

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

*Life for ever runs its endless race,
And like a line death but divides the space,
A stop which can but for a moment last
A point between the future and the past.*

LUCAN.

Immortality.

AS men are, so are their ideas of immortal life. We may even judge ourselves by this test. We may ask, "What are my thoughts of the After-world? Are they paltry or noble?" Whatever the answer is, it will be as a looking-glass showing what manner of men we are in the present world. The savage, therefore, entertains savage thoughts of the soul and its destiny. He will think of his soul as a shadow; or as a mannikin, or small copy of his body; or as a spirit that flies off in the form of moth or butterfly; or as something that may escape from him in a swoon, or be stolen from him by a witch or sorcerer. So also with the place and occupation of the soul after death. Our beliefs, our dreams, our poetry on this subject reflect our moral self. The savage will think of the future world as a dismal cave; a field for hunting; an ocean on which the spirit paddles its canoe. Other visions will shape into the fires and torments of Tartarus; the cold and dark recesses of Sheol or Hades; the miseries of Hell; the cleansing sufferings of Purgatory; the Happy Islands of rest, or the gardens of Paradise, or the choirs and golden architecture of the New Jerusalem; or the Ten Heavens of Dante. All through these ideas there runs the sure criterion: if they are mean and selfish, the mind that harbors them is mean and selfish, narrow and individualist; and as they become purer and less egoistic, it is a sign that the mind which creates them is itself becoming purer, more impersonal, more disinterested.

We believe, indeed, that each individual should have full scope for a useful and cheerful life; that every industrious citizen should be assured (and great masses are not assured now) of a decent and orderly family existence; that education should be such as to discover and use for social ends every faculty of skill and genius that hides in the brains of the people. Mr. Bernard Shaw lately used a happy word which defines a reasonable kind of domestic existence,—the word "handsome." Life for each citizen should be simple, healthy, ample, handsome. Without this free, strong, handsome individual life, the life of Humanity itself is so much weaker and more puny. But while we say this; while we insist on it, and demand that politics, Socialist or other, shall make such an individual life possible for all, we yet believe that the individual life itself has no true value apart from the general life, the general love, the general order, the general progress. We live through humanity. The life that we live is the life of the past humanity, gathered up, summed up, concentrated in our hearts to-day. All the dead live in us. They rule us by their feeling, thought, invention, art, politics, energy. We are the last word in their speech: the last note in their song; the last beat of their heart; and in the movement of the human race to-day we hear the rustle of the wings

of the Past, and breathe the breath of our fathers. That is why the study of history should be a loved occupation; it is looking into the face of a mother.

The individual life, then, has no value apart from the general life. The destiny of the individual is subordinate to the collective evolution. Greek and Roman patriots rightly died for city and fatherland, because, in so doing, they proved their subordination to the collective existence. The same noble spirit was shown in the loyalty of the Jewish people to their Law; in the loyalty of Catholic saints to the Church; in the loyalty of French Revolutionists to the ideal of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; in the loyalty of Irishmen, Finns, Poles, Hindus, and others to the ideal of national self-development; in the loyalty of many a humble Socialist to-day to the vision of his Utopia. And therefore we believe in collective immortality. But nobody will want this immortality until he has learned to love the idea of the splendid general life; the idea of the rich, fertile life of our race all over the planet. Until you learn to love humanity, you are more concerned with personal immortality in the narrowest sense than you are with the enduring life of the vast society of which we are everyone members.

I spoke once on this subject to a meeting of working-men, and I put the question to them, "Do you honestly wish to live for ever just as you are?" A murmur of No went round the room. And the next question was this: "If, then, you would wish the worse parts of yourself removed; if you wish your weaknesses removed; would you quite recognise yourself after their complete removal?" Their answer was a smile. They could see that a purified human character, transferred to a new sphere of existence, would be so changed that it would not be reasonable to regard it as a valid continuation of the present individual life. But when we get as far as this thought, we are on the threshold of the idea of the general life; the conception of a Larger Life in which the better elements of our individual lives are preserved, and the inferior are gradually erased and cancelled. Whatever was precious in the life of the departed,—if it was only (as Dante has it) "one little tear" that had genuine feeling in it,—shall live on in the universal Man. "There are no dead." There is a play by Maeterlinck now being acted in a London theatre which shows a scene of gravestones, from which two children expect to see the dead arise. No shrouded corpses issue from the tombs. Only lilies spring up, as one sees in old Italian paintings of Mary the Virgin ascending to heaven from an open coffin filled with lilies. The boy in the play cries out, "There are no dead!" We carry the dead in our blood; we guard their memory in the inmost chamber of our being. How can Shakespeare be dead when his thoughts ring musically in millions of minds all over the civilised world every moment? If he could, as an individual in Elizabethan guise, return and survey the nations, would he not confess that he is more truly alive to-day than in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? "There are no dead." And we have to remember that all natures that have any good in them at all have a part in this growing power of the so-called dead. It is not only the illustrious people whose life endures. A man gave a cup of cold water to a thirsty wayfarer. The heart of humanity is to-day the richer for that little act

of kindness. It is not our own goodness that keeps the world sweet and free from decay. There is in us a vast store of nobility which has been treasured up, century after century, by men, women, and children whose names are forgotten. In old Greece, in old Rome, in old India and China; in the cave of Primitive Man; and in the souls of the poor dumb creatures from whom our race evolved, is the fountain of our morality. And so the moral character of the world increases. Every healthy heart-beat of ours; every affectionate impulse in man or animal; every common-sense thought or word; every bright and musical conception; every bit of industry in field, factory, or workshop, every effort to help in politics or education, every duty done for family or country,—every one of these things is a gift flung into the treasury. The dynamic of every generous heart adds a lasting glory to the human race. To do a useful piece of service, therefore, is not a plan for securing some reward in another world for a paltry Self. It is adding a drop to a magnificent stream. It is adding a stone to a noble temple. It is giving a stronger rhythm to the one vast human soul. "The whole succession of men during so many ages," says Pascal, "should be considered as One Man, ever-living, and constantly learning." Our faults are so much waste, but they do not stay the march of the One Man. He marches because our race is more healthy than unhealthy; its goodness is greater than its transgressions.

But what has immortality to do with the outcast proletarian who has no scope for the handsome life, and who constitutes the problem of modern politics over the civilised world? If it is true that even the unemployed and the pauper is a child of the Past; if it is true that this brother of misfortune carries in his brain (even if he knows it not) some spark of the life of Plato, of Marcus Aurelius, of Joan of Arc, of Cromwell, of Goethe, of Shelley, of Mazzini, and the rest; then the problem may be stated thus,— "Are we, as a community, ensuring this representative of humanity,—this child of a glorious Past,—an honorable place in the great society?" When the question is put to the social conscience in these terms, I believe it will appeal with more urgency, more sting, more conviction, than any question put by the religions of the past or the politics of Liberals and Conservatives to-day. Such a question reminds us that the Outcast Man (I mean the unemployed, the defective, the so-called fallen woman) is not simply a troublesome person who can be more or less adequately dealt with by Charity Organisation, or Labor Exchanges, or penal farm-colonies. Humanity herself faces us, and asks, "What are you doing with this my son,—my daughter,—who carries some germs, if ever so feeble, of my majestic life? He or she, if ever so decayed and wrecked, is no beast of the field out of all relation to me; but a representative, though ragged and foul, of a wonderful series of past ages; I beseech you, give him the opportunity to act as my worthy servant." Surely, in such a conception of the problem of unemployment and poverty, we have a moral dynamic that is revolutionary in the grandest sense, and that is creative for social order and progress.

We wander into no vain speculation as to what may be the secrets of realms beyond sunrise and sunset and the evening star. But if a hundred curtains were drawn aside from any such secrets; if veil after veil were lifted to reveal marvels of evolution now inconceivable to us; yet the doctrine of the Enduring Life would still hold true. Even when the theatre of existence and experience was enormously enlarged, still the most precious thing would be the living for others.

Men and histories come, and seem to go. Yet the supreme river of life proceeds. It is a dignity to know we belong to such a river. We and our comrades of love, order, and progress are that river. Wordsworth wandered down the banks of Duddon, and as the stream entered the sea, he for a moment sympathised with its apparent dissolution. But on glancing back along the valley, down which the

Duddon had led him as partner and guide, he saw the river still flowed; its water lapsing, but its function never dying.

The stately stream of humanity flows on,—to us the fairest and dearest Existence in the universe:—

"I thought of thee, my partner and my guide,
As being passed away. Vain sympathies!
For backwards, Duddon, as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the stream, the function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty and the wise,
We men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish!—Be it so;
Enough, if something from our hands have power—
To live, to act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as towards the silent tomb we go, [dower,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendant
We feel that we are greater than we know."

F. J. GOULD.

Puritanism and Progress.—IV.

(Concluded from p. 275.)

IN what has gone before I have shown the impossibility of tracing to Puritanism any definite or concrete benefit to English society. It championed no social or intellectual principle in and for itself. Any good it did was adventitious, and expressed principles not at all peculiar to Puritanism. The constant references one meets to English liberty as being won by "Cromwell's Ironsides" is in the highest degree absurd, if by this is meant that the struggle was peculiarly the product of Puritanism. Pre-Puritan and post-Puritan times afford a constant stream of instances in which we see the contest between the Crown and the People, privilege and right, freedom and tyranny, expressing itself. Only the distorting effect of sectarian belief can induce people to, so to speak, date the commencement of human history from the prevalence of a form of religion to which they may happen to pin their faith.

As a matter of fact the attempt is seldom made to offer decisive proof of the good influence of Puritanism. The general rule is to make vague statements concerning the good effect of the spirit of Puritanism, its lofty moral ideal, and its power in inducing a purer form of religion. And so long as we are not told when and where these good influences prevailed, their acceptance is ultimately a matter of their harmonising with already existing prejudices. The preacher whose ill-considered sermon furnished a text for the present articles adopts the cheap device of placing Puritanism in opposition to dissoluteness, as though there were no middle, and more desirable, course. Not that even asceticism, regarded as a protest against dissoluteness, belongs to Puritanism. It is one of the oldest contests in civilised society. The Greek and Latin moralists are full of it, and they express it with an intelligence far removed from Christian extravagance. But average, and desirable, humanity is neither ascetic nor dissolute. It rightly regards the world, not as something to be held at arm's length, but as something to be grasped and made the best of. Against the Christian advice to keep oneself unspotted from the world it opposes the healthier desire to keep the world free from spot. The real question is not whether one holds as an ideal the Dissenter's typical Puritan or the same person's typical Cavalier, but whether he will cultivate sufficient wisdom to steer a middle course, and so avoid the vices inherent in either extreme.

