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PRICE TWOPENCE

The applause of slaves and of the foolish mad is below ambition.—HORACE WALPOLE.

Down With Atheism!

WHILE we do not deal with party politics in these columns, we know enough of the game, and of human history which lies behind it and explains it, to be aware of the truth of Don Quixote's statement to Sancho Panza that there were never but two parties in the world—the Haves and the Have-Nots. The struggle between these is the real secret of nine-tenths of all political situations.

This is frequently not perceived by the Have-Nots, but the Haves always recognise it. What is more, they understand it. And, understanding it, they stick at nothing in the way of securing what they possess, and even of adding a bit to it from the other side. When we say that these people stick at nothing we mean it exactly. There is a certain simplicity about the people; they are wonderfully patient; they support misery with the most amazing fortitude; and it is difficult to fill them with the spirit of revenge. When they burst out occasionally they commit excesses, but they soon get tired of the game. Even at the worst their cruelty is nothing to the cold, relentless, thorough-going cruelty of their tyrants and despoilers. Quite recently, at Barcelona, the angry mob burnt convents and monasteries, but were careful not to hurt the inmates; but when the party of priestcraft, oppression, and exploitation got the upper hand again they pursued the policy of wholesale arrests, tortures, and executions; and the murder of Francisco Ferrer was only the most salient instance of their iniquity.

The Church and State party in England cannot (at present) commit atrocities like the assassination of Ferrer. They have to be unscrupulous in other directions. They deal in calculated misrepresentation and prejudice. Their hired journalists—members of the glorious free press of old England—play any tune that is called. The only thing that matters to them is the salary. Secure them that, and they will write sophistry by the hour and tell lies by the mile.

A pretty instance of this sort of thing appeared in last week's *Referee*. The jack-of-all-work who signs himself "Vanoc" put on the mask of piety and mouthed the shibboleths of the tabernacle. He started with an appeal to the Nonconformists. Did they not care first of all for religion? Would they run the risk of losing it, or injuring it, by keeping bad company in politics? "The coming struggle"—between the Peers and the People—would "largely be decided by Nonconformists, who will have to make up their minds whether they hate Free Love, Communism, and Atheism more than they hate the Church of England and the House of Lords." Now this "Free Love" is a mere high-flavored red herring drawn across the scent. There is no Free Love party in England—except in the aristocratic circles. A great number of sober people wish to see the reformation but not the destruction of marriage, and to call them Free Lovers is a vulgar abuse of the English language. The Communists are just as numerous as the Free Lovers, although they ought to

be plentiful enough in a Christian country, for if Jesus did not teach Communism he taught nothing, and we know what was the practice of his first disciples. Of course there are a good many Atheists in this country, but it is a mere trick to associate them with Communists and Free Lovers. "Vanoc's" object, of course, is simply to frighten Nonconformists into the Tory camp. It is like crying "Mad dog!" "Wild bull!" and "Fire!" Any terrifying cry does while the pickpockets go through the crowd.

"Vanoc" rings the changes—frigidly and calculatingly, as Balfour would say—with a solemn face. "The coming struggle," he says, "of which the Budget is the outward and visible sign, is no less a struggle against Materialism than against theft." Now we are not discussing the Budget. It may be right or wrong. We are simply drawing attention to this partisan trick. Death duties are theft, and a tax on land is sacrilege! Why not say at once that Lord Lansdowne is God Almighty, and Mr. Balfour Jesus Christ, and that to offend either of them is next door to the sin against the Holy Ghost? We should know where we are then.

The policy of "Vanoc"—that is to say, of his employers—is to represent the Budget as Socialism, and Socialism as Atheism (or Atheism as Socialism, for he turns it both ways). Marx was an avowed Atheist, so is Belfort Bax, and Blatchford, Shaw, and Hyndman are opposed to Christianity. Not a word about Keir Hardie, and Stewart Headlam, and Conrad Noel, and R. J. Campbell, and Philip Snowden! There are Christian Socialists as well as non-Christian Socialists. Indeed, it is time to say a plain word on this matter. Socialism is only Atheism in the restricted sense that every man is an Atheist to the extent in which he minds his own business instead of leaving it to God. In that sense, all the Christians in England (outside asylums, workhouses, and perhaps prisons) are Atheists. In any fuller sense of the word, Socialism is *not* Atheism,—and Atheism is not Socialism. Socialists may be Atheists, and Atheists may be Socialists; but the "may be" is largely an accident. We say "largely," not absolutely, because it is natural that an Atheist should pick up new ideas (for what they are worth) sooner than a Christian. That is why Freethinkers are the pioneers of so many advanced causes. They will not always be right; being human, they will make mistakes; but they will always be in the front.

"Vanoc" touches the spot when he says that if "the hope of another world no longer consoles a sufferer from the miseries of life the desire to obtain comforts and luxuries attains a cyclonic force." The "cyclonic force" is wild exaggeration, but the rest of the sentence is quite accurate. When the people have done with the "consolations of religion" they want a present remedy for their miseries; and in pondering this problem they soon perceive that the very people who offered them the world to come had taken possession of the world that now is. We readily conceive that "Vanoc" and his employers do not want the people to demand "comforts and luxuries" in this life. That is grovelling Materialism on their part. The "comforts and luxuries" belong to the privileged classes. That is true Religion. For the classes, Here; for the masses, Hereafter. So down with Atheism!

G. W. FOOTE.

A Problem in Determinism.

IN the beginning of the present year, while writing a series of articles on Determinism, I received several letters raising one or two interesting points in connection with the subject. I did not deal with these at the time for the reason that, having already written six articles on Determinism, I was afraid of wearying my readers. I did, however, promise one or two of my correspondents to deal with their criticisms on a future occasion, and this promise was recalled to my mind by a passage in a recent work on *Life and Evolution*, by Mr. F. W. Headley. Mr. Headley, after discussing the evolutionary conception of the growth of mind, and admitting the impregnable nature of the deterministic position, says that, notwithstanding the evidence to the contrary, we cannot help cherishing the belief that we are in some sense "free," and adds:—

"For practical purposes what is wanted is not free will but a working belief in it. When the time for decision and for action comes, a man must feel that he is free to choose or he is lost. And this working belief in free will, even though the thing itself be proved to be a phantom and an illusion, is the inalienable property of every healthy man."

And one of my correspondents put what is fundamentally the same point in the following words:—

"In a moral crisis, and with the consciousness of a strong tendency in the direction of what is felt to be wrong, is there no danger of this desire gaining further strength and becoming the predominant feeling by accepting Determinism, causing a weakened sense of responsibility, besides providing a convenient excuse for giving way to the lower instead of the higher? Thus in a question of alternatives is it not conceivable that, by dwelling on this thought, the agent is resisting possible influences which might otherwise have a different effect had Determinism no advocacy and with a different competitive factor to oppose? This, it seems to me, is what the Indeterminist fears, and I think it must be admitted not without some reason."

Now I might reply to both gentlemen by the not unprofitable method of merely criticising the use made by them of certain leading words. And I think it could be shown that no small part of their difficulty does arise from giving words meanings which in this connection they ought not to be made to bear. This is specially true of Mr. Headley, who in using the word "free" seems to quite ignore the fact that in a question of science the word has no meaning whatever save as a mere figure of speech, but applies only to social or legal matters. I am not, however, adopting this plan, partly because I have already done so in the series of articles referred to, but chiefly because the passages cited do represent a common, and so far a real, difficulty in the way of people giving a whole-hearted support to the doctrine of Determinism. And in order that we may realise the full force of the objection, I will put it in what I think is a still more forcible form. Determinism, it must be remembered, is an attempt to apply to mind and morals that principle of causation which is of universal application in the physical world, and where it has proven itself so fruitful a suggestive. On this principle all that is flows from all that has been in such a way that, given a complete knowledge of the capacities of all the forces in operation at any given moment, one could predict with mathematical accuracy the state of the world a century or more hence. So also with human action. Human conduct being an exact expression of the interaction of organism and environment at any given time, our inability to say precisely what any person will do is an expression of our ignorance of the quantitative and qualitative value of the forces operating. But in a general way it is seen that the principle of causation really applies here as fully as elsewhere.

It is at this point that Determinism lands one in what is apparently an ethical *cul-de-sac*. If all that is is the necessary result of all that has been, if nothing different to what does occur could occur, what is the meaning of a sense of power over circum-

stances, and what is the use of urging people to make an effort in this or that direction? I may flatter myself with the notion that things are better because of some action of mine. But beyond the mere fact that my action is part of the stream of causation all else is a mere trick of the imagination. My conduct is all the time the result of past conditions in co-operation with present circumstances. The plea that praise or blame applied to the conduct of others, or a feeling of approbation or disapprobation applied to my own, are factors in the determination of conduct, does not quite meet the point. For my expression of opinion or experience of a feeling are themselves part of a determined order.

Or it may be said the knowledge that by rousing certain feelings I may suppress others, operates in the direction of improvement. Quite so; and as a description of what occurs no fault can be found with the statement. But there is no "I" that determines which feeling or cluster of feelings shall predominate. "I" am the expression of the succession and co-ordination of mental states; we are still within the closed circle of inevitable succession. Whether I am good or bad, wise or unwise, I shall be what I must be, and nothing else; do as I must do, and nothing else.

A common retort of the Determinist is that, this being granted, things remain as they were. If the criminal cannot help doing wrong, the judge cannot help punishing, and so no harm is done. We shall all go on praising or blaming, punishing or rewarding, exactly as before, simply because we cannot do otherwise. But this retort neither explains the sense of power people *feel* they have over circumstances, nor does it meet the criticism raised at the opening of this article. On the one hand there is the fact that character does undergo modification and the conviction that human effort does operate in bringing about that modification. With this there goes the feeling, with many, that if everything, mental states and dispositions included, forms part of an unbroken succession of events, why delude ourselves with the notion that we can do or abstain? Why not let things drift? And, on the other hand, there is the scientific conviction that Determinism holds the field. The state of mind induced is fairly well expressed in the two quotations given, particularly in Mr. Headley's opinion that we ought to act as though freewill were a fact, even though we know it to be otherwise. The dilemma is there, and it is not always properly faced by writers on Determinism. Indeed, I cannot recall a single writer who has dealt with the difficulty in a satisfactory manner. Writers have made more or less illegitimate appeals to man's moral sense, and they have argued that a knowledge of the causal character of morality should cause people to be more on their guard against encouraging harmful states of mind. This is good counsel, but it in no way touches the point that, whether I encourage beneficial or harmful states of mind, is all part of the determined order of things.

As an example of what has been said, I may take a passage from no less a writer than John Stuart Mill. In his criticism of Sir William Hamilton, Mill remarks:—

"The true doctrine of the causation of human actions maintains.....that not only our conduct, but our character, is, in part, amenable to our will; that we can, by employing the proper means, improve our character, and that if our character is such that while it remains what it is it necessitates us to do wrong, it will be just to apply motives which will necessitate us to strive for its improvement, and so emancipate ourselves from the other necessity; in other words, we are under a moral obligation to seek the improvement of our moral character."

