire* down from its shelf and turning instinctively to the right place. We also found, as we surmised, that Mr. Stead had applied the passage wrongly; also—which is worse—that he had quoted it inaccurately. We print the whole passage as John Morley wrote it—leaving the italics to be explained afterwards:—

“Will you sweeten the lives of suffering men, and take its heaviness from that droning piteous chronicle of wrong and cruelty and despair, which everlastingly saddens the compassionating ear-like moaning of a midnight sea; *will you animate the stout of heart with new fire, and the firm of hand with fresh joy of battle, by thought of a being without intelligible attributes, a mere abstract creation of metaphysic, whose mercy is not as our mercy, nor his justice as our justice, nor his fatherhood as the fatherhood of men?* It was not by a cold, a cheerless, a radically depraving conception such as this, that the Church became the refuge of humanity in the dark times of old, but by the representation, to men sitting in bondage and confusion, of god-like natures moving among them under figure of the most eternally touching of human relations, a tender mother ever interceding for them, and an elder brother laying down his life that their burdens might be loosened.”

Will it be believed that Mr. Stead omitted all the words we have printed in italics? True, he put a few stars there to indicate that something *had been*

omitted; but that does not justify what he did, for the omitted lines show that John Morley was not criticising Satniism (or aggressive Atheism) but Deism—that is, Theism without Revelation. There is no excuse for Mr. Stead except the unhappy one that he took the quotation at second-hand, which we think is the probable explanation, for we are sure he would not deliberately do anything dishonorable. Morley begins the paragraph from which this extract is taken with the words “A bald deism.” It is against this “bald deism” that he is protesting all the time. Indeed, on the previous page he had remarked that the influence of Deism was “cold and inanimate,” and that “the common people are wont to crave a revelation, or else they find atheism a rather better synthesis than any other.” It is utterly impossible for any intelligent person, with the book before him, to mistake John Morley’s meaning. We are satisfied, therefore, that Mr. Stead is a careless victim of someone else’s carelessness—or worse. Anyhow, John Morley’s “famous protest against Satniism” is purely imaginary.

The following remarks of Mr. Stead’s partake very much of the nature of prophecy:—

“For it is a fact, and will before long be admitted by all who take the trouble to inquire into the truth of things, that the personality of man does persist after death, and that, therefore, all the fantastic exaggerated pictures of Heaven and Hell which have been painted by the Dantes and mumbo-jumbo makers of the world are nearer the truth than the arrogant Satnis who proclaim there is no hereafter—no life beyond the grave. And the healing of the sick by other means than those of the pharmacopœia, and the seeing of visions of Isis or of the Virgin Mary—these also are not without their objective realities, as Lourdes and Mrs. Eddy and the records of psychical researchers testify.”

We have always regretted that Mr. Stead has no strong a taste for such slap-dash expressions as the one he starts with, and such cheap mysticism as that which he concludes with. Visions of Isis and the Virgin Mary belong to pathology; and as for the miracles of healing at Lourdes, it was a wise and witty observation of M. Brioux’s that the wooden crutches hung up there by cripples who had gone away healed would have been more convincing if they had been wooden legs. People’s nerves may be stimulated by excitement, and benefit may result, at least for a time; but no man ever went to a shrine with one leg and came away with two.

It will be well, however, to treat another point of Mr. Stead’s more seriously. He refers to *King Lear* as well as *False Gods*, and mentions us incidentally:—

“From one side of the Haymarket we cross over to the other, and after seeing *False Gods* we see in *King Lear* the evolution of the passions emancipated from God. Mr. Foote remarked the other day that Tolstoy disliked *King Lear* because there was no God in it. Tolstoy spoke in different strain to me when he said that the tragedy of *King Lear* was repeated in every Russian *iba*. He might have said in every human heart. For the indulgence of the promptings of selfishness without regard to the obligations of duty is no strange phenomenon in human life.”

We have only space to say that this is not an accurate statement of what we said, or of what we represented Tolstoy as saying. It is more important, at present, to show that Mr. Stead consistently supports make-believe. He actually blames Cordelia for her “stubborn and pharisaic refusal to kiss the Blarney stone.” She should not have revolted at the hypocritical gush of her hell-cat sisters; she should have worn her heart upon her sleeve and turned it inside out! But she was not built that way. She was honest by nature; she had pudicity of mind as well as of body; in short, she was Cordelia, and her name carries a perfume, as Charles Lamb said, who was a better judge of all such things (if we may say it without offence) than Mr. Stead is ever likely to be.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Freethought Attack.

ONE of the speakers at a recent religious conference made what was to him a remarkable, but what may well be to others a belated, discovery. Unbelief, in which he included Atheism and every mental disposition obnoxious to the Churches, was no longer held in private, but professed in public; it was not acknowledged with regret, but with pride. Its positions were stated with an air of authority, and it dogmatically laid down the conditions on which it might permit religion to continue for awhile in existence. One can fully understand the position of the speaker. In relation to unbelief, he objects to the thing itself; but he objects much more strongly to unbelievers conducting themselves as though their mental disposition was something of which to be proud. That men should hold opinions hostile to Christianity is bad enough; that they should publicly profess them is infinitely worse. An Atheism that is afraid to express itself in open speech, or if it does speak professes great concern and veneration for religious beliefs, may be tolerated. But an unbelief that has confidence in itself, and holds it to be a duty to speak plainly and fearlessly, is doubly objectionable to the religious mind.

One must admit that from the religious point of view there is much reason for uneasiness and dissatisfaction. The old-fashioned short and easy way with unbelievers is no longer applicable. The Freethinker can no longer be burnt. He cannot be put out of the way—in this country, at least; although Spain shows us, in the case of Ferrer, that this eminently religious practice is not beyond the possibility of revival. Even imprisonment is now being discarded—not without some regret, it may be assumed; for whenever there is a spasmodic case of imprisonment religious comments usually take the form of pointing out that this policy should be given up because it does not pay. In Parliament, on local councils, and on the committees of innumerable voluntary agencies, Atheists and Christians sit together in an easy familiarity that to earlier generations would have seemed an impossibility. Religious preachers discuss questions of belief in a manner that would have seemed little less of an impossibility. And their very discussion suggests to all at least the possibility of error. For a thing cannot maintain its sacredness and be made the subject of debate. Discussion implies that either side may be wrong, or at the least that there is more than one view of a given subject. And when the rank and file see its leaders engaged in discussing topics that they have believed to be beyond question, such an experience may well awaken doubts where before none existed.

And meanwhile Atheism is militant. Not so militant as one would like, because much of it is disguised under names less displeasing to the religious world. Still, unbelief—to take a wider and a less religiously objectionable word—is widespread, active, and not at all inclined to urge its claims in a voice tuned to a reverential and somnolent key. It not only contradicts; it teaches. It not only warns religion that it must clear out of its long-occupied territory; it claims to have already established a protectorate over the contested region. At all events, it has set up a very effective blockade. The source of supplies has been cut off. Religion may live while it can on what it has—a possession constantly diminishing by repeated desertions; but it can receive no fresh reinforcements. It is in the position of a dwindling army occupying a thoroughly invested position, with no hope of the siege being raised or abandoned. Not only so, but while the weapons of defence are all of an obsolete pattern, the weapons of attack are of the newest description, and directed by men who have the fullest confidence in their range and efficiency. Religion to-day is outclassed, outranged, and out-manceuvred.

This analogical language is by no means forced. During the past fifty years the form of the Free-

thought attack has undergone many important modifications, and few of the defenders of religion seem aware of the fact. It is amusing, yet pitiful, to observe how blind professional defenders of the faith are to the real nature of the attack now being made upon their position. They prepare elaborate disquisitions proving that no single person among the early Christians could have invented the character of Jesus Christ, oblivious to the fact that their opponents are proving that the character—teaching, doctrinal and symbolical—lay ready to hand before the early Christians were heard of. While the enemy is demonstrating the relationship of Old and New Testament stories to an almost universal mythology, the defenders are laboriously and fruitlessly discussing the precise authorship of the documents. As though, in the light of comparative mythology, there is anything more than a purely literary interest in the question of the date and authorship of the Biblical writings. Ignoring the fact that the belief in God is completely undermined by anthropological research, we have elaborate disquisitions on what the idea of God might mean or ought to mean to civilised mankind. As though this meets the charge that the whole belief began in error and can only lead to error as a result. Or, if a reply is attempted, the attack from the side of physical science, almost invariably "Materialism," is demolished by criticising a theory of matter held a century or more ago. The essential fact, that fundamentally Materialism is the assertion of universal phenomena as the expression of knowable, controllable, calculable, and eternal forces, is either lost sight of or deliberately ignored. Current religion seldom, if ever, really meets the attack that is made upon it. Its time is spent in slaying imaginary enemies, or in taking positions that no one cares to defend.

It is quite as curious to observe the manner in which they fail to meet the Freethought attack from the ethical side. Time is spent in emphasising the value of certain moral qualities, and in vague generalities concerning the moral influence of the Christian faith. In support of the latter, we are provided with numerous "horrible examples" of people who have been made better men and women by Christian belief and influence. That people do change for the better the Freethinker cheerfully admits. That they believe this change to be due to the influence of Jesus, he is not concerned to deny. But a person is no more an absolute authority upon the causes that bring about a change in his moral outlook than he is an infallible authority upon the causes of a change in his physical condition. Moral physiology is no more to be understood without adequate preparation than anatomy is to be mastered without the requisite study. The Freethinker meets these cases by pointing to the socialised nature of man, and to the innumerable social forces bearing upon each of us. That these often operate under the guise of religion is unfortunately true, but religion has no more determined their operation than is the power of a bottle of medicine determined by a label describing the way in which it is to be taken.