For the great complaint against Puritanism is that it does not actually moralise people. It accentuates in fact the evil it protests against in word. Its method of protesting against the immorality of the theatre, instead of making the theatre purer, produced the contrary effect. First, it attracted there an undesirable type of character; and, next, by excluding the steadier portion of the community, it gave the other class greater power over both per-

formers and dramatists. Institutions are not made better by decent people standing aloof from them, but by them demanding by their presence a desirable level of excellence. Isolate the theatre from life as a whole, force it to appeal to one class of the public and to reflect one aspect of life, and the result is bound to be morally and intellectually objectionable. Bring it into vital relation with the whole of life, and it becomes one of the instruments of national betterment. From the brutalising influence of Puritanism on the English theatre the public has not yet recovered. Over two thousand years ago the plays of Æschylus and Euripides could be read aloud to the general public of Athens. Could one now act in a similar manner to the people of London with plays of equal excellence? Or would not one be obliged to fall back upon a realistic description of a football scrimmage?

So, also, in other directions. Puritan denunciation of sexual immorality has not served to make people sexually moral; it has only succeeded in so filling the moral consciousness with this particular offence as to almost totally obscure other aspects of the moral life. Often enough the dwelling upon sexual vice in the name of moral betterment is little better than the play of a puritan imagination, indicating a character with all the desire, but lacking the courage, to be vicious in action. Puritanism thus gave no real moral strength to the nation. It developed a questionable side of the moral impulse—the desire for outward decorum—to a degree that has brought upon the English the charge of being the greatest hypocrites in Europe. It developed intolerance to an even greater degree, if possible, than it existed in the Roman Catholic Church, and without the latter's more human degrees of accommodation. It coarsened the national character by its repudiation of the artistic side of life, and so hardened it that a man like Wilberforce could insist upon the imprisonment of a poor man with a large family, whose children were at the time suffering from small-pox, for the offence of publishing Paine's writings. Religious fanaticism certainly played its part in developing hard-heartedness from firmness and self-esteem, and the intensity of sectarian conviction helped to strengthen that form of patriotism which expresses itself in hatred of other nations. So far as one can trace the effect of Puritanical religious beliefs on the life of the people, it appears to have distorted the good qualities while failing to check the expression of the bad ones.

An intense worship of the literal truth of the Bible—modified by a more or less dishonest apologetic—with devotion to a peculiarly narrow form of Sabbatarianism were the saving features of Puritanism. Of the first, it may be said that nothing has stood more in the way of scientific and general intellectual advance during the last two hundred years than this. Every form of intellectual chicanery and cowardice has been expressed in its behalf. The suppression of truth that might injure belief in the Bible became a stock feature of the Puritan regime. Children were systematically misinstructed by this means, while social boycott kept large numbers of adults quiet. Next to this policy—when it became no longer practicable—came the wrenching of Biblical texts so that they could be made to mean something that they were never thought to have meant, that they might endorse teachings which could no longer be kept from the public as true. Of the evil effect of this positive obstruction to truth, and its distortion in the interest of Bibliolatry, there is no doubt, although any exact calculation is impossible. But what its effects have been may be judged by the number of "harmonies" between science and the Bible that have been set up, only to be discredited, and of the number of men who still expend their energies on much the same task. And the worst feature of the case is, not that people who act in this way are deliberately dishonest, but they are unaware of the manner in which they are prostituting their intelligence and misleading those who look to them for guidance. The poison

has sunk so deeply into their natures, the humbug of it all has become so sanctified by custom, that they are, for the most part, unaware of the sorry figures they cut, and of the discreditable part they are playing. And the nearer we approach to the Puritan type, the more marked these ill features become.

Concerning Sabbatarianism, much is said of what the English people owe to "Sunday"—and they are indebted to it for much, although the debt is not quite of the kind Sabbatarians believe. On the contrary, for sheer demoralising influence hardly any other of our peculiarly British institutions can compare with this one. Preachers of a more liberal type themselves favor us to-day with accounts of the ill effects Sabbatarianism had upon their childish natures. The gloom, the senseless austerity, the labelling of their joyous and childish impulses during one-seventh of their young lives, could not fail to have a deterrent effect on the healthy development of their natures. They were soured before the better part of their nature had a chance to develop; made humbugs before they were given an opportunity to develop sincerity. And the evil work commenced in early childhood was continued in after life. As far back as the date of Charles the First's "Lawful Sports," we find the complaint that the cessation of Sunday games and sports "in place thereof, sets up filthy tiplings and drunkenness," with other undesirable consequences. Shut off from spending their day of rest in a healthy way, people naturally spent it in an unhealthy manner. Generation after generation grew up with every avenue of rational recreation and education shut to it, during what, so far as the bulk of the population is concerned, was their only real leisure time. The only reputable occupation was religion, and that of a repellent character, suitable only to those whose constitutions had by some means been marred in the making. With Puritanical religion on the one side and the public-house on the other, small wonder the latter proved the more powerful. And one might even defend the thesis that it was not the more injurious of the two. There is only one way in which a vicious habit may be fought or inhibited, and that is by the development of a good one. Puritanism did what it could to prevent the growth of the one, and, in doing so, made the path straight for the development of the other. And present day Puritanism in closing on Sundays, in public parks, the people's gymnasias, in prohibiting, where it can healthy games, and in obstructing the avenues to genuine physical and mental recreation, is doing what it may to perpetuate the street corner hooliganism and evil habits it has done so much—even though it be unconsciously—to develop.

In all the really higher branches of life the world owes nothing to Puritanism. In art, in science, in pure literature, in the drama, its influence has always been felt as a blight. In the sphere of intellectual charity its influence has also been evil. It has never failed to convert a mental difference into a moral disqualification, and in the name of morality has slandered its opponents with an energy no other Christian body has ever bettered. The asceticism which the Roman Catholic Church restricted, officially, to its clergy, it cast over the whole of life, and by restricting morality within the narrowest limits, helped to demoralise the moral consciousness of man. What Puritanism was in practice the record of its rule in Geneva, in England, in America, and even in Scotland shows. Without making people better, it blinded them to the necessity for improvement. It made hypocrisy almost a national characteristic, and gave to its jaundiced impulses the sanctions of religion and morality. The revolt against its rule was fundamentally healthy, quite as much so as was the revolt against the celibate ideal of the older church. And there is, happily, small likelihood of the world to-day reverting to the Puritan ideal. It has had its day, and its value to us, rightly considered, consists in it offering an object lesson of what to avoid.

Conflicting Voices.

NOTHING is more notorious than the multiplicity of parties and factions and cliques within the Christian Church, most of which owe their existence to theological differences and disharmonies. Christendom harbors hundreds of sects, no two of which are in agreement on any so-called fundamental doctrine. Scarcely any two members of the same communion hold identical opinions on a single point. It was a favorite saying of Henry Ward Beecher that every man paints his own picture of God; but the great preacher omitted to add that no picture of the Deity is from an original. It is the absence of an original that accounts for the fact that the Divine Being is represented as having numerous and contradictory characters. One theologian assures us that he is absolutely supreme throughout the Universe, doing "according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth"; but another tells us with equal confidence that he is only in the painful process of subjugating the world unto himself. One declares that Christ reigns triumphantly in his Church, while another is quite as certain that the very Church he purchased with his precious blood is crucifying him afresh. Not long ago, the Rev. Mr. Chadwick, a popular Wesleyan preacher, expressed his conviction that God is saving the world as quickly as the Church permits him to do. He has entered into a solemn covenant with the Church to do nothing except through her instrumentality. He is completely at her mercy. His omnipotence counts for nothing, and his infinite love is as if it were not. He is in a state of hopeless captivity to his own appointed instrument. Is it conceivable that the Divine Redeemer of the world would voluntarily have subjected himself to such unspeakable humiliation and shame? Is it possible to think of him as agreeing, of his own accord, to so discreditable and suicidal a policy? The Rev. J. E. Rattenbury, another Wesleyan minister, seems to be of opinion that no such silly covenant ever existed. "God can do very well without us," he graciously admits. "He is tied up to no Church organisation; the wind bloweth where it listeth." Indeed, Mr. Rattenbury sorrowfully confesses that God is not in the Wesleyan Church at all just now. For the moment the two stand severely apart, though the reverend gentleman fervently hopes they will soon come together again. "We must return to God," he adds, "as individuals and a Church." But does it not strike Mr. Rattenbury as passing strange that, if "God can do very well without us," he has not done so long ago? If he is not tied up to Church organisations, why on earth has he not ignored or destroyed them all, and done his work independently of imperfect, inadequate, and unnecessary instruments?

The fact is, however, that the two conflicting opinions just mentioned are wholly fallacious. Neither Mr. Chadwick nor Mr. Rattenbury has a right to speak in the name of God, for to neither has he ever made a communication of any kind, whether concerning himself or others. Mr. Chadwick was endeavoring to account for the comparative non-success of the Gospel, and the only way he could do so was by representing the Deity as being cooped, imprisoned, restricted, and hampered within his own Church. For the failure of Christianity, therefore, it was not the Lord but the Church which limited and hindered his omnipotence, that was responsible. Mr. Rattenbury, on the other hand, is dealing with the backwardness and lukewarmness of the Church, which he can explain only on the supposition that her Lord and she have parted company. But both the failure of Christianity and the glaring imperfection of the Church are due to a cause unrecognised by these preachers. Christianity has failed because there is no supernatural force behind it, and the Church is imperfect because no Divine Being indwells it. Mr. Rattenbury may spend as much time as he likes at Calvary and the Upper Room, but neither he nor his Church shall ever transcend the

obvious limitations of mediocre men and women. Meantime, God preserves his eternal silence and invisibility.

The same remarks apply to the various opinions as to the relation between God and the Bible. The Rev. Dinedale Young says that "sometimes one hears people say, 'In the Bible we have David's opinion, or Peter's view, or Jeremiah's view of things,' and so forth," with obvious reference to the teaching at the City Temple. "Now," says Mr. Young sarcastically, "I know you will think me terribly antiquated, but I don't mind. But I venture to say we have nobody's view of things in the Bible." To this gentleman the Bible is not a collection of human guesses and opinions and speculations, but a revelation of the mind and character of God, and of the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ—a revelation of God and by God, vouchsafed to men specially prepared to receive it. "The more I read the Bible," continues Mr. Young, "the more I am inclined to ask, Can that wonderful literature, greater than Shakespeare, the despair of Tennyson, and the model to which all our Masters of English literature have looked, be of purely human origin? Indeed, the unique literary quality of the Bible implies that it is of Divine inspiration." Fortunately, the reverend gentleman grants that this is an old-fashioned view of the volume. According to the modern view, the Bible contains only the opinions of its writers on the various subjects discussed therein. God doubtless spoke to them, but only in the same way that he has spoken, and still speaks, to men in general. Man himself is the highest revelation of the Divine Being. The modern view is rapidly gaining ground throughout Christendom; but it is difficult to see what accounts for its evident acceptability to the modern religious mind. To the modern scientific mind, both views are obsolete and impossible. The Bible contains not a single superhuman element, though there are elements in it of which the highest minds are profoundly ashamed. The character of its God is often lower than the average human character of the period concerned, and sometimes higher. When it is lower, God serves as the instigator and extenuator of crimes to which ordinary men are naturally averse; but when it is higher, God is referred to as demanding and encouraging the performance of heroic and honorable deeds, to which average humanity is not ordinarily equal. But in no part of the Bible does the Divine Being transcend the ideal of character to which good men in all ages and countries have succeeded in giving a more or less definite and beautiful expression. Thus interpreted, the Bible is at once most harmless and interesting; but taken at its own valuation, which is accepted wholly by Mr. Young and partly by Mr. Campbell, its influence becomes highly mischievous, and the constant perusal of it perpetuates superstition.