Clearly this is no reply to the criticism that whether we seek moral improvement or not is as much "necessitated" as the character that needs improving. To give real meaning to this passage we should have to assume the existence of an ego apart from the stream of causation, deciding at what point of the stream the faulty character should

enter. That so clear a thinker as Mill should have failed to realise this goes a long way towards proving the truth of what has been said concerning Deterministic writers having failed to grapple with the real question in dispute.

Now, it is perfectly valid to urge against any criticism of Determinism that so long as we believe a theory to be sound there is really no gain in acting as though we were convinced otherwise. Even granting that an illusion may have its use, it can only be of use so long as we do not know it to be an illusion. A mirage of cool trees and sparkling pools seen by thirsty travellers in a desert, may inspire them to renewed efforts of locomotion. But if they know it to be a mirage it only serves to discourage effort. And once we believe in Determinism, our right course, and the only profitable course, is to face all the issues as courageously as may be. Not that I believe for a moment that a correct appreciation of Determinism will result in our sitting with hands folded without the spirit to struggle for better things. That certain people may so read Determinism that it will have this effect may be true enough; but one cannot reasonably hold a theory responsible for every misreading of it that exists. Even a Christian would have to admit, that if Christianity were to be held responsible for all that has been derived, in perfect sincerity, from its teachings, the consequences would be of a most uncomfortable kind. All that we can reasonably credit a theory with are such conclusions or consequences as are logically deducible therefrom. The questions we are now concerned with are, first, will Determinism, properly understood, really lead to the deplorable consequence indicated by my correspondent; and, second, is it possible for a convinced Determinist to account for the belief, which I think exists, more or less, in the minds of all: that it is possible to modify each other's character, and, in so doing, modify our own? In Mill's words, can we exchange the necessity to do wrong for the necessity to do right? I believe that a satisfactory reply can be given to both queries.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

The Ethical Value of the New Testament.

THE people who believe in the verbal inspiration and infallibility of the Bible are now so few in number, and in scholarship so meagre, that they may be treated as a wholly negligible quantity. Practically all accredited theological critics have been obliged to repudiate what was once regarded as the foundation doctrine of Protestantism. Most of them still maintain that the Bible contains a revelation of God to the world; but they speak of it as a progressive revelation, which reached its climax only in Jesus Christ. It is granted that the Old Testament abounds in myths and legends, in which it is often difficult to discover any revelation at all. It is only the New Testament that can be relied upon for Christian evidence purposes; but even here a good deal of discrimination must be exercised. There are numerous passages which up-to-date orthodox divines even feel called upon to characterise as apocalyptic, symbolic, or poetic. For example, so conservative a theologian as Professor Sanday, of Oxford, admits that the Temptation of Christ can no longer be treated as if it were in all its details historical, or as if it were an event in the life of Jesus that actually happened as described. And yet, while many concessions to criticism are being made, in this manner, by the ablest theologians, it is still contended that Jesus of Nazareth was God himself incarnate, and that his teaching, as recorded in the Gospels, and as developed in the Epistles, is the infallible rule of faith and conduct. The concessions, however, nullify the contention. The moment a theologian begins to concede, his case

is lost; which proves that, in reality, he never had a case that could be established.

Let us now examine that portion of the contention which relates to conduct. Is the New Testament an infallible moral guide? Does it furnish a rule that can be followed with safety and profit? The only reasonable answer is in the negative. Nothing is more indisputable than the fact that the ethical maxims ascribed to Jesus have never been translated into practice. From the beginning until now, oceans of extravagant praise have been showered upon them by Christians; but between them and conduct there has always lain an impassable gulf. On Sundays believers read, with ecstatic delight, "Give to him that asketh thee," and on Mondays clap all beggars into gaol. On Sundays they repeat, with ebullient joy, "Resist not evil," and devote every week to ruthlessly resisting all who stand in their way. In the sanctuary they listen, with rapt attention, to the admonition, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth," but on returning to the busy world their one ambition is to lay up here as big a pile as ever they can. The truth is that the Sermon on the Mount, while containing a few beautiful and true sayings, is, as a whole, but a mass of ethical confusion, and that a society constituted on the basis of it would not hold together for a week. The leaders of the Churches are fully aware of this, but they throw dust into the eyes of their followers by explaining their Master's sayings away. It is astonishing to what desperate shifts they resort in their endeavor to evade the inevitable conclusion that the Sermon on the Mount is a tissue of moral absurdities. The commonest subterfuge, perhaps, lies in the assertion that in this Sermon we have, not a set of petty rules to be literally observed at all times, but a series of general principles; not a string of precepts to be strictly obeyed, but so many counsels of perfection or vague ideals incapable of conversion into actuals. "Resist not evil," according to that gloss, only means, "Be never vindictive, nourish no grudge against those who do you harm." A glance at the context shows how utterly fantastic that interpretation is. The Old Testament rule was this: "And thine eye shall not pity; life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." In his opposition to that barbarous enactment Jesus went the length of saying to his disciples, "Do not even resist the evil-doer." On the face of it, no teaching could be more preposterous; but there can be no reasonable doubt that Jesus meant it to be taken literally as it stands.

The greatest moralist of New Testament times was the apostle Paul; but it is a significant fact that neither in his discourses, as reported in the Acts, nor in his letters, did he once quote from, or refer to, the moral teaching attributed to Jesus. It is incontrovertible, however, that both were influenced by the same background. They both labored under the delusion that a terrible catastrophe was about to occur. Jesus believed that the kingdom of God was on the eve of being established in Israel, and that in that kingdom there would be neither marrying nor giving in marriage. His disciples were led to expect that he was the Messiah who would redeem, and restore the kingdom to, Israel. It was to be an exclusively Jewish kingdom—a kingdom in which foreigners would have neither place nor say. What was to become of non-Jewish peoples under the new régime does not appear. On this point Paul was of a different opinion; but it is certain that he, too, believed that the end of the world was at hand, and that, though Jesus died before the kingdom came, he would return to set it up. He was quite sure that the stupendous change would happen in his own lifetime, and this hope colored his whole teaching. It also accounted for his indifference to moral problems as such. He was a sentimental mystic, whose citizenship was in the coming kingdom, and it was in the light of such prospective citizenship that he considered all questions. For the rest, he was simply a child of his age, as, indeed, was also Jesus.

The attitude of Jesus and his apostles to the future is mainly responsible for the regrettable fact that the ethical value of the New Testament is but small, while in some respects it has exerted an evil influence upon the moral life of Christendom. It is an attitude essentially inimical to the best interests of morality. As students of history well know, the Essenes looked upon marriage with contempt, and rigorously abjured it. At the commencement of our era the sect was declining, but it still consisted of several thousands of men, every one of whom was a celibate. Whether Jesus belonged to this communion or not, he neither entered upon the married state himself, nor urged others to do so. Paul expressly discouraged wedlock. There is no evidence that he was ever married, and certainly he advised his converts not to embark upon the hazardous experiment. "If you can, be as I am," he used to say to everybody. The ground of his objection to marriage was his belief in the speedy return of the Lord. "What is the use of getting married and begetting children," he argued, "when to-day or to-morrow the Lord may arrive?" "If you are married," he added, "or if you marry now, you shall have tribulation in the flesh; and I would spare you. When he comes, to be encumbered with a family will be a serious disadvantage." Now, while the Essenes repudiated marriage, living as monks, and both Jesus and Paul regarded it with anything but approbation, there existed, in Alexandria and other centres over a wide area, communities of men and women occupying separate cells, but frequently meeting for sacramental feasts, and for celebrating an ordinance very similar to the Christian Lord's Supper. Philo informs us that the women were all virgins or widows. With these facts in mind we are not unduly surprised to learn that there existed among very early Christians a relationship between the sexes which can only be described as spiritual marriage. Men and women lived together in what was known as a state of voluntary virginity. The Dean of Westminster is inclined to doubt this statement. "There is no clear trace of an Order of Virgins in the Apostolic Church," he says; but Paul, in 1 Cor. viii., seems to recognise such an Order and to lay down rules for its guidance. "Now concerning virgins," he says, "I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give my judgment" (v. 25). His opinion, then, was that virginity was in every way better than marriage, but that if men and women could not live together as virgins, they would do well to marry. Verse 36 is conclusive on this point.

Enough has now been said to prove that the New Testament was written for people who were in the daily, if not hourly, expectation of the catastrophe of the end of the world, and of the establishment of the kingdom of heaven, in which the question of sex would cease to trouble. While waiting on the brink of the transition the great thing was to be "free from cares," and to that end Paul recommended that those who had wives should be as though they had none. That is to say, the world and its relationships did not count, except so far as they helped or hindered the preparations for the world to come. Christians were children of the resurrection, citizens of the glorious city of God, and their only duty was to do their utmost to hasten the end. But both Jesus and Paul were radically mistaken, and their whole attitude to this world was tragically false. The world has not passed away yet, nor has the Second Coming taken place; but the teaching of the New Testament, based on that fundamentally erroneous notion, remains, and has yielded a copious harvest of disastrous consequences. "The apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas," claimed and exercised the "right to lead about a wife that was a sister," and thus smiled upon by the highest authorities, the institution of virgins—platonic marriage—grew and spread until it became an awful scandal. This was "the new morality" brought into the world by Christianity, and sanctioned by its most holy teachers. No, Christianity did not originate it; it simply borrowed it and gave it its blessing. The Order of the

Virgin, taken over by the Church, prospered amazingly, until ere long we find that "one Egyptian town of moderate size contained 20,000 virgins and 10,000 monks," while "50,000 monks would meet for common ceremonies on the banks of the Nile"; and their licentiousness was a proverb. It would be impossible to read the testimonies of St. Jerome, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine without being shocked at the unspeakable depth of degradation and immorality the clergy and many of their followers had sunk in the second, third, and fourth centuries; and we could give endless quotations from great ecclesiastics in all ages showing what horrible corruptions and vices of all sorts prevailed in monasteries and nunneries in all parts of Christendom. Religion was nothing but a hypocritical cloak under which the most abandoned characters gratified their worst lust with impunity. The New Testament and the Church generally condemn sensuality and lust, but they encourage institutions in which only a miracle could have prevented sensuality and lust from developing.

The inescapable inference, from all that has been said, is that the New Testament possesses but a small modicum of ethical value, and has done but little to inspire a high moral tone either in the Church or the world. Indeed, for the ethical standard that obtains among them at present, Christians are much more indebted to Confucius and Buddha and Aristotle and the Græco-Roman Stoic philosophers than to Jesus and his apostles; and it is undeniable that during the last hundred years science has done more to moralise the West than the Church did during the preceding eighteen centuries. Is it not high time, then, to give formal recognition to the truth that ethics would thrive infinitely better resented from its forced dependence upon theology and the Church than it has ever done during the whole period of its unfortunate subjection?

J. T. LLOYD.

Free Utterance.