So, also, the presentation of the Freethought attack, as an assault on moral ideals, is an exhibition of stupidity or knavery. The Freethinker's objection is not that Christian morality is too lofty, but that it is not lofty enough. So far as it is impracticable, its impracticability lies in its inapplicability to human nature and social conditions. And its impracticability is due to its ignoring the true nature of morality and the proper conditions of its development. The Freethinker asserts that social necessity is as much the mother of morality as individual necessity is the mother of invention. It is clearly no reply to this to point to the constant association of morality with religion. For social necessities modify religion as they modify other things, and religious teaching must either accommodate itself to their requirements or disappear. As a matter of fact, a great deal of religious teaching has disappeared because it was repugnant to a more

developed moral sense, and more is in process of rejection from the same cause. Moreover, the really effective appeal to a higher moral life has all along come from the non-religious side. Unconsciously, there has been the influence of improved education, better methods of communication, healthier conditions of living, with numerous other agencies of a like nature. And, consciously, there has been the greater emphasis laid upon the value of mental development, of the unprejudiced search for truth, and a more adequate comprehension of the essential conditions of human welfare. To continue the assertion that morality is dependent upon religion, in the face of all that is known of the nature of moral development, and in the face of the historic influence of religion in distorting moral values, causes one to hesitate as to whether stupidity or knavery is the more powerful with the professional defenders of current religious beliefs.

All along the line there is this want of appreciation of the nature and strength of the Freethought attack. Because criticisms of certain Christian teachings no longer figure largely in the writings and speeches of Freethinkers it is assumed that the critics have been silenced; the truth being that it is Christians themselves who have been forced to surrender these teachings and so made further criticism unnecessary. Moreover, the fight has now advanced beyond the stage of criticising the authority of a particular church, or the supernatural value of a particular volume. The issue has to-day become broader, deeper, and more definite. It is the basic conception of the supernatural that is on trial; and, in attacking this, the Freethinker has in his hands weapons far more effective than earlier generations could possibly possess. If he speaks with decision on the nature of religion it is because he is sure of the facts, and acts with a lively appreciation of their value. He marches forward with confidence because he knows that he has behind him the full weight of scientific development, and because the course he follows is one marked out by the whole of past human evolution. And the past contains the true prophecy of the future. Human evolution may be slow, even at times retrograde, but in the long run it is certain. The law of development, like the law of averages, justifies itself if only our survey takes a sufficiently wide sweep. And although in our fight against the hoary imposture of religion we may experience occasional reverses, these checks serve but to inspire us with renewed energy to press forward to our ultimate and certain victory.

C. COHEN.

"Holy Hypocrisy."

IT is usual, in religious circles, to condemn hypocrisy as one of the lowest and meanest of sins. The word is no longer employed in its original Greek sense of playing a part on the stage of a theatre. No one would dream to-day of calling an actor or an actress a miserable hypocrite. In play-acting there is no deception or fraud whatever. Everybody knows that an actor plays a part not his own, or represents a character which may be the very opposite of his own. In the old Greek sense he is a professional hypocrite. In the ethical sense, however, a hypocrite is a moral impostor, or one who in real life pretends to be what he is not. His enemies called Tiberius Cæsar the prince of hypocrites because they alleged that, in spite of his loud profession of great regard for the moral virtues, he yet indulged in the most hideous debaucheries during his deep retirement at Capreae. Abdallah Ibn Obba and his partisans were denominated The Hypocrites by Mohammed because they feigned to be friends when in reality they were foes in disguise. Rochefoucauld defines hypocrisy as "the homage which vice pays to virtue," and in the *Rambler* it is called "the necessary burden of villainy." Rabelais describes an island called *Chaneph*—that is, *Hyocrites' Isle*—which is "wholly

inhabited by sham saints, spiritual comedians, head-tumblers, mumblers of ave-marias, and such-like sorry rogues, who lived on the alms of passengers, like the hermit of Lormont." Indeed, in religious as well as in general literature, hypocrisy is vehemently denounced as a powerful corrosive which never fails to destroy the character of those who practise it.

But at last hypocrisy has found an eloquent champion in one of the most eminent preachers of the day. The Rev. Principal Alexander Whyte, of Edinburgh, has lifted up his voice in extravagant praise of the popular vice. In a remarkable discourse on "I Washed My Face," published in the *British Weekly* for October 28, this ingenious divine refers to Jesus as the most consummate hypocrite in all history. He says:—

"All his life long our Lord was 'The Man of Sorrows'; but his disciples never discovered that from anything he ever said or did. He was 'The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;' but he did not appear unto men to be that; but only to his Father, who saw him in secret. All his days his face was set to go up to Jerusalem; but his followers never believed that he was going there; no, not even when he took them and told them in the plainest words possible what was waiting him there. In his own words, he so 'anointed his head and washed his face' that he completely deceived his most discerning disciples all the time he was with them. He fasted and prayed in secret; but all the time his enemies were not without some ground for saying, 'Behold, a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners (harlots). When the wine went done at the marriage of Cana, he filled the six waterpots up to the brim with the best wine that the governor of the feast had ever tasted."

Surely this is the first time that a minister of the Gospel has ever designated his Lord as the arch-dissembler or deceiver, who never tore off his mask. Now, Principal Whyte's point is that—

"when our Lord says to us that we are always to 'anoint our head and to wash our face,' he means us to understand that he would have us always to do as he did himself. That is to say, he would have us to eat and to drink, and to go to all our entertainments and amusements and relaxations with a smile on our countenances, even when there is a sword in our hearts. We are not to let the men around us so much as guess that there is anything the matter with us. We are on no account to expose God's sanctification-secrets to vulgar eyes."

The originality and boldness of that passage one is bound to admire; but all it amounts to is that, as Jesus played the hypocrite to his disciples, so are we to play the hypocrite to our fellow-beings. Christians are a pack of scoundrels of the deepest dye, and the only doom they deserve is everlasting damnation; but they are solemnly exhorted not to let the world know it. They are to play and sing and dance and laugh as if they were the most blameless and happy people that ever trod the earth. Non-Christians are so "dull-witted and unimaginative" that Christians must "anoint their head and wash their face" as if they were as "dull-witted and unimaginative" as themselves. Dr. Whyte's advice to believers is most emphatic:—

"In short, you are here called to a kind of holy hypocrisy, so to name it. That is to say, you are to use all your skill to cast dust in the eyes of the most lynx-eyed of men, till you make them think that you are anything and everything but what you actually are, in your broken heart and hidden life."

Only one is to be told how inexpressibly wicked Christians really are. Only one is to listen to the depressing, heart-breaking tale of woe which they have to relate. James Guthrie, of Stirling, used at one time to enumerate all his secret sins and sorrows and defilements at family worship, which rendered family worship perfectly intolerable to all but himself. But one day his church-officer rebuked him for inflicting so much suffering on his wife and children and servants and guests, and advised him to trouble no one but God with the long list of his offences and shortcomings and iniquities. Then Principal Whyte

lays down this general rule for the guidance of believers:—

"When you have had a specially bad day, as James Guthrie had so often, be sure you select a specially cheerful chapter to read to your household that night; and sing a specially joyful Psalm. And then bid them all good night with a beaming countenance. And then after they are all fast asleep, then shut your door on yourself and your heavenly Father. And when once your door is securely shut, then let as many clouds come out on your brow, and let as many tears run down your cheeks as you like. You are free now to pour out your blackest and most broken heart: as black and as broken as you like. Only your head must be well anointed, and your face well-washed, before you make your appearance at the breakfast table next morning."

All this is extremely rough on God. Everybody's feelings are to be considered but his. The world in general, and friends and relations in particular, are to be spared the melancholy task of listening to a recital of the terrible schedule of the abominations of which Christians admittedly stand guilty, while God's ears are to be deafened every night, and all night long, with the nauseating narration. If the Christian God verily existed he would put a speedy stop to such tomfoolery as that. No earthly father would tolerate for a moment such conduct on the part of his children; and the fact that the heavenly Father *does* tolerate it from his sons and daughters in Christ is the most convincing proof that he does not exist at all. Of course, people can say whatever they like to a non-existing deity, who neither heeds nor hears.

The exhortation to cultivate and practise "holy hypocrisy" is based upon an empty dream. The "black heart," so graphically described in many of Dr. Whyte's books, is a purely theological creation. The doctrine of sin, as taught by evangelical divines in general, and by Principal Whyte in particular, is as baleful as it is false. To persuade a man to believe that in himself he is irrecoverably bad, that he enters the world in an irretrievably lost condition, and that, unless God takes pity upon him, and for Christ's sake saves him, he shall utterly perish, is to degrade him in his own eyes, and to incapacitate him for ever fulfilling the great and glorious promises which lie latent in his nature. The sense of un-fathomable sinfulness which has lain like a horrible nightmare on the heart of Christendom for so many centuries, is an artificial, false sense, which must be got rid of before mankind can ever attain to and enjoy anything like complete life. It is a wicked libel on human nature to paint its heart as "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," or to represent "every imagination of the thoughts of its heart as being only evil continually." The human heart is fundamentally sound and good, and all its needs is wise training and healthy exercise.

It is a strange peculiarity of Christians that they charge themselves with being the worst, and at the same time congratulate themselves upon being the best, people in the world. "Once," they say, "we were totally depraved, submerged in the slough of corruption, living according to the flesh, according to the prince of the power of the air, being dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath, walking in the lusts of our fallen nature; but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, has quickened us together with Christ, so that now we are the temples of the Holy Ghost, who, by the application of the blood of Jesus, is cleansing us from all sin." And yet these are the very people who are still complaining that their hearts are inconceivably black, and their thoughts indescribably foul, and that in order to live in society with any degree of comfort they must "cast dust in the eyes of the most lynx-eyed of men" so as to "make them think that they are anything and everything but what they actually are."