The same conflict of opinions is seen in connection with the subject of God and sin. These are the two great words in an Evangelical's lexicon. He stakes everything on the personality of God and the dread reality of sin. God and sin are the chief assets of his ghostly profession. He makes his living by pretending to act as mediator between holy God and sinful man. Mr. Young has no patience with those who dabble in Pantheism and think lightly of sin. To him sin is "the entity you cannot escape." He says: "There are some people telling us that Evangelicals make too much of sin. I believe it is impossible to make too much of sin. If a man is wrong on sin, he is wrong on everything. When I hear a preacher, I want first of all to know what he thinks of sin." Mr. Young is perfectly right. The Church that makes light of sin is doomed, and the preacher who shoves it into the background of his teaching commits suicide. It is on God and sin that the Church has flourished in all ages. They constitute her stock-in-trade. The value of salvation is measured by the enormity of sin; and the secret of the Church's power lies in the superstitious belief that she has in her custody the Gospel of redemption and the keys of heaven and hell. As long as this belief

was unclouded the Church's sway was supreme. Now that the belief is dying her hold on men's minds is weakening. No wonder that a fervid Evangelical like Mr. Young clings so desperately to the personality of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and offers deliverance only through the blood of Jesus. But it is to vanishing dreams and shadows only that he is clinging. He may wax as vehement as he pleases in denunciation of the New Theology; but it is the day of No-theology that is breaking on the distant horizon. The New Theology is merely an interlude, a compromise, an encouraging sign of the times, and possible only because the dawn of No-theology is on the wing. Now, the endless conflict of opinions on God and sin shows that both are the inventions of the human mind. A known God would render acrid discussion and bitter controversy about himself absolutely impossible. If God existed, he would certainly be known, and as the Father of the race so clearly known as to leave no room for doubt and dispute. It is about an imaginary Deity that mankind have been so fiercely fighting all the ages hitherto. And at last we are witnessing the tardy passing of this offspring of human ignorance and fear; and it is highly significant that in proportion as the belief in God dies the sense of sin weakens. Atheists have no sense of sin whatever, and the Christian scheme of salvation is an absurdity in their sight.

It is to the rapid growth and development, during the last fifty years, of the scientific spirit and attitude that we are indebted for the discovery that Christianity cannot be true. Had it been true, in Paul's conception of it, it would have knitted the human race into a compact, harmonious whole almost immediately, and we would never have heard of bleeding divisions, malignant factions, and bitterly jealous sects, all delighting in feuds and broils and controversies. The history of Christianity is written in blood. It has always pursued a blood and iron policy. Indeed, a heated and by no means brotherly controversy is now going on in the Churches of this land as to what Christianity really is, and there is no likelihood of their ever arriving at anything like agreement on the point, while each contestant is cocksure that he, and he alone, has the truth. What the scientific student is learning is that the truth is outside all the contending parties, outside every known form of Christianity, safely lodged in the heart of Nature, and in these latter days beginning to make itself known to the honest and patient investigator. The only known truth about man is that he is a social animal who is but a beginner in the art of rightly conducting himself among his fellows. His ignorance, inexperience, and selfishness have already given rise to many hard, cruel, and oppressive conditions, which, with increasing knowledge and widening experience, he should set himself to rectify as soon as possible. Such is man's mission in the world, and the extent to which he fulfils it will be the measure of his own peace and happiness. Let him, then, complete his break with superstition, and make it his aim to develop the "Conscience of Life."

J. T. LLOYD.

Mark Twain.

"How many and many a weary day,
When sad enough were we, 'Mark's way'
(Unlike the laureate's Mark's)
Has made us laugh until we cried,
And sinking back exhausted, sighed
Like Margery, 'Wot larx!'"

—ANDREW LANG.

THE death of "Mark Twain" will damp the gaiety of nations. He contributed in no small degree to the cheerfulness of his generation; but people were apt to overlook the deep insight into human nature which underlay his fun. The function of the humorist is underestimated. The man who makes people laugh does them a great service. The physiological

effect of merriment has yet to be appraised at its proper value. Although doctors bestow a certain patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor place in the Pharmacopœia, no one will dispute that humorists are public benefactors.

And yet, with the exception of Rabelais, Cervantes, Molière, and Dickens, who is liked better for his pathos than his fun, humorous writers are held to be only second-rate literary artists. The world will not take them seriously. Perhaps it is their own fault for electing to provide fun for thankless folk.

Mark Twain was unquestionably a great humorist; but his humor was distinctly national. America has to-day a school of humor as essentially national as German music or French art. American air, we are told, is famous for its extreme dryness; and dryness is the salient feature of American humor. There is nothing of the brilliance of the French humorists except in the single instance of Ingersoll. In the hands of a master, however, it was dangerously near perfection.

Your American humorist is a showman, absolutely unimpassioned about his exhibits as a showman should be. Mark Twain said the funniest things in a calm, almost aggrieved, manner. That distractingly funny essay on the Swiss chamois in *A Tramp Abroad* is a perfect example of serious, unemotional joking. Mark Twain was, in his own inimitable way, a philosopher. His Freethought permeates his writings, and is at his best in *The New Pilgrim's Progress*. In his delightful pages Biblical yarns fare as badly as the popular superstition in the portly volumes of the sedate Herbert Spencer.

For forty years Mark Twain filled the world with laughter, always generous, always clean, often springing, as the truest humor must always spring, from the source of tears. But beneath his quaint drollery was partially concealed one of the sanest writers of our time, a satirist who reserved all his scorn for the mean and the ignoble, and all his praise for the worthy and the pure. The incident of his failure, which, like Scott's, was wholly the work of others, raised him to the rank of the heroes of literature, and every new revelation of his character only brought him closer to the hearts of his admirers. This great Freethinker was, in his day, the most eminent man of letters in America, and the lustre of his fame must tend to deepen with the progress of the years.

MIMNERMUS.

Shilling Month.

(The Figures mean the number of Shillings.)

J. G. Dobson, 2; H. W. Varley, 1; S. Huxley, 1; A. D. Howell Smith, 2; W. Barton, 1; E. J. Baskerville, 4; D. Wright, 2½; C. E. Corriu, 1; H. S., 2; S. J. Bull, 2; W. H. Deakin, 10; Brixton, 2; E. Jones and Friends (Porth), 6; T. M., 2; J. Aimer, 1½; Manchester, 2; A. J. R., 4; Election, 2; R. Lloyd, 2; F. Kuetgens, 3; Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, 5; H. Lazarwick, 2½; G. G., 2; R. D. Gray, 1; H. Shaw, 2; J. M. Brennell, 1; H. J. Borrand, 2½. *Per Miss Vance*:—Alfred R. Bennett, 2; Joseph Bevin, 5; R. Wood, 2; Collected by Alec Fincken, 16; E. Brooks, 3; R. B. H., 1.

Pleasures to be enjoyed, or pains to be endured, after we are dead and gone, are but little regarded even in our own cases, and much less in the case of others. Still, in addition to this there is something so ludicrous in promises of good or threats of evil a great way off as to render the whole subject with which they are connected easily turned into ridicule. "Better lay down that spade, Paddy; if you don't, you'll pay for it at the day of judgment." "Be the powers, if you'll credit me so long I'll take another!"—*Abraham Lincoln*.

Such Halfness, such halting between two opinions, such painful, altogether fruitless negotiations between Truth and Falsehood has been the besetting sin, and chief misery, of mankind in all ages. Nay, in our age, it has christened itself Moderation, a prudent taking of the middle course; and passes current among us as a virtue.—*Thomas Carlyle*.

Acid Drops.

Catholics are naturally greatly upset over the result of the French elections, which have given the late Government an increased majority in the new Chamber. If the Catholics were hoping for the nation's condemnation of the separation of Church and State, they have been grievously disappointed. The *Catholic Times* says: "Nations no longer look to France for grandeur of ideas, for the most progressive statesmanship, for courage and tenacity in great moral reforms." One must, of course, allow a defeated party to have its grumble, but one cannot resist pointing out that the policy of the late Government, which so disturbed Catholics, was in itself evidence that France is leading the way on a road that all Governments must sooner or later traverse.

Any judgment on George Eliot, whether as a writer or as a human being, is an implied judgment on the Freethinker. For this reason it is well that anything that touches her reputation should be at once challenged by those who have the interest of Free thought at heart. Most of us, I suppose, are aware that Mr. T. P. O'Connor is a gentleman who adds the labors of an easy-going publicist to those of an even more easy going journalist. In her scathing attack on an Evangelical pietist of her time, Dr. Cumming, George Eliot unconsciously described this intellectual type: "A moderate intellect, a moral standard not higher than the average, some rhetorical affluence and great glibness of speech." These serviceable mental qualities have given Mr. O'Connor a considerable influence over a large class of readers—a class which has no real literary culture, very little knowledge, and any number of moral and social prejudices. A week ago he gossiped on the congenial subject of Mr. Oscar Browning's volume of recollections. Now, as Mr. Browning was an intimate friend of the Lewes', it is only natural that he should have something interesting to tell us about the author of *Adam Bede*. Mr. O'Connor, however, is not contented with quotation, he must get in his own opinion. To do him full justice, we do not think there is another journalist—with the exception, perhaps, of the gentleman who poses as an artist in the *New Age*—that can get so many fatuities into so small a space. We must allow him to speak for himself; a paraphrase would obscure the brilliance of his sentences:—

"The marvellous irony of this gifted woman's life was that she led what was regarded by all her own countrymen and women an immoral and even a disreputable life, and yet she remained in herself the veriest bourgeois, the most bigoted lover of the moral, the conventional, and the respectable. She was no daring iconoclast, no reckless and fearless law unto herself, like George Sand, her great contemporary, and all her writings, by a strange paradox, were lofty and eloquent pleas to everybody else to stand by the old ways—in other words, in condemnation of her own life and action. And that was her tragedy."