NOT once nor twice have I dropped with a feeling of relief into the columns of the *Freethinker*, which, in profession and practice, represents free utterance. I do not mean flatteringly to imply that it is the only liberal organ in England. It has a few, but very few, comrades in the front rank of the pioneer forces. Nor do I suggest that the *Freethinker* avowedly opens its pages to discussions on all and sundry topics. But, by unflinchingly expressing its views on the delicate and dangerous theme of God, it is constituted a champion of free speech at the crucial point, and becomes a symbol of the whole art of candor. On this ground, therefore, I venture to set down some reflections on the vital importance of unfettered discussion. Four journals in which I was more or less accustomed to write have in the present year put a veto on opinions which I quite temperately affirmed on Passive Resistance, Free Trade, the Licensing Bill, and Woman-suffrage. Every one of these four journals gave itself out to be a progressive print. I am not disposed to explain these incidents by the motive of bigotry, nor of personal difficulties; for I am still on friendly terms with all the four editors. In all four cases the cause lay in the fear of offending influential subscribers. And what was the spring of action in the subscribers in question? I should say it was an impatience or resentment at adverse ideas being thrust into a medium which they regarded as peculiarly their own. But cannot a man do as he wills with his own? Let us agree that he can. We are nevertheless driven to the fundamental problem,—How can a man expect to attain clear conviction and common-sense certainty of intellectual position unless he stands the test of criticism and doubt? The old method was to persecute. The new method is to say, "You are quite at liberty to criticise my creed elsewhere, but not on my journalistic premises."

This is an adequate reply for a professional newspaper-man, but not for professional pioneers. The essence of a genuine pioneer is enthusiasm for a re-statement of thought or a re-arrangement of policy. But a re-statement or a proposed re-arrangement which cannot bear pressure from a critical finger is both paltry and self-stultifying. I remember how, in the days of the Bradlaugh Oath-struggle, the cry ran that we must fight the bigots. Undoubtedly, the bigot was then a full, ripe, flower-show specimen, equal to some of the most characteristic examples in the Middle Ages. In August, 1881, for instance, I had a debate with a correspondent in a country weekly, and on my speaking of Bradlaugh as the "Apostle of the Poor," this sweet soul retorted that Bradlaugh was an "Apostle of beastly villainies that would disgust a respectable ape." Such exquisite flowers of speech do not burst so frequently in the Christian garden to-day. Bigotry is a puny creature now, and is yielding place to a nervous hypocrisy which clings to its wretched little idea for fear of losing itself in the whirlpool of problems. That is my explanation. Life is singularly complex in the Twentieth Century. The economic, political, intellectual, and religious strands are so tangled to the ordinary eye that social reformers, so-called, hold on desperately to their supposed remedy, and dare not submit to severe scrutiny. Intellectual timidity is our weakness, not bigotry. No wonder some young minds leap at the call of Nietzsche, and rejoice at his frightful blows upon the gates of religious and social convention. For pure daring, the Continent cannot produce Nietzsche's match. His German Zarathustrian satire is reserved for sleek make-believe, and somnolent Philistinism, German and English. I always strongly recommend the works of Nietzsche for this reason. He takes the soul of Europe by the scruff of its neck and shakes it as a bulldog might shake a rat; and even then, the soul barely yawns. What with the sleepy and the timid, it is no wonder things drag. I left the Church because it would not courageously handle all the facts of human nature and life, and not merely because it taught obsolete doctrines of God. We need courage. Yes, but what sort of courage? We need the courage to be philosophic. I will go back to the Church—Trinity, Hell, and all—unless I can get and keep a philosophy that will face all the data of history and experience, and endeavor to meet them by proposals more practical and rational than Christianity offers. Such a philosophy is now tangibly shaping itself in various Humanist forms. My own preference is for Positivism. But the reader need not shrink from that term as involving (so I find some friends believe) incense, candles, gowns, and mutterings. Positivism is another name for the scientific interpretation of the world, and for faith in the past, present, and future sanity and goodness of mankind. But there are Positivists who blink at new lights, and dread the sound of innovating steps at the door of their Polity. This is another way of confessing the miserable fact that, after all, they do not possess faith in the very Humanity which they glorify in hymn and picture. I have met Ethicists who are afraid of ethics, and Freethinkers who become apprehensive if our blessed Reason tries to crush other infamous things besides priestcraft. God save us all (I apologise for the theology!), but these crooked roads will never lead anywhere but back to Thomson's City of Dreadful Night. Let us put all our cards honestly on the table. Let us out with such thoughts as we have. Let us live openly. I am for charity, reverence, courteous manners, public decorum, and that charming ornament of life which is called seriousness. But, as I understand these qualities and essentials, they do not demand hypocrisy, finicking and silly concealments. All subjects of human interest should be debatable in human language,—economics, sex, privilege, and God. It is time to be sick of toleration. The Nineteenth Century had many sins to answer for, and it tried to atone for them by dying with the smug advice to us all to be

tolerant even to Freethinkers and Socialists. I want a brave spirit that will salute doubts and entertain criticism as a favored guest. In place of the toleration which, like the Devil, "grins horrible a ghastly smile," I want the candor and the serene self-possession which invites test, inquiry, analysis. Only in such a temper can the human mind master the tremendous issues of the modern world. Gods, thrones, universities, political institutions, commercial creeds, sex-customs,—all must be unflinchingly examined and discussed. We shall be the happier for healthy plainness of speech, and neither honor nor modesty need fear the stress of debate. What is truth? It is the courage of humanity. To truth, and not to God, let the heart of man say,—

"I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness;
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, the victory?
I triumph still, if thou abide with me."

F. J. GOULD.

Acid Drops.

The silliness of official interference with people's amusements, except in the ordinary way of prosecuting offenders after the commission of an offence, was illustrated when the Japanese fleet visited England a year or two ago. Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, *The Mikado*, was prohibited just then on the ground that it might give offence to our Japanese prince visitor and his entourage. A loss of thousands of pounds was thus inflicted on several persons who were honestly trying to earn money by their own exertions. Yet when the English pressmen first set foot on the quarter-deck of the Japanese admiral's flagship, lo and behold the Japanese band was actually playing selections from *The Mikado*! And when they were told of the precautions taken against hurting their feelings they only laughed. They explained, like the sensible little men that they were, that music was music, and fun was fun, and that it was foolish to take offence where none was intended—especially in a work of art.

The Joint Select Committee on the Censorship of Stage Plays, having presented its report of nearly 400 pages, says that it should be one of the Lord Chamberlain's duties to refuse to license any play "calculated to impair friendly relations with any Foreign Power." But why should a play be snuffed out for this reason while articles, pamphlets, books, and songs are left flourishing? As to plays refused a licence on the ground of containing "offensive personalities," why on earth should not the offended persons be left to the usual remedies? Besides, a proviso of this kind is sure not to work out impartially. Mr. Shaw's *Press Cuttings* was refused a licence simply because two of the leading characters bore names somewhat resembling those of Mr. Asquith and Lord Kitchener, neither of whom, we venture to say, would have raised the slightest objection. Recently, however, a musical farce was passed with a song in it directed against Mr. Lloyd George by name. Being only a Radical, the "personalities" in this case did not matter. Not that Mr. Lloyd George would have raised any objection. He went to see the piece, and he enjoyed the song. It was on the night that the Suffragettes kicked up a shindy.

"To do violence to the sentiment of religious reverence" is another fault in a play calling for the Lord Chamberlain's ban—according to the finding of the Censorship Committee. This is one of the vaguest offences it is possible to commit—or even to conceive. Stiggins and Chadband seem the appropriate persons to be judges of such an offence. Even the law against "blasphemy" is referred to by the Committee, who consider it is "not adequate for the control of the drama." Are dramatists and actors and theatre-goers as blasphemous as that? Who would have thought it?

We referred last week to the Rev. F. Swainson's opinion of Spiritualism as "a strange mixture of devilry and trickery," and on the ground that Spiritualism was not absolutely unique in this respect we advised the reverend gentleman to look a little nearer home. We now wish to add something to our comment on Mr. Swainson's utterance. He declared that "the dark *séance* is a criminal fraud, and a mode of obtaining money under false pretences." Well, what about purgatory? Is not that also a means of obtaining money under false pretences? And, if so, why does not the reverend gentleman start a crusade against the Catholic

priesthood? Mr. Swainson further said that Spiritualism led to three great evils—"infidelity, insanity, and immorality." We believe he is mistaken with regard to the "infidelity," and we are pretty confident that the "immorality" is only a vulgar prejudice in his own mind. We say nothing about the "insanity," for all superstition leads to that in some degree or other. Christianity undoubtedly does. Ask the doctors of lunatic asylums about "religious mania," and you will hear something worth remembering.

We see that Mr. Swainson, the theologian, has joined Mr. J. N. Maskelyne, the conjurer, and challenged the Spiritualists to a public investigation. We wonder if the reverend gentleman would accept a challenge of the same kind with respect to the efficacy of prayer. And why does the theologian "pal on" to the conjurer in this case? Is it just an illustration of Shakespeare's sentence that "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind"?

The *British Congregationalist* remarks that while all Christians believe in a future life, that the dead should hover round their earthly homes and seek to prove their identity to the living, "these things tax faith." They seem too much, the writer adds, "like the reflex desires of the living." Well, we should imagine that if people survive death, to seek to communicate with the living seems the reasonable and natural thing for them to do. And when we come to spiritualistic tales being the reflex desires of the living, we take this as a case of the pot making uncomplimentary remarks on the complexion of the kettle. The larger portion of the arguments used by Christians to justify the belief in immortality is a mere marshalling of cultivated feelings and desires. Remove these, and there is nothing left. Christians can quite see the absurdities of spiritualistic claims, and Spiritualists can as easily perceive the illogical nature of the Christian position. We are in the fortunate position of seeing that both sides are so far justified in their attitude.

Gipsy Smith has finished converting Chicago, and is coming back again to England. We assume that, were Mr. Stead to revisit Chicago, he would now find all his old objections to the city removed. Gipsy Smith claims that during his visit ten thousand people "rose to be prayed for"—and it is to be hoped that the recording angel did not get the names and addresses and requirements mixed. One can easily imagine some very unpleasant consequences if such a contingency occurred. Gipsy Smith also says that the number of converts mounted "far up in the thousands." On which a Chicago religious paper rather unkindly remarks that it would be better not to talk about thousands in this way. "It does not add them to the churches, and it does give ground for unfavorable criticism of the work." But if a professional evangelist may not tell lies about the number of his converts, what is he to be permitted to lie about? Some people are too squeamish on these matters.

There is no finer example in the world of the gullibility of people than is offered in these elaborately engineered missions. At great cost and labor large audiences are gathered together, and, once collected, the merest glance over them—a noting of the manner of the people, their familiarity with the order of the proceedings and with the hymns sung, their use of all the familiar language—is enough to show that we are dealing with an already Christianised gathering. All except a negligible quantity are already believers. And when the call for conversion comes the same people respond time after time, repeating the same testimony and professing the same sense of salvation. The congregations of the churches remain as they were, little the better for the emotional debauch they have had. It is hard not to believe that the professional evangelist sees through the imposture of it all, and there is small wonder that his lying about converts comes as a climax to a long drawn out piece of humbug. But that people can be imposed upon time after time by these organised missions is, we repeat, a supreme example of the gullibility of human nature.