Is it not beyond all doubt that such teaching is dreadfully demeaning and demoralising in its influence? To live daily in an atmosphere of hypocrisy is fatal to self-respect and true inward peace. They who hide their true selves are but wretched slaves

for whom the joy of life does not exist. It is open sincerity that imparts genuine strength and stability to character. We are all imperfect, and in our imperfection commit many mistakes; but no true man can be a deliberate hypocrite, because, as Dr. Whyte himself admits, a hypocrite is a man who "fawns on you and flatters you, when all the time it is simply poison to his peace of mind to hear anyone appreciate you and praise you." Now, since it is said that a Christian ought to be "something like that," is it not undeniable that the sooner the earth is rid of Christians the better it will be for all human interests?

J. T. LLOYD.

Sober Blacks and Drunken Whites.

NIGERIAN AND BRITISH TOWNS COMPARED.

SOME astonishing statements are contained in the report of the committee of inquiry into the liquor trade in Southern Nigeria, which has just been issued as a White Paper.

"It goes without saying," runs a paragraph, "that the standard of sobriety in Southern Nigeria is very much higher than that of the United Kingdom. Speaking of Abeokuta, a town of 150,000 people, one missionary volunteered the statement that you could see more drunkenness in the Wandsworth-road in one night than you could in three years in Abeokuta. Another witness said that he had seen more drunkenness in one day in Bristol than he had seen in the whole of his experience of thirteen years in Southern Nigeria."

When asked by the Commissioners to compare Ibadan (a Nigerian town) with places in England, Dr. Currie replied that no comparisons were possible, and for these astounding reasons:—

"You cannot compare Barnsley with Ibadan, because one is a drunken town and the other is not.

Asked with regard to the district round St. Bartholomew's Hospital, he said again: 'You cannot compare the two. Smithfield is a dirty, drunken district, and Ibadan is not.' Dr. Manners, speaking of Brass and Bonny, and asked to compare them with the districts round St. Thomas's Hospital, replied: 'Lambeth would not compare well. I do not take Saturday nights because that would be unfair, but an ordinary night in Lambeth would not compare favorably with any village in the Brass district.'

For a population estimated at over seven millions, the quantity of spirits imported in 1908 was 3,235,669 gallons, or about one-third of a proof gallon per head. The quantity per head consumed in the United Kingdom in 1907 was just over nine tenths of a gallon.

For the year 1908, according to the late Dr. Burns, the expenditure per head on spirits works out at £1 0s. 1d. in England, £1 19s. 7d. in Scotland, and £1 4s. 8d. in Ireland. Assuming that the average price of trade spirits in Southern Nigeria is 1s. 3d. a bottle of five-sixths of a pint, and that the consumption of the higher class liquors extends to half a million people, the expenditure on trade spirits in Southern Nigeria works out at about 5s. 6d. per head of the population.

Summing up their conclusions, the Committee say that there is absolutely no evidence of race deterioration due to drink.—*Daily Chronicle*, Oct. 28.

CRUSH THE INFAMOUS.

The strange and sinister method of assault upon religion which we of a later day watch with wondering eyes, and which consists in wearing the shield and device of a faith, and industriously shouting the cry of a church, the more effectually to reduce the faith to a vague futility, and its outward ordering to a piece of ingeniously reticulated pretence; this method of attack might make even the champions of prevailing beliefs long for the shrewd thrusts, the flashing scorn, the relentless fire, the downright grapples, with which the hated Voltaire pushed on his work of "crushing the Infamous." If he was bitter he was still direct. If he was often a mocker in form, he was always serious in meaning and laborious in matter. If he was unflinching against theology, he always paid religion respect enough to treat it as the most important of all subjects. The contest was real, and not our present pantomimic stage-play, in which muffled phantoms of debate are made to gesticulate inexpressible things in portentously significant silence. The battle was demoralised by its virulence. True; but is this worse than to have it demoralised by cowardice of heart and understanding, when each controversial man-at-arms is eager to have it thought that he wears the colors of the other side, when the theologian would fain pass for a rationalist, and the free-thinker for a person with his own orthodoxies if you only knew them, and when philosophic candor and intelligence are supposed to have hit their final climax in the doctrine that everything is both true and false at the same time?—*John Morley*, "Voltaire," chap. i.

Acid Drops.

"Christ's Attitude Towards Money" was the heading of the front article in the last *British Weekly*. It does not seem to us that the question is of much personal importance; for, according to the Gospels—and there are no other sources of information—he could find all the cash he wanted like a conjurer, even in a fish's mouth on one occasion. We agree with our contemporary, however, on one point. "Let us frankly confess," it says, "that amongst Christ's hard sayings, none are more difficult to understand and carry out than certain parts of his teaching in regard to money." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," said Christ. Most Christians laugh at that, and take their motto from Iago's counsel to Roderigo—"Put money in thy purse."

Christ said, "Carry neither purse nor scrip." His followers carry heavy purses, when possible, and lay hands on all the scrip they can.

Amongst the eighty-six Passive Resisters who turned up at Leicester Police-court the other day was Mr. J. L. Harrison, a Roman Catholic and Labor Member of the Board of Guardians. He protested against the grant of £25 which the Education Committee had given to the son of the Rev. R. Veitch, a prominent Passive Resister—to enable him to continue his studies at Cambridge. Roman Catholic Harrison contended that Protestant Veitch was well able to pay the entire cost of his son's education out of a salary of £7 a week. And it really doesn't seem unreasonable.

Prince Ito, the great Japanese statesman, who did more than any other man to bring Japan into the front-line of civilised nations, seems to have paid the penalty of the Mikado's policy in Korea. He was certainly worthy of a better fate. But we do not refer to the matter on political grounds. We wish to draw attention to the fact that Prince Ito was a Freethinker. He was early emancipated from the superstition of his native land, and he was not attracted by Christianity. If he called himself anything it was an Agnostic. But the newspapers say nothing on that point—as usual.

What is a brilliant journalist? The *Daily News* confers the title on Mr. S. L. Hughes. It says that he "possesses a national reputation as a brilliant journalist." Brilliant! Mr. Hughes was never troubled with a fair-sized idea in the whole course of his life. As for his style, was ever anything more painfully wire-drawn? If to fill a column in saying next to nothing makes a brilliant journalist, Mr. Hughes merits the *Daily News* description. We can quite understand his, and that journal's, horror at the "shocking calumny" that was circulated during the Bermondsey election that he was an Atheist. We don't think he is likely to become one. Coleridge said that not one man in ten thousand had strength of mind or goodness of heart enough to be an Atheist; and Mr. Hughes is hardly the odd man.

Dr. Sheepshanks, Bishop of Norwich, is resigning. His health is not improving and he is seventy-five. "I had hoped," he says, "that my heart would regain its strength, but God has seen fit otherwise." This is not very elegant English, but its meaning is perfectly clear. God regulates the Bishop's heart as the Bishop regulates his watch; and God doesn't pay the slightest attention to the Bishop's wishes concerning it. No doubt it will sound odd to a good many people, but, after all, it is quite correct according to the doctrine of "Providence."

Mrs. Besant is trying to establish a university in India, which shall be free from Government control and therefore able to teach religion. "It would only affiliate colleges," she says, "in which religion and morals were an integral part of the curriculum." She has Lord Morley's promise to do all he can to forward the scheme—which will be news to some who remember him as the stern Agnostic. Mrs. Besant says she has secured "representatives of all the great religions" on the board of this projected university except the Christian. Unfortunately, she told an interviewer, she "had not been able, so far, to find an Indian Christian of sufficient educational and social rank." Which is rather rough on the Christian missionaries.

The poor clergy, like the poor other folk, are always with us, and in this case the clergy see that the subject is kept well before the public. The Queen Victoria Clergy Fund held a meeting the other day at the Mansion House, with

the Lord Mayor presiding. The latter, by the way, is a Roman Catholic, and we thus see the impartiality of some people shown by his assisting to get funds to supply the people with a teaching which, as a Roman Catholic, he believes to be false. Lord Kinnaird said that no clergyman in the diocese of London should receive less than £300 per year, whereas some were only getting £265. Now we have no objection whatever to people being well paid for their labor; in fact, we much prefer that they should be, and there is enough spent in salaries in the Church of England to give a comfortable allowance to all if it were more equitably divided. Still, the constant cry about the salaries of the clergy, together with the lamentations that the number willing to take up with the profession is diminishing, while the quality is decidedly inferior, reduces this "spiritual" occupation to the level of an ordinary commercial pursuit. People take up with it much as they take up with other trades and professions—some because they like it, and some because they think they see an "opening." But whether there are many or few, and whether the quality is high or low, is evidently a question of a purely "material" character. Yet we keep up the solemn pretence of believing that the clergy are a specially gifted body of men, specially called by God to their work. What a solemn lot of humbugs we are, to be sure! Perhaps if we were less solemn we should be less a nation of humbugs than we are.

Mr. Silvester Horne does not believe in Sunday golf. Being a minister, although a golf player, this seems only natural. He cannot well play golf on Sundays, and therefore sees no reason why other people should—especially as playing golf would keep them away from church. He adds that people can amuse themselves out of church time on Sunday without playing golf. "Out of church time" is significant and instructive.

Rev. G. Wainwright, of Bath, says the decline of Church membership fills him with a sense of hopeless impotence. The world treats the churches with indifference rather than with active opposition. He says the situation calls for the immediate and persistent attention of all ministers. Of ministers, yes; but we fail to see that anyone else is vitally concerned.