In the first place, there is no irony, "marvellous" or otherwise, in George Eliot's life, because many of her countrymen and women, whose society was worth cultivating, were as friendly with her after her union with Lewes as they were before. Tennyson, Herbert Spencer, and Mr. Frederic Harrison were among her intimate friends, and we are told—a fact which must appeal to the journalistic mind—the Princess Louise sought, and obtained, an introduction to her through the Goschens. There is no doubt that her secession from religious and social orthodoxy alienated her from her own family and the friends of her youth. She suffered much from this alienation, for sympathy was as necessary to her existence as truth. It is idle nonsense to talk of her family and early friends as if they constituted "all her countrymen and women." That she was a *bourgeoise* in any sense of the word is equally ludicrous. Is it likely that a *bourgeoise*—that is, a woman with the intellectual ideals of the wife of a small shopkeeper or a journalist—is it likely that she would translate Strauss's *Life of Jesus* and Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* at the beginning of her career, continue with an essay like that on *Worldliness and Other Worldliness*, in which Anglican Christianity is denounced with an aggressive sureness that reminded one of a French critic or Pascal's *Provincial Letters*, and end with a spacious planned novel like *Middlemarch*? She was so far from being a moral bigot that her best critics have always recognised the breadth of her morality. In contrast with the ethical opportunism of the party politician and the journalist, her conception of what is right and wrong may seem rigid, or even bigoted. She was no "reckless law unto herself," like George Sand, but it is possible that she was more daring, for here in England she had to take greater risks, and her daring was the expression of courage and deliberation, not the impulse of a moment.

"T. P." must have read his George Eliot a long while ago, and with curious inattention, to imagine that in her novels and essays she holds a brief for orthodoxy—social, intellectual, or moral. She makes many of her characters stand by the old ways because she held that our lives should be guided by the accumulated wisdom of the race; yet she was wise enough to see that there are times when we must rebel, when we must act upon our own warrant, not only without an appeal to eternal law, but in face of the law. She had rebelled herself, and her action brought with it a large measure of mental peacefulness. Her warrant was thus proved not to be false. The sorrows that came to her in the way of life—death of those she loved, the alienated sympathy of the friends of her youth—she bore with clear-eyed endurance, and refused to drug herself with the opium of a supernatural creed. The "tragedy" of her life is wholly of "T. P.'s" making.

Nothing can withstand the progress of Christianity—except facts. Here is a sample. During the past year the Baptists built thirty-eight new churches. They have added to their teaching apparatus 508 Sunday-school teachers, 37 lay preachers, 42 pastors, and provided accommodation for 5,000 more people. Here, then, is progress. Unfortunately, the membership—the vital thing to a church—shows a decrease of 1,553 members. The machinery is more elaborate, but the material to be manipulated steadily shrinks in bulk. Such is Christian progress.

Holy Russia still continues to manifest the power of Christian belief when dealing with the Jews. In addition to expelling large numbers from Kieff, it has just been decreed that Jewish medical students are no longer eligible for admission into the Military Medical Schools. M. Stolypin himself is developing a rabid Anti-Semitic spirit, which is doubtless part of his general policy of obstructing reforms as much as possible. Other indications are seen in the Annual Congress of Nobles passing a resolution calling upon the Government to prevent the participation of the Jews in local government, to prohibit them serving on juries, and to make it as difficult as possible for them becoming teachers in primary schools. Christianity alive and in action is a delightful spectacle.

In the Lower House of Convocation last week the Sabbath question was under discussion. Ostensibly the supreme object in view was "to secure for all workers a weekly day of rest"; but it soon became evident that the ostensible object was not the real one. The Archdeacon of Coventry favored only "such recreation on the Lord's Day as should not interfere with the primary duty of religious worship." Canon Williams was opposed to any mention of "recreation of body and mind," their one business being to "consider what could rightly be done to emphasise the primary duty of religious worship on the Lord's Day." The truth is that parsonic concern about Sunday observance is a purely selfish one. What the men of God fear is the loss of their Field Day, of which hitherto they have had the monopoly. Some of them say to men of the world: "As long as the hours set apart for religious worship are not encroached upon, you may do what you like the rest of the day." Others demur, however, and say: "No; the whole day is sacred, and should be devoted exclusively to the interests of the soul. Besides, we are well aware that if we give you an inch you will eventually take an ell, and then we shall have to shut up shop."

"J. B.," of the *Christian World*, is a really clever writer, and his articles are read with great interest; but what on earth does he mean by saying that "religion is the idealism of man," and that being so "it is eternal?" The "idealism of man" exists apart from all religious convictions, and thrives in the entire absence of supernaturalism. Have we not had Atheistic poets whose ethical ideals were of the highest and noblest kind? "J. B." discerns in the religiousness of millionaires "the evidence that to fill a man full of all this world offers leaves him hungering still"; but, surely, millionaires are not full of all this world offers. If they were they would not be millionaires. A millionaire may be a very good Christian, but he has never realised his responsibilities and privileges as a member of the human family. His social ideals are conspicuous only by their absence. It is a certainty, to say the least, that the ethical idealism of average Atheists does not fall short of that cherished by average Christians.

"To be sure of man," "J. B." says, "is to be sure of his future." Possibly; but are we yet sure of man? Is it not true that under Christianity social man has always occupied the background, almost out of sight, and that individual man's chief duty has been to be very sure of God and of being in right relations with him? The Christian's citizen-

ship is in heaven, not on earth. His mind is to be "set on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth." For a thousand years Christendom went, morally, from bad to worse; and when social and moral improvement really set in, the Christian faith was already on the wane. Indeed, it seems that in order to be quite sure of himself and his future, man must let go of God and the illusory hopes of the Gospel.

The Church of Christ is clearly on the decline. She is losing vitality and strength daily. All sorts of quack medicines are being administered to her, but the decay is not arrested. The parsons declare, however, that she is on the eve of a magnificent victory. At the recent meeting of the Baptist Union an emotional man of God exclaimed, "No mountain can confront faith that cannot be levelled or crossed or bored. In the might of our Master we can get over, or round, or through all obstacles." Then, in the name of all the wonders, if you *can*, why *don't* you? If all the forces of life are at your disposal, why remain in this languishing, dying state? Like most consumptives, the Church has not yet realised that her end is drawing nigh.

The pious readers of the *British Weekly* must have thought, on reading a recent issue, that the world was coming to an end when their eyes caught the front page heavily headed up "Suicide by W. Robertson Nicoll." We are glad to say this meant nothing more serious than some four or five columns of dreary platitudes on this cheerful subject by the reverend knight. We once had the pleasure to possess a portrait of him, and his sleek and comfortable appearance, his brow unforrowed by care, warrant us in saying that he is not likely to deprive the world of his illuminating presence—at least, not by his own hand. One of the most frequent causes of suicide, we believe, is insomnia. We trust the Rev. Sir Wm. Robertson Nicoll's articles have as beneficial an action on the writer as they have on us. We are assured by our medical adviser that no one need fear the suicidal mania as long as he reads the *British Weekly*. No wonder the Sir Rev. LL.D. is a cheery optimist, since he makes a comfortable income by dictating sleep-producing columns of artless prose.

As a whole, the article is in the usual non-committal style of popular journalism, what it says at one moment it contradicts or modifies at the next, with the result, that at the end, you are no further than you were at the beginning. Still, there is one passage that every Freethinker must strongly object to. It is this:—

"Another reason for the increase of suicide is the weakening of religious sanctions. We cannot tell how far this goes. There was a time within the memory of middle aged men when people, almost of a sudden, began to believe that God was all geniality and indulgence—that there was nothing to fear from Him—that those who took their lives found themselves immediately on the breast of His mercy. It was impossible that such a creed could live in such a world as this is. Even among those who reject definite forms of religious belief, there is a sense of the terrors of the universe, of the something after death, of the Justice and the Magnificence of God. Still, we believe that in so far as positive faith is weakened, to that extent one great deterrent from suicide is weakened correspondingly."

It will be noticed that "we cannot tell how far this goes" gives the whole case away. The editor of the *British Weekly* knows quite well that religious doubt is a negligible factor in suicide. The majority of unfortunate people who are driven to take their own lives are no more Freethinkers than was the unhappy Rev. Thomas Law. The reader of the *British Weekly* expected some reference to the connection of suicide and the slackening of orthodox belief, and the editor was not the kind of man to disappoint him.

The Rev. Geo. Duncan, who has been preaching a sermon at Edinburgh on the danger of outspoken scepticism, is one of the old uncompromising school of parsons. He is no believer in religious philandering like the Rev. Sir Robertson Nicoll, for instance. You may have as many doubts as you like he tells his congregation, but you must not give utterance to them. How, in this way, hypocrisy is to be avoided in and out of the pulpit the reverend gentleman is unkind enough not to tell us. He indulges in the usual clerical abuse instead:—

"We live in an age of cheap scepticism, blatant cynicism. The loudest Agnostic too often passes for the most original thinker. Morality becomes a tottering superstructure when the basis of religion begins to shake.....You remember, perhaps in sadness, the career of George Eliot when morality became severed from religion."

There are four long columns in the *British Weekly* by this clerical *bombastes furioso*. The charming reference to George Eliot's union with Lewes (a truer marriage than many celebrated in either Baptist Chapel or Free Kirk) with

the inimitable "perhaps in sadness," is one of those things that make us doubt whether the religious type of mind is capable of strict veracity.

Speaking at a meeting of the Anti-Socialist Union, Lord Halsbury, ex-Lord Chancellor, expressed himself shocked at the sight of a "very serious and real peril"—to wit, "a regular organised attempt to destroy the Christian religion in these islands." With pious horror his lordship explained to his shocked hearers that "there was a regular system by which every kind of abominable blasphemy was distributed over various parts of the country." He had seen publications which made one shudder to think that an English printer could be found to print them. This crusade of infidelity must be suppressed, and then they would find the innate forces of Christianity would enable them to conquer." With much more to the same end. Poor Lord Halsbury! With his record we do not doubt for a moment that he would be only too pleased to lend a hand at forcibly suppressing both the "horrible blasphemy" and the still more horrible blasphemers. And yet we dare to say that these depraved individuals have, even the meanest of them, given more real evidence of their desire—even though it be a mistaken one—of benefitting their fellow-creatures than ever Lord Halsbury has during the whole of his long and much-salaried career. Piety has always been one of his lordship's characteristics, and when piety is wedded to £10,000 a year a deal of argument is naturally required to remove it. It is interesting to note that this "blasphemy" has to be suppressed, and then Christianity will enable Lord Halsbury and his kind to conquer. That is, when the Freethinker has been killed by the force of the law, the Christian can then with safety perform a fandango on his corpse. We should have imagined Lord Halsbury would at least have learned from his career that suppressing Freethought is not quite so easy a matter as it looks. And we are really afraid that his lordship will have to go on shuddering.

