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The greater the knowledge the greater the doubt.
GOETHE.

The Latest from America.

FOR some reason or the other America produces a prolific crop of religious cranks and charlatans. This may be due to the absence of a State church, or to the isolated position and mentally parochial outlook of communities in a country of so great an area as the United States. The fact, however, remains, whatever be the explanation. English religious extravagances move along certain well defined lines; while the religious adventurer is not greatly encouraged by the principal churches. In America they seem to have a royal time. With a mental capital that in any other walk of life would spell bankruptcy, in religion a man may pose as a great thinker and an inspired prophet. This phenomenon is the more remarkable since, in scientific work, America is doing much of which the country may be proud, and for which other countries owe her a debt of gratitude. It would almost seem as though the gulf between the scientific and the religious worlds in America are greater than even in this country. Or, it may be, that the religious life of the American Negro helps to keep alive primitive religious forms among the white population.

And for some reason, again—perhaps as a chastisement for our sins—American religious charlatans seem to flourish amazingly in this country. We are subject to a continuous invasion from the species, who must find the old country a profitable field for exploitation. We import our higher criticism from Germany, and our lower type of religion from America. One American representative of this class who is on a visit to this country is the Hon. W. J. Bryan, better known as ex-candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Apart from the physical strain of speaking, the effort cannot be an exhausting one. For Mr. Bryan has, apparently, only one speech, which he delivers under various titles, and portions which he hurls at an audience as "impromptu." The particular report that lies before me appeared in the *Belfast Witness* for June 3, sent me by a friend with the apt comment that there is a deal of work yet before Freethinkers ere they can, with safety, relax their efforts.

Religiously, Mr. Bryan is an old offender. He commenced preaching, he says, at the age of fourteen, so that his lecture represents the accumulated religious wisdom of a lifetime. One is not surprised to learn from him that the more he talks about religion the more certain he gets. Some men can, and do, keep on telling a lie until they accept it themselves as truth; and in the same way, where no positive knowledge is available, the mere repetition of unwarrantable statements may, in time, endow them to their author with all the authority of a thoroughly scientific proposition. In Mr. Bryan's case the truth of this is shown by his confession: "I feel sure of my ground when I make a political speech, but I feel even more certain of my ground when I make a religious speech." Quite so; his certainty becomes the more pronounced as the

possibility of knowing anything about the subject decreases. This is quite a common phenomena in the religious world; any Salvation Army meeting will provide similar examples, and there was certainly no need to import more from America. The real gainers by the importation are the Americans.

For a man who has aimed as high as the Presidency of the United States, Mr. Bryan's intelligence is of a startling primitive description. In the whole of the six columns of his speech there is not an expression that lifts him above the level of a street corner preacher, while there are many statements evidencing an ignorance as gross as that displayed by the infamous Dr. Torrey. The man who can, at this time of day, say that "religion is the foundation of morality in the individual and in the group of individuals," betokens a total incapacity to understand the subject with which he is dealing. Such a man shows himself unacquainted with, or unable to understand, all that is now actually known of the origin and nature of morality, and places himself outside the pale of intelligent and cultured society. He invites contempt, and ought to receive it.

The primitive character of Mr. Bryan's mental outlook is well illustrated when he attempts to deal with the relations between religion and science. When at College, he says, he was confused by the different theories of creation. Really, so far as I am aware, there is only one theory of creation—the Theistic. Non-theists not only do not believe in creation, they do not even understand it. Mr. Bryan was simply saddling other people with his own mental confusions. And having examined these theories he came to the quite remarkable and strikingly original conclusion that there must be a "Designer back of the design, a Creator back of the creation." An unimpeachable conclusion if we grant both creation and design. Until this is done, Mr. Bryan is simply performing the familiar trick of begging the whole question at issue.

This is not a very promising introduction to the religious bearings of the doctrine of evolution, although it is a fitting one to what follows. Scientific men will regret to hear that Mr. Bryan does not "carry the doctrine of evolution as far as some men do." He is not yet "convinced that man is a lineal descendant of the lower animals." He disowns the relationship with all the indignation of a free born American resenting association with a "nigger." Not that he is without reasons for rejecting evolution. For example, "The ape, according to this theory, is older than man, and yet the ape is still an ape, while man is the author of the marvellous civilisation which we see around us." Why aren't all the apes men? Why are not all the fishes birds? Really, one cannot say, except that apes never have turned into men, or fishes into birds. A shilling text-book on evolution would enlighten Mr. Bryan as to what relation evolutionists believe exists between men and apes. At any rate, Mr. Bryan may cheer himself up with the reflection that even though man has descended from apes, the mental condition of some humans does not appear to shut out the possibility of a return.

Mr. Bryan has three other reasons for rejecting evolution. The first seems introduced for the purpose of saying something "smart." Thus: evolution is a dangerous theory because, if true, we have to

determine whether man is going towards the monkey or coming from him. The second objection is, that if we accept evolution we shall "lose the consciousness of God's presence in our daily life"; on which one may remark in passing, that to anyone, save persons of Mr. Bryan's type, the question is whether a teaching is true, not whether we may gain by calling a truth false, or a falsehood truth. And the third objection is, the Darwinian theory "represents man as reaching his present perfection by the operation of the law of hate—the merciless law by which the strong crowd out and kill off the weak. If this is the law of development, then, if there is any logic that can bind the human mind, we shall turn backward toward the beast in proportion as we substitute the law of love."

Let me try to be serious for a moment with Mr. Bryan, although it is not an easy task. If man has reached his "perfection" by the law of hate, then the "law of hate" destroys itself in the "law of love," which is its product. Or, again, if man has reached his "perfection" by this means, the animal world has reached its "perfection" by the same means, and we shall not get nearer the "law of love" by approximating to this condition. Further, if the "law of hate" is really the governing force of animate existence, why blame Darwinism for it? Darwin did not invent it. At most, he only discovered it. If it be a fact, the responsibility for its existence rests with the Deity to whose defence Mr. Bryan has so chivalrously devoted himself. Non-theism is not affected in the slightest degree whether love or hate rules. If hatred rules, the fact is extremely inconvenient for the believers in an all powerful Deity, but it leaves the Atheistic position untouched.

Mr. Bryan's interpretation of evolution is, however, as stupid as his criticism. Elimination is not the only fact in human evolution. Co-operation is quite as patent and quite as powerful a phenomenon. For hatred, as far as it is operative in human evolution, is active only as between groups; within the group co-operation is the effective force. It is that which gives the tribe cohesion enough to withstand assault from without. Elimination—the scientific fact that is the equivalent of Mr. Bryan's hatred—does work within the tribe, and in a manner that offers an unanswerable indictment against Mr. Bryan's Deity. Against physically eliminative agencies—storm, famine, extremes of heat and cold—human intelligence, not God's care, has established numerous safeguards. Against elimination by disease, many protective measures have also been taken, although it is in this direction that elimination chiefly works to-day. And—from the Theistic point of view—it works in a peculiarly callous and immoral manner. It punishes with cancer or consumption the one on whose health and strength the well being of a family depends. Children are afflicted with numerous diseases, while the conduct that human nature delights to honor—unselfish work for the benefit of others—is often enough the occasion seized upon by nature—or God—to inflict an incurable complaint. Nature, uncontrolled by human sympathy and intelligence, or to put it Theistically, God unchecked by man, is, from the standpoint of human ethics, brutal and immoral. To the Atheist these facts are only so many difficulties to be overcome; to the believer in God they are problems that defy solution.

There is much in Mr. Bryan's speech of the same kind and quality as the remarks noted; I have space only for one more point. A belief in immortality, he says, consoles the individual and exerts a powerful influence in bringing peace between individuals and laying the foundations for peace. Not one of these statements contain a vestige of truth. The belief in immortality does not console individuals. Everyone's experience proves that believers feel the death of those near to them quite as keenly as unbelievers, and usually bear their grief with less fortitude. It does not promote peace between individuals. Christians themselves are a conclusive proof of this.

There is no greater obstacle in the world to united action than difference in religious belief. And that anyone can say it makes for peace in view of the history of Christian warfare, and with the present state of European armaments before them, shows how wildly and irrationally people may talk, if only they do it in the name of religion. Finally, Mr. Bryan is attending a missionary conference. At that conference much will be said—some of it with truth, and some of it with *Christian* truth—of the deplorable features of savage and semi-civilised non-Christian communities. Yet all these communities believe in a future life; and the less civilised they are the more firmly they believe. More, a great many of the most regrettable practices of savage life spring directly from this belief, and would not exist otherwise. In uncivilised life there is no shadow that rests on it in a more forbidding manner than this belief in a future life. And from savagery to civilisation there is no other single belief that has been responsible for so much terror, wasted energy, and ruined lives as the belief in a world beyond the grave.