"There is great need of strengthening the intellectual basis of Christian conviction," says the *Methodist Times*. We admit the need, if Christianity is to live. But it is a need much easier stated than satisfied. In any straightforward use of the phrase, the "intellectual basis" of Christianity consists of the ideas and beliefs that are expressed in historic Christian doctrines. And so far as educated circles are concerned these are now dead beyond the possibility of a resurrection. Demoniical possession, for example, was once the most firmly held of all Christian beliefs. But to suggest the possibility of *strengthening* this is to realize at once the hopelessness of the task. So also with most other genuinely Christian beliefs. They cannot be strengthened or preserved in even their present state of attenuation, because the mental conditions for doing so no longer exist. All that can be done is to give a more or less dishonest interpretation of Christian doctrines, so that the uncritical may be imposed on. The *Methodist Times* says that each age "saves the intellectual content of the past by adapting it to the present." But this is only true where adaptation is consistent with mental honesty. In cases where it is otherwise we have unhesitating rejection. The Ptolemaic astronomy was not adapted. The theory of special creation was not adapted. Both were rejected as being false to the facts. It is only in theology that the process of adaptation is always going on; and this is because the rule seems to be, "Cling to the old lie as long as is possible—and profitable—and afterwards get as much of it as you can into circulation under the disguise of the new truth."

On an application for a dancing license by a skating-rink company in Dublin, the Recorder "investigated" the case of an unknown person who appeared at one of the company's carnivals dressed in a white costume bearing the letters I. H. S. As the person was unknown, the Recorder merely promised that something dreadful would be done to anyone who repeated this "grave and terrible" outrage. We have heard a lot of what would happen "If Christ Came to Chicago" or "If Christ Came to London," now we know what would happen if he came to Dublin. He would be dragged before the Recorder to receive attention in the boiling oil or molten lead line, while any public hall that admitted him would be refused a license.

Rev. Watts-Ditchfield gives as reasons for the decline in church attendance the growth of a general spirit of frivolity,

and the awakening consciousness of people to the pressing evils summed up in what is called the Social Problem. We do not believe that either of them rank as of any great value as causes of the disintegration of religious belief. Much has been said of late concerning the frivolity of people and we feel that it has been somewhat overdone. The truth seems to be that where there was vacuity there is now frivolity, and of the two we prefer the latter. It may at least pave the way to an appetite for something better. Of course, the Churches enjoyed the support of the vacuous, and so far it is a loser by the change. As for overcrowding and poverty leading to disbelief, this also is not very evident. Periods of religious weakening have been more usually coincident with an improvement in material conditions than the reverse. Religious belief has never been strikingly antagonistic to deplorable social conditions, as a study of the poverty-stricken classes over all Europe shows. Even the Socialists in this country are not, as a rule, drawn from the very poorest classes. The truth is, that thinking demands some measure of material ease, and until people do think religious belief is quite secure. If the Rev. Watts-Ditchfield sets himself to think of the nature of the intellectual developments of the last century, he may light upon considerations that will have some bearing upon the subject in hand.

A right method makes all things easier than they would be otherwise, and to get in the "proper attitude for understanding Matthew xviii. 19," says Mr. Campbell, "all we have to do is to realise that the spirit of man is independent of spatial relations and is, at the same time, present everywhere. If, therefore, our thoughts are moving on the spiritual plane we are at one with infinity, and executing its behests." We do not profess to understand what this means, and we doubt if Mr. Campbell does either. Still, we agree with him that if you can work yourself into an attitude that will make you believe that you believe this, you will be in the "proper attitude" for accepting City Temple philosophy or any other dose of verbal moonshine that happens to be offered to you.

How they love one another! The following is written by Mr. Albert Dawson, editor of the New Theology weekly:—

"In the innermost chambers of the Memorial Hall, where are held the secret conclaves of the Congregational Union and the Free Church Council, it has been solemnly decided that New Theologians are not to be recognised. They are not to be denounced, challenged, openly opposed, formally excommunicated; they are simply to be left outside, passed over, ignored, boycotted; and all this is to be done as quietly as possible. 'Then'—say these sapient religious politicians, these exclusive custodians of the oracles of God, these elect souls who are to determine what shall be the religion of the future in this country—'Then New Theologians will fizzle out.' That is the appalling fate reserved for those misguided persons who refuse to take their theology cut-and-dried from Dr. Forsyth, Dr. Nicoll, and the Rev. Thomas Law, and presume to differ from other equally high authorities. 'Have nothing to do with them; don't invite them to your churches, don't preach in theirs. We won't let them on to our platform, don't go on to theirs. Freeze them, isolate them; let them fizzle out. And whatever you do never give the real reason for this policy; be fertile in excuses, but, if you can possibly help it, don't say it is their theology you object to—that is apt to raise awkward issues, and we don't want the peace of our nice little family party to be disturbed.'"

Such is the "religion of love" after nearly two thousand years' careful practice.

The clerical capture of the Socialist movement goes on rapidly. We see that one Branch of the Independent Labor Party acts as canvasser for the *Christian Commonwealth*. They will push Bibles round next—or Spurgeon's sermons, or Prophet Baxter's weekly entertainer.

Rev. Conrad Noel, a Church Socialist, denies that Socialism "means a hundred contradictory things" and that its advocates let it take "any shape to gain its ends." "This," he says, "is exactly the charge brought against the Christian religion by the *Freethinker*, and with far greater truth." We welcome the reverend gentleman's moment of candor.

"We stand upon Time's forehead," says a New Theology preacher to the New Theologians. What a ticklish position! We suppose they are kept from falling off by Time's eyebrows. Anyhow, we wish them greater security—and a better use of metaphor.

Another New Theologian, the Rev. J. M. Lloyd Thomas, declares that the Virgin Birth and the Physical Resurrection of Christ are stories of no importance. Even if it were

proved that he never lived at all, Christianity would be just as true as ever. Of course it would be—to the gentlemen who live by it—as long as they could get enough people to agree with them.

Mr. Lloyd Thomas "believes in drains because he believes in the Incarnation." This is the most roundabout belief we ever heard of. Perhaps the reverend gentleman will tell us why the old Romans believed in drains? They must have had another reason than his. Was it because they believed in health and cleanliness?

Rev. Alexander Brown affirmed, at the autumnal meeting of the Scottish Congregational Union, that "the evangelical faith is written in the very heart of man himself." If that is so, can Mr. Brown explain how it is that the majority of mankind are totally ignorant of it, and that only about one in five or six, even in Christendom, care a rap for it? It is because the evangelical faith is alien to the human mind that Mr. Brown gets his living by preaching it. Were it "written in the very heart of man" there would be no need of churches and the black coated gentry.

The Huddersfield Wesleyans are living "amidst a constant blaze of revival," and, in consequence, they are rapidly "building the city of God" there. But living in a blaze isn't healthy, and no solid work can be accomplished "amidst a blaze." The truth is, however, that "the blaze of revival" is not true light at all, and that those living in it have good reason to exclaim with Milton,—

"O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon."

Professor Sanday, of Oxford, says that "Christianity works, and has proved its trustworthiness by its results." The fact that Dr. Sanday is a clergyman is an adequate explanation of that wild statement. To members of other professions, to people who judge by common sense, it is abundantly clear that Christianity has proved its entire untrustworthiness by its results. Russia and Spain are Christian "results." So are our huge armies and navies and police forces and prisons and penitentiaries. Is Dr. Sanday proud of these "results"?

A dastardly, and, of course, unsigned article on Professor Ferrer, appears in the *Birmingham Weekly Post* of Oct. 23. After repeating the common Catholic falsehoods as to Ferrer's teaching of Anarchism and regicide in his schools, it proceeds to hold his memory up to contempt by describing the contents of his will, which was drawn up on the eve of his execution. It says that (1) his daughters are earning "scanty" livelihoods by their own labor; (2) that in spite of this, their father bequeathed "several hundred thousand pesetas in other directions"; and (3) implies that he neglected in both thought and act the claims of his children upon him. The article concludes with a show of moral indignation at so much "fuss" being made over so worthless a character.

The best answer to this anonymous calumniator is a recital of the facts. (1) The money possessed by Ferrer was left him as a moral trust to carry on his educational work. There was no legal obligation for him to spend a penny on the schools, and had he kept the money in his pocket the Christian conscience would easily have condoned the theft. Instead of that, the money has been scrupulously expended in the direction expressed by the givers, and to the work Ferrer has given all he had—his life. (2) His wealth—or at least the bulk of it—has been left to carry on the work to which he devoted, and gave, his life; but, for obvious reasons, this bequest had again to take the form of a moral trust. (3) Actually he has bequeathed to his children the sum of 6,000 francs. What his children think of their neglectful father is shown by their not only refusing a proposed public subscription on the ground that their parent would not have wished them to accept it, but they have announced their intention of renouncing their legacy in order that it may be expended in the furthering of Ferrer's life's work. They are noble women, worthy daughters of a noble father; while father, children, and work are obviously far above the mental appreciation of an anonymous scribbler, whose pen and conscience are probably both at the service of whoever cares to purchase their contemptible services.

Mr. A. S. Headingley's article on "The Socialist Party and the Survival of the Inquisition" in last week's *Justice* is very seasonable. He tells the Socialists that the Jesuits got Ferrer murdered because he was an active Secular Educationist, and that they will get all such men murdered wherever they can. "Clericalism," he concludes, "especially

the Clericalism inspired by the Jesuits, will show us Socialists no more mercy than was shown to Ferrer. If we value our freedom, if we value our lives, if we value our Cause, let us be up and doing." Editor Quelch (we believe it is Quelch) states in a footnote that he agrees in the main with "comrade" Headingley that Clericalism is the enemy,—but ———! We expected that "but." It simply means that the S. D. P. leaders are not going to risk what popularity they have by attacking religion. They will only attack Clericalism. Just as if Clericalism could exist without religion, or religion without Clericalism. The great fault of the Socialist leaders in England is that those who are thinkers are timid, and those who are not timid are not thinkers. And the result is that Socialism is being rapidly nobbled by the Clericals—though Quelch and his "comrades" haven't the sagacity to see it; unless they do see it and are afraid to recognise it.