Rev. Sydney Swann hopes to be an angel some day, we suppose, but we dare say he is in no hurry to join the winged hosts around the great white throne. He apparently prefers to try flying here for something tangible. The papers report that he is going to compete for Sir William Hartley's prize of £1,000 for the first flight from Liverpool to Manchester. The reverend gentleman has got his monoplane ready, and we wish him luck. No doubt he is better occupied in practising modern science than in preaching ancient superstition.

We have given the clerical Dives tribe a rest lately, but we just note, in passing, that the Rev. W. S. T. Gompertz,

of Brentwood, formerly Vicar of Pilling, Gloster, left £16,284 1s. 11d. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes," etc. He has our sympathy.

The Archbishop of York dreads the idea of the "spiritual" peers being banished from the House of Lords, and hopes the Nonconformists will not fight for such an unholy object. Don't turn us out, he says in effect, but come and join us. He suggests that there should be a reform of that "august body," and that "with the archbishops and bishops there should be some of the leading representatives of other religious bodies." We wonder if he includes Jews, Positivists, and Ethicists—for some of the last sect profess to be religious with a solemnity that would do credit to any church on earth. In that case, we should have Bishop Clifford, Bishop Adler, Bishop Harrison, and Bishop Coit. Perhaps even Bishop McCabe.

Rev. Henry Pitt, vicar of St. Mary Magdalene, Southwark, in his Parish Magazine, deviates into politics, and denounces the "senseless system" of Free Trade. We are not surprised at this; in fact, our leading article last week was entitled "Clerical Protectionists." The men of God always want their business protected. If they deny it, we ask how many of them would vote for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, or for perfect Sunday freedom?

What's the matter with "Providence"? The extraordinary bad weather on this planet of late, with earthquakes and storms of the worst character, suggest that "Providence" is suffering from the staggers. We hope for a speedy recovery.

Father Bernard Vaughan has been preaching to large congregations at Faversham, and his sermons are reported in the *Reading Observer*. Amongst many things with which, of course, we are bound to disagree, he said some things which we rather endorse. He said, for instance, that Protestants did not quite know what to believe. "He must either be a Catholic," he added, "or an Agnostic; in true philosophy he could find no other standpoint." "There was nothing before them," he also said, "but Catholicism or Secularism; everything else was going to pieces." That's true, anyhow. We are now of the same mind as ever that the battle of the future must be between Catholicism and Freethought. Both are logical, both are the real thing; the one is pure Reason, the other is pure Faith. What is called "the decay of the Church of Rome" is only a part of the general decay of Christianity.

Christianity is a funny thing. It boasts of its divine origin, it boasts of having a divine revelation, and it has persecuted and killed people for doubting a single word of "the blessed book." And now it is explaining nearly every word of it away—thus tacitly admitting that the persecuted and murdered people were right. Even in an obscure place like Maryport a man of God, the Rev. J. R. Howarth, tells his Bible Class that the book of Jonah is not history at all, but a parable. Nothing related in the book ever happened. It is a dramatic story with a cosmopolitan moral. Its object was to teach the Jews that God cared a little for other people as well as for themselves. Very likely. But what is the use nowadays of literature addressed to people on such a low level of moral culture that they required to be taught such a lesson?

Christian preachers are always making wonderful discoveries. Here is the Rev. W. E. Loe, for instance, who has been talking to the Cleaton Moor Brotherhood on "Votes for Women." Now that women are waking up, this good Christian finds that Christianity has been with them all the time, though neither they nor anybody else knew it. The woman movement, it appears, began "in the towns and villages of Galilee under the preaching of the young Carpenter of Nazareth, who taught, among other revolutionary ideas, the equality of the sexes in the sight of God." Mr. Loe does not seem to have ventured to indicate where Jesus taught this idea. He might also inform us, if he can, why Paul, who was the principal figure in the New Testament after Jesus, who was the greatest of the apostles, and who was in a far better position than Mr. Loe is to understand the teaching of the Carpenter of Nazareth, is as emphatic as possible on the inferiority of women to men, and on their natural and proper subordination to the "superior" sex. Paul teaches wives to obey their husbands in all things; he says that woman should hold her tongue and never presume to teach; he even says that the man was not made for the woman but the woman for the man. Such was the "Votes for Women" movement that began in Galilee two thousand years ago.

Rev. R. Roberts, of Bradford, who started the "Jesus or Christ?" controversy amongst New and Old Theologians, is far from admitting that the orthodox party have scored. He concludes a long letter on the subject with some plain language. "We are not certain," he says, "of anything in the alleged Life of Jesus. The date of his birth, baptism, ministry, and death are all doubtful, we have not a line of his writing, and the records of his life have been and still remain the riddle of Christendom." Mr. Roberts incidentally answers the Rev. R. J. Campbell's argument about "every great spiritual movement" requiring "a central personality to give it expression." He points out that this does not apply to the Roman religion, the Jewish religion, nor to Hinduism. We should like to see Mr. Campbell's rejoinder to this reply.

The New Theology weekly tries to be poetical over the death of the Rev. Dr. Dallinger, who was a great authority on spiders—which we hope has no ecclesiastical significance. "At times," our contemporary says, "it seemed as if by the wizardry of thought and devotion he would weave from the gossamers of a spider's web a ladder which reached to heaven." A flimsy ladder—to a flimsier destination! And as the gossamer of a spider's web is meant to catch flies for the spider to eat, one wonders what sort of a heaven—ay, and what sort of a God—Dr. Dallinger's argument would lead to.

Another American preacher, the Rev. Dr. Newman Smyth, of New Haven, has been telling a Whitefield Tabernacle audience of a Japanese student who came to Yale, and after reading the New Testament said that Jesus was "the one man of history of whom it is true that he never knew what it was to fear." If the story be true, the Japanese student must have been poking sly fun at the Yale Christians. To say that Jesus never knew fear is to deny his "agony and bloody sweat" and to repudiate such texts as "Let this cup pass from me" and "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Mrs. Besant, arriving at Brindisi on her way to India, was interviewed by a representative of the *Corriere della Sera* (*The Evening Courier*) which calls her the Popess of Theosophy. She told this gentleman that reincarnation, with her, was a matter of memory, and that she was really and truly a reincarnation of the soul of Giordano Bruno. She recollected her previous life quite well. Thus it seems that the adventurous lady has got this idea firmly fixed in her mind. Before very long she may remember that she was also Jesus Christ. We hope, however, that she will not eventually be like a certain distinguished gentleman in Colney Hatch, who monopolised identities, and would not let anybody else in the place be anything. He was the Tichborne Claimant, and the Duke of Wellington, and Julius Caesar, and Moses, and at length Jesus Christ; and at last, hearing an inmate setting up as the Deity, he claimed to be God Almighty. So difficult is it to stop short in that sort of progress.

The interviewer, in taking leave of Mrs. Besant, says that he rose, bowed, and held out his hand to the Signorina Giordano Bruno. That is, of course, Madame or Mrs. Giordano Bruno. Sounds pretty, doesn't it? But when we think of what Mrs. Besant was once we feel inclined to echo poor Ophelia's words: "We know what we are, we know not what we may be."

None are so blind as those who will not see. The *Ethical World* must really be pretending not to understand a recent remark of ours concerning Mr. Harry Snell's statement to a *Daily News* interviewer on the occasion of the death of Ferrer. Speaking as secretary of the Ethical Union, Mr. Snell said, "It is a matter of extreme disappointment to us that none of the Christian Churches have said a word on this matter." Our contemporary calls this an "obvious truism," and is much annoyed at its exciting our risibility. But this looks too dense. It appears, however, that we must explain. Clearly there can be no disappointment where there is no expectation. Mr. Snell's statement was nonsense, therefore, unless the Ethicists expected the Christian Churches to protest against Ferrer's execution. Well, we don't believe they did expect this. Mr. Snell has stated in our columns that he did not. Is there any Ethicist who did expect it? If not, our smile was perfectly justified.

We remarked that "some of our Ethical friends" were such "very superior persons." This is resented by our Ethical contemporary, and all the more warmly because everybody knows it to be true. Our contemporary's criticism only helps to prove our case. It asks whether the "obvious truism" aforesaid should have called forth "a

characteristic reflection on a man and a movement, both of whom have frequently insisted on honorable recognition being given to the editor of the *Freethinker* and his friends when others were not so disposed." Now we will let the "man" alone, for we said nothing worse about Mr. Snell than that we defied him to repeat what he said to the *Daily News* interviewer to anyone who knew him, and keep a straight face in doing it. But with regard to the "movement" we beg to say that (1) the statement is quite painfully untrue, and (2) that the sweet condescension of it is valued at its proper worth. Men like Mr. Foote, Mr. Cohen, and Mr. Lloyd are not built to trouble themselves much about anybody's "recognition." Their own work tells its story, and the story is pretty well known, although certain superior people affect not to have heard of it. The latter point hardly needs laboring; the former calls for elucidation.

If the Ethical movement has striven to display amity towards the editor of the *Freethinker* and his friends—including, we suppose, the National Secular Society—it has been singularly unsuccessful. Numberless instances of its utter failure might be cited. We will refer to a very recent one. When the great Paine Centenary meeting was organised by the N. S. S., the Ethicists, the Rationalists, and other bodies were invited to co-operate, not in providing the funds, but in sharing the honors of the platform. Mr. Foote yielded the chair to Mr. Herbert Burrows, and what is called "the fat" of the speaking was given to Mr. Harry Snell and Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner. Mr. Foote and his colleagues were satisfied with playing the part of general utility men, because they cared a great deal more about Thomas Paine than they did about themselves. Arrangements were made, too, for announcing and selling the Rationalist edition of Conway's Life of Paine. No one can deny that this was handsome behavior on the part of the N. S. S. And how was it reciprocated by the "honorable recognition" people? They got up a Ferrer meeting at South-place Institute—the Ethicists and the Rationalists. And did they invite the co-operation of the N. S. S.? Nothing of the kind,—although they flooded N. S. S. Branches with printed advertisements in order to make up a good meeting. This lesson was not lost upon the N. S. S. Executive. The moral of it is only too obvious. And we may as well say that, while friendly relations are very desirable between the various advanced parties, it is of no use whatever to pretend to such relations where they plainly do not exist. From the time when Dr. Stanton Coit went about trying to break up N. S. S. Branches down to the South-place Ferrer meeting, the Ethicists (with rare exceptions) have persistently treated the N. S. S. and its leading representatives with a spirit which is worse than open hostility. It is not pleasant to say this, but our Ethical contemporary asked for it—and has got it.

Now that the pen is in our hand, and the subject is before us, we may state that we are in no wise afflicted; on the contrary, we are fairly cheerful; for the dislike of the half-hearted to the whole-hearted is an old phenomenon, and not exactly unflattering to the objects of the dislike.