Frankly, I feel I ought to apologise to my readers for spending so much time over our latest American visitor. But Mr. Bryan is a prominent man in his own country, and the newspapers are making a deal of his championship of Christianity. I am pleased to see it. Nothing can so strengthen the Free-thinker's confidence in his cause as the perusal of speeches like those of Mr. Bryan's. For when a religion has to rely for support upon such mental hog's-wash as that served up by Mr. Bryan, it but proclaims its own decay. From this point of view he is useful—for the same reason that the Spartans made a slave drunk to give their children a lesson in the virtues of sobriety. Above all, let us not commit the mistake of taking W. J. Bryan as a representative of American intellect at its best. He is no more than a street corner preacher represents English science and philosophy. He undoubtedly does represent one side of American religion, but we have so much of the same kind here, that to get more is veritably to carry coal to Newcastle. We can only console ourselves with the thought that while he is here he cannot be anywhere else, and that he confers a benefit on the States by coming to England. America owes us something, at any rate, for our having taken him, if only for a season, off its hands.

C. COHEN.

"The Diabolical Cry."

THE Rev. Dr. Horton bemoans the fact that "in all there are 284,000,000 of our fellow creatures at the beginning of the twentieth century of Christendom who have never yet been told of the truth that has saved and made us—poor children of the dark." The reverend gentleman would feel sadder still if he but realised the full gravity of the situation. According to statistics presented by the Bishop of Ripon, in 1896 the world-population was 1,500,000,000, and the number of Christians 500,000,000, leaving a non-Christian population of 1,000,000,000. Now, if in the teeming multitudes represented by this unrealisable number there are only 284,000,000 who have never heard the Christian Gospel, it necessarily follows that seven hundred and sixty-six millions have heard it in vain, or that upon the minds of these inconceivable myriads it has failed to make any favorable impression. Dr. Horton may have underestimated the number of those who have never heard of Christ; but, in any case, the state of things is, from his point of view, sufficiently deplorable to make angels weep in perfect anguish of heart. This divine is known as a red-hot enthusiast in the cause of Foreign Missions; but if he faced the real facts he would be obliged to confess that Foreign Missions have been, and are, a notorious failure. And the being so is by no means surprising. The Gospel

which cannot win the Heathen world is equally unable to hold Christendom. One smiles when Dr. Horton speaks of "the truth that has saved and made us." Who are the "us" said to be "saved and made" by Christianity? We all know that London is called a Christian city, a fold affectionately watched over day and night by the Good Shepherd, or one of the chief capitals of the Prince of Peace; but has Dr. Horton the hardihood to maintain that London is a "saved and made" city? Why, any fool can see that London is kept in tolerable order, not by Jesus Christ, but by the police, with the military in reserve.

Now, let us consider these two facts in their bearings upon each other. Of course, Dr. Horton does not admit that Foreign Missions have fallen infinitely short of what was originally expected of them. He considers that an increase of more than 70,000 Protestant Christians in Japan during the last thirty years betokens a grand triumph of the Cross; but, in reality, such increase is so small, as compared with the growth of the population, that it can safely be treated as a negligible quantity. The same thing is true of every other Heathen country in which Christian missionaries have been laboring. Every convert from Paganism costs many thousands of pounds; and millions have been sunk without any return at all. Naturally, the Christians at home are profoundly disappointed and disheartened, with the result that their contributions have so seriously fallen off that the directors of the various Societies are beginning to sound the cry of retreat, a cry which Dr. Horton characterises as "diabolical." "Never was there a more diabolical cry than that," he says; "never was there a more anti-Christian thought than that—to sound retreat just at the moment the Captain calls for advance, and when he has prepared the way." If we only had the means, he adds, we could soon win Japan, and China, and India, and the isles of the sea for Christ; all we lack is means, or a sufficiently large number of missionaries in every country. That is nothing but tall talk to cover up defeat. It is a radical delusion to imagine that the Pagans are crying out and anxiously waiting for Christ. They are doing nothing of the sort. "The Jew waits for the Gospel," exclaims Dr. Horton; but the truth is that the Jew vigorously resents every attempt to proselytise him, as a piece of inexcusable impertinence. What he is waiting for is not the Gospel, but to be decently let alone.

But it is not disappointment at the scanty harvests reaped through Foreign Missions alone that accounts for the shortening and lightening of subscription lists. The main cause of the shortage is the decay of faith throughout Christendom. The churches, on the liberality of which the directors of the various Missionary Societies wholly depend for support, are themselves becoming empty. This is admitted even by Dr. Horton. "Is it a fact," he was asked by a *Daily News* representative, "that the habit of public worship is losing hold of the people?" "Undoubtedly," he answered. "I estimate that for every person inside our places of worship there are twelve outside. No one can give the proportions with exactness, but I do not think I am very far out when I say that 12-13ths of our people do not go to worship." Mr. R. J. Campbell was recently in a rural district, and was told that even there church attendance was not what it was twenty and thirty years ago.

"I was informed," he says,—

"that the majority of people in that country district do not attend the means of grace more frequently than Londoners, which is saying a great deal; the aloofness between church and chapel continues, but most of the inhabitants are indifferent to both. For—and this is to me the truly significant point—they have not created other religious associations for themselves; it is religion they have dropped for the time being, not merely church-going. This is the situation we are having to face to-day. All over this land, and all over the world, there is, or seems to be, a decline in religious susceptibility, a decay of religious desire."

As a minister of the Gospel, Mr. Campbell naturally

tries to persuade his followers that this is only a temporary eclipse, a transient hiding of the light of spiritual truth, and that shortly religion shall reappear in the fulness of its glory and power. The Rev. Richard Roberts shares that hope. Quoting Mr. Zangwill, he said in his first sermon as pastor of Crouch-hill Presbyterian Church: "We are trembling on the brink of an apocalypse." So we doubtless are but what will be the nature of the apocalypse? Is it not more likely to be "the new apocalypse of Nature," through the medium of science, than a revival, even in an improved form, of the Christian faith? Meanwhile, the indubitable fact, with which we are face to face, is the gradual collapse of all Christian creeds and institutions. The people do not support Foreign Missions, because they are no longer interested in them; and the lack of interest is symptomatic of a corresponding loss of faith in them; and clearly the decay of faith in Foreign Missions indicates at least an equal loss of interest and faith in the Christian religion itself.

We believe that the cry of retreat in Foreign Missions, so far from being "diabolical," is a perfectly natural and justifiable cry. In Dr. Horton's sense, it is the cry of honesty against dishonesty—the cry of managers who feel compelled not to run into reckless debt; and, though this doctor of divinity knows it to be a cry of that kind, he labels it "diabolical." In our sense it is a cry of reason against fanaticism, and we take the word "retreat" in its full sense of retirement—withdrawal. We firmly believe that it is the imperative duty of the Christian Church to recall every missionary from Heathendom, and then to dissolve all its Missionary Societies, and devote itself to minding its own business at home. If it has a passion for making converts, let it concentrate its activity upon Christendom. If it had succeeded in making Christendom an ideally peaceful, prosperous, and happy portion of the world, it would have had some excuse for going out and endeavoring to establish the same delightful conditions in other parts. Then it could have proudly said to the benighted heathen, "See what the result of my triumph in my own land has been, and with your consent I shall achieve the same victory among you." Instead of being able to employ such language the Church is careful to instruct its missionaries, before sending them out, to be specially on their guard against letting the people among whom they are to work learn anything about the state of things in Christian countries. They may talk as much as they like about the Churches and their work, about prayer-meetings and Bands of Hope and Societies of Christian Endeavor, but must not breathe a word about the horrible slums, the grinding poverty, the shameful sweating of the workers, the open traffic in sexual immorality, and the internal divisions and feuds that embitter the life of the very Churches whose representatives they are. Christendom wants to be the physician of the whole world, though she is impotent to heal her own diseases. She wants to set all other countries right, though she herself is woefully wrong. In the circumstances, common decency demands her complete withdrawal from the work of insolent interference with the affairs of other nations. It is not the cry of retreat, it is the order to advance, that is diabolical. Again and again has China said to her, in most unambiguous terms, "Clear out, and allow me to work my own salvation in my own way"; but she persists in her foolish determination to remain and undertake the reconstruction of the Empire and the national character according to her ideas. This is the acme of impudent egotism, the most objectionable and detestable of all evils.

The only hope for the future lies in the steady leavening of Christendom with scientific knowledge, which is now taking place, and in the concentrating of the attention of the public upon economic and social problems. The only thing we possess that is worth communicating to outsiders is our science, and this has already been largely appropriated by Japan, and is beginning to percolate into China; and once

Japan and China have definitely taken their stand for science and the scientific treatment of all subjects, the deliverance of the East from the curse of superstition will be at the door. In the meantime, the disintegration of Christianity in the West is a consummation that is being most devoutly wished and worked for by a growing class of people. Why are the Churches being abandoned, and why is the missionary exchequer being depleted? Not because the people are becoming more thoughtless and indifferent and selfish and brutal, but because by thinking for themselves they are discovering that Christianity is founded and fed on myths and legends and fairy-tales, and that the superiority of absolute perfection which it claims for itself, is claimed for itself, with equal fervor, by every one of the religions which it despises and seeks to supersede. They are finding out that a Christian priest or clergyman is as ignorant and superstitious, in reality, as are the official advocates of any other cult; and in the proportion in which they acquire such knowledge, they say good-bye to the parson and his yarns, and face the various problems of this present life, which Christian teachers have hitherto cowardly shelved, promising, without any authority whatever, satisfactory solutions in a world to come. Therefore, as Christianity says to all Pagan religions, so say we to Christianity as well: "Retire, withdraw thyself, and let us have peace to live."