How to Become a Christian is the title of a tract issued by a Glasgow firm. "How to Cease Being a Liar and Become an Honest Man" would be more suitable to the author's reputation—that person being the Rev. R. A. Torrey.

The Cape, a South African paper, says that desperate efforts have been made, in vain, to raise £550 to clear off a mortgage on a Dutch Reformed Colored Mission Church at Woodstock. The money is being pressed for by the mortgagee's executors, and the situation is critical. Yet the sum of £9,000 has been raked in throughout the Cape lately for the purpose of sending missionaries to the Sudan. So much cash goes to such a distant object, yet "the Dutch Reformed Church authorities are lifting no finger, much less a penny of the money raised for missions, to help their local mission church"—which seems likely to be sold under the hammer.

Certain things seem to be much the same in America as they are over here. We see by the *Chicago Record-Herald* that the First National Bank of Mineral Point, Wisconsin, has come to grief, with a shortage of nearly half a million dollars. Forgery has been committed to cover fraudulent withdrawal of the bank's assets. The principal culprit is described as "a pillar of the church, a Sunday-school superintendent, who sometimes occupied the pulpit, and was implicitly trusted." Same old game!

Liverpool must be positively soaked in religious fanaticism to regard George Wise as a great man. His followers are simply rabid Protestants who are opposed to doubtless equally rabid Catholics. The two parties ought to take Hamlet's advice to old Polonius, and play the fool nowhere but in their own houses. At present they insist on howling at and threatening each other in the streets. For his share in the general trouble, George Wise was sentenced to four months' imprisonment in default of being bound over to keep the peace for twelve months. That was too long a time for him to be kept under such a restriction, so he decided, after a lot of consideration, to do time instead. He did not take a cab, however, and go quietly to prison and surrender himself. He took the trip in an open carriage at the head of an organised procession. This necessitated the whole police force of Liverpool being on active duty to preserve the peace, and they had all their work to do it; indeed, they were glad of the help of three hundred foot constables and twenty mounted men drafted in from Manchester. Plenty of stone throwing went on, of course, but nobody was killed. On arriving at the prison gates, George Wise took a dramatic farewell of his supporters. We understand that it was more touching than his Master's farewell at the last supper. And as the gates closed, with George Wise on the wrong side of them, we daresay he felt himself the greatest martyr of the age.

General Booth has lost the sight of one eye and the sight of the other is going. The Lord is not treating him kindly.

It is pointed out that Mr. Stead, who prints in the *Fortnightly Review* an interview he has had with Disraeli's ghost, makes Lord Beaconsfield talk exactly like Mr. Stead himself. The Tory leader's ghost informed his interviewer that "at the long last the budget will be accepted." "Now, oddly enough," the critic observes, "'at the long last' is one of Mr. Stead's own pet North-country expressions, and one which it might have been thought would hardly have been known to Disraeli." Of course not. Mr. Stead talks with ghosts as talks with himself. The proof of it is that they all talk like himself. We noticed the same thing in our review of Mr. John Lobb's *Talks With the Dead*—which he takes round the country as a lecture and gets lots of soft people to listen to. Shakespeare and Dickens talk exactly like each other, and both talk exactly like Mr. John Lobb.

Which is the most natural thing in the world, when you come to think of it.

Amongst the aphorisms contained in Ibsen's posthumous writings is a characteristic one on vivisection. "Men of science," he says, "should not be allowed to torture animals to death. Let them begin with journalists and politicians."

Another of Ibsen's aphorisms makes us hope it is true. "There will be," he says, "a new nobility. Not the nobility of gold or of money, of talent, or of knowledge. The nobility of the future will be the nobility of courage and of will." It is certainly needed.

Vice-Chancellor Dale quotes Thomas Carlyle as saying that "There never was any book like the Bible, and there never will be such another." We are glad to hear it.

Mr. Balfour has been denouncing "frigid calculated lies." We advise him to read Christian apologetics if he wants to see the utmost that can be done in that line. He should make himself acquainted with the lies told by frigid calculating Christian liars about Voltaire, Paine, Ingersoll, Bradlaugh, and other conspicuous Freethinkers. He would soon see that the political liars are not in the running with the religious liars.

An image of the Virgin, in the church of the Holy Mother, at Czenstochowa, has been worshiped all over Poland for the last five hundred years. But robbers are no respecters of holy persons. Some of them got into the church recently and stole the Virgin's diamond crown, also her dress of votive offerings; the lot being valued at £100,000. The Holy Mother did not know that the robbers were coming, and she does not know now where they are gone. She is quite unable to give the police any information that may lead to an arrest. She saved others; herself she cannot save.

Mr. E. G. Baskerville, who got the *Freethinker* placed upon the tables of the Free Library, Newton Abbott, Devonshire, has been officially informed that the Committee have decided to discontinue placing it there. An inquiry as to why this journal is to be excluded has brought no answer. Bigots are now more astute than they used to be, and don't care to give themselves away. We suppose we must take their action in this case as part of the general boycott which we have had to contend with ever since this journal started.

Last week's *Reynolds'* contained an article on the dangers that beset business girls, in which Miss Rose, secretary of the Liverpool Branch of the National Vigilance Society, was reported as saying that—"Immorality was increasing among the so-called respectable girls. A well-known clergyman told her that he was not so much concerned about the girls who did not go to church as the girls who attended the Bible-class meetings and church, and he was afraid, also, a great number of communicants." This is very pretty news—and it is not our discovery. Scores of clergymen know what is going on, but they do not speak out and thus wink at the evil. One of our correspondents informs us that, some twenty years ago, he was pressed to join the class of a Sunday-school teacher who told him, in quite unprintable language, what took place, and held it out as an inducement to him to join. Religion and sensuality, at bottom, lie very near together; and the fact is quite familiar to pathologists.

Robert Edmondson, an ex-sergeant-major of the 21st Lancers, who headed a deputation of unemployed ex-service men to Mr. Haldane, suggested that the £74,000 expended on Army chaplains might be better spent on finding employment for ex-soldiers. Mr. Haldane replied that "he had never heard greater nonsense in his life." In our opinion he has seldom heard better sense.

"As the one dieth so dieth the other" and clergymen have "no preeminence above" infidels. At St. Stephen's Church, Cardiff, the other morning, the Rev. A. G. Russell dropped dead while conducting divine service. A Freethought lecturer couldn't have dropped further.

We have not referred lately to the men of God who have left fine estates behind them when emigrating to whatever part of "God's universe" they were bound for. But we just note in to-day's newspapers the case of the Rev. Frederick Fowler Bradford, of Swansea, Dorset, who left £24,491. How will he be able to go up for his plate of manna when Christ cries "Blessed be ye poor"?

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 7, Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints, Manchester; at 3, "The Martyrdom of Ferrer"; at 6.30, "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life—in *Hamlet*, etc."

November 14, Liverpool; 28, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 21, West Ham; 28, Aberdare. December 5, Liverpool; 12, Manchester; 19, West Ham.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 19, Leicester.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £258 6s. Received since.—R. B. Godfree, £1 1s.; H. E. (Croydon), 5s.; T. Stringer, 1s.; R. Carless, 2s. 6d.

J. W. REPTON.—Ardor and patience, as George Meredith said, is needed for our work. We are not discouraged by not getting hold of the "long ear of the dear public"—to use Thackeray's expression. We appeal to the thoughtful, and never expected the mob to run after us. But our appeal has not been in vain. We have earned the thanks of a good many, of whom you are one; and we are quite satisfied that the volumes of the *Freethinker* will count for something in the mental history of the age we have lived and worked in.

A READER.—You do not appear to know that polygamy, which had long died out in Greek and Roman civilisation, still existed amongst the Jews at the time of Christ. That fact must govern our interpretation of the New Testament. If polygamy was not forbidden by Christ, Paul, and other Apostles, it follows that polygamous converts must have been admitted into the Christian Church. You say that "the teaching of Christ and his apostles was against" polygamy. Such a statement is easily made; it only requires pen, ink, paper, and ability to write. We defy you to point to a single text in support of your assertion.

G. D.—The principal point in your letter was dealt with incidentally in our last week's leading article. The notion that religion, in itself, was invented for economic reasons, is as idle as any other theory of its invention. We must leave it to Socialists, as such, to defend Socialism against misrepresentation and unjust attack. Glad you see that the boycott against the *Freethinker*, the N. S. S., and Mr. Foote (and his colleagues) is all-round. It is no use blinking the facts.

L. D. HEWITT.—It is an old challenge which never was and never will be accepted. We don't suppose the reverend gentleman will reply.

K. THORP.—Hardly up to the mark.

E. J. BASKERVILLE.—See "Acid Drops"—and accept our thanks.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—It is impossible for us to conduct controversies in local newspapers throughout the kingdom. The one answer to all the Catholics who talk about Ferrer's "crimes" and the "proofs" of them, is that he never had a trial in any decent meaning of the word. The court-martial which sentenced him to death never had a witness before it. All it had was a written statement put in by the prosecution. That was enough. Evidence on his side was not wanted and not taken. To call this a trial is an abuse of language. The plain truth is that the man was murdered by those who had been trying to get rid of him for years; and having murdered him, they act after their kind by befouling his grave. Faith and filth always went well together, morally as well as otherwise.

H. HARPER.—Answering an argument and answering a question are two different things. One has to answer an argument every time it is presented in discussion, but to be answering the same question repeatedly in the same paper is tiresome—whether the questioner feels it or not. Besides, we did give you the only fact of any importance. The man was connected in 1883-1885 with the Secular movement in Manchester. We published a long letter from him, with our comments, in the *Freethinker* of January 3, 1904. We object to be always advertising such an unimportant person gratuitously. Perhaps you see now. And, after all, what does it matter if a *Freethinker* now and then reverts to Christianity, when at least nine-tenths of all *Freethinkers* are converts from Christianity.