One of the silliest letters we ever read appeared lately in the *Eastern Daily News* from the pen of "Theist." The writer argued that "Anti-Socialism and Atheism are one and the same thing" because, as he says, of "the fact that the three most prominent Atheists of our day have spent their lives very largely in fighting and arguing against Socialism—Mr. Charles Bradlaugh in England, Colonel Ingersoll in America, and the present head of the Secular Society in England, Mr. G. W. Foote, the editor of the *Freethinker*." We shall have something to say about the truth of this statement presently. Meanwhile we wish to draw attention to the fact that the argument based upon it is simply rotten. If there are Atheists opposed to Socialism, as undoubtedly there are, there are also Atheists in favor of Socialism. Mr. Hyndman, Mr. Bernard Shaw, and Mr. Robert Blatchford are as much Atheists as Bradlaugh and Ingersoll were. These three names will do, though we could give many more. And on the Continent the overwhelming majority of Socialist leaders are Atheists. It is obvious, therefore, that "Theist's" little argument is as hollow as himself. And now as to the truth of his statement. Bradlaugh and Ingersoll were not Socialists, but to say that they spent their lives very largely in fighting against Socialism is simply absurd. Mr. Foote is hardly a "bitter enemy" of Socialism. He left politics alone when he became President of the N. S. S., and that was nearly twenty years ago. Many members of the N. S. S. are Socialists, and many are not. The President of the N. S. S. remains practically neutral. He neither opposes nor assists any political party. He has too much other work to do.

The *South African Review*, Cape Town, dated October 8, accuses the Salvation Army of exploiting the Saturday Hospital Fund collection. Our contemporary says: "The amount realised by the recent Hospital Saturday collection was £585 18s. 7d. as compared with £513 8s. 11d. last year, an increase of £72 14s. 8d. As the population is smaller than it was a year ago, these figures may cause surprise, but the secret of the increase is as follows: In 1907 and in previous years, on Hospital Saturdays the Salvation Army sent out its own collectors to seek alms; not, as need scarcely be explained, on behalf of the hospitals, but in order to swell the revenue of the Headquarters staff of the Army. Many people, of course, gave money to these Army collectors under the impression that it would go to the hospitals, for was it not Hospital Saturday? The *Review* having called attention to these Army tactics, Mr. McGragh, secretary to the Somerset Hospital, remonstrated with the Army just prior to last year's 'Saturday,' and the Army promised not to offend again. But when the 'Saturday' came round these Army collectors were as busy as in previous years outside Cape Town itself, the only result of the remonstrance being that the Army refrained from sending out boxes into Cape Town proper; in the suburbs they were as assiduous as ever. This year Mr. McGragh sent an even stronger protest to the Army and threatened to write to the press, and the result was that on the recent 'Saturday' the Army collectors were conspicuous by their absence. Thus the whole amount collected went exclusively to the hospitals for the first time. This accounts for the welcome increase." The *Review* makes another inquiry after the Salvation Army balance-sheet. It remarks that the Headquarters staff look very comfortable, while the poor rank and file, who have to do all the cadging, look "correspondingly seedy and miserable."

Mr. Richard Roberts, in his book *The Church and the New Generation*, calculates that 80 per cent. of Sunday-school scholars pass away without being won "either into Christian discipleship or Church membership." We are not surprised. Children usually attend Sunday-school either because they are sent there out of the way or because of the company of other children. And when they grow up they discover how much their credulity has been imposed on, with the result that disgust develops instead of reverence. Moreover, the influences of the modern world are far too powerful to be altogether counteracted by a course of Sunday-school attendance. And, in the long run, the claims of life will always be more powerful than the claims of religion. Mr. Roberts professes the conviction that the child "is essentially religious from the beginning," which is only true in the sense that the child's unformed nature, its credulity and helplessness, permits its becoming religious under the tuition of those who care far more about breeding clients for the churches than turning out clear-minded and useful citizens. Left alone, children do not become religious; and Mr. Roberts's figures show that, in spite of all that is done, only a small percentage can be kept religious. If Christians had more faith in human nature, and more confidence in the sanity of their own creed, they would leave religious instruction until children were old enough to understand it.

A very cocksure man is the Rev. Dr. Gwatkin. In his *Early Church History* he professes himself quite certain of the future of Christianity. "The power," he says, "which long ago subdued Greece and Rome and England is not likely to be finally defeated in India or China, or even by the stubborn unbelief of Israel.....The Gospel has tightened its hold on each successive age of the world, and most of all on our own." This is one of those cheap generalisations and prophecies that Christians are in the habit of making without troubling to inquire how far they fit the facts. The truth is that Christianity as an appeal to the reason, or even the feelings, of mankind conquered neither Greece, Rome, nor England. So far as Greece was concerned, the question of conquest did not arise. Greece was part of the Roman Empire when Christianity came to power, and Christianity was made the religion of the people of the Empire by the power of the State being exercised in its behalf. So with every other country where Christianity obtained the controlling position. Moreover, instead of Christianity, as a body of teachings, being a conquering power, its whole record is one of modification and rejection under the pressure of non-Christian civilising forces. Whether Christianity will be defeated or no in India and China is a matter of opinion, although it has not been conspicuously successful in either place. At its present rate of growth it looks as though—if the expression is allowable—by the time Hindoos and Chinese are brought to the point of believing in Christianity there will be nothing of it left for them to accept.

Rev. S. H. Sprent, of the North China Missions, says that the chief work of his Society in Manchuria is to prevent Europeans from becoming Pagans. This may be quite true, only it says very little for the Christian conviction of Europeans. What it does indicate is, that a profession of Christianity is extorted from many by social pressure, but that when that pressure is relaxed people revert to a more honest course. And this offers a chance to Mr. Sprent and his kind to raise subscriptions at home to prevent such a dangerous development on the part of Europeans visiting heathen lands.

A Christian Science lecturer at Queen's Hall wound up with the following lines:—

"They would sit at the feet of Christ,
Unknowing, blind, and unconsolated;
It yet shall touch his garments' fold,
And feel the heavenly alchemist
Transform its very dust to gold."

The first two lines are perfectly true; the other three lines are only prophecy. And how long have "Christ" and "alchemist" been good rhymes? The lecturer came from Rochester, New York. We wonder if they all rhyme like that over there.

The *Catholic Times* was not shocked by the murder of Francisco Ferrer. He was an Atheist, and his murderers were Catholics—so *that's* all right. But how our Papist contemporary screams when Catholics are "persecuted" merely to the extent of being allowed no more than equal rights with other citizens. "Atheistic propagandists in France," it says, "are artful dodgers," and in support of this statement it quotes a passage from a manual in use in some of the public day-schools. The passage occurs in *Legons de Morale* by Albert Bayet, in a section headed "Religions and Freedom of Conscience," and is as follows:—

"As we cannot know scientifically what will happen after death, men have tried to divine it and have made on this subject a great number of suppositions. Some have said that there is nothing after death. But others have believed that after death men found themselves in presence of an eternal being, sovereignly good, sovereignly just: God. They have believed that God judged men, recompensing or punishing them. For that reason they have said that men ought to honor and pray to God, and they have drawn up the prayers to be said in praying to him and the ceremonies to be observed in honoring him. Thus they have established a certain number of religions. When several persons believe the same things with regard to the unknowable and God, and when they offer to God the same prayers and ceremonies, they are said to have the same religion. There are many religions, for there are many ways of representing God to one's self. Some have believed that there was only one single God; others have believed that there were many Gods. Some have believed that God should be honored by prayers and hymns; others have believed that in order to honor him he should be offered presents and sacrifices. The principal religions are Brahmanism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islamism. All these religions speak of God and what happens after death; they speak to us, therefore, of unknowable things, of things which we are free to believe, but which we cannot know scientifically. Wherefore we have the right to choose between all these religions that which pleases us best; and if none of them pleases us, we have the right to have no religion. The right to have the religion one likes or to have no religion at all is called freedom of conscience. Freedom of conscience is an absolute right."

This should seem sensible enough to all men who are not bigots and fanatical partisans of a particular faith. To the *Catholic Times*, however, it is "a horrible mockery of religious instruction." Why? Because the Catholic faith must be taught as absolute authoritative truth to children. On that condition alone can it continue to exist. Give it fair-play and it perishes. Our contemporary knows this as well as we do. Hence its fierce anger at the "artful dodgers" who are so singularly straightforward.

There is a certain *naiveté* about Mr. W. T. Stead which disarms animosity. Writing to the *Daily Chronicle* in reply to uncomplimentary critics of his Julia Bureau enterprise in general, and of the Lombroso interview in particular, he says that "To talk about 'trickery' in a case where everyone was frank and sincere in their effort to ascertain what was possible and what was not is absurd." Mr. Stead is sometimes in too great a hurry to attend to his grammar, and this is an instance. But the real point is his simplicity. He not only answers for his own frankness and sincerity, which few who know him would think of disputing, but he answers for the frankness and sincerity of everybody else in "the show." Now, to use his own adjective, this is absurd. It also shows how hopelessly Mr. Stead is handicapped in such investigations. He has an immense quantity of what Professor William James calls "the will to believe."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 28, Birmingham Town Hall; at 3, "The Martyrdom of Ferrer"; at 7, "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life and Death—in *Hamlet*, etc."

December 5, St. Pancras Baths.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 28, Aberdare; December 5, Liverpool; 8 and 9, Bristol; 12, Manchester; 19, Public Hall, Canning Town.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—December 5, Holloway; 12, St. Pancras Baths; 19, Leicester.

THE PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: Annual Subscriptions.—Previously acknowledged, £269 4s. Received since.—Pedagogue, £2.

T. FOWLER.—You may have your private opinion, but it is impossible in a public journal to go behind the verdict of a jury, especially in the case of an acquittal.

BODIE (Ashton).—The class you refer to are not licensed in England, as on the Continent, but they are subject to inspection, and therefore to registration, in certain garrison and naval towns.

J. THACKRAY.—You could hardly expect your letter to be answered. The most foolish believer is apt to see when he is cornered. Thanks for the Spiritualist cutting.

ARTHUR FIRTH.—You are quite welcome. The way in which the Roman Catholics are slandering Ferrer would be astonishing if we did not know their history. Besides, why should murderers hesitate at calumny?

"PEDAGOGUE," subscribing from Germany towards the President's Honorarium Fund, says: "It is astonishing to me that the party cannot contribute easily twice the amount asked for." We are afraid he takes a too sanguine estimate of the depth and weight of their purses.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for ever-welcome cuttings.

J. DESPY.—Nobody knows anything of "real as distinguished from phenomenal being." We neither affirm nor deny the "infinite divisibility of matter." Why should we? We know nothing about it. Nor do you. Nor does anybody else. Why waste your time over fantastic puzzles? Nothing but infinite perception and intelligence could possibly answer your question.

D. V. GREY.—The Congo document would have been better worth noticing if it had been signed.

B. BRADBURY.—Our pages were practically made up before your letter arrived. We will try to find room for it next week.

H. J. HYETT.—See paragraph. Thanks.

J. A. SHARPLEY.—Tuesday morning is too late; will find space for it next week.

A. T. LIONEL.—The New York *Truthseeker* is a very good paper. You will get your money's worth if you subscribe for it. We should have thought that the extracts we have given from it would prove that.