In a recent article on Mark Twain, Mr. Chesterton says some really brilliant things about the great American humorist. He shows that at the back of his most wildly extravagant stories there was always an idea. The reason he could not write seriously of Saint Francis or King Arthur was that they were not serious subjects to him. Here is what Mr. Chesterton says:—

"Even that fantastic irreverence and fantastic ignorance which sometimes marked his dealings with elements he insufficiently understood were never abrupt departures, but only elaborate deductions from his idea. It was quite logical that when told that a saint's heart had burst his ribs he should ask what the saint had had for dinner. It was quite logical that his delightful musician, when asked to play music appropriate to the Prodigal Son, should play 'We all get blind drunk when Johnny comes marching home.' These are things of real wit, like that of Voltaire; though they are not uttered with the old French restraint, but with a new American extravagance. Voltaire is to them as the Rhone is to Niagara; not inferior in quality, but merely in quantity, for Niagara is not only one of the violences, but almost one of the vulgarities, of Nature. The laughter of Mark Twain was literally like Niagara."

A better illustration of Twain's irreverence would have been the picture of Christ walking on the Sea of Galilee, accompanied by "A Life on the Ocean Wave." One may jest on the subject of the Prodigal Son and yet be a Christian, but you can hardly refuse to take the Son of God seriously without you are a Freethinker.

The Rev. George Ferris Whidborne, formerly Vicar of St. George's, Battersea, S.W., has left estate of the value of £530,284. The Rev. H. Burchett-Herne, who died in March, left estate valued at £57,155. These are worthy followers of him who had nowhere to lay his head. We suppose these gentlemen had some private interpretation of the passage in which we are told that the rich man is as likely to get to heaven as a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. The *Guardian*, we are sorry to say, makes no comment.

The following is a sentence from a sermon by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The second assertion as to the serious literature of to-day is one of those dogmatic statements peculiarly associated with pulpit utterances:—

"England up to the reign of Henry VIII. had practically no prose literature at all, and it was hardly too much to say that they could not take a page of to-day's literature of a serious kind in English life without tracing back the phraseology used, the similes employed, the very sentences as constructed, to their source in the English Bible of the sixteenth century."

The Archbishop should try his critical hand on a chapter of Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*. We promise him some interesting difficulties in tracing back its phraseology, metaphors, and construction to the Bible of the sixteenth century.

It is curious that many people will put into rhyme sentiments that, in prose, would strike even their authors as too idiotic for publication. Verse seems, to such persons, merely a cover for imbecility. The *Grimby News*, for instance, publishes a screed, entitled "No Jesus," in which every line begins with a repetition of the title and a picture of all we should be without in the absence of Jesus. No freedom, no pure business, no joy, with thirty or forty etceteras. Some people might think the loss of almost everything by the consideration that, with "No Jesus," there might also be none of this stupid drivel inflicted upon a long-suffering public.

Providence is still busy. In Servia the floods are assuming the proportions of a national catastrophe. In America a frost has damaged the cotton and fruit crop to the estimated extent of £9,000,000. Good or bad, however, the harvest thanksgiving services will be the same in the churches. "Thank you" is the response of the slave by nature to a blow. "Thank God for his mercies," after the wholesale devastation of a country, is not far removed from the same type. It is, perhaps, a redeeming feature that Christians are not quite honest in their supplications or thanksgivings.

Roosevelt, the advertising and much-advertised, has been pouring out another stream of platitudes before a Parisian audience. Among other warnings, he solemnly cautioned "the man of learning" against taking up an "attitude of sneering disbelief towards all that is great and lofty." Men of learning will smile at Mr. Roosevelt's exordium, which is unnecessary, and a trifle impertinent. Men of learning may sneer at much that people of Mr. Roosevelt's calibre regard as great and lofty, but that is a different matter. Really great and lofty things can usually be left to look after themselves. It is the special weakness of small intellects to imagine that the good in the world is in danger of extinction unless taken under their protection. But, with rare exceptions, it is not the noble and lofty things that are the objects of learned men's sneers, but the shallow, the tawdry, the fustian that is passing itself off on the world as good material. And then there is naturally alarm in some quarters.

One paper, we see, referred to Theodore Roosevelt as a typical Anglo-Saxon. Quite so—of mixed Dutch and Irish descent.

Preaching in Manchester Cathedral, Canon Bonney announced a discovery and proclaimed an alarm. The discovery was that a "phase of unbelief" seemed to be setting in. The discovery was accompanied with the remark that in the eighteenth century "infidelity was due to ignorance," but at present it is "deliberately adopted, maintained by argument, and proclaimed as a gospel." We beg to assure Canon Bonney that "infidelity" was no more based upon ignorance in the eighteenth century than it is in the twentieth. Belief may be, and usually is, based upon ignorance; but unbelief, in the nature of the case, must be based upon some knowledge, no matter how limited it may happen to be. The unbeliever, as a condition of his unbelief, sees certain truths which the believer either cannot see or does not appreciate. Perhaps Canon Bonney only means that some arguments used by eighteenth century Freethinkers have not the same value now that was then attributed to them. This may easily be true; but whatever modification Freethought arguments have been subjected to—these have been nearly always in the direction of making them still more anti-Christian—the modifications of the Christian position have been infinitely greater. Indeed, Christian advance has consisted chiefly in adopting the positions once occupied by Freethinkers, while they have moved on to still more commanding ones.

Canon Bonney is alarmed because, he says, the masses are the rulers of the land, and it would be possible for Churches and Chapels to be closed by law, and for Christian worship to be made illegal. We suppose it is natural for a Christian to take this view of the position, because it is exactly what would happen to Freethought if Christians were only powerful enough or united enough to work their will. All the same, the fear is quite groundless. It is at least in the nature of Freethought to destroy feelings that lead to such a result, whereas, with Christianity, the tendency is quite in the opposite direction. We agree with the Canon in disliking an Atheistical fanatic as much as a religious bigot, only we would point out that the former is not nearly so plentiful as the latter, and there are always a sufficient number of genuine Freethinkers to care for the liberty of others as well as for that of their own, and this keeps in check "Atheistical fanatics" who would really

represent reversion to a type of character that Christianity has done its utmost to encourage.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel announces that the basis of its World Missionary Conference is that nothing is to be done against the convictions of any of the churches co-operating. Bearing in mind that the income of the Society has experienced a further drop of £10,000, it looks as though what the promoters *ought* to have said is, that nothing will be done that is likely to stop people subscribing. Nothing like a shortage of funds to bring the churches to a more accommodating frame of mind!

There are those who doubt that prayer brings definite results to one who prays with a believing mind. The case of Arthur Classen, ice merchant of Jersey City, U. S. A., offers proof to the contrary. Classen's wife had been operated upon for cancer, and, like a good Christian, her husband went on his knees to pray for her recovery. He began a "series of long prayers," varied by the singing of hymns. After continuing this practice for some time, he rose from his knees and began smashing the furniture, steadily working through the rooms of the house in this fashion until the police came and removed him to a lunatic asylum. The wife, too, has suffered a relapse. There is a moral to this story, but we are not sure whether we ought to conclude that the man prayed because he was mad, or became insane because he prayed.

Another example of prayer occurred recently in the case of Walter Oldroyd, of Clough, Birstall. He was much given to solitary prayer, and was found in his room with his face resting on the bars of the grate in which a fire was burning. His nose and one eye were destroyed, but he lived long enough to tell the doctor that he had committed a sin, and had to make some atonement. Atheists will please note, and be warned in time.

The Rev. T. E. Westerdale asks for "seven happy children of God" to send a donation of twenty-five guineas each for his East London Mission. Probably the "seven happy children" would feel their gaiety lessened by falling in with Mr. Westerdale's wishes.

There is no one like your Christian for stupid pessimism and equally stupid optimism. The lady who supplies the weekly page of feminine gossip to *T. P.'s Weekly* has been airing her views lately upon the momentous question as to how we should check the spread of Materialism. We are fond of talking, she tells us, about spiritual things, and we run here and there after any preacher of any doctrine, if only it be new. But we are at heart Materialistic. "In every circle," she goes on, "whether in club or at home, grumbling at the obstacles that are put in the way of a smooth running of the wheels of a luxurious existence, gives the tone to conversation..... We are submerged in a flood of food, clothes, and furniture philosophy." Now, we don't doubt for one moment that in well-to-do Nonconformist households in Camberwell or Brixton the conversation does run on these topics. But we can heartily assure the good lady that she is greatly mistaken if she imagines that her remarks are applicable to either the intelligent (usually Freethinking) artisan or the educated (and usually Freethinking) upper middle class. The world is surely not going to the dogs because Brixton villadom is unspiritual. And Brixton villadom is religious at the same time as it is unspiritual and Materialistic. If it divests itself of its religion as easily as it takes off its silk hat and frock coat, it is indeed in a bad way, and *T. P.'s* lady gossip is moved to eloquent and sorrowful reprehension.

The anodyne for this metaphysical anguish is fortunately supplied by one of the lady correspondents, who finds life eminently livable because she came through some trouble successfully and owns to a serene faith that everything will come right some day for everyone. There is certainly no harm in hoping. But your religious optimist is always aggressive. He preaches his doctrine in and out of season and has a high-handed way of dismissing every fact that headed against his optimism. He ignores such awkward things as consumption and cancer. Although his optimism is at bottom temperamental, he frequently desires to take credit for the expression of his will to live as if it were an acquirement peculiar to him. In the preface to *An Inland Voyage*, Stevenson, a typical aggressive optimist, says that "Although the book runs to considerably upwards of two hundred pages it contains not a single reference to the imbecility of *God's* universe, nor so much as a single hint that I could have made a better one myself." If this were not merely a pose we would be justified in naming it egoistic callousness.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(All early dates cancelled until further notice.)

To Correspondents.

- PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.**—Previously acknowledged, £204 18s. Received since:—J. G. Dobson, 5s.; B. L. Reilly, £1; Messrs. Mitchell & Reynolds, Lowestoft, 10s. 6d. each (£1 1s.); J. G. Finlay, £1; A. Berndt, 2s. 1d. *Per Miss Vance*:—Alfred R. Bennett, 3s.
- W. H. DEAKIN.**—Mr. Foote has read your welcome letter, but, as you will see, he is not in a condition to undertake an argument just now on the Indian Press Law. Our chief objection was to arrest and indefinite imprisonment without any form of trial.
- J. SQUIRES.**—Sorry we cannot hunt up the address for you. Mr. Foote has not written on either of the novelists you mention.
- W. BARTON.**—Glad you are coming up from Suffolk to the Conference evening meeting on May 15. We don't see why a good many Freethinkers within a hundred miles of London shouldn't do the same at holiday time.
- F. W. HEASE.**—Your suggestion shall be considered.
- G. R. BALLARD.**—Thanks; but we already had an article in type on the same subject.
- N. SHAWCROSS.**—A girl being burned to death at prayers is indeed a ghastly commentary upon the belief in a protecting heavenly father. Unfortunately, only one person here and there sees the real inwardness of such an event.
- R. H. ROSETTI.**—Pleased to hear that those who attended the West Ham Branch's Social spent a pleasant evening. Regret we have no space available this week for a more lengthy notice.
- H. DAWSON.**—We regret to hear of the rowdiness you were subjected to in your attempts to spread Freethought in Enfield. Your account shows how much it is needed there, and we hope to soon hear that you have successfully worn down such brutal, but pious, opposition.
- Those interested will please note that the name and address of the secretary of the Wood Green Branch is Mr. W. Stewart, 78 Carlingford-road, Wood Green.
- H. CROSSLEY.**—The *Freethinker* is supplied to Branches on the same terms as to newsagents. Our shop manager, Mr. W. A. Vaughan, will supply full particulars on request.
- M. E. PEGG.**—Pleased to hear of Mr. Lloyd's highly successful close to your lecturing season, and that he received "quite an ovation" at the conclusion of his evening lecture.
- A. RIDOUT (Wynberg).**—Delighted to hear of the work done by *Freethinker* readers in South Africa. We have handed your letter to Miss Vance, who will write you on the matter.
- H. SHAW.**—Your copy of the poster is amusing, and certainly ought to attract attention. Thanks for the "constant notice" advertising this paper, which is certain to do good.
- C. THOMSON.**—The secretary of the Secular Education League is Mr. Harry Snell, 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, London, W.C.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- 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.

Special from the President.

Monday Night, May 2, 1910.

I CONTINUE to progress steadily. The professional nurse has left to-day, and the slight attention that the nearly quite healed wound of the operation still needs can be rendered by my wife. The doctor reports everything connected with the operation itself "very satisfactory," and the collateral troubles are disappearing. I mention these details in order that my friends may be sure that I am not indulging in general optimism.

Strength does not return in a hurry after a severe shaking, but I am feeling better every day, and shall be making a good approach to my normal health in a few weeks. Much depends on the weather. I am on my legs again, and able to waddle about a little in the sunshine—when it appears. I could not go far from home at present, but I expect to go away after the N. S. S. Conference and gain a complete recuperation.

My mind is a great deal occupied with that Conference. I hope to face a good gathering of old and new friends at St. James's Hall on Sunday, May 15. I appeal in particular to the London "saints" to do their very best to secure a crowded evening meeting.

G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

This is practically the last opportunity we shall have of calling attention to the N. S. S. Conference, to be held on Whit-Sunday at the St. James's Hall, Great Portland-street, W. We hope to see there a large gathering of delegates from both London and Provincial Branches, in addition to those who attend as private members. There has been a tendency of late years for some Branches of the Society to take the Conference as a purely formal function, and to approve the work done, as well as that contemplated, by their absence. This is, from many points of view, undesirable, and we look for a change for the better on this occasion. Some of the Motions on the Agenda are of far-reaching importance, and ought not to be decided without the sense of the whole Society being taken. Delegates who are attending should forward their authorisation forms to Miss Vance as speedily as possible, and private members must not forget to have their cards of membership with them.

St. James's Hall is easy of access from all parts of London. Motor and horse-buses run by the top of Great Portland-street, and the Tube to Oxford-circus brings visitors within three or four minutes' walk of the hall. A luncheon has been arranged for delegates and members at the Bay Malton Hotel, almost opposite the meeting-place of the Conference, at a cost of 2s. per head. Tickets are to be obtained of Miss Vance, but only those who signify their intention beforehand of being present can have their luncheon guaranteed. Excursions are being arranged for the Monday following the Conference, one of which will probably take the form of a visit to the Anglo-Japanese Exhibition. Other announcements will be made at the Conference.

Visitors from the provinces will please note that the place of meeting on Saturday evening is to be at the Bay Malton Hotel, 160 Great Portland-street. Delegates arriving at St. Pancras, King's Cross, or Euston will find it their best plan to travel by the Underground Railway to Portland-road Station. Those desiring to be met at the railway terminus, or to be provided with sleeping accommodation, should write the Secretary without delay. London friends who meet visitors at the railway stations will be recognised by their wearing one of the Society's badges.

Finally, a word as to the evening meeting. The St. James's Hall is one of the handsomest halls in London, and it should be *well filled*. It can be easily crowded if the London Freethinkers take their responsibilities seriously. The list of speakers is a long one and a good one, and they should face a crowded hall. London is far too huge for such a meeting to be properly advertised by means of posters, and for that reason much must depend upon the personal efforts of Freethinkers themselves. We sincerely hope they will all work for a meeting worthy of themselves and of the cause they represent. The doors open at 7 o'clock. From 7.15 to 7.30 there will be music; after that the speeches. Handbills advertising the meeting can be obtained of Miss Vance.

The Committee of the Bradlaugh Fellowship forward a resolution, unanimously passed at its last meeting, expressing its "deep sorrow" on hearing of Mr. Foote's illness, and wishing him a speedy and complete recovery. We have forwarded the resolution to Mr. Foote.

We are too experienced in their ways to expect decency of behavior from Christian Evidence-mongers, and we are not surprised to learn from Miss Vance of an exhibition of Christian courtesy on Parliament Hill on Sunday last. On the North London Branch of the N. S. S. going to take up the position occupied by it for over three years it was found that a person in "Holy Orders," who has gained a certain notoriety by his defence of the faith, had planted *his* platform there. The place usually occupied by him was vacant, but he declined to move as no one had a legal right to the spot. Of course, it is not a question of *legal* right, but of decency, of courtesy—in a word, of the peaceable and proper conduct of public meetings. Evidently this reverend person is deaf to all claims resting on such a basis. We advise Freethinkers who can do so to bear Parliament Hill in mind as a place needing their presence.

We are asked to announce that Miss Kough lectures from the Secular platform in Victoria Park to-day (May 8) at 6.15. We hope that Freethinkers in the district will make it a point of being present. Those who do so will find themselves well repaid for the trouble of their journey.

Confessions of a Palmer.

THE *Freethinker* lately expressed curiosity as to the ultimate destination of all the bad silver coins taken out of church collection boxes. That is a mystery we must leave the church officials to explain. The reason why they get in is pretty obvious. Even the faithful become tired of the continual system of blackmail which is pursued by all religions; and the collection box is a convenient method for getting rid of any worthless coins. The migration of a few types of money can be traced with little difficulty. A bank clerk recently told me that on Mondays he had numbers of threepenny bits paid in by the neighboring churches. During the week there were demands for threepenny bits from the local clubs; and his theory was that the threepences came in handy at the clubs for adjusting bridge points; and on Sunday the bridge-players equipped themselves and their families with these tiny pieces of silver for the church collection; and so they found their way back to the bank again. It thus appears that the threepenny pieces alternately serve God and Mammon.

The system of taking up the collection frequently exercises the minds of the clerics. Passing the plate has the advantage of exhibiting the money, so that a conspicuously uncurrent piece is not likely to be dropped in; but it also has the disadvantage that any tempting piece of silver may be deftly removed as the plate passes from hand to hand. Consequently the collecting bag is substituted, so that coins once placed in it cannot be removed by the congregation. But this, in its turn, has the disadvantage, from the clerical point of view, that the worshipers are induced to limit their contributions to coppers and trousers' buttons. The parson who stated from the pulpit that "a lady having given me a new pair of bags, I shall take up the collection in them next Sunday," need not have been surprised at the laughter which followed the announcement.

As far as church collecting boxes are concerned, I must confess to having contributed much worthless rubbish—all in the sacred cause of archaeology—for the most common objects of antiquarian interest in this country are churches; and it is usually impossible to inspect an ancient church or ecclesiastical building without making some show of alms-giving; and it comes cheaper to limit one's donations to articles of no value. For my own part, I strongly object to being made to contribute on any pretence to clerical schemes for increasing poverty and crime, or even to what are euphemistically styled "restoration funds"; for every antiquarian is convinced that an ancient building restored is an ancient building spoiled, and that there is far more satisfaction in viewing the mouldering work of the ancient craftsman than in looking at the soul-less imitations of the modern stone-botcher.

In my own case the problem is rendered easy by the generosity of numerous friends who, knowing my delight in numismatics, are good enough to present me with any worthless coin that comes their way—on the principle of assisting the deserving poor. I refuse nothing, being sustained by the thought that some day there may be a grain of wheat among all the chaff. At any rate, I have a selection always ready for church contributions; and, as Shakespeare says, "Who steals that purse, steals trash."

Some uncurrent foreign coins are sufficiently like the English to pass muster at a casual glance. Others can be substituted at the proper moment by the exercise of a slight skill in "palming" gained in youth by devotion to parlor conjuring tricks. But as a general rule all that is necessary is to allow the gleam of the silver or nickel to be seen as it is passed into the collecting box. "When thou givest thine alms openly, to be seen of men, verily great is thy reward."

Some time ago I was being conducted through Chester Cathedral by a verger, and before admitting me through the choir screen I was requested to put "a trifle" in the box. Apparently the conduct of

previous visitors had not been considered satisfactory, for he also asked to see the coin I was contributing. I exhibited what he probably took to be a shilling. As a matter of fact it was a badly-worn franc of Napoleon Bonaparte, which is no longer current even in France. But the verger was satisfied; so was I.

On another occasion we happened to be in a large, handsome Perpendicular church in the Eastern Counties, which was being "restored." An intelligent-looking workman joined the party, and was good enough to facilitate our inspection of various parts of the building that were covered over. Such attention seemed to demand a gratuity. Our guide explained that he was the foreman in charge of the works, and requested us to place anything we wished in the contribution-box. The proffered coin of the realm was promptly replaced by an Italian piece of uncertain origin, which found its way into the box. The guide was gratified that his eloquence had been appreciated: we were cheered to think that the "restoration" had had no profit from us.

Speaking of guides, it is always a pleasure to meet one that is intelligent and well-informed. The majority are extortionate nuisances. They waste time by pointing out things that are perfectly obvious, they seldom know anything worth hearing, and they are always endeavoring to arouse the wonderment of visitors by making ridiculous statements. Thus they will lower a light down what is plainly an ancient cesspool, and tell you it is an old dungeon or *oubliette*. They seem to think that people in the Middle Ages had no occasion for sanitary conveniences. Another dodge is to lead the visitor to the end of an old drain, and talk about a mysterious subterranean passage leading to the next castle, miles away. Many tourists get the impression that the chief enterprise of the Middle Ages was the construction of Twopenny Tubes all over the country. Another drawback is that the *baksheesh* to the guide must be in current coin, which is a grief to the frugal mind; but some people seem to do otherwise. A little while ago I was looking over the ruins at Aghadoc, and handed the woman in charge the usual sixpence. (They think in Ireland that Saxon tourists are made entirely of sixpences.) The coin was received with the customary Milesian expressions of profound gratitude; but I noticed the old lady turning it over, and examining it closely several times. As it was a good specimen of the mintage of King Edward VII., I put the woman's action down to Celtic suspiciousness. However, we learned afterwards that, firstly, the good lady's eyesight was not as perfect as it used to be; and, secondly, that Yankee trippers frequently tried to meet the demand for sixpences by tendering ten cent pieces. It is universally admitted that Christopher Columbus was the best friend Ireland ever had; but yet the Irish prefer the coinage of the Saxon oppressor to that of free America.