J. THACKRAY.—See paragraph. Thanks.

F. WYKES.—Thanks, though we cannot make use of them this week.

F. HOY.—Sorry; but it seems to us a storm in a teapot. It is impossible to please everybody. We do our best.

W. BOLLAND.—Shall be pleased to see yourself and daughter at our Manchester lectures. Your defence of Ferrer in the *Lancashire Daily Post* is a worthy one, and must have done good.

ISABELLA T. ROBERTS.—Thanks for the extract, which may be useful. Glad you were so pleased with our lecture on "Why Men Believe in God." You are right about "health." It is the best thing one person can wish another, and the common sense of mankind admits it in the universal toast.

G. CROOKSON.—We are reading Mr. Frank Harris's new book on Shakespeare, and shall probably have something to say about it as soon as we can find time.

R. CARLESS.—Glad to hear that you remember so pleasurably the day when you first became acquainted with our "glorious paper."

T. W. ALLISON.—Your suggestion shall be duly considered. Raising the price of this journal to threepence is really out of the question.

W. P. BALL.—Thanks for valued cuttings.

H. J. HYETT.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

J. JOHNSON.—Say what you think, by all means; we don't want the world to ourselves.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We prefer to say nothing about the incident this week. Presumably we shall hear from you again.

J. G. STUART.—Pleased to see your good letter in the local paper.

HORACE DAWSON.—Hone's Apocryphal New Testament is obtainable for about 2s. 6d., and the Old Testament Apocryphal Books are published by the King's Printers at Oxford and Cambridge. The latter are included in the Catholic Bible; the former not in any.

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

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

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

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

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

ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.

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

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

Sugar Plums.

South Lancashire friends will note that Mr. Foote lectures at Manchester to-day (Nov. 7), afternoon and evening, in the Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints. As the subjects are likely to attract large audiences, those who wish to secure seats should take care to be in good time.

The horrid weather on Sunday—rain all day long—naturally affected Mr. Foote's audience at St. James's Hall. It was a very good audience in the untoward circumstances, although it was unfortunate that the course of lectures should close with what could not help being Mr. Foote's smallest meeting. Had the weather been more favorable, judging by those who were present in such conditions, there would probably have been a bumping assembly. Mr. Foote's lecture on "The Rev. G. Bernard Shaw" was evidently much relished. Mr. F. A. Davies, who occupied the chair, invited questions and discussion, and succeeded in eliciting both.

It is possible that another course of lectures will be given at St. James's Hall in the new year.

Mr. Cohen had fine audiences in the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday, and his lectures were very warmly applauded. The afternoon lecture being on Spain, a resolution was unanimously passed in silence (the audience standing), expressing indignation at the recent execution of Professor Ferrer. The resolution appeared in the next morning's *Daily Post*.

We are glad to see that Mr. A. B. Moss has been re-elected to his old seat on the Camberwell Borough Council, which he boldly risked in championing the cause of the *Freethinker* against the bigots in connection with the local free libraries.

Under the auspices of the International Working Men's Society, an International Public Meeting will take place on Friday, November 5, at 8 p.m., at the Club Union Buildings, Clerkenwell-road, E.C. (next to the Holborn Town Hall), to protest against the murder of Ferrer and demand the immediate release of the prisoners now suffering at Montjuich Fortress. Speakers in various languages. Admission free.

We received a communication, too late to be dealt with in last week's *Freethinker*, from the National Association of French *Freethinkers*, which was founded by that great scientist, the late Marcelin Berthelot. The circular announced that, by arrangement with the Paris Municipal Council, a demonstration in honor of Francisco Ferrer, and in condemnation of his murderers, would be held at Montmartre, before the monument to the Chevalier de La Barre. A

request was being made to the Council that the monument to Ferrer, which is being prepared, should be erected beside that of La Barre's, in face of the Church of the Sacred Heart. We shall be glad to hear that this request has been granted.

Writing to us last week—too late, however, for the *Freethinker*—Mr. Harry Snell said: "In your reference to the Ferrer matter you interpret my own feelings with deadly accuracy when you say that I personally did not expect the Churches to interfere in the Ferrer case until it had become popular. But any secretary who is worth his salt will always avoid committing his movement to opinions of his own. It is just possible that some members of the Ethical movement may have expected that the Churches would interfere, although to do justice to them, I have not heard of any." Good! But why then did Mr. Snell say "We are disappointed"?

Mr. Snell asks if the *Freethinker* has "any suggestion to make for some practical international support for the work that Ferrer started." We have already said that the initiative in this must be left to the officers of the International Freethought Federation at Brussels.

Shakespeare is so universal that a quotation for almost any occasion may be found in his writings. A correspondent sends us the following passage from *King Lear*, which fits the Ferrer case to a t. One may fancy his murderers speaking it before their crime:—

"Though well we may not pass upon his life
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men
May blame, but not control."

Fortunately the "blame" of men has been too much for Ferrer's murderers.

Another social gathering, under the auspices of the N. S. S. Executive, will be held on Thursday evening, November 18, at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street. The President (Mr. G. W. Foote) will attend, together with Messrs. Cohen, Lloyd, and other vice-presidents. There will be a little speaking, more music, and ample opportunity for conversation. By this means Freethinkers may get introduced to each other, and form acquaintances and perhaps friendships. Members of the N. S. S. will be admitted on showing their cards, if necessary; they will also have the privilege of introducing a friend. Freethinkers who are not members, and cannot get introduced, should communicate with the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, 2 Newcastle-street, E.C., who will supply them with special cards of admission. Any person present who wishes to speak to the President, and is not personally known to him, is perfectly at liberty to introduce himself (or herself). Mr. Foote begs them not to stand aloof on mere grounds of conventional ceremony.

All copies of Mr. Foote's *Book of God*, both cloth and boards, are now cleared out at the reduced rate. It will be useless, therefore, to send us further orders for the book.

We think it advisable to say a few words, and a few words only, about the recent prosecution under the London County Council's by-laws for the use of "improper language" by a lecturer at Clapham-common. We are bound to resist every attempt to enforce the Blasphemy Laws, because we are opposed on principle to these laws, and therefore to their application in any circumstances whatever. But we are not opposed to laws against "improper language" in places of public resort, where the hearers have the same right to be as the speakers have. We say plainly that we are not going to defend any and every man's right to say whatever he pleases at outdoor meetings. We would defend his right to advocate his opinions, but not his right to use language which would not be tolerated on political or social platforms. We take the responsibility for our own language, and others must take the responsibility for theirs. This attitude is in keeping with all that we said during the latest "blasphemy" prosecution. And we are happy to know that it has the unanimous approval of the N. S. S. Executive.

We have this to add to the foregoing paragraph. Some of the Christian outdoor speakers use abominably provocative language, and the County Council should show its impartiality by calling them to order, and even by taking further steps if they persist in misbehaving themselves. While we are bound to approve of a general law against "improper language" in places of public resort, we do not approve of its application to Freethinkers only, while Christians are allowed unlimited license. And we shall take care that this expression of our views reaches the County Council officials.

The Narratives in Genesis.—XVIII.

A MATTER EXCITING LAUGHTER.

(Continued from p. 701.)

REVERTING to the last narrative of the Priestly writer (Gen. xvii.), the god Shaddai, after instituting the obscene rite of circumcision, made a promise to Abraham respecting that patriarch's wife Sarah—which reads as follows:—

"I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her.....and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her."

When Abraham heard this he "fell upon his face and laughed," and though he had the most implicit faith in all the promises of Shaddai, he could not help saying in his heart "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?" But that we know that Abraham was "the father of the faithful" we might say that the question he asked himself betokened rank incredulity. El Shaddai would seem also to have had some such idea, for he repeated his promise:—

"Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac."

The name "Isaac" means "he laughed" or "laughter"; whence it is clear that the naming of Abraham's promised son resulted from that patriarch's laughing at the idea of an old woman of ninety giving birth to a child. One can imagine hearing the god Shaddai say: "Ah, you old sceptic; you laugh, do you? Well, you may take my word for it, your wife shall really have a son, and you shall call his name Laughter." El Shaddai had no objection to a mild and select sort of a pun when he happened to be alone with a friend.

We come now to Gen. xviii., which is from the pen of the Yahvist. In this chapter we have a story of Abraham entertaining the god Yahveh and two of his angels. That worthy patriarch, this voracious writer says, was sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day when "lo, three men stood over against him," one of whom turned out to be the god Yahveh incognito. Abraham's tent had been pitched behind a tree for shade; so that the patriarch, hastening forward, seated his guests under the tree, ran and asked Sarah to make some cakes, and set one of his young men to kill and cook a calf. When this improvised meal was ready, Abraham brought it, with butter and milk, and set it before the three men, and "stood by them under the tree" while they partook of it. When the meal was over, one of the three men, Yahveh, after asking where was Sarah, said to Abraham:—

"I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son."

This should have been no news to Abraham—that is, assuming the account by the Priestly writer to be true. The promise, however, certainly came as a surprise to Sarah, who was listening behind the tent door. "And Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I have waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also." Though Sarah laughed "within herself," the god Yahveh, who had sharp ears, heard her, and turning to Abraham he asked "Wherefore did Sarah laugh?.....Is anything too hard for Yahveh?" Sarah, being now afraid, "denied, saying, I laughed not."