R. CHAPMAN.—We cannot see any excuse for sending such matter to reach us on Tuesday when it might have been sent days and days before. We are getting a bit angry with Branch secretaries. They will have to toe the line in the new year, or take the consequences of their dilatoriness—which simply means throwing the trouble on us. We strain a point now for Mr. Heaford's sake.

W. WARRENDER.—Mr. Bottomley does not profess to be an Atheist or an Agnostic. It might be better to be glad that he goes as far as he does than to complain that he does not go farther.

P. G. PEABODY (Boston, Mass.).—Thanks for the cutting, which will be useful.

H. B. DODDS.—We shall have to make the Tuesday morning rule absolute in the new year.

T. ZEISS.—See paragraph. Thanks.

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote delivers two lectures to-day in the great Town Hall at Birmingham, and very large audiences are expected. For the comfort of visitors from other Midland towns tea will be provided at a reasonable rate in a suitable part of the building at 5 o'clock. Admission to all seats is free—with a collection towards the expenses, but tickets for reserved seats are printed for the convenience of ladies, elderly per-

sons, distant visitors, etc. These tickets can be obtained of any member of the Committee or of the secretary, Mr. J. Partridge, 183 Vauxhall-road. Mr. Foote's afternoon subject will be "The Martyrdom of Ferrer"—a title he adopted weeks before the issue of a pamphlet bearing it. His object will be to tell the whole truth about the Ferrer case, to vindicate his memory, and to show the long-pursued policy of his murderers. Mr. Foote's evening subject will be "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life and Death," with illustrative selections from *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, etc. We understand that this lecture is being looked forward to with remarkable interest.

The social gathering at Anderton's Hotel on Thursday evening, November 18, was a great success. There was a large attendance, some good music and readings, and a brief address by the N. S. S. President. Miss Vance would have written a longer report, but she is unfortunately not very well. We hope she will be herself again by the time this *Freethinker* is in its readers' hands.

The New York *Truthseeker*, the oldest, largest, and we think best Freethought paper in America, makes the following reference to the great protest meeting organised by the National Secular Society:—"Probably no other group who have met to voice their indignation over the military murder of Ferrer have listened to so memorable and altogether effective address as that which it was the privilege of the Freethinkers of London to hear from George W. Foote. Mr. Foote is delivering lectures at St. James's Hall. Feeling sure that the sentence of death would be executed upon Ferrer, Mr. Foote announced the meeting in advance, and prepared a resolution to be adopted. His speech appears in the *Freethinker*, of which he is the editor, for October 24. Losing a trifle of its fire by being reduced to cold type, it is still capable of producing the glow of enthusiasm which must have produced a white heat on the occasion when it was spoken. 'Ferrer is a martyr,' said the orator. 'We know very well what his crime was. He tried to make people think; he knew that education was the only way to do that, and educationists are never practisers of violence. A man who goes in for education goes in for the slow but sure method. Education is the most terrible of all dynamite when applied to tyranny, superstition, and inhumanity. The priests of Spain know what priests know everywhere—for nature has endowed all animals, including priests, with the instinct of self-preservation. They know that whoever spreads education and causes the fermentation of ideas is preparing peacefully but surely for the destruction of all priestcraft and all mental tyranny.' The words go straight to the bottom of the well and bring out the truth. Ferrer died for founding 'godless schools.' The priests can absolve the incendiaries who destroyed their church and convent buildings, but not Ferrer. The Spanish monarch, the upholder of the Church, can afford to pardon the man who attempted his life, but not the man who would educate his subjects."

The following resolution speaks for itself: "Recognising that Francisco Ferrer was ruthlessly murdered by the clerical party in Spain, we, the congregation worshipping in the Unitarian Church, Congleton, Cheshire, hereby make our solemn and emphatic protest against the inhuman attitude of the Spanish Government in this case. We also take this opportunity to express our deep sympathy with the bereaved family of the martyred hero."

The South Shields Branch has arranged for a lecture in the Royal Assembly Hall on Sunday, December 5, by Mr. W. Heaford, whose subject is to be "Francisco Ferrer: Educationalist, Thinker, and Martyr." Tyneside "saints" please note.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch holds its annual "social" and sale of work in the Cordwainers' Hall on December 1. Tea at 6 o'clock. Tickets from any of the Committee.

Mr. W. W. Collins, who left England some twenty-four years ago, but is still a vice-president of the National Secular Society, delivers Freethought lectures, and conducts a paper called *The Examiner*, at Christchurch, New Zealand. He often refers to the *Freethinker*, and the last number of his paper to hand reproduces our article on "Lost Souls." We see that Mr. Collins's lecture in the Choral Hall on Sunday, September 26, was commemorative of the seventy-sixth anniversary of Bradlaugh's birthday. We note a reference also to Mr. Collins's lectures at Dunedin, where he had an audience of 700 in the Alhambra Theatre. We wish him and his paper all success. More than that, we shake hands with him in spirit as a fellow soldier in the great war of human liberation.

Converting Christians.

BETWEEN forty and fifty years ago Christianity was a real faith in this country. The masses of the people were steeped in ignorance, and religious superstition, like an infectious disease, periodically took possession of the people, and drove them to all kinds of extravagances of conduct. I remember, when I was a boy, the "Shakers" coming to London. They used to have meetings at Walworth; men and women stood in a circle, and when the spirit moved them they danced and screamed and fainted and foamed at the mouth like people who, under great mental or physical strain, go stark raving mad. As a boy, too, I remember going to hear Richard Weaver preach at the old "Victoria" Theatre—the home of blood-curdling melodrama on week-nights, and of the Gospel of Blood and Fire on Sundays. The crush to get in to hear "Dick" Weaver was almost as great as that of the fight to get into the pit on Boxing Night to see "the great Little Rowella" as clown; but to me, as a youngster, Weaver's performance was nothing like so entertaining or amusing as the antics of the man in motley. When the preacher proclaimed that Christ was willing to save sinners, the people used to shout "Hallelujah!" "Praise be to God!" and similar exclamations followed after almost every sentence of the popular Evangelist; indeed, their fervor was only comparable with that of the members of the Salvation Army in the early days of that extraordinary movement.

Ten years later I went to hear the famous Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and heard him deliver some of his thrilling discourses on the Hell that was awaiting unbelievers. The doctrine of a material burning hell, and a real live Devil who kept the furnace in a perpetual blaze, was a vital belief among the masses of the middle-class shopkeepers and poor folk who thronged the great Tabernacle in those glorious days of ignorance and piety. But even in those days, when infidels were regarded, not as persons who were intellectually benighted, but as fiends from hell, with hearts "foul and corrupt, and with desires to thwart the will of God and work evil continually," there were men in the country brave enough to challenge the pretensions of priests, and dare the malice and bigotry of the ignorant mob. But because the belief of Christians was then a real belief, the Freethinker had a better chance, when he came to grapple with their arguments and examine the grounds of their beliefs, to expose their folly and convert them to Freethought, than he has to-day. To-day the professed Christian believes in so little, and his beliefs are so vague and indefinite, that the chance of his conversion to Freethought is much more uncertain than it was in those old days of ignorance and bigotry.

What was the Christian belief in the glorious days of my youth, forty years ago? Almost everybody one met believed the Bible to be the veritable Word of God; many people considered that it contained everything that it was necessary for man to know; that a knowledge of the Bible was more than a liberal education; in point of fact, it meant happiness in this life and a good prospect of everlasting happiness in the next.

The teaching of Christianity was then definite enough. There was but one God and one true religion—and the Bible revealed both to man. Put into a small compass, the Christian faith was summed up as follows: Nearly six thousand years ago God, who had existed from all eternity in absolute inactivity, resolved to create a world, and a man and a woman and some animals to inhabit it. Nothing was in existence but God, and with all that was not himself he created the heavens and the earth. On the fourth day he made the sun to give light to this wondrous world by day, and flung into space innumerable "lesser lights" to rule the night. One day later he caused the waters to bring forth abundantly the "moving creatures that hath life"

and all the fowls of the air. On the sixth day he made the "beasts of the earth," and finished his labor making "man in his own image." Then God rested! Having refreshed himself after his six days' hard labor, he caused man to have a deep sleep, extracted a rib from him, and produced a woman. Man and woman! These were perfect productions. God placed them in a garden, surrounded them with trees containing luscious fruit, forbade them to eat the fruit of a particular tree, allowed a serpent to induce them to disobey, turned Adam and Eve out of the garden, cursed the serpent, punished the woman by making her "in sorrow to bring forth children," and cursed the ground because Adam had "eaten of the tree." This tragic scene the Christians call the Fall of Man, which is the fundamental doctrine of their religion. Upon it the whole fabric of Christianity rests. Christians were ceaselessly telling us that man fell in the Garden of Eden, that all humanity has since been depraved, and that we needed a Savior to redeem us from our sins, and that we had such a Savior in Jesus Christ, who shed his blood to save us all! But, when they told us that, they did not say that that was all it was necessary for us to believe.

They told us it was necessary to believe in all the puerile and absurd stories of the Bible—the story of the Flood, the Tower of Babel, the romantic stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the story of the Israelites being in bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh, the story of the Plagues, and the story of the Exodus.

They told us also that we must not fail to believe in Balaam and his wonderful donkey; the story of Joshua commanding the sun to "stand still" so that he might have enough light to destroy his enemies; the story of Jonah and the whale—and all the other silly stories recorded in the pages of "Holy Writ."

With such definite teachings as these it was an easy task to convert Christians to Freethought if you could only succeed in getting earnest men and women to listen to your arguments. Lectures from such popular platform orators as Charles Bradlaugh, Mrs. Besant, Charles Watts, the editor of this journal, and others, converted Christians by hundreds every year a little over a quarter of a century ago. It is no exaggeration to say that the great Freethought orators did a wonderful work in those days. They used all the weapons of scholarship, of science, of philosophy, and of common sense to accomplish their purpose; and at last the Christians themselves began to modify their beliefs. They held out, however, as long as they could. First they tried, by distortion of language, to give the Bible stories a new meaning. Then they said that the Bible was never intended to be regarded as scientifically accurate. Nor was it to be considered altogether as historically true; indeed, they admitted that it contained a good deal that was mythical, and that some of its teachings were decidedly immoral.

Although the Bible was not all true from the first chapter of Genesis to the last line in the book of Revelation, it nevertheless contained the word of God; but you required to search diligently, and in a prayerful spirit, in order to separate the word of God from the undoubted word of man. Gradually some of the Christians began to give up the supernatural element in the Bible, but most of them found it necessary to believe that they could not very well give up the miraculous birth of Jesus, and the equally miraculous resurrection, without destroying the most vital element in their faith.

On one occasion I met a gentleman who gravely informed me that he thought his mental attitude was best described as that of "a Christian Atheist," because he believed that Jesus was only a man—a great and good man, worthy of admiration as a leader of men, imbued with noble religious ideals; but with regard to the gods—Jewish and Pagan alike—he treated them all as mere figments of the imagination. Of course, Christians of this sort are rare enough, except among the Unitarians; many of these are admittedly "Agnostic" in reference to the existence of Deity, while they still cling tenaciously

to the idea of a superhuman Christ who was made of different stuff, so to speak, from that of any other great religious teacher.