J. T. LLOYD.

Goldwin Smith.—II.

GOLDWIN SMITH sometimes offers more than a pinch of incense on the altar of the popular gods; now and then it is a handful, as the following passage witnesses:—

"That with Jesus of Nazareth there came into the world, and by his example and teaching was introduced and propagated a moral ideal which, embodied in Christendom, and surviving through all these centuries the action of hostile forces the most powerful, not only from without but from within, has uplifted, purified, and blessed humanity, is an historical fact."

A breathless eulogy wound up with a gasping statement—which is scientific or nothing. "An historical fact" is it that all the long eulogy is true? Let us see.

What is the "moral ideal" that came into the world with Jesus of Nazareth, and was propagated by his example and teaching? Had no echo of the controversy as to whether Jesus of Nazareth was an historical personage at all ever reached Toronto? Or did Goldwin Smith despise it? And if so on what grounds? It is idle, nowadays, to treat a serious contention with a curled upper lip, as if that were a sufficient reply. Schmiedel admits, even against his own theory, that "the view that Jesus never really lived" is gaining "an ever-growing number of supporters." "It is no use," he adds, "to ignore it, or to frame resolutions against it." But even if we allow that there is, or may be, an historical basis of some sort to the vast legendary and mythological story of the four gospels, the question still remains—What *was* it that came into the world with Jesus? What *was* the "moral ideal" that he both introduced and propagated? Mr. Goldwin Smith says that Jesus propagated it by his "teaching and example." That gives rise to a further question. How are we to pick out the real example and the real teaching of Jesus from the diverse and contradictory "records" of his career? In other words, what did he *do*, and what did he *say*? Now this question is increasingly seen to be difficult, if not impossible, to answer. The desperate effort of a scientific critic like Schmiedel is a perfect assurance on this point. Even a far less scientific, and far more popular, author like the Rev. R. J. Campbell recognises how thin the ice is over this part of what is called Christian Evidence. In his *Christianity and the Social Order*, after quoting some stirring utterances of Jesus, he waves aside the

question of their authenticity. "Whether these records of the utterances of the remarkable man who heralded the movement since known as Christianity be accurate or no," Mr. Campbell says, "does not matter in the least. Their importance consists in the fact that they reveal the mood of the time; they show what people were thinking about." On another occasion, Mr. Campbell can only say, "It is here that I seem to hear the voice of Jesus." Only "seem" even when he would so much like to be sure! And as to the originality of Jesus, Mr. Campbell is constrained to say that "He said not a word, nor produced an idea, which in some form or other had not found expression before."

The fact is that what Jesus did and what Jesus said, if he did anything at all or said anything at all, cannot now be determined. The original evidence has either disappeared or been hopelessly confused. George Eliot justly remarked that the materials for a biography of Jesus do not exist. His followers have prevented us from ever knowing what he really was—if he were indeed a man; and if he were a god, his proper place is not history but the pantheon.

Setting Jesus of Nazareth aside, what is the moral ideal "embodied in Christendom"? Mr. Goldwin Smith gives no hint, and Christian theologians may be challenged to say what it is. Scholars are aware that there is no new moral ideal in the Gospels. And if no new moral ideal came into the world with Jesus, or with the Christian Church, it could not have resisted hostile forces during subsequent centuries. A nothing can do nothing.

Finally, it may be asked *how* Christianity has "uplifted, blessed, and purified humanity"? Nothing is clearer than that modern civilisation, with its ideas of liberty and progress, is due to the growth of science and its enlightening and liberalising influence. Throw the civilised world back where it was before the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and in what way would its condition shine by contrast with the civilisation of, say, China or Japan? And how poorly it would compare with the civilisation of Greece and Rome!

Christianity claims the credit of all improvements in human affairs—even after opposing them and persecuting their authors. But the credit is really due to other agencies. Abyssinia has been a Christian country longer than England, France, Germany, and Italy; but where is its civilisation? And where would *our* civilisation be if we depended upon Christianity?

But if Mr. Goldwin Smith is inept in this praise of Christianity he is still worse in his objections to Evolution, if it is to include the human race. "Points of similarity between the ape and man," he says, "are not proofs of transition." Perhaps not; but it all depends on what the points are. If they are very intimate—as in the matter of sexual periodicities—they certainly point to a common origin; unless you believe in special creation, and that by a Creator who obscenely aped his own handiwork. Another objection to Evolution betrays small knowledge and less reflection. "Has any animal," Mr. Goldwin Smith asks, "given, like man, the slightest sign of self-improvement or conscious tendency to progress?" Mr. Goldwin Smith ought to have known that this objection was dealt with by Darwin. Presenting it again, as though it had never been answered—whether the answer was satisfactory or not—shows a want of information or a want of candor.

Mr. Goldwin Smith's attitude towards the soul and a future life is somewhat similar. "That all is material, nothing spiritual," he says, "does not seem yet to be proved." Just as if a negative of that kind *could* be proved! Yet he also says:—

"The belief that man has an immortal soul inserted into a mortal body from which, being, as Bishop Butler phrases it, 'indiscernible,' it is parted at death, has become untenable. We know that man is one; that all grows and develops together. Imagination cannot picture a disembodied soul. The spiritualist apparitions are always corporeal."

Surely this is sufficient to show that Mr. Goldwin Smith had no positive belief in the world to come. Clearly he did not believe in the orthodox heaven and hell; indeed, he did not "understand how a clear line can be drawn between those who are admitted to heaven and those who are condemned to hell"—considering "the infinite gradations of character and the frequent mixture of good and evil in the same man." He denies that Jesus taught anything that can be relied upon on this subject:—

"That the Founder of Christianity looked for a future life, with its rewards and punishments, is evident. But he brought no special message, lifted not the curtain of mystery, did nothing to clear our minds upon the subject. His apologue of Dives and Lazarus shows that to him as to us the other world was a realm of the imagination."

But if Jesus did not "bring immortality to light," where are we to look for information? Mr. Goldwin Smith talks vaguely about conscience, and free will, and moral progress, but these things all relate to the present life, and it is difficult to see what light they throw upon the question of a future life. Have we anything but imagination to guide us in this inquiry? If so, Mr. Goldwin Smith does not indicate it.

It seems to me that Mr. Goldwin Smith's affirmative arguments amount to nothing. His negative contentions are the most important features of "confession of faith." Not what he retains, but what he rejects, is really worthy of our attention.

We shall see presently what he says about the Bible. Meanwhile let us take his statement of what is left us if the Bible ceases to be taken as an authority:—

"But apart from the Bible, have we any revelation of the nature, the will, the unity, the existence of deity? It must apparently be owned that, though we tremble at the thought, we have none. We are left upon this shore of time gazing into infinity and eternity without clue or guidance except such as we can gain either by inspection of our own nature with its moral indications and promptings or by studying the order of the universe."

That is to say, we are left utterly to ourselves. There is no help from heaven. Revelation is a dream. And how far our own efforts will ever bring us nearer to deity, if such a being exists, is suggested by the old Bible question: "Can man by searching find out God?" Or as Holyoake once asked: If God has not revealed himself to man, will you pluck him forth from the universe with the pincers of a syllogism?

Deism has never been able to establish itself on the ruins of Christianity. Men who give up revelation for the most part give up religion altogether. In the long run, Christianity stands or falls with the Bible. That is why so much learning, ability, and patience has been expended on modern Biblical criticism. The book in itself was not worth so much study. What was at stake was the historic faith of Christendom and its great (and wealthy) Churches. Mr. Goldwin Smith well says that—"We are confronted with the vital question what the world would be without religion, without trust in Providence, without hope or fear of a hereafter." Precisely so; and that is because the Bible is found out to be a human and not a superhuman production.

Mr. Goldwin Smith's view of the Bible—and the view, in his opinion, of most educated and thoughtful men—is as follows:—

"Belief in the Bible as inspired and God's revelation of himself to man seems hardly to linger in well-informed and open minds. Criticism, history, and science have conspired to put an end to it. The authorship of the greater part, including the most important books, is unknown. The morality of the Old Testament differs from that of the New, and though in advance of the world generally in those days, in more places than one, as in the case of the slaughter of the Canaanites, shocks us now. There are errors, too, in the Old Testament of a physical kind, such as those in the account of creation and the belief in the revolution of the sun. Of the New Testament, the most important books, the first three Gospels, our main authorities for the life of Christ, are manifestly grafts upon a stock of unknown authorship and date. They betray a belief in diabolical possession,

a local superstition from which the author of the Fourth Gospel, who evidently was not a Palestinian Jew, was free. There is a discrepancy between the first three Gospels and the fourth, notably as to the day and consequent significance of Christ's celebration of the Passover. It is incredible that God in revealing himself to man should have allowed any mark of human error to appear in the revelation. We have, moreover, to ask why that on which the world's salvation depended should have been withheld so long and communicated to so few."