In this second account the Lord's promise respecting Sarah is clearly implied to have been given for the first time. Moreover, as regards the two accounts, it is obvious that if the second be true, the first must be fictitious; while if the first narrative be true, the second is a fiction. This is evident. Assuming the first account to be historical, Abraham upon reaching home would at once have acquainted his wife with the honor that awaited her. From that day Sarah would have lived in the expectation of the great event, and could have thought of little else. The disgrace of having no children would now

be wiped away, and the promise of being the mother of nations and the ancestress of kings must have been ever present to her mind. And such being the case, the promise, when made a second time, would not have come upon Sarah as a surprise; it would, in fact, but serve to strengthen her faith in the possibility of its fulfilment. She certainly would not have laughed and said within herself what she is reported to have said: such action could only take place when the prediction was heard for the first time. Similarly, if the second narrative be true, Abraham thought so little of the first promise that he did not think it worth mentioning to his wife, which, having regard to its nature, would be very unlikely indeed. We should then have to account for the fact that Abraham's god thought it necessary to make the promise twice—on two separate occasions. When, however, we take into consideration that the two narratives are by different writers, each narrating his story independently of the other, all difficulties vanish: we can then reasonably set them down as both fictitious.

It may be interesting to notice how the Lord treated the incredulity of the two married people. When Abraham laughed upon hearing the prediction respecting Sarah, El Shaddai discreetly ignored the incredulity of which it was the expression, and simply repeated his promise. When Sarah laughed, however, the god administered a rebuke, and was inclined to be severe. He asks: "Is anything too hard for Yahveh?" The answer to which, of course, is: "No, nothing is beyond his power." To this I would beg leave to add: "except, perhaps, to make serpents live upon dust"—a feat which has now been awaiting the exercise of his skill for nearly six thousand years.

But we have not got to the end of the "laughing" connected with the name "Isaac" yet. In chapter xxi. a third writer—the Elohist, whose first contribution appears in chapter xx.—tells us a story relating to the birth and babyhood of this child which commences:—

"And Sarah said, Elohim hath made me to laugh: everyone that heareth will laugh with me..... Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should give children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age" (xxi. 6-7).

From the words italicised it would seem that the Elohist knew nothing of the Lord's promises to Abraham in the narratives of the Yahvist and Priestly writers. Leaving this point, we have three stories to account for the name Isaac: the first by the Priestly writer who makes Abraham laugh—a laugh of incredulity—at the idea of his ninety-year-old wife giving birth to a son; the second by the Yahvist, who makes Sarah laugh—the same laugh—at the same idea; the third by the Elohist, who also makes Sarah laugh—but in this case a laugh of triumph—and not until after the birth has taken place. All three accounts are, of course, equally historical.

Returning to the Yahvist narrative, the "three men" who had dined under Abraham's tree arose, and two of them went towards Sodom. The third, who was the god Yahveh, debated with himself the advisability of taking Abraham into his confidence, and finally decided that he might do so. "For," said he, "I have known him, to the end that he may command his children, and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment": that is to say, Yahveh knew that Abraham would act in accordance with the commands enjoined in Deut. iv. 8-9. If Abraham knew nothing of these commands, the writer did, which comes to the same thing. The god then said to Abraham:—

"Verily the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and verily their sin is very grievous. I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

Abraham, upon hearing this, remembered that his nephew Lot had gone to live in Sodom, so he "drew near" to Yahveh, and prayed him not to destroy that city if fifty righteous persons were in it. This the

god readily granted—a notable instance of answer to prayer—but there were not fifty righteous within the city. Abraham then besought Yahveh to spare the city if it contained forty-five righteous persons; then, if it contained forty; then thirty; then twenty; and finally if it contained only ten. But even this small number of righteous people was not to be found in Sodom. The city was therefore doomed to destruction. "And Yahveh went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place."

In the New Testament we find the following statements respecting the god who had been "communings with Abraham":—

John i. 18.—"No man hath seen God at any time."

John vi. 46.—"Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is from God; he hath seen the Father." [Jesus himself was "he which is from God.]"

1 John iv. 12.—"No man hath seen God at any time."

1 Tim. vi. 16.—"Whom no man hath seen, nor can see."

In these four passages it is distinctly asserted that "no man" had ever beheld the god of Israel. Now, setting aside the account of Moses, who is related to have seen "the back" of "the Lord God" (Exod. xxxiii. 22), and that of the seventy elders, who are stated to have seen his whole figure (Exod. xxiv. 9-11), there cannot be the smallest doubt that Abraham, in the Yahvist narrative here noticed, both saw and spoke to the Hebrew deity; and, further, that the form of this god was that of an ordinary man. The latter fact recalls the Bible statement (Gen. i. 26-27) that Elohim created man in his own image and likeness—a statement which means that "the Lord" was himself of the form and appearance of a man. And such was undoubtedly the belief of all the ancient Hebrew writers.

ABRACADABRA.

(To be continued.)

Is Faith Necessary?

THE REAL MEANING OF M. BRIEUX'S DRAMA,
"FALSE GODS."

M. BRIEUX, the talented French dramatist, belongs to that *élite* of authors who, following the example of the ancient classical poets, justly considers theatrical art not merely as a harmless and amusing pastime, but rather as the means of studying and discussing one of the many vital and all-absorbing social problems which, through the constant development of civilisation, become more and more complex.

All his pieces are constructed on a thesis, the discussion and development of which are carried through by the author on strictly natural and rational lines. A great lover of humanity, his heart throbs with pain at the sight of man's unhappiness and wrong-doings, generally caused by his voluntary or unconscious ignorance. M. Brieux, therefore, arrives at conclusions which are perfectly logical, humane, and free from prejudices.

For instance, one of his masterpieces, *The Arm of the Law*, constitutes a severe and justified criticism of the haphazard and inefficient way in which justice is rendered at present. In another of his well-known pieces, *Maternity*, the author strongly rebukes a certain class of women, chiefly found in the fashionable and idle class of society, who do their utmost to evade the duties of motherhood, and he clearly demonstrates the evil effects of such a practice.

With *False Gods*, M. Brieux has aroused a renewed interest in the problem of religion in relation to morality. In order not to shock the susceptibilities of a certain class, the drama takes place in ancient Egypt some 1,300 years before Christ; at first sight the spectator is led to believe that the old pagan gods, and the gross superstitions attached to them, are alone dealt with; but for the student of religion, who easily reads between the lines, it is evident that the author studies the engrossing question whether faith is a necessity or not. All religions have a

common basis—the belief in the Supernatural, and all descend from the same cause—primitive man's incapacity for understanding the laws of Nature. Therefore, to criticise a certain belief in a certain god or gods is to lay open to discussion the validity of religion in general.

Unfortunately, for so many centuries, the idea of religion has been so intimately connected with that of morality, although both are absolutely independent one from the other, that the majority of people are incapable of distinguishing both principles. The result is that at present an immense variety of meanings is attached to the word "religion," and if we are not careful, from the outset, to clearly express the true meaning of religion, misinterpretations of various kinds will necessarily arise.

The belief in gods involves the belief in invisible, supermaterial or spiritual beings like, and yet superior to, man; therefore one may accept Professor Tylor's definition of religion, "the belief in spiritual beings," as representing the most comprehensive, and therefore the most scientific, definition yet given.*

In latter years, thanks to the wonderful and ever-increasing progress in all branches of science, a large number of people, throwing aside the worn-out and obsolete superstitions of old, are ready to admit that the basis of religion's claims is, after all said and done, but a vast hypothesis, a mere illusion of the senses transmitted to us through the ignorance of our primitive ancestors. However, these same people pretend that, granting all religions to be false, it is, nevertheless, an absolute necessity that we should cultivate some kind of supernatural faith in order not to completely wreck our moral standing. This idea is very prevalent in our days, and it is pointed out that a purely secular education would necessarily eradicate from the heart of men the fear of God, and that without this wholesome cringing to the supernatural, mankind would certainly descend to the deepest abyss of moral degradation.

It is unfortunate to note that, in matters of religious controversy, too often scrupulous honesty is not the motto of the champions of the supernatural; in fact, there is a serious tendency for Christians to—consciously or unconsciously—misinterpret facts so as to transform them into convenient arguments for the upholding of their special form of belief. This spirit has been revealed in a striking way in various criticisms which appeared in the press after the first performance of *False Gods*. For instance, here is an extract which appeared in the *Church Times* :—

"In truth it covers the whole realm of theological discussion as we see it around us to-day. We see the bitter hopelessness of mere iconoclasm, such as that which still survives from Voltaire; we see the anticlericalism of Gambetta; we gain an inner view of Modernism; a swift light is thrown on Nationalism, and above all and through all there is the throb of the one mighty argument for religion, that it satisfies human needs....."

And again, this time from the *Christian Commonwealth* :—

"The need of the human heart to have something to believe in, somewhere that it can lose its sense of burdened loneliness and weakness in the restful strength of supernatural forces, is expounded in masterly fashion....."

The italics are mine, and serve to emphasise the drift of the articles quoted; in the former, we first note the curt and unsatisfactory way in which the great Voltaire is dismissed, and then comes the statement that religion is a want and is necessary to satisfy human needs; the latter article confirms the above declaration.