Quite recently we went to see a Norman church in the Home Counties. The door was fortunately open, and within we found the pew-opener. She bustled round and talked nonsense, and it looked as though a tip would have to be tendered; but suddenly we observed that the good lady's face changed, and she retired into the background. The entrance of the vicar explained her confusion. The rev. gentleman beamed on us, and took us round to explain the features of the building, some of which were remarkable, if not unique. His knowledge of mediæval architecture and ancient ritual did not appear to be very profound; in fact, he expressed a fear that we were "experts"—a title which we modestly disclaimed. On passing out we saw two collection-boxes, and a large foreign nickel coin was ostentatiously placed in each. The parson saw the glint of the white metal, and warmly thanked us: but he need not.

One disadvantage of flashing worthless silver about in this way is that other members of the party not in the secret occasionally feel constrained to deposit silver also, so as not to be outdone in generosity;

and thus we run into the very fault we wish to avoid, by actually assisting church contributions instead of making sham ones. When such a contretemps is to be feared it is best to exhibit a largish piece of money, such as a battered *ruble* or *thaler*, or a poor half-crown of Queen Anne, and say, "I'm putting this in for all of you." Such a charitable action creates a good impression, and if any member of the party desires to reciprocate it usually takes the form of tea or other refreshments.

So far, we have only spoken of silver and nickel; but worthless copper and bronze are far more common, and may be dropped into collecting-boxes with good effect. An old copper halfpenny makes a good noise when falling; and when the vicar opens the box he may be reminded of the "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal."

CHILPERIC.

Women in Other Lands.

SOME little time ago a correspondent in the *Clarion* quoted Richard Cobden as saying that "Christianity and its doctrines had done more than anything else since the world began to elevate women." We give this only as a particular instance of a claim that is generally made by its apologists on behalf of Christianity. Probably Cobden was only repeating an opinion he had imbibed without seriously examining its truth. The constant repetition of falsehoods, particularly of a religious nature, usually results in their getting accepted unquestioningly as at least an approximation to the truth. But no claim that has ever been put forward on behalf of Christianity will bear less investigation than that of its being "woman's best friend." When the Commission sent by the Japanese Government to Europe and America to study the moral influence of Christianity returned to their native land they were, says Professor Hearn, unanimous in their report that "Christianity had proved itself less efficacious as an ethical influence in the West than Buddhism had done in the East." And in no sphere of social life or relationship is this ethical influence seen in greater contrast than in relation to the position and freedom of women. The Christian apologist, in advancing such a claim, not only conveniently shuts his eyes to social facts lying under his very nose—the barbarous and degrading conditions of factory life under which hundreds of thousands of married and widowed women are forced to eke out a bare livelihood; the cheerless, monotonous existence of the majority of the wives of the working class, struggling on insufficient incomes to make ends meet; and the degradation of the thousands of women compelled by economic pressure to sell their bodies for the wherewithal to maintain life—but he ignores the available testimony of many competent authorities as to the vastly superior status enjoyed by women under a different faith. He has gazed so long and so earnestly at the crippled feet of Chinese ladies that their diminutive extremities has narrowed his mental vision. But there are other heathen ladies besides the Chinese who are worthy of a little attention, and whose social position is the subject of this article.

Ceylon, Burma, and Siam are countries where Buddhism is a *living* faith, and obtains in comparative purity, and where women approach perhaps nearer to an ideal freedom than anywhere else on the globe. Mr. John Jardine, of H.M.C.S., Bombay, and Judicial Commissioner of Burma, in his Introduction to Father Sangermano's *History of the Burmese Empire*, after discussing the philosophy of Buddhism, says: "Turning aside from the tendencies to what is known of the practical results of Buddhism in Burma, we find two of great importance—the general diffusion of education through the teaching of the monks, and the elevation of the character and position of women." Of the legal aspect of their position, on which Mr. Jardine speaks with some authority, he says that one of the visible results of the influence of Buddhist ethics on the Burmese legal code has been "the ele-

vation of women in matters of status, marriage, and inheritance." Quoting also from Bishop Bigandet, the author of *The Life or Legend of the Buddha*, he says:—

"In Burma and Siam the doctrines of Buddhism have produced a striking, and to the lover of true civilisation a most interesting, result, viz., established the almost complete equality of women with that of men. Their social position is more elevated in every respect than in those regions where Buddhism is not the predominant creed."

This testimony of a Christian dignitary is both interesting and candid, and is one of those admissions which all Western students of Buddhism are obliged to make in favor of the many excellencies of the system.

The Soul of a People, too, contains some most charming chapters on the subject of the position of woman in Burma. Its author lived for many years in the country, and made an impartial study of the influence of Buddhism on the lives of the people and their social institutions. He says:—

"If you were to ask a Burman what is the position of women in Burma? he would reply that he did not know what you meant. Women have no position, no fixed relation towards men beyond that fixed by the fact that women are women and men are men. They differ a great deal in many ways, so a Burman would say; men are better in some things, women are better in others; if they have a position their relative superiority in certain things determines it. How else should it be determined?"

If you say by religion, he laughs, and asks what religion has to do with such things. Religion is a culture of the soul; it is not concerned with the relationship of men and women. If you say by law, he says that law has no more to do with it than religion, in the eyes of the law both are alike. You wouldn't have one law for a man and another for a woman?"

It will thus be seen that in the Burman's attitude towards his womenfolk there is a delightful absence of that "lord and master" spirit of superiority which characterises his Western brother. Just as in the Buddha's teaching there is nothing to show that he made the slightest difference between the sexes—no Pauline dogmatism about woman as the weaker vessel, or being subject to her husband—so in her social life and relationship she rises to the altitude of the teaching. Speaking of the economic condition and relationship of the Burmese women, Mr. Fielding says:—

"Just as the men farm their own land, so the women own their own businesses. They are not saleswomen for others, but traders on their own account, and with the exception of the silk and cloth branches of the trade, it does not interfere with their home life. The bazaar lasts but three hours, and a woman has ample time for her home duties when her daily visit to the bazaar is over; she is never kept away all day in shops and factories.

Her home life is always the centre of her life; she could not neglect it for any other; it would seem to her a losing of the greater in the less. But the effect of this custom of nearly every woman having a little business of her own has a great influence on her life. It broadens her views; it teaches her things she could not learn in the narrow circle of her home duties; it gives her that tolerance and understanding which so forcibly strikes everyone who knows her."

And this wider interest in the activities of the outer world saves her, he says, from that "dreary, weary pessimism that seeks relief in fancied idealism, in art, in literature, and in religion, and which is the curse of so many of her sisters in other lands." That "economic emancipation" advocated by ideal Socialists like William Morris and Edward Carpenter as being an essential condition of woman's perfect freedom in the acceptance of the responsibilities of wifehood and motherhood, has actually been attained by the Burmese woman without let or hindrance from her Buddhist faith. In Christian England we have the social peace frequently disturbed by militant suffragists, to whom the "subjection of women" appeals in all its ethical hideousness, and some of whom are beginning to recognise that the most conservative influence against which they have to

fight is the derogatory teaching of the New Testament.

Moncure Conway tells of the Rev. H. P. Channing, who was the father of Lady Arnold, the wife of the author of the *Light of Asia*, that he once went to Concord and delivered a lecture on Buddhism, in which he so exalted the Buddha as to produce a most unexpected result. The next day a deputation of ladies waited upon him with the request that he would oblige them with another lecture, and also state some reason *why they should not all become Buddhists*. This startling request appears to have somewhat shocked the Christian clergyman, who was sorry he was unable to gratify their wish. The desire of these ladies to change their allegiance from Christ to the Buddha is not to be wondered at when we consider the sublime character of Gautama, the beauty and compassionateness of his teaching, and the elevated position to which women have attained under the auspices of his religion. And in the light of the present available knowledge—not so accessible, perhaps, in Cobden's day—as to the position of woman under Buddhism, the repetition of such an audacious claim on behalf of Christianity as that of being her "best friend" can hardly have the excuse of ignorance. And that such a claim, so devoid of truth, should be repeated in a Socialist journal, and pass unchallenged by its numerous readers, is somewhat painful evidence that the leaders of the movement have not been able to inspire the rank and file with any high ideal of intellectual integrity or respect for Truth.

The history of woman during all ages affords very melancholy and painful reading; but in other civilisations besides those we have mentioned she has undoubtedly attained a position in respect to freedom and of social and legal equality which she has never enjoyed under the dominion of Christianity. Women in ancient Egypt, says Winwood Reade, were treated with much regard. And a picture of her position in the household may be formed from the following remarks:—

"When a party was given, the guests were received by the host and hostess seated side by side in a large arm-chair. In the paintings their mutual affection is portrayed. Their fond manners, their gestures of endearment, the caresses which they lavished on their children form sweet and touching scenes of domestic life."

Another high authority, M. Revillout, quoted in McCabe's *Religion of Woman*, tells us that he finds woman held in equal dignity with man in the earliest periods of Chaldaic and Assyrian civilisation. The same writer, quoting from a historian of Japanese literature, says that during the classic period of their literature (about 800 to 1186—that is to say, just at a time when women were at the lowest point of legal degradation in Christian Europe) "a very large and important part of the best literature Japan has produced was written by women."

In attempting to estimate the moral worth of a people, a race, or a civilisation, we are much more enlightened, says Letourneau in his *Evolution of Marriage*, by the position given to woman than by the legal type of the conjugal union. And, as Edward Carpenter points out, under some forms of monogamy women have held a much less respected position than she has attained, in some instances, under polygamy. And it is fairly evident that the indissoluble marriage bond which has received the pious sanction of the Christian Church, and which, it may be remarked, is also in vogue among some of the lowest tribes of the human race, has not succeeded in raising woman to that position of freedom and superior social status enjoyed by the Burmese matron, whose marriage relation, as we have seen, has little or nothing to do with either religion or law. If, therefore, the moral worth of a civilisation is to be estimated by the position given to woman, it would appear that, notwithstanding all our boasted progress, Christian civilisation is still in a lower stage of culture than in some so-called heathen countries.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Persecution!