This is really the most important passage in the whole of Mr. Goldwin Smith's book. What he says about religion in general does not show that he had let his mind play with freedom and vigor upon it. What he says about the Bible is clear, pertinent, and—unanswerable. The only statement one might take exception to is in favor of the Bible rather than against it. That the morality of the Old Testament was "in advance of the world generally in those days" is more than doubtful. With respect to Egypt and Babylon, and one might add India, it is distinctly untrue. But this questionable statement of Mr. Goldwin Smith's is more than balanced by the grave consideration which is raised in his concluding sentence. If the Deity had a revelation to be given to the world, not only for its good but for its very salvation, why was it withheld from the great civilised nations of antiquity? Why was it given to a handful of insignificant people in an insignificant country? The orthodox answers to the questions are all absurd except one, which is wicked. In the last resort, the orthodox apologist replies that man has no right to judge God, who has a right to do what he likes with his own. But this is not reason; it is the abnegation of reason; it is a blind submission to the fiat of irresistible power.

The upshot of Mr. Goldwin Smith's confession is that the Bible, whatever it may be as human literature, is doomed as the inspired Word of God. Whether he knew it or not, or whether the Churches know it or not, this means that Christianity is doomed. We repeat that Christianity stands or falls with the Bible.

Goldwin Smith's intelligence kept him from being orthodox; his training and interests kept him on good terms with orthodoxy. The latter fact is of great importance,—it shows that Christianity cannot survive the solvent action of what Newman called "the restless intellect of man." No one was ever a Christian on grounds of reason; Christianity, like every other supernatural religion, rests on faith. Hume's irony was never truer (or more superb) than when he said, not only that Christianity was a religion of miracles, but that everyone who believed it was conscious of a miracle worked within himself. Oscar Wilde was far from being a David Hume, but it was in the same spirit that he uttered the epigram that man, in the sphere of religion, will believe the impossible but not the improbable. In a certain way Tertullian was less absurd than he appeared when he exclaimed that Christianity was to be believed because it was impossible. To say that a thing is impossible is to speak according to human knowledge; it does not exclude the theory of supernatural intervention. But to say that a thing is improbable is to say that human reason shows it to be unlikely to happen. This is an appeal to reason, and it cannot be set aside by a dogmatic declaration. The mind has been at work upon the subject, and it is pretty sure to continue doing so when it has once commenced. Hume, Oscar Wilde, and Tertullian—a strange trio!—were all three right on this particular point. When such different persons do agree we must expect their unanimity to be wonderful. Yet the wonder diminishes with reflection. One sees at last that there never were but two camps in the world—the camp of reason and the camp of faith. Freethinkers make a definite choice; they belong to the camp of reason. Catholics like Newman make a definite choice; they belong to the camp of faith. Men like Goldwin Smith belong to neither; they are afraid to make a choice.

G. W. FOOTE.

Acid Drops.

The Catholic Church in France is losing its priests at the rate of a thousand a year. This looks like the beginning of the end.

Rev. Dr. Horton has been telling an interviewer that twelve-thirteenths of the English people do not go to a place of worship. He says it is the churches which are at fault. "Men come to church," he adds, "but they are not fed, and as a result they go away dissatisfied and do not come again." Other preachers declare that the week-end habit, and golf and motoring, and cycling, are emptying the churches. One prophesies that religion will die out altogether if this continues. People must go to the house of God or they will cease to worship. But is not this a professional view of the matter? Preachers were saying the same sort of thing in Tom Hood's days, and his answer to them is given in the fine "Ode to Rae Wilson":—

"The Saints!—the aping Fanaticks that talk
All cant and rant, and rhapsodies high-flown—
That bid you baulk
A Sunday walk,
And shun God's work as you should shun your own.

Thrice blessed, rather is the man, with whom
The gracious prodigality of nature,
The balm, the bliss, the beauty, and the bloom,
The bounteous providence in ev'ry feature,
Recall the good Creator to his creature,
Making all earth a fane, all heav'n its dome!
To his tun'd spirit the wild heather-bells
Ring Sabbath knells;
The jubilate of the soaring lark
Is chaunt of clerk;
For choir, the thrush and the gregarious linnet;
The sod's a cushion for his pious want;
And, consecrated by the heav'n within it,
The sky-blue pool, a font.
Each cloud-capp'd mountain is a holy altar;
An organ breathes in every grove;
And the full heart's a Psalter,
Rich in deep hymns of gratitude and love!"

Surely, if there be a God, he would wish to be worshiped in some such way; especially if it be true, as Cowper said, that "God made the country and man made the town"—churches included as well as public-houses.

"Given an adequate supply of preachers like Mr. Campbell, Dr. Campbell Morgan, and Dr. Jowett," says the *Christian World*, "the church-going problem would be solved." Not a bit of it. How many non-Christians do these people get into their churches? How many non-Christians do they succeed in persuading to become Christians? These are the really vital points to which Christians should address themselves. The truth is that men like the speakers named fill their churches at the expense of other preachers. And, meanwhile, the number of laymen who reject Christianity steadily increases. The real problem is, not to make people come to church, but to make them believe in Christianity. If that is done, the question of church attendance will settle itself. There is not much religion in people whose only reason for attending church is to hear a good speaker or to pass away an evening pleasantly.

According to a report of the World Missionary Conference, there are 113,000,000 of non-Christians who are not having the Gospel preached to them. We observe that these are nearly all living in parts of the world that are not ripe for Western exploitation.

Rev. Thomas Jackson, of Whitechapel, told a Bourne-mouth religious convention that twenty four Nonconformist chapels in East London had been wiped out during the past twenty years. No wonder the Missionary Conference is impressed with the necessity of opening new markets for its spiritual wares! Those at home seem about played out.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell is discovering things. The situation the Churches have to face to-day, he says, is that "all over this land, and all over the world, there is, or seems to be, a decline in religious susceptibility, a decay of religious desire." Quite so; and the other side of this truth is that it is accompanied by a growing desire to arrange the social life of man on a more desirable plan. The humanisation of man has kept pace with the decay of the belief in God.

The *Burton Daily Mail* deeply laments but frankly admits the fact that "the vast majority" of our people not only absent themselves from church and chapel, but do so because

they no longer believe in the Christian religion "in any real sense." It is further acknowledged that this is true, not alone of London "and the majority of provincial cities and towns," but also "even of the rural parishes." If we put these facts side by side with the apologetic claims of the divines, we can only conclude that Christianity is a religion that advances by retreating, that conquers by being defeated, and that wins by losing—the most absurdly paradoxical religion the world has ever seen. No wonder that the highest percentage of communicants in London is as low as 5. It will be down to zero by-and-bye.

Mr. W. J. Bryan appears to be a fine speaker with nothing to say—and plenty of pay for saying it. The business he follows is a lot more profitable now than it was when his Master got three nails and a crown of thorns in full payment for all his services. Bryan is a dead failure as candidate for the United States presidency; every time he stands he is more unsuccessful; but he knows how to tickle the ears of a Christian crowd, and he does it to the accompaniment of rolling-in dollars. During his recent visit to Liverpool the *Express* said of his oration at the Philharmonic Hall that "a wealth of beautiful language adorned a soundly reasoned speech, punctuated by neat epigram, racy anecdote, and vivid illustration." But we failed to find any of these qualities in the letterpress report, which is frightfully poor stuff after (say) the speeches at the N. S. S. Conference public meeting, reported in the *Freethinker* of May 29. Bryan went back to Genesis and found "In the beginning God created"—and he "took his stand there." Of course he did. He hasn't brains enough for anything else. It saves him the trouble of thinking. We say this deliberately. The man who says—"If you tell me there are mysteries in the Bible, I tell you there are mysteries everywhere," doesn't understand the A B C of the question. The Bible is a revelation,—though it reveals nothing; and if it is necessary to explain the explanation, even the brains of a Bryan ought to see that there is something wrong somewhere.

"We don't understand everything in the Bible," Bryan said, "but if we live up to what we do understand we shall be kept so busy doing good that we shan't have time to worry." Well now, does Bryan understand "Take no thought for the morrow"—"Labor not for the meat which perisheth"—"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth"—"Blessed be ye poor"—"Woe unto you rich"? And, if he understands them, does he live up to them? He rakes in all the shekels he can. Moreover, he had a *lord* in the chair at that very meeting. Lord Longford was also "supported on the platform by a large and representative body of citizens"—who probably found the money to pay him for bamboozling the mob in the body of the hall.