Even the Rev. R. J. Campbell still calls himself a "Christian," although he has given up all the main doctrines associated with historical Christianity. And so it happens to-day that Freethinkers assail the doctrines of the Church, and professed Christians coolly turn round and say: "Ah, you know very well we don't believe in these things now; Christianity has undergone a complete transformation—it is now a higher and nobler belief than in former days, and all your assaults are absolutely futile against the higher spiritual teachings of to-day." But though clergymen may say this in reply to Freethought lecturers, they do not venture upon saying this when they are addressing a larger public. Let me quote from a sermon in "Lloyd's Pulpit" of recent date, by the Rev. Hamilton Rose, M.A., of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. He said:—

"Indeed, we live in critical, logical times, when men think for themselves. They see that religion must embrace the whole life or be worthless. Are the Churches, then, losing such enlightened hearers because creeds are retained that have become shibboleths not only to those who walk out but also to those of us who remain in? Have our services become too antiquated? Do they need amending; and do our creeds need re-translating? Have we no power of freedom to adapt ourselves, our services, our churches, our religion, and our worship to the changed and changing times? I have tried to bring home how all around us is changing; how new conditions, new circumstances are arising. Have we no message to deliver, no hope to give, no power to guide the new movements into the right courses? Surely the Gospel has truths still for us to preach? Oh, let us fear lest we become a dying branch—a dead branch—of the Holy Catholic Church."

Although it is difficult for the Freethinker to convert the Christian to Freethought, the Christian clergy are gradually doing the work for us, and leaving a clear course for the future—in the final struggle between Rome and Reason.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

"Wait Until You Die!"

NOT infrequently the last argumentative resource of a Theist, in reply to the position taken up by the Atheist with regard to the existence of God, is in the ominous words, "Wait until you die!"

The Atheist merely smiles in pity and contempt at the mental state revealed by such words.

"Wait until you die!" What a revelation of mental cowardice is displayed in the phrase! What a wealth of terror lurks in death to the ordinary "believer"!

So real is this terror to him that it is utterly impossible for him to comprehend the philosophic calm of the Atheist in the contemplation of death.

To the latter, death appears as natural as birth. He is, of course, as anxious as the Christian to avoid pain as much as possible, but death to him is merely the disintegration of all that goes to form his personality into its original elements. It is his final absorption into the bosom of his mother, Nature.

There awaits him no nerve-racking judgment, no heaven, no hell. Just peace and silence and rest. Therefore he smiles at the Christian warning, "Wait until you die!"

The terror of death is a mental state dependent upon certain beliefs held. In the mind of the Christian those beliefs are the continuity of spiritual existence after physical death, the apportionment of blame or praise for acts committed during life, and the consequent punishments or rewards for those acts.

Underlying these beliefs is the assumption that man sins not against his fellow man, but against God.

To the Christian, therefore, death is a sort of a committal for trial, which is invested with fearful

possibilities that involve the condition of his existence throughout eternity.

Now, to the human mind, eternity is a fairly long time; and, considering the precautions taken to render mere earthly existence as comfortable as possible, it is not surprising that the Christian views his approaching trial with some anxiety.

But no such anxiety harrows the brow of the Atheist. To him, the consolations that religion is supposed to offer to the dying are so much meaningless nonsense.

The obvious fact is that the Christians artificially manufacture terrors, and attempt to soothe them with artificially manufactured consolations.

Once disabuse the mind of the errors which provoke the former, and the utility of the latter cease. Neither the terrors nor the consolations have any real objective existence. They are pure hallucination, born of ignorance and fostered by a calculating priestcraft in its own interest. They are enemies to the happiness of man.

At a recent meeting in the Albert Hall I was astonished to hear Mr. Horatio Bottomley—who should have known, and probably does know, better—playing to the gallery by drawing a pathetic picture of the serenity of the Christian at the death-bed, buoyed up by the "sure and certain hope." Who of us, he exclaimed, have not envied the almost divine calm of such?

This is one of the most pestilent falsehoods that an astute religion has ever fostered. It is a deliberate attempt to trade upon the fears of ignorant humanity, and Mr. Bottomley should have been the last to lend his aid to such an obvious travesty of the truth.

With the memory fresh in his mind of the corpse that was hardly cold under the shadow of the grim walls of the fortress of Montjuich, and of the unflinching manner in which that courageous pioneer of popular education in Spain met his death, he should have held his peace on such a subject.

Francisco Ferrer, the most recent victim on the blood-stained altar of human progress, is a typical instance of the serenity of an Atheist face to face with death.

His only thought, his only anxiety, was for the schools he loved; the schools to which he had devoted his life and his wealth.

Men like Ferrer are the salt of the earth, the rejuvenators of mankind. Without such men every thinker and lover of human progress would become a cynic and a pessimist.

I lay my humble tribute on the shrine of his inextinguishable memory. Francisco Ferrer is the Atheist's answer to the cowardly Christian words, "Wait until you die!"

ALFRED GERMANY.

APRIL.

But, when April comes,
A mighty wave of life will bubble up,
From the deep rootlets of the naked plants,
And run through barked fibres, and produce
A very mirth of green. I hear the hymn
Of woods, of vineyards, and of hedges sweet,
Of crops and meadows, and a harmony
Of many tints, of many pungent scents,
Of humming bees, of gentle rustling leaves,
And tuneful nests of birds. And I plunge deep
My soul and senses in that mighty life,
And live again for joy! O ye who lie
Within the silence of the dusky grave,
Say, have the dead an April? Wondrous things
Does Faith profess; and Science tells us—nought.

—*Arnabolai*, translated by Eugene Lee-Hamilton.

We may ruin ourselves body and soul with the spirit of the poppy and none can interfere; but let euthanasia be offered to the dying, so that a fellow-creature should suffer some few throbs less of mortal agony, and humanity protests in the name of law and order and religion.—*Eden Phillpotts*.

Our Moral Guardians.

It may fairly be said that there is no idea more firmly rooted in the minds of the clergy, and of lay workers who collaborate with them, than this: that they are the divinely appointed guardians of the morals of other people. Indeed, some may hold that this is the dominating idea amongst orthodox people. The concern and solicitude of Christian people for all those outside the pale of the Churches is very affecting. The earnestness of the appeals we hear at Revivalist or Evangelistic meetings is very impressive, and it is not surprising that numbers of those who are ignorant or intellectually weak, and who have not been trained to habits of independent reasoning should be influenced, because many such people are hysterical, and easily impressed by emotional appeals.

But we have a duty to inquire how this idea originated, and to what effect the efforts of those possessed by the idea have contributed. Whatever may be the result of such investigation, I think it must be said that Christianity, as promulgated, taught, and represented to-day, is a very convenient refuge for those who want to make the most of two worlds. A very moderate expenditure of time and money in church work will bring to the ambitious and avaricious business man prosperity and ease in the life that now is, and in the future life an eternal weight of glory. No one need deny that there are sincere people in Christian churches whom it does not "pay" to be Christians. That minority is to be found in the ranks of the working people who have had their minds saturated with orthodox teaching in early childhood. This type of person is usually thoroughly honest, and honestly and sincerely solicitous about unbelievers who are walking on the broad path to hell. The hypocritical Church member who has had the advantage of a fairly liberal education, and who holds himself out as a "liberal" or "advanced" thinker, is not really solicitous about the well-being or ill-being of his fellows, though he is quite as anxious as the sincerely orthodox for an increase in the membership of his church because that means for him a wider connection and larger opportunities of advancing his own prosperity, and these he can cunningly utilise and turn to his own advantage under a mask of solicitude and concern. He may not believe the dogmas which his poorer brother enlarges upon at street-corners, and he excuses himself from doing duty at such places; but, privately, he has always a warm handshake and a word of commendation and encouragement for his more ignorant and more eloquent colleague.

The assumption made by Christian people that they are the divinely appointed guardians of the morals of other people is directly attributable to the institution of priesthoods, which have done more than anything else to keep great numbers of people in ignorance, degradation, and dependence. Be it observed the most knowing and influential and wealthy Christians clearly believe that the existing conditions have been divinely ordained, and those gentry quite complacently accept their comfortable and luxurious positions in life without bothering much about the misery and privations of many of their fellow-beings. When a large and beautiful church is built, and consecrated by processions and ceremonials, the conspicuous figures who receive the positions of distinction at the consecration are a crowd of sleek and well-fed clergymen, attired in silk of various colors; and from the general nature of the proceedings, and the language used, one would suppose that they deserved all the credit for the existence of the building. The amount expended on huge ecclesiastical structures in this country and the maintenance of an unnecessary body of spiritual guides could, if suitably applied, have done much to diminish a lot of the country's suffering. Some Protestants may repudiate the name of "priest," but what, after all, is the "minister" or "pastor"? Their "duty" is to bring people to a knowledge of the "Truth." They profess to be instruments of the Almighty by which he effects his purposes. These men represent themselves, and are represented by their adherents as channels or *media* by which the grace of God is communicated to other human beings. Once the people generally decline to recognise these assumptions, and decide that all speculative questions about the origin of man, the conduct of his life and his ultimate destiny shall be dealt with by the unaided exercise of the private judgment of the individual, the profession of priest is undermined and the main contention of the Rationalist has prevailed.

The "redemptive element" in religion, involving a fall of man from innocence into wilful and rebellious sin against God and necessitating the intervention of a Savior, is the kernel of the whole matter and the sheet-anchor of the priest. Recent scientific research, and conclusions of leading thinkers about such matters, have furnished another reason for concern and solicitude on the part of the clergy. Their profession is now in danger. The principle of Evolution has thrown a new light on life and the suggestion that

man is such a free agent as to be rendered liable to everlasting punishment for (say) fifty years. "Sin" is not now seriously advanced by the orthodox. One cannot help observing that the old-time precision of statements by Christian apologists is disappearing and giving way to a vagueness which makes their statements have a very uncertain ring. The old dogmas of religion, commonly accepted sixty years ago, are now softened into moral precepts.

Nevertheless, this idea of moral guardianship still continues to do baneful work. Like other parts of the fundamental teaching of religion it gives a position of arrogant authority to a section of individuals, bad for themselves and bad for those who, in a state of mental inertia, depend upon their teaching. The time is not yet at hand when every man shall have all his faculties developed, and when every man shall stand up in the power of his own manhood and vindicate the nobleness and independence of Humanity.

SIMPLE SANDY.

The Tolling Bell.

A DULL, grey day, when London slums look their shabbiest; when cold and poverty, the twin grand-inquisitors, displayed their handiwork on the faces of the poor; when the sympathetic heart almost burst its surroundings at the sight of the appalling nightmare called Life. Such a day the bell was tolling. Its doleful sound seemed to mock and vie with the day in misery.

'Twas curious that the chief attendant to its call was deaf. Yes, as deaf as the God of the prophets whom Swinburne denounced.

Slowly along the street the funeral cortège proceeds—the familiar black horses wearing the familiar sombre plumes, the driver with a bandage round his hat which would be funny in comic opera, black carriages, black apparel of the mourners, and all the outcome of ignorant convention and superstition.