OR

The Attempt to Suppress Freedom of Speech in Chicago.—IV.

BY M. M. MANGASARIAN.

(Concluded from p. 284.)

WHEN my *Human Prayer* appeared in print, one of the Christian clergymen—a Lutheran pastor—called it "The Devil's Prayer." No one in the church ever thought of protesting against his language. But suppose I had called any clergyman's prayer "The Devil's Prayer," how awfully that would have shocked and wounded the feelings of the Christian world! A Christian can do anything he pleases with *my* feelings, but I am a blasphemer and should be deprived of my rights of free speech if I should hurt *his* feelings. What better proof do we need of the incapacity of the theologically trained mind to see straight?

It has reached my ears from more than one source that my recent *Human Prayer*, printed side by side with the *Lord's Prayer*, and each signed by the name of its author, was one of the reasons which influenced the Orchestra Hall trustees to refuse us their hall for another year. Let me give the prayer as it appeared on our Sunday program:—

"THE HUMAN PRAYER.

Our Humanity which art everywhere, Beloved be thy name.

Thy reign of Reason come, Thy gentle Will be done in this, and in all other lands.

We give unto thee this day our daily service.

We do not pray for forgiveness, but invoke thine impartial justice.

Lead us in the ways of honor, and deliver us from meanness.

The welfare of Humanity be our reward, and the consciousness of having deserved its gratitude, our glory, forever. Amen."

What is there in the above prayer to make it "the Devil's Prayer," or to provoke persecution against us? Mrs. Eddy, in one of her writings, quotes from the New Testament on one page, signed J. C., meaning, I suppose, Jesus Christ; and on the opposite page she quotes from *Science and Health*, and signs it *Mary Baker G. Eddy*. J. C. and Mary Baker G. Eddy! But Mrs. Eddy burns incense upon the church altars, and I do not, and that makes all the difference. But I tried to improve on the Lord's Prayer—to make it broader, sweeter, and nearer the heart's desire, and that is an unpardonable crime. I tried to see further than Jesus, and I should be stricken with blindness for it. I tried to speak in a more *human* accent than Jesus, and the trustees of Orchestra Hall passed a resolution to gag me for it, so far as their jurisdiction would permit. Well, if the trustees of the Orchestral Association feel that they must protect the Lord's Prayer against the prayer of a mere layman, they must think that it cannot stand without their support. The people who resort to force to maintain a religion never stop to think that thereby they are only advertising their unbelief in it. Instead of fearing competition, a divine religion ought to invite it. Nor do the persecutors realise that no God who has any independence at all would care to be worshipped by an unwilling person.

It has also come to me that our extensive advertising of the lecture "Is the Morality of Jesus Sound?" gave great offence to the Christian public of Chicago. The resolution of the trustees to stop our meetings in Orchestra Hall followed almost immediately the appearance of this lecture. Evidently the church people think Jesus is beyond criticism or comment, which again proves our statement that the believer has no use for liberty. But our libraries are full of books in every language containing most radical statements about Jesus and his teaching. Why are not these books destroyed? If the churches had their way, a big bonfire would be made out of all

books not endorsed by the Protestant or Catholic bishop. The truth is that the Church will never feel safe until it commands both pen and tongue.

But does persecution help the cause of truth? There is an impression that the best way to spread a truth is to persecute it. I doubt whether history will verify this statement altogether. The death of Socrates by poison, some have argued, destroyed the liberty of Greece. It compelled his great disciple, Plato, to conform, more or less, to the superstitions of the populace. It scared the lesser philosophers into silence.

Persecution certainly hurts the cause of progress. If evolution means anything, it is this: There is no progress where the environment is not favorable to variations from a given type. In other words, if we all believed alike, and were not at liberty to differ from one another mentally, there would be an end to progress. The object of the forces of nature is to promote variations from a given type. The object of the Church is to prevent such variations. Heterogeneity is what nature seeks. Homogeneity, or sameness, is what the Churches are fighting for. Death is uniform; life is diverse. The creed is death; truth is life.

But the persecution also hurts the persecutors. If the Protestants and Catholics should succeed in suppressing our movement altogether, they would be the greater losers. From a selfish point of view even, the Christians should be our best friends. We help to keep them awake. We keep them on the alert. We help to ventilate religion. We give it air, which it has never had, and without which it cannot live. We remove the walls and tear down the doors of the closet in which the churches have been penned up for long centuries. But for the opposition of Science and Rationalism, the grass would grow in the church aisles, and the creeds would become mildewed with neglect. Opposition provokes orthodoxy into action, and action is salvation. We sting the creeds into a livelier pace. It was to counteract our influence in this hall that the Sunday Evening Religious Club was organised. It is to fight Rationalism that revivalists are brought over from abroad, and new activities are launched. It is opposition that challenges our better natures. The Churches need us to sharpen their wits upon and keep the blood tingling in their veins. Even as in politics insurgency helps to check corruption in the party in power, so in religion opposition, by rubbing mind against mind, evokes the spark of truth.

In conclusion, I have heard some of our hesitating friends remark that if I had been a little cautious we might have remained in Orchestra Hall indefinitely. But to be "a little cautious" is a vague phrase. How much caution would satisfy the clergy, for instance? And how much the business men who manage this public hall? Besides, I may just as well argue that if the clergy had been a little more cautious in their preaching we might never have left the Churches. But the preacher must be true to his convictions, and the lecturer to his. If any caution is necessary, it is the caution to tell the whole truth about religion. To keep some of it back would be the worst inaction. In fact, it is our extreme caution to be consistent, to make no slips and never to be caught napping, that orthodoxy does not like. The Unitarians, the New Theologians, and the insurgent professors in the universities are tolerated because these men, now and then, throw a pinch of incense on the altar of the supernatural. We do not even tip our hats to the gods.

After all, it is difficult to change nature. Christianity is Asiatic, and a residence of two thousand years in Europe and America has had little effect upon it. Renan writes that he searched in vain for any laws of religious persecution in the Roman Empire prior to the introduction of Christianity into Europe. We have dressed up this Asiatic institution in Western attire; we have taught it one or two polite manners; we have smoothed its rugged features, and covered its paws in soft gloves. But we have not changed its nature. Let a man inadvertently, even, step upon its toes, and all its

barbarian proclivities will rush to the surface. Only the other day, in Spain, a man by the name of Ferrer poked it with a stick, and he got his heart filled with lead for it. As long as we have an infallible religion there will be persecution.

The directors of this hall, by trying to suppress the liberties of a portion of the community of this cosmopolitan city of the great West, have injured its good name. They have also dishonored the free institutions of America, the latest born of time, to whose pleasant and peaceful shores the oppressed of every land look with longing. They have forfeited the friendship and gratitude of all who look upon liberty as the jewel of their souls. We shall not change our religion, or join the Churches, to escape eviction from this building. We give up the hall, and keep our liberty.

And to you, my friends, you who have maintained this platform for many years; you who have championed an unpopular cause—a cause which is now being driven from this great hall by the authority of laymen acting as the agents of the clergy—I say: As long as you shall continue to think and speak your best thoughts freely and without fear—as long as you live up to your highest ideals, and hold up your heads erect, bowing neither to priest, king, nor God—"bigotry shall have fingers to grasp with, but no thumb." If I were on my death-bed, my last word to you would be: "Suffer not bigotry to grow a thumb."

Church, Criticism, Prison.

THE *Frankfurter Zeitung* of April 24 reports the trial in Munich of Joseph Sontheimer, who was charged with having committed offences against the Christian religion and its institutions. At the time of the Ferrer meetings last year Sontheimer addressed two public meetings in Munich, making vigorous attacks against State Christianity and the Pope, and characterising Rome as a poison-nest from which nothing but misfortune emerges. With reference to Spain, he had said that that country was diseased and the victim of intellectual oppression and tyranny; for centuries the vatican viper had held sway there, and it were not too much to assert that Rome was the central vehicle of everything noxious. Ferrer had, said he, been shot in the name of the Catholic Church and of organised Christianity, and that act signified a call to arms against the Roman pest. Whoever had read the work, *Present-Day Spain under the Popish Yoke*, by José Ferrandiz, would conclude that Rome was a criminal organisation which ought to be bombarded with cannon as Garibaldi had done—not Secular Rome, but Papal Rome—the Vatican. The Romans themselves were too proud to bow under the yoke of a Roman harlequin, and in Rome the inhabitants spit at the Vatican.

The State Prosecutor perceived in these utterances insults to the Catholic Church and the Pope. In course of other remarks the accused had said that the god which a priest could make out of a wafer, that was the god which was to be fought against. The State Prosecutor saw in these remarks insults to the Mass and the Sacrament. The accused had stated, further, that State Christianity was an unclean and filthy religion, and that it was an organised crime which, after 2,000 years, had not been able to banish meanness and misery. One must do away with the fairy-tale that an Asiatic Jew had saved the world. The accused had also spoken against the sign of the Cross and the person of the Virgin Mary in words for which the indictment charged him with insulting the reverence of the Cross and the cult of the Virgin Mary.

During the hearing Sontheimer admitted having uttered the incriminating remarks, but contended that he had no intention of insulting the Catholic Church as such, but had simply wished to exercise a rightful criticism. He had not intended to attack the Church, but simply Clericalism and Ultramontanism. Several witnesses were produced who were present at the meetings, and who testified to feeling hurt at the accused's remarks. The State Prosecutor urged a penalty of three-and-a-half months' imprisonment. He was, however, sentenced to five months' imprisonment. In the course of judgment it was emphasised that some of the indicted remarks were capable of offending religious feelings and yet were not punishable. At the same time, the remarks in which State Christianity was referred to as a dirty religion, Christ as an Asiatic Jew, and the Pope as a harlequin must be held to be offences (*Beschimpfung*) against the Church and its institutions.

Sontheimer has entered notice of appeal to a higher court.

—Translated by G. C.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, Mr. Marshall, "What Use is Christ to Man?" 6.15, Miss K. Kough, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): E. Saphin, 3.15, "The Gospel According to Smith"; 6, "Christianity and Evolution."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 (noon) S. J. Cook and J. J. Darby Newington Green: 12 (noon), Walter Bradford, a Lecture. Finsbury Park: 3.30, Arthur B. Moss, "The Bible and Evolution." Highbury Corner, Saturday evening at 8, H. King and T. Dobson.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, F. A. Davies, "Christianity and Common Sense."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, W. J. Ramsey, "God is Love."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill): 11.30, A. B. Moss, "False Gods."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

HUDDERSFIELD BRANCH N. S. S. (Trades and Friendly Club): Tuesday, May 10, at 8, Members' Meeting—Conference Agenda.

OUTDOOR.

EDINBURGH SECULAR SOCIETY: The Meadows, 3, a Lecture; The Mound, 6.30, a Lecture.

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