Roosevelt and Bryan were in England together. Both are ostentatious Christians. And one is a "bounder" and the other a champion of "bunkum." If these are the pick of American Christians,—God help them!

The *Express* published a sketch of Bryan in a characteristic oratorical attitude, and Bryan was "so pleased with it that he added his signature to it." It looks like a fat Jew financier advocating the claims of a very elastic Rubber Company.

The *Daily News*, in a leader on "World Missions," in relation to the Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, said that the value of missionary work "receives ever increasing recognition," yet it also said that "the missionary organisations experience greater and greater difficulty in raising funds adequate to their work." What a strange contradiction! The latter statement, however, is undoubtedly true.

The King's message to the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh hoped that its deliberations would be "guided by Divine wisdom." Evidently we have a very sanguine monarch. Another part of the message shows that King George is anything but infallible on this question. He referred to missionary work as promoting "international friendship, and the cause of peace,"—which is the very opposite of the truth. Missionaries have caused trouble nearly everywhere that they have gone. Look at China, for instance. King George is probably not as well-informed on this subject as Charles Dickens was. Dickens called missionaries "perfect nuisances" who "leave every place worse than they found it."

While the World's Missionary Conference was palavering at Edinburgh, and professing unspeakable love for the souls of the poor heathen, a hundred and seventy-five negro

ministers of Washington addressed an open letter of protest to the delegates of the Sixth World's Sunday-school Convention against the action of the Convention Committee in doing all in its power to exclude the United States colored delegates from participating in the proceedings. "It is difficult to see how anyone can pray or hope for the evangelisation of the world," they say, "when one refuses to fellowship his neighbor next door because of race and color." Could anything show the humbug of Christian missions more plainly? White missionaries go about the world "converting" the colored "heathen" and getting them ready for the kingdom of heaven, where they will all sit down with the white guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb. But there is no sitting down together on this side of Jordan. White Christians in America won't have colored gentlemen as members of their churches. The colored gentlemen have to run their own. Neither is there a Young Men's Christian Association in the United States that will take a colored member. In view of these facts, the World's Missionary Conference is a mere pantomime.

Dr. Clifford is thundering against the Government for its impartial support of religion at Lagos. It already supports a Mohammedan priest there, and is going to extend its support to the Anglican Church. Other bodies who wish for churches are invited to send in their applications. Dr. Clifford considers this infamous. Government support of religion in churches is a crime; but Government support of religion (of the right sort) in schools is a noble policy. Such is the difference between Dr. Clifford in relation to Lagos, and Dr. Clifford in relation to England. His objection to the Government support of religion disappears when Non-conformists have a prospect of getting the best of it.

The House of Commons has played into the hands of the Sabbatarian bigots at Portrush. The Midland Railway Bill was amended in committee by 94 votes to 59, so as to prevent the Company from opening the golf links on Sunday without the consent of the Urban District Council. The Company was acquiring the golf links, and Mr. Kerr-Smiley, the Conservative member for North Antrim, said that their object was to attract week-end visitors. Mr. Illingworth, junior lord of the treasury, speaking for the Board of Trade, remarked that Sunday golf was a matter that each person should decide for himself, and that he "viewed with the gravest apprehension the novel principle that powers given to the Company by act of parliament should not be fully exercised without the consent of the local authority." But the Sabbatarians triumphed, and Portrush is happy. "Let us all be unhappy on Sunday" must be the most popular song there.

Poor Mr. Plowden, our most popular magistrate, is being fiercely scourged by the *Church Times* for the horrible crime of having called marriage a purely human institution, or a simple civil contract. It was in his evidence before the Divorce Commission that Mr. Plowden committed the heinous sin for which he is now being so mercilessly lashed. Perhaps our religious contemporary's excessive wrath is due to the unwelcome consciousness that its own views on marriage are being generally discredited and disowned, because they represent a state of things no longer possible. We sincerely hope that Mr. Plowden will speedily recover from his severe castigation, and we heartily congratulate him on the noble courage and sturdy independence with which he defended his views before the Commission when questioned by the Archbishop of York and others.

The lash of the *Church Times* falls, though not so heavily, upon the Archbishop of Canterbury also, because he dared to attend and speak at The World Missionary Conference recently held at Edinburgh, which, being a Protestant Conference, ought not to have been encouraged by the chief prelate of the Church of England, a Church which can no longer be called Protestant.

Once the most low varlets of the Most High God used to persuade their opponents of the error of their ways by the gentle persuasion of the rack, the gibbet, and the stake. Now they publish insulting paragraphs in the press and issue dainty volumes of apologetics.

Professor David Smith, recognising the fact that theologians must get their living somehow, provides endless work for them, and justifies their existence as well, when he says that "the truth (meaning Christianity) must be interpreted to the mind of each generation." "The truth abides," he continues, "but its definitions are ever changing, and yesterday's definition does not suffice for to-day, nor will to-day's definition suffice for the morrow." That sounds

eminently plausible; but the plain truth is that there is no such thing as Christianity. There is always a vast number of humanly constructed theological systems loudly clamoring and fiercely fighting for the ascendancy, each of which *claims* to be the genuine article; but every unprejudiced, sensible person can clearly see that the very existence of such conflicting and mutually destructive systems conclusively proves that Christianity, apart from these systems, or "interpretations" as Dr. Smith calls them, is non-existent. Not only nobody knows what it is, but there is nothing there to know. The people who support the theologians are ignorant dupes or unfortunate victims. As soon as the eyes of the dupes are opened, theology will disappear, and there will be no Christianity left. Meanwhile, the conflicting systems yield a comfortable livelihood to a numerous class of speculators.

"The day will come," exclaims Mr. Campbell, "when it will be just as impossible to deny the immortality of the soul as it is now impossible to deny that the world is round." But the reverend gentleman forgets that even the existence of the soul has never yet been established, much less its immortality. It would be idiotic to *deny* that, the very existence of which is nothing but a gratuitous assumption. What Mr. Campbell really means, probably, is that the day will come when the evidence for man's immortality will be absolutely convincing; in which case, we would ask him, How do you know it? By what authority do you make such an assertion? More probably still, perhaps, the sentence quoted is only one of the irresponsible emotional outbursts in which the minister of the City Temple so habitually indulges.

There is a maudlin, mawkish, slobbery exaltation of love, frequently affected by the pulpit, which can do nothing but harm. It is said that "we live just in proportion as we love." But there are lots of people who do nothing but love. Especially in church on Sundays they are brimming over with fervent affection. "O! how ineffably sweet it is," they cry, "to love everybody without distinction." But such a profession of love is worthless. Christian love is mostly a hateful counterfeit. Such love is the cheapest and emptiest thing in the world. What most people need is, not sickly sympathy or frothy affection, but solid justice, legitimate fair-play, a helping hand over the stile, a fair wage for honest work, generous toleration for unpopular opinions sincerely held. Christian love has never been equal to the free granting of such dues.

A worm of the dust named Tabrum has published a little book, *Religious Beliefs of Scientists*, in which the author gives the opinions of a number of persons interested in science concerning the battle between Reason and Unreason. The writer's inquiries extended over fourteen years, and some of the answers received have a somewhat ironic flavor, which augurs ill for the eternal welfare of the writers.

Professor W. Boyd Dawkins, of Owens College, Manchester, wrote: "It is, of course, true that scientific research has shown the imperfection of the cosmogony of the Old Testament, but it has done nothing more." Dr. Carruthers, F.L.S., says: "I know of no fact of science which is antagonistic to the Bible, rightly understood." A number of other persons write to the same effect, obviously with the tongue in the cheek.

Two things emerge from this egregious publication. The ideas of the verbal accuracy and absolute inerrancy of the Bible have been thrown over by the Christians themselves. Next time Brother Tabrum pursues his inquiries he might ask the scientists to explain the feeding of the five thousand in view of the elementary scientific axiom that the part can never exceed the whole.

At this time of the year the pilgrims journey to Lourdes and other fraudulent shrines. Shakespeare says, "The miserable have no other medicine but only Hope." The priests know this, and turn it to financial account. Christ died on the cross, and these ecclesiastical humbugs live on it.

The Bishop of London takes a great interest in Esperanto. This may explain the poverty of his English in his published utterances. The poverty of his ideas must be explained in terms of mentality.

Rev. Septimus Buss delivered a dinner-hour lecture in a City church lately on "Tom Paine and the 'Age of Reason.'" Mr. Buss is a solemn old gentleman. To be called Septimus in infancy and childhood is enough to ensure a solemn old age. He and the congregation, such as it was, solemnly sang the hymn "O for a faith that will not shrink"—even with

washing. Then the reverend gentleman proceeded to talk about Thomas Paine as though the subject were a novelty. He gravely told his hearers that the *Age of Reason* "was received with great indignation in America and Europe." Also that he (the preacher) went to the British Museum (instead of spending fourpence-halfpenny) the other day "to read the book," and "found it abounded with coarse and vulgar expressions about the Deity, such as were used by the late Charles Bradlaugh." We might borrow the reverend gentleman's language and call him a "coarse and vulgar" slanderer of both Paine and Bradlaugh. But we won't. We content ourselves with saying that the final hymn "O for a closer walk with God" would have been more appropriate if "God" had made room for "Truth."