Gloom, mystery, depression, and then the enervated senses become accessible to the stupefying and insidious jargon called Christian consolation.

The half-starved crowd looks on while the coffin is taken inside, still accompanied by the clang of the bell. In the church is heard the monotonous drone of a commercial parasite, whose intonation varies not one degree for the three epochs of man's life. The uneasy shuffling of feet adds further to the unreality of it all, whilst even the hopes held out of a sure and certain resurrection cannot stem the flow of tears.

Tears, to be compatible with the tenets of the Church's teaching, should be tears of joy: for, then, is not the soul released from its earthly bondage?

Such is the Christian burial—denied to the suicide—and one wonders who is the gainer when this is all it be to those who leave the earth unwillingly.

And the bell—that masterpiece of sound, as hollow as the creed preached beneath it—that is now silent until it is rung again for another unconscious visitor.

Ye priests of lies, ye ministers of calumnies, ye disseminators of creeds incomprehensible to intelligence and feared by the weak-minded, this triumph of cheap theatricality ought for ever be emblazoned on your standard. A brazen bell of befitting metal, and worthy of your cause, hollow, and making sound when manipulated by a hired laborer. How typical of your doctrine! Refuse to pay the laborer his hire and the bell is silent; and the same may be said of your commercial undertaking.

Haeckel has robbed you of the 'divinity of birth; reason and common sense are slowly relieving you of the second magical assistance of the Deity at the nuptial performance; and knowledge, your greatest enemy, is surely rendering futile your foul untruths about death.

You feed on the living; you batten on the dead. Nothing is sacred from your polluting touch, and this ghastly farce called Christian burial is the last crowning act of your infamy in man's life.

Like a canker in the heart of a blossom, you blight the mind of youth; in later days you woo him with the seductive wiles so well known in your business; and when he is dead his corpse is snatched to further your nefarious villainy.

The lightning of contempt, the thunder of ridicule shall before long blast and shake the power you wield, and the wholesome brilliancy of the light of truth shall expose you in your trickery. Growth, bloom, and decay: get you to the flowers and the fields, and teach your followers of what you know. Or, if your Christian arrogance be too strong, turn to the East, to the honest Tentmaker's philosophy, who spoke of verities.

"One thing is certain and the rest is lies.
The flower that once has blown forever dies."

And the bell. Let that forever clang to proclaim your dreary creed. It is a noble voice, and your followers, dosed with your mental drugs, like this something mysterious. Let it ring for eternity—loud, clamorous, and long. In time we Freethinkers shall rejoice to see the great cunning Cat belled by itself. When every man's mind is free, then shall we see that consummation come about.

J. W. REPTON.

A Doubter's Prayer.

BY JOHN EMERSON ROBERTS.

O Thou infinite, invisible, nameless One, whom men must name, and naming call thee God. If thou art, why may not men know thee who thou art? If thou art not, why should the thought of thee embitter and pervert the hearts of men? Thy worshipers are guessers, and guessing at the divine riddle, men, like children at play, fall out and quarrel, turning happiness and joy into strife and tears.

In thy name they have built dungeons—piled fagots and devised tortures from which life fled to the cool embrace of death, the last and only friend. They have called thee maker of Paradise and Hell—thou the Infinite, and have said the glory of thy throne shone more refulgent, the music of celestial joy was sweeter for the cry of anguish and the sobs of pain which rose and reached the heartless happiness of the blest. In thy name men have trampled into mire the sweet earth with blood—touched with fingers of hate every nerve of pain—violated every holy human right—curled the world with every crime, and in thy name. Listening for thy unspeaking voice, men have been heedless of the cry of a suffering world; reading the revelation they said was thine, they have been blind to truth, deaf to reason, and enemies of knowledge. Following thee they have gone astray—serving thee they have burdened their fellowman. Dwellers in huts have built thy cathedrals and overlaid them with barbaric gold. Wearers of rags have woven purple and fine linen for indolent tyrants claiming to act for thee. Priests have fattened while children cried for bread. And thou art God? Hadst thou been mother the cry of children had touched thy heart. Mary's tears as she watched the death agony of the Cross were kindlier than thy silence in the skies. Help us to forgive thee. If thou wouldst have thy name revered on earth, make kind and gracious those who embroider it on their garments and banish it from their hearts.

If religion is to endure among men, cast out from it the devils of hatred and clothe it with the comeliness of sanity and love. If thy temples are to remain, open them to the light and make them hospitable to every honest thought. Since thou art silent, may men speak modestly when they speak of thee? Since thou art hidden, may men not claim they see?

And if in the illimitable mysteries of life and death there be those who seeking cannot find, pondering cannot know—who question the eternal silence in vain, who say at last thou art not—turn not thou from them! May honest doubt find favor in thy sight; reason unfeared walk the earth; character be counted as salvation's very self; the noble purpose and unselfish aim be dear to thee; virtue unblushing meet thy searching gaze, and love the key unlocking all the gates of joy—if thou art God.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

A Pious Sleeper.

A POLICEMAN passing along a train which had arrived at the Ancona Station, saw a man outstretched on the seat of a third class carriage. The sleeper was wrapped in a heavy overcoat with the collar turned up, and his hat was drawn well over his eyes. The policeman entered the carriage, and, shaking the recumbent passenger, shouted in his ear, "Get out!"

The man was fast-locked in slumber, and all the policeman's efforts to wake him were fruitless. With the help of some other people the man was conveyed to the station police office, and a doctor was summoned.

The professional investigation showed that the man was in a cataleptic trance, and he was ordered to be removed to the hospital.

The mysteriously somnolent traveller was a middle-aged man, decently attired as a well-to-do artisan, and his features were characteristically of the German type. For forty-eight hours he continued to sleep, remaining insensible even to the influence of pin-pricks.

The director of the hospital, supposing that the man could understand French, tried to hypnotise him, and ordered him in that language to get up and open his eyes. A shudder passed through the sleeper's body, but otherwise the doctor's summons remained unheeded.

The doctor then called a German who resided in Ancona and begged him to repeat the summons.

The experiment met with success. Hearing his mother tongue, the sleeper shivered, lifted his arms, and stared around him.

Then he told his story. Ludwig Heuli is his name, and he is a workman. From Widnau he went on a religious pilgrimage.

At Rome he visited every church, praying intensely at each. At Loreto he remained for some hours in ecstatic rapture before the famous statue of the Madonna. After taking the train he remembers little or nothing.

Evidently he is a deeply religious man, whose faith has degenerated into fanaticism. This is the fourth time he has fallen into a lethargic sleep of the same kind.

—*Daily Telegraph.*

MEMORIAL AGAINST FLOGGING.

A memorial has been presented by the Criminal Law and Prison Reform Committee of the Humanitarian League to the Prime Minister submitting that the time has come when the punishment of adult offenders by flogging might be abolished with safety and advantage in all portions of the United Kingdom. Among the signatories to the memorial are Mr. William Archer, Mr. Richard Whiting, Mr. Jerome K. Jerome, Mr. Tighe Hopkins, Canon Barnett, Rev. Stopford A. Brooke, Rev. John Clifford, the Dean of Durham, Sir J. Crichton-Browne, M.D., Sir W. J. Collins, M.D., M.P., Sir Walter Foster, M.D., M.P., Sir John T. Brunner, M.P., Arthur Henderson, M.P., Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, Sir William Wedderburn, His Honor Judge Willis, Sir John Gorst, Lord Sutherland Gower, Edward Carpenter, Dr. Havelock Ellis, Rev. W. Douglas Morrison, Robert Blatchford, G. W. Foote, Henry Broadhurst, Walter Crane, Dr. Thomas Baty, and Mrs. Mona Caird.

Sometimes I think that God Himself is cursed,
For all His things go wrong. We cannot guess;
He is very God of very God, not God of men:
We feel His power, His inhumanity;
Yet, being men, we fain would think Him good.
Since in imagination we conceive
A merciful, a gracious God of men,
It may be that our prayer and innocent life
Will shame Him into goodness in the end.
Meantime His vengeance is upon us; so,
My blessing and God's curse be with you all.

—*John Davidson, "Cain."*

THOSE DOCTORS OF DIVINITY.

The most humorous incident of the recent Rock River conference at Rockford occurred when Dr. Clayton Youker arose and introduced a resolution respecting the academic degrees held by the preachers.

"I move, Mr. President," said Dr. Youker, "that the secretary be instructed to enter upon the minutes of the conference the name of every preacher having D.D. after his name. There seems to be a great number of them here. In fact, nearly every one seems to have them. The secretary will also enter after each name the institution from which the degree was received, the date and place of its receipt, and the reasons therefore. This will simplify matters very materially for the brethren. If a preacher having the charmed symbols shall have received them from a German university we should know it, and be in a position to show him the obeisance due to him. We would then address him as 'Doc-tor,' with the proper inflection on the syllables. Whereas, if a man has his degree from an unknown or inferior institution, we can pass him on the street with a call of 'Hello, Doc!' and cut it short. Thus may we say to our posterity:—

'Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our live sublime,
And departing, leave behind us,
D.D.'s on the sands of time.'

It was referred to the committee on conference relations.

ADAM CONDEMNED.

(From Memoirs of the Duchess of Dino.)

The old Marchioness of Salisbury last Sunday was at church, a rare thing with her, and the preacher, speaking of the Fall, observed that Adam, excusing himself, had cried out, "Lord, the woman tempted me!" At this quotation, Lady Salisbury, who appeared not to have heard of the incident before, jumped up in her seat, saying, "Shabby fellow, indeed!"

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, W. Heaford, "The Why and Wherefore of Religion."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public Hall (Minor), Barking-road, Canning Town): 7.30, J. W. Marshall, "Who were the Early Christians?"

OUTDOOR.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 (noon), Sidney Cook, a Lecture Packington-street, Essex-road, 12 (noon), Walter Bradford, "The Creation Story": 6.45, W. Heaford, Short Address.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ABERDARE BRANCH N. S. S. (New Public Hall): C. Cohen, 2.15, "Spain Under the Crescent and the Cross: a Short Chapter in the History of Christianity"; 6.15, "The Origin and Decay of God."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Town Hall): G. W. Foote, 3, "The Martyrdom of Ferrer"; 7, "Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life and Death—in *Hamlet*, etc."

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY (Club Rooms, 12 Hill-square): 6.30, S. Vepra, a Lecture.

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

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, J. McCabe, "The Evolution of Morality.—IV. The Higher Evolution of Morality." Lantern illustrations.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, H. Percy Ward, "To Hell and Back in an Hour."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, "Mrs. H. B. Bayfield, "Some Benefits of the Budget."

NEWCASTLE RATIONALIST DEBATING SOCIETY (Vegetarian Café, Nelson-street): 7.30, C. Gillespie, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy."

NOTTINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Cobden Hall, Peachey-street): 7.30, G. Watts, "The Death of Ferrer: its Lesson to Humanity."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (above Tram Hotel, Market-place): 7.30, Final Lecture arrangements.

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