Now, in the second act of *False Gods*, it happens that Satni, through his knowledge, was able to cure a hysteric woman suffering from a purely nervous disease, and that on account of this "miraculous" cure the poor, ignorant Egyptians regard him as a more powerful god than those to whom they have

been accustomed to pray. Satni does his utmost to uproot this conviction from the minds of his compatriots, and finally decides to shatter in one mighty effort the popular belief in the supernatural. Roused to enthusiasm by his burning words, the entire population proceeds to destroy their idols, shouting: "The gods are dead!" Then follows, as was to be expected, a period of depression. A child does not become an adult in a day, and these poor, ignorant people are bewildered in the presence of the sudden mental liberty they have conquered; not being sufficiently developed to know of any other moral guide but fear, they naturally go wild and commit numberless excesses. This is human logic, and events could not have run otherwise; but immediately we see the Christian press distorting the author's aim by declaring that without religion morality cannot exist. Truly this is a childish argument, which gives us a sad insight on the low standard of the professional Christian intellect. If, instead of always trying to discover new arguments in favor of the God-hypothesis, these Christian pressmen had endeavored to use their brains, they would have found that M. Brioux meant to convey to us the fact that religion is part and parcel of man's intellectual evolution. During a certain period of his development, religion is necessary to man. In the same way that a child is incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, and that during his early years his parents must, in order to be obeyed, inspire him with fear and respect, man in his first stages of intellectual evolution needs to fear deified nature in order to be moral. Later on, as when the child becomes adult, he will, thanks to his developed knowledge and reasoning powers, fully understand the intrinsic value and the social necessity of morality. Arrived at that stage, the belief in the supernatural becomes perfectly useless; in fact, it then constitutes a serious obstacle to his further development, and the sooner he abandons the old myths which have done their duty the better will it be for the cause of social progress.

Let us suppose, for an example, that a few savage tribes, who only recognise brute force, were induced to adopt a republican form of government. It is evident that it would prove a total failure. Why? Not because the republican formula is in itself a failure, but rather on account of the intellectual incapacity of savages to adopt such a refined form of government, which can only be a success where the people are sufficiently civilised to appreciate their individual social responsibilities.

No—a thousand times no—morality is not dependent on religion. The laws of evolution and anthropology have conclusively proved that religion is only a product of the human brain; religion is bound to follow man's intellectual development, and a time comes when it can be safely and profitably dismissed. Morality is the outcome of our social organisation; it is the instinctive means whereby a gregarious society protects itself, in view of its reproduction and conservation, against the egotism of the individual.

The higher the social organisation, the more refined is the individual and collective morality.

F. O. RITZ.

The Making of a Prophecy.

THE Evangelist Matthew (xxvii. 9-10), after having stated that the Jewish authorities purchased a field from a potter with the thirty pieces of silver returned unto them by Judas, declares :—

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was priced, whom certain of the children of Israel did price, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

Now if the prophecy here attributed to Jeremiah had really proceeded from his lips in the form quoted, it

would have supplied a most remarkable instance of vaticination seemingly verified by events. Alas, however, only the barest nucleus of the alleged prediction occurs in the writings of the prophet to whom it is so unhesitatingly attributed. This gem is to be found in chap. xxxii., where Jeremiah states that he purchased a field at Anathoth from his cousin Hanamel for seventeen shekels because he believed that God had directed him to buy it.

As, however, Nebuchadnezzar was at this time besieging Jerusalem, the prophet rued his investment, and cried:—

"Thou hast said unto me, O, Lord God, Buy thee the field for money, and call witnesses; whereas the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans."

To this the Lord replied that the city should fall and the people be scattered, but that he would bring them back again safely, adding:—

"Fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe the deeds, and seal them, and call witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem.....for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the Lord."

Now, waiving the fact that this prophecy was obviously intended to foreshadow the return of the Jews from captivity and not to describe any private transaction, it is evident that the only portions capable of being wrested for the purpose designed by Matthew would have yielded the following result:—

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, For money shall men buy fields about Jerusalem: Thou, O Lord, hast said, Buy thee a field for money."

As, however, the fulfilment of such a prediction would have been limited to an event so indefinite as a purchase of land near Jerusalem, for a price unstated and from a vendor whose occupation was unnamed, the applicability of the passage to the conduct of the priests in buying the potter's field for thirty pieces of silver must have appeared a very lame affair in the eyes of Matthew. Hence we find that to remedy this defect and make the prediction more precise and serviceable, the Evangelist, whose acquaintance with the Old Testament scriptures was extensive, took certain phrases from another prophetic author, and inserted them, without a word of acknowledgment, in the prophecy of the seer whom he specifies. The passage thus amended would read thus as compared with the original draft:—

"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying,—

For money.....

Shall men buy fields about Jerusalem. Thou, O Lord, hath said.....

Buy thee a field for money.

For money, thirty pieces of silver, the price that I was priced at of them, shall men buy fields about Jerusalem. Thou, O Lord, hath said, Cast the thirty pieces of silver to the potter [And] Buy thee a field for money."

By this stroke of genius, Matthew introduced into the original prediction (1) the thirty pieces of silver paid for the life of Jesus by the Jewish authorities; (2) the potter from whom the said authorities bought a field with the said money; and (3) the fact that God had told the prophet to get a field from a potter. The source whence these all-important details were surreptitiously derived was the book of Zachariah, wherein this author, after mentioning the fulfilment of one of his prophecies, says:—

"Thus the poor of the flock that gave heed unto me knew that it was the word of the Lord. And I said unto them, if ye think good, give me my hire; and, if not, forbear. So they weighed for my hire thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter, the goodly price that I was priced at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them unto the potter in the house of the Lord" (chap. xi.).

It will be observed that this passage says nothing at all about the purchase of a field from the potter, or anyone else; and therefore would not of itself have

sufficed the purpose of Matthew, who merely extracted what seemed necessary to compliment the prophecy of Jeremiah, and render it more in harmony with its alleged fulfilment. Thus he identifies the price estimated for the services of the prophet with the sum subsequently set on the life of Jesus, and makes the donation given to the potter foreshadow the payment received in after ages by another potter for a field at his disposal. One point, however, the astute Evangelist overlooked—namely, the vital difference between the circumstances attending the pricing of Zachariah and the pricing of Jesus. (1) Zachariah was priced by "the poor of the flock," Jesus by "the chief priests and elders of the people"; (2) Zachariah was priced for his advantage, Jesus for his destruction; (3) Zachariah received his price, Jesus received nothing; (4) Zachariah cast away his price by divine command, Judas cast away the price of Jesus from remorse; (5) the price of Zachariah, unlike that of Jesus, was not returned to the payers, but bestowed on a third party; (6) the price of Zachariah, unlike that of Jesus, was given to the potter by the person priced; (7) the price of Zachariah, unlike that of Jesus, was given to the potter as a gift, and not in purchase of a field.

Again, in the version of the prophecy given by Matthew, we read, "they took the thirty pieces of silver.....and gave them for the potter's field as the Lord appointed me." But, as we have seen, the Lord appointed Jeremiah to buy a field, and Zachariah to give thirty pieces of silver to a potter, the two appointments being therefore distinct as regards the persons appointed to act and the actions appointed for them to perform.

ELIJAH GREENLEAF.

Correspondence.

INDETERMINATE SENTENCES.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—May I thank you for the good wishes you express for the success of the Penal Reform League in your issue of 14th ult.; and may I ask you a question? If we manage to develop a system for the cure and education of criminals, who is to decide beforehand how long it will take to cure or educate any given criminal?

To me it seems that, given the motive and means of curing and educating, it will naturally follow that the period cannot be determined beforehand. At the same time I grant you that an indeterminate sentence of our present prison régime would be monstrous. But so is any sentence of such a régime.

ARTHUR ST. JOHN.

PROTESTANTS AND THE BIBLE.

Jack had provided a fair copy of his father's will, engrossed in form upon a large skin of parchment; and resolving to act the part of a most dutiful son, he became the fondest creature of it imaginable. For although, as I have often told the reader, it consisted wholly in certain plain, easy directions, about the management and wearing of their coats, with legacies and penalties in case of obedience or neglect, yet he began to entertain a fancy that the matter was deeper and darker, and therefore must needs have a great deal more of mystery at the bottom. "Gentlemen," said he, "I will prove this very skin of parchment to be meat, drink, and cloth, to be the philosopher's stone and the universal medicine." In consequence of which raptures, he resolved to make use of it in the necessary as well as the most paltry occasions of life. He had a way of working it into any shape he pleased; so that it served him for a night-cap when he went to bed, and for an umbrella in rainy weather. He would lap a piece of it about a sore toe, or, when he had fits, burn two inches under his nose; or, if anything lay heavy on his stomach, scrape off and swallow as much of the powder as would lie on a silver penny; they were all infallible remedies. With analogy to these refinements, his common talk and conversation ran wholly in the phrase of his will, and he circumscribed the utmost of his eloquence within that compass, not daring to let slip a syllable without authority from that.—*Swift*, "Tale of a Tub."

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.

INDOOR.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Church-street, Upper-street, N.): 7.30, Rev. A. Hyatt, "The Savior of the World."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Hall (Minor), Barking-road, Canning Town): 7.30, W. J. Ramsey, "Shall We Live Again?"

OUTDOOR.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 (noon). Debate, H. Randall and Sidney Cook, "Is the Bible the Word of God?"

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Prince of Wales Assembly Rooms, Broad-street): H. P. Ward, 3, "Is There a God? Why I Answer 'No'"; 7, "The Murder of Ferrer: an Impeachment of the Jesuit Government of Spain."

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Club Rooms, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, A. Davis, an Address.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, 12 (noon), "The Tercentenary of Michael Servetus, the Victim of John Calvin"; 6.30, "Thomas Paine in 1909."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, J. McCabe, "The Evolution of Morality.—I. The Origin of Moral Feeling." Lantern illustrations.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall Islington-square): 7, C. Wilson, "Roman Catholicism and Social Democracy."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): G. W. Foote, 3, "The Martyrdom of Ferrer"; 6.30, "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life—in *Hamlet*, etc." Tea at 5.

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Hedley Café, Clayton-street): 7.30, W. Richardson, "Education: What it Is and What it Might Be."

NOTTINGHAM (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, "Agnostic," of Manchester, "The Philosophy of Secularism."

BUSINESS CARDS.

Short advertisements are inserted under this heading at the rate of 2s. per half inch and 3s. 6d. per inch. No advertisement under this heading can be less than 2s. or extend beyond one inch. Special terms for several continuous insertions.

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