Henry Alexander, a market gardener, was killed by lightning at Basildon, Essex. The foreman of the coroner's jury at the inquest was the Rev. H. Carpenter, and the jury's verdict was that "death was caused by an act of God." The reverend foreman of the jury did not demand a warrant against the said "God." This seems a sad oversight. But perhaps it was thought that there might be considerable difficulty in executing the warrant—or even serving a summons. A personage with no address, who has never been seen, and who is everywhere in general but nowhere in particular, is not very "come-at-able."

Lord Willoughby de Broke has discovered the true cause of King Edward's death. He was killed by "Divine Providence" in order to frustrate the evil intentions of the Liberal Party. Liberals had brought politics to the foot of the throne, said his lordship, and "the hand of Divine Providence had suddenly cut them short in their career." Now we know all about it.

More "Providence." Altenahr, an exquisite little town in the Rhine district, much visited by tourists, has been wiped out by a cloud-burst which led to a flood. A large number of its 1,000 inhabitants have perished. "He doeth all things well."

The Bishop of London, speaking at Fulham Palace on Tuesday, June 14, made the ignominious confession (as reported in the *Daily News*) that "for every hundred pounds he could raise for the East London Church Fund, he had the greatest difficulty in getting five pounds for rescue and preventive work." Religion and benevolence are obviously far from being the same thing.

Sir W. Robertson Nicoll says that "the supernatural Church is thrown back on supernatural aid," and that "that aid is first, midst, and last." We challenge this knighted man of God to adduce, from history, a single scrap of evidence that the Church is a supernatural institution, or that even as a human institution it has ever accomplished a single piece of work that could not have been done without "supernatural aid." Until this challenge is seriously taken up, we must charge the reverend knight with talking sheer nonsense.

The Founder of the First Salvation Army is reported to have said, "Suffer little children to come unto me." Bramwell Booth, of the present Salvation Army, puts on his bills, "Young children, with or without their parents, cannot be admitted to these meetings."

The "fancy religion" of Faith Healing has been the subject of a symposium in the *British Medical Journal*. The verbiage of some commercially minded medical experts is sufficient to provoke a smile from a cab-horse. If pain is only an illusion of the mind, why don't Christian Science women stick their hatpins through their heads instead of through their hair? There is one thing superior to both science and religion, and that is—common sense.

Lord Halifax refers to some of the witnesses before the Divorce Commission as "entirely ignorant of divine law in regard to marriage." We hope his lordship doesn't mean that the divine law in regard to marriage is to be found in the Bible, for the Bible favors polygamy. It was not from the Bible that the Christian Church adopted monogamy, but from the civilisation of Greece and Rome, and the customs of the northern "barbarians." All the favorites of the Bible God were thorough-going polygamists, from Abraham and Jacob to David and Solomon.

One man in the world, at least, has an appropriate name. We refer to the Rev. Jonathan Goforth, Canadian Presbyterian missionary at Honan, China. This gentleman has been paying a special visit to Motherwell under the auspices

of the Lanarkshire Christian Union, and discoursing on "The Secret of Revivals." According to the card advertisements, Mr. Goforth "has been much used of God in connection with the wonderful Revivals which have been recently experienced in Manchuria and North China." When he has done telling of "these marvellous gatherings" over here, we suppose he will go forth again. We believe the natives in Manchuria and North China would enjoy a repetition of Mr. Goforth's speeches at Motherwell. Being human, they must have some taste for romance.

Sir Robert Anderson reports a death-bed incident of Mark Twain's, for the truth of which we will not vouch. According to this evangelistic ex-detective, just before he died Mark Twain asked for his favorite book; and, as soon as it was handed to him, died. In the ordinary run of such stories, this favorite book should have been the Bible. In this case, it was Carlyle's *French Revolution*—a circumstance which greatly "depressed" Sir Robert. Poor man!

The Vatican has entered a protest against the small amount of religious liberty recently granted in Spain. The Spanish authorities have quite properly replied that the matter is one over which they can permit no outside interference. The truth is, we imagine, that those who engineered the murder of Ferrer find that they have gone too far, and the better type of the Spanish people are becoming restive under the stigma of a crime that has given Spain an unenviable notoriety throughout the civilised world.

The Kaiser depends much upon the Bible. He recently informed a dignitary of the Prussian Protestant Church that he keeps a Bible beside his bed, with "the most precious thoughts underlined." In all his thoughts and actions he asks: "What does the Bible say on the point?" The Bible is to me the source from which I draw strength and light." We should much like to see the Kaiser's Bible with its underlined passages. Probably he drew from thence the inspiration for the "mailed fist," and his famous advice to his soldiers that if ordered to fire on their own parents or brothers they must not hesitate to do so. The Kaiser is also convinced that "many who have fallen from God will again embrace the faith." No doubt he regrets that he lacks the power to order their return to the fold. Anyway, hopes are cheap. Meanwhile Germany, like other civilised countries, counts a greater number of unbelievers every year.

Someone says that "if the bells of heaven are to ring out we must work the strings down here." Amazingly sensible and logical bells! There is no bell-ringer in heaven, the angels being too aristocratic to descend to such menial occupation. Christians, then, are welcomed to heaven before they start, and—by themselves. We need not point out the obvious moral.

"The Sunday Corner" in the Saturday issue of the *Burton Evening Gazette* is crowded with brilliant ideas. For example, it contains this sparkling gem: "The brotherhood of man cannot be attained without the Fatherhood of God." How on earth, or anywhere else, can the Fatherhood of God be attained? To attain anything is to achieve, accomplish, reach, or gain it by efforts. Fancy attaining by effort God and his Fatherhood, and thereafter, as a consequence, the brotherhood of man!

Here is another priceless jewel from the same "Sunday Corner": "There will be no Court of Appeal at the Last Judgment." The man that made that discovery is a genius of the first water. It would never have entered into the head of anyone else even to dream of such a thing. It takes our breath away to read the precious sentence. It is so astoundingly original, and so faultlessly logical. Is the Rev. Mr. Waldron its happy author?

Because only £23 was collected at a missionary festival at Chichester, Bishop Taylor Smith snorted his disapprobation. Priests are not often so explicit that their concern is Cash, not Christ.

Rev. C. E. Jackson, writing in *Lloyd's Weekly News*, says that Christ "marks the hen brooding over her young, and the falling sparrow. Twice do the tears of women arrest Him." Tears! If Christ is alive to-day he might realise that there are more Magdalens in London alone than there were in the whole of Palestine in his day. And this founder of the Gospel of Poverty might also note the lordly equipages of the princes of his Church carrying their sleek and hypocritical occupants, whilst under the shadows of his Churches crouch human beings in want of food.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

(Lecturing Suspended during the Summer.)

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURING ENGAGEMENTS.—June 26, Parliament Hill. July 3, Victoria Park.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £220 9s. 7d. Received since:—W. P. Adamson, £1 1s.; C. H. M. Grönn, £1 1s.

SHILLING MONTH.—C. H. M. Grönn, 2.

N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Miss Vance acknowledges:—Kingsland Branch N. S. S., 10s. 6d.

H. VICKERS.—Roosevelt is gone now; it is best to let his achievements here be forgotten. With regard to Mr. Foote's health, he has been making steady progress all the time, and hopes not only to do a good deal of writing during the summer, but to be in first-rate form for the winter's lecturing work.

W. P. ADAMSON, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, says that nothing in the world gives him more pleasure than filling in that cheque. "You," he adds, "have won the battle of Freethought. You have, for thirty years, amid treacheries, discouragements, and insults, borne aloft the word 'Freethinker' without even taking notice of the angry outcries of your bitter and unscrupulous enemies—if they can be called so.....One cannot but admire your splendid audacity and rare courage, especially in these days of knock-kneed feebleness in every section of public life."

R. H. ROSETTI.—Pleased to hear of your successful meeting at Laindon. Accept our congratulations on your endeavor to win converts in what cannot be the most promising of quarters. We are not surprised at the tactics of the Christian speaker who was imported to oppose. Such things are to be expected, and are, in a way, testimony to the efficacy of the Freethought attack.

J. BAKER.—Perfect nonsense. Haeckel's "collapse" is a Christian dream. The wish was father to the thought. He has not renounced his views on evolution." The safe rule is never to believe what Christians say about Freethinkers.

B. SAVILL.—The Kingsland Branch's vote of thanks for "the grand Conference report" is welcome.

C. H. M. GRÖNN (Melbourne).—Glad you regard the *Freethinker* as a "weekly feast" and think so highly of its writers.

E. J.—Thanks for your interesting quotation from Catlin's *American Indians*. Unfortunately, we have no space at our disposal for a week or so in which it might be used.

T. DOBSON.—See paragraph. Thanks.

J. BRISTOW.—Always glad to receive useful cuttings.

H. J. BALDWIN.—Sent as requested.

R. B. CAMPBELL.—MURGRAVE READE (we have said it so many times!) was connected with the Secular movement in Manchester for a short time in the early eighties, and soon afterwards went back to Christianity without being missed. He never was a "leader."

J. BRUCE.—MSS. to hand, and will appear. We agree with you that if the members of the Missionary Conference study Buddhism in the right spirit it ought to do them good. Still, the capacity of human nature for missing obvious truths is great, and that of missionary human nature specially so.

W. MCKELVIE.—We are glad to hear that the Liverpool Branch experienced ideal weather on the occasion of its annual outing, and that those who participated thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

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

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

WHEN the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

People may well wonder how Mr. Foote has kept the *Freethinker* going—and going strongly too—ever since 1881. Mr. Robert Blatchford, in last week's *Clarion*, denies that his paper has ever paid. One would have thought it did, in view of its advertised circulation some two or three years ago, but Mr. Blatchford declares otherwise. "For years," he says, "quite ten years, perhaps more, the *Clarion* has been sustained by the extraneous earnings of A. M. Thompson and myself.....We have never lived on the *Clarion*; the *Clarion* has always lived upon us." What is to be said, after this, of the folk who fancied that Mr. Foote was making a fortune out of the *Freethinker*? George Meredith, of course, was not one of them. Writing to Mr. Foote some twenty years ago, he said: "You fight for the noblest of causes, profitless as you must know it to be." It has been "profitless" all the time, but Mr. Foote has never given up the "fight." He went into it for other objects.

The late Mr. Hermann Vezin, who was a fine actor and a beautiful elocutionist, desired his remains to be cremated, and that nobody should wear any outward sign of mourning for him. We understand that he was a sceptic with regard to the Christian faith. It was appropriate that Mr. Hermann Vezin played the part of Count Cenci at the private performance of Shelley's great drama some twenty-five years ago at the Grand Theatre, Islington. It has always been impossible to obtain the Lord Chamberlain's license for the public production of *The Cenci*.

New Zealand is a long way off, and the May number is the last that we have seen of Mr. W. W. Collins's *Examiner*. It is an excellent one. Mr. Collins leads off with a seasonable article on "The Comet." We are glad to see that the *Freethinker* is laid under contribution for the second article. From the editorial notes we see that Mr. Collins still lectures in the Choral Hall, Christchurch, on Sunday evenings, to good audiences. It is twenty years since Mr. Collins delivered his first lecture in Christchurch. We hope it will be longer before he delivers his last.

We are asked to announce to Freethinkers in Glasgow and district that the Glasgow Branch of the N. S. S. has fixed its annual picnic for July 8. The place selected is Mearns Castle, and those who wish to join the party are asked to meet at the juncture of Argyle-street with Jamaica-street, at 10 o'clock sharp. We wish the Branch pleasant weather and an enjoyable day.

Mr. F. A. Davies visited Newcastle-on-Tyne last Sunday as lecturer for the local Branch at its Annual Demonstration on the Town Moor. There were large audiences, and the secretary writes that the members were "highly delighted" with the results of the day's work. Some interruption occurred from several disorderly Christians, but Mr. Davies is too old a bird to be greatly disturbed by such tactics. We should not be surprised to learn that he enjoyed the interruptions as much as the audiences appear to have enjoyed his lectures.

A Bradlaugh Slander.

LIES about great Freethinkers are so common that it is impossible to nail them all down. It is advisable, however, to nail down promptly and decisively an odious lie about Charles Bradlaugh, which appeared in Tuesday's *Daily Chronicle*. In the account of old "Harry" Lloyd who has just died at Enfield, and turns out to have been a woman who had passed for twenty-five years as a man, it is stated that "many years ago she used to attend Bradlaugh's lectures for 'men only.'" This cannot possibly be true. Bradlaugh never lectured to "men only." He left that wretched trick to preachers of the religion he despised. I invite the *Daily Chronicle* either to prove from some public announcement that Bradlaugh did lecture to "men only" or to withdraw the abominable statement. I trust the editor will not take refuge in Christian silence.

G. W. FOOTR.

The Funniest Book in the World.

"Do I view this world as a vale of tears?
Ah, reverend sir, not I."

—ROBERT BROWNING.

IT has ever been a source of wonder to Freethinkers how Christians have ever been able to maintain, after a perusal of the Bible, that their deity was entitled to the credit of benevolence. The pious opinion really seemed in the nature of an unmerited compliment, unsupported by any evidence. The grim exponents of the religion of the "Man of Sorrows" seldom smiled themselves, the study of the Scriptures having, apparently, a depressing effect upon them—so much so that one could tell Christians by the very expression. Nay, more; the tell-tale features advertised how far the victim was suffering from the disease of religiosity. From the slight droop of the mouth which distinguished the High Churchman, to the resemblance to a tired cab-horse worn by the flat-chested warriors of the Salvation Army, one might accurately classify them.

Christians were cankered through with austerity. Generation after generation had been stifled under a system which was sunless, joyless, and graceless. The results were to be seen in the dull, dismal, dreary, rectangular frequenters of the places of worship. The professional pulpit-punchers and Bible-bangers were so far incapable of honest laughter that an undertaker was a merry-andrew compared with them. In short, the Christian world was in the meshes of devilry, darkness, and despair.

This gospel that life for the majority of the human race was but the ante-chamber to an eternal red-hot poker department, which was in reality an arraignment not merely of the "Man of Sorrows" deity but of human nature itself, finally transformed this fair world of ours, for all Christians, into a darker and more terrible hell than the genius of Dante or Milton conceived.

All this unmerited suffering might have been avoided if the earliest theologians had been able to see a joke. It is entirely owing to the mental density of these Orientals that Christianity is a nightmare rather than a religious system. These intellectual babes and sucklings misconceived the central idea of the Bible. They innocently took a work of humor and read it in all seriousness. We all know the fearful results, besides which a madman's dream appears as perfect sanity.

The Bible is, in reality, a work of humor. We must, however, "speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us." The Holy Ghost's humor is not as our humor, nor his witticisms as our witticisms. The Ghost is not so satirical as Heine, so ironical as Gibbon, nor so modern as Anatole France. Quip, repartee, and epigrams are strangers to his pages. Maybe a ghostly humor is best suited to a book by a ghostly author. Although we cannot say that there is a laugh on every page, a smile in every paragraph, the prehistoric fun of the Bible will suffice. There are sufficient jokes, sly stories, Rabelaisian anecdotes, and quaint burlesques to have enlightened the theologians.

The proverbial Scot, who required a surgical operation before he could see a joke, was a rollicking humorist compared with those pietists who could read the Ghost's stories without moving a muscle. As a funmaker, the Holy Ghost somewhat resembles Artemus Ward, although he is the Yankee's superior as a writer of fiction. The Ghost is a showman, absolutely calm about his exhibits, as a showman should be. He says the most deliriously funny things without turning a hair. That delightfully funny story of Jonah and the lodging-house whale is the perfection of unemotional joking. Whilst reading it we fairly sympathise with the poor whale who had a bed-sitting-room in his "tum-tum." The humor of the tale of the grand old greengrocer, Adam, is infectious. He is stated to have been the first man, and to have been able to throw hundred-weights about on his first day on the earth. If he

had been a shoemaker he would also have been the last man. The nautical yarn of Noah's Ark is a masterpiece, including, as it does, the suggestion that millions of creatures were crammed into a seaworthy Pantechnicon, whilst only two fleas accompanied eight Orientals on this pleasure trip. The stories of the Adventures of the Talking Snake in Eden, Daniel in the Lions' Den, The Ten Plagues, The Tower of Babel, Ezekiel's Aldermanic Banquet, are also brilliant examples of Eastern humor. The life of the Man of Sorrows in the later pages is sufficient to make a bronze statue burst into smiles. When the hero walks the waves, argues with a fig-tree, turns water into champagne, feeds thousands with some bath-buns and a few sardines, and finally sails away in the ether like an aeroplane, we feel that the Arabian Nights is sober history in comparison.

We cheerfully admit that there is a falling off in the latter pages. There is, however, a sprinkling of fun, a day's march between each jest, but what of that? A pearl is none the less a pearl even if it is surrounded by an intolerable deal of oyster. Learned men, who find out everything in time, have discovered some additional jocosities. Mark Twain has pointed out that the phrase, "the street which is called straight," is ironic; for he adds, the thoroughfare in question is "straighter than a corkscrew but not so straight as a rainbow." Lord Byron found a most ungallant reference to a lady's nose in "the tower which looketh unto Damascus." Huxley extracted much fun from the anecdote of the bedevilled "porkers," but never met a rasher opponent than Gladstone, who was as innocent of humor as the lunatics who find Bacon in Shakespeare. Fed on such food, Bible students should have waxed fat. To class the Bible as sober fiction is absurd. It is a Salmagundi of riotous, exuberant, Oriental imagination. If people would only read the volume instead of chattering about it, such absurd misconception would be impossible. The Ghost is a more subtle humorist than people imagine. The refusal of the stupid, good people to see his jokes must have astonished the Ghost. He never expressed his amusement, but "let concealment, like a worm in the bud, feed on his damask cheek." If he had let himself go, he must have held his two sides—which are six—until his three heads—which are one—fairly ached from the explosion.

MIMNERMUS.

Religion and Sexual Morality.—II.

(Concluded from p. 397.)

NOT only is a belief in religion no hindrance to leading a life of sensual indulgence, but it has often been a direct incentive to immorality. The Antinomians maintained that under the Gospel dispensation the moral law was of no use or obligation, but that faith alone was necessary to salvation. They believed that they "were justified by faith" and set free from the law; they founded themselves on Paul's teaching, "By him all that believe are justified from all things" (Acts xiii. 39), and "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Cor. vi. 12); and his followers, finding they were justified in the lawfulness of their vices, troubled very little about the expediency or in expediency of them. The Rev. Baring Gould says:—

"Even in the first ages the disorders were terrible. St. Paul's Epistles give glimpses of the wild outbreak of antinomianism that everywhere followed his preaching—the drunkenness which desecrated the Eucharists, the backbitings, quarrellings, fornication, lasciviousness, which called forth such indignant denunciation from the great apostle."*

The converts of St. Paul, he says, "rolled up ceremonial and moral restrictions in one bundle, and flung both clean away." The Corinthians, to show their freedom under the Gospel, boasted their licence to commit incest "such as was not so much as named among the Gentiles" (1 Cor. v. 1). Nicolas, a hot

* Baring-Gould, *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, p. 26.

Pauline, and his followers "rushed headlong into fornication without shame" (Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 29); he had the effrontery to produce his wife and offer her for promiscuous insult before the assembled apostles" (p. 25). And this evil has dogged the Church throughout the ages.

When the Church—following the teachings of Christ and Paul—adopted the ideal of asceticism, and declared the life of monk and the virgin to be the only perfect life, she deeply injured civilisation. As the historian, Lecky, observes:—

"But most terrible of all were the struggles of young and ardent men, through whose veins the hot blood of passion continually flowed, physically incapable of a life of celibacy, and with all that proneness to hallucination which a southern sun engenders, who were borne on the wave of enthusiasm to the desert life.....The Lives of the Saints paint with an appalling vividness the agonies of their struggle. Multiplying with frantic energy the macerations of the body, beating their breasts with anguish, the tears for ever streaming from their eyes, imagining themselves continually haunted by ever-changing forms of deadly beauty, which acquired a greater vividness from the very passion with which they resisted them, their struggles not unfrequently ended in insanity and in suicide."*

That this total suppression of human nature led more often to a life of profligacy and hypocrisy, is the testimony of the greatest of the saints, St. Jerome, who escaped the tempter by acting upon Christ's advice (Matt. xix. 12) and, by a surgical operation, made himself a eunuch "for the kingdom of heaven's sake." When St. Jerome deals with the moral condition of his time—the fourth century—it is not the pagans and heathen that he charges with immorality. "We are struck with the fact," says Professor Dill, "that his heaviest censure falls on those who, at least in name, had separated themselves from the world,—the monks and the secular clergy of Rome."† And he observes that—

"the picture which St. Jerome draws of female society is so repulsive that we would gladly believe it to be exaggerated. But if the priesthood with its enormous influence was so corrupt, it is only too probable that it debased the sex which is always most under clerical influence. That clerical concubinage, under the pretence of the severest sanctity, was common, cannot be doubted by anyone acquainted with the writers of the time. St. Jerome is perfectly explicit on the subject. Men and women, vowed to perpetual chastity, lived under the same roof, brazening out the miserable imposture of superhuman piety under impossible conditions" (p. 134).

To deal with the horrible immorality of the Middle Ages, when the Church was supreme and unbelief non-existent, would require several articles the length of this one. We pass on to the sixteenth century, when Luther set out to reform the Church. He also, like Paul, proclaimed Justification by Faith only, and he also was held to have swept away the obligations of morality. To cite the Rev. Baring Gould again:—

"The results were precisely the same in the sixteenth century, when Luther re-affirmed Paulinism, with all his warmth and want of caution. At first he proclaimed his doctrines boldly, without thought of their practical application. When he saw the results he was staggered, and hastened to provide checks and qualify his former words."

Luther himself declared:—

"Scarce did I begin to preach my Gospel before the country burst into frightful revolt; schisms and sects tore the Church; everywhere honesty, morality, and good order fell into ruin.....Like a wild horse without rein and bridle, without constraint or decency, they rush on the accomplishment of their grossest lusts."‡

As the Rev. Baring Gould observes, "The disease broke forth in a multitude of obscene sects spotting the fair face of Protestantism" (p. 8). One of these sects,—the Anabaptists,—obtained, under the leadership of Jan Bockelson, a tailor of Leyden, possession of the town of Munster. Starting with asceticism,

the Anabaptists soon passed over into extreme licentiousness, women returning to the primitive innocence of Adam and Eve by appearing naked in the public streets.* "Munster," says Baring Gould, "now became the theatre of the wildest orgies ever perpetrated under the name of religion. It is, apparently, a law that mysticism should rapidly pass from the stage of asceticism into that of licence."† An eye-witness of the orgies declared:—

"We should scandalise our readers were we to relate in detail the outrageous scenes of immorality which took place in the town, and the villainies which these maniacs committed to satisfy their abominable lusts. They were no more human beings, they were foul and furious beasts."‡

To cite the Rev. Baring Gould again:—

"The more spiritual a religion is, the more apt it is to lurch and let in a rush of immorality; for its tendency is to substitute an internal for the external law, and the internal impulse is too often a hidden jog from the carnal appetite."§

The object of the ascetic is not to regulate and control the natural appetites and passions of mankind, but to suppress them altogether. They sit on the safety-valve, thus causing the explosions of immorality that have always followed the practice of asceticism. In our own country, the asceticism of the Puritans under the Commonwealth was followed by the extreme licentiousness of the Restoration under Charles II.

Christianity has taught a false morality, it has taught the total suppression of the sexual side of our nature, with the result that it has concentrated attention upon it, and, instead of getting rid of the vice, it has only concentrated it until it becomes an obsession.¶

The average Englishman believes that his nation represents a pattern of morality for all others to copy. He sniffs at the morality of the French, the Russian, and especially at that of the Oriental nations. It is this intolerable pharisaism which renders our countrymen so odious in the eyes of many foreigners, who detest us for our hypocrisy. It would surprise him to learn that the people of the East, who are acquainted with our literature, are disgusted with its impurity. Lafcadio Hearn—who lived thirteen years in Japan as a teacher, marrying a Japanese wife and adopting the Japanese style of living—tells us that, to the Japanese,—

"the people of the West, with their novels and poems about love, seem a race of very lascivious people. If, indeed, he should think more kindly of them at all, it would be through pity,—as a race of sexually starved beings, frantic with nymphomania and all forms of erotomania, through refusal to obey the laws of nature."¶¶

Upon receiving from America a Sunday paper full of love poems, illustrations of fashionable beauties, and new styles of underclothing, he observes: "To-day, after three years in the most Eastern East,

* Bax, *Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*; 1903; pp. 60, 61.

† Baring Gould, *Freaks of Fanaticism*; 1891; p. 267.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

§ *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, p. 11.

¶ Mr. Havelock Ellis, one of the sanest writers of our time, in his *Affirmations* (p. 116), observes: "It is a very ancient observation that the most unchaste verse has often been written by the chastest poets, and that the writers who have written most purely have found their compensation in living impurely." And he cites from Greville's *Memoirs* a comparison between the licentious poetry of Moore and his pure life, with the pure poetry of Rogers and his being, "of all the men he had ever known, the greatest sensualist." Mr. Ellis goes on to say: "In the same manner it has always been found in Christendom, both among Catholics and Protestants, that much of the most licentious literature has been written by the clergy, by no means because the clergy are a depraved class, but precisely because the austerity of their lives renders necessary for them these emotional athletics. Of course, from the standpoint of simple nature, such literature is bad; it is merely a form of that obscenity which, as Huysmans has acutely remarked, can only be produced by those who are chaste; in Nature, desire passes quickly into action, leaving little or no trace on the mind. A certain degree of continence—I do not mean merely in the region of sex, but in the other fields of human action also—is needed as a breeding-ground for the dreams and images of desire to develop into the perfected vision of art."

¶¶ Elizabeth Bisland, *Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn*; 1906; vol. ii., p. 113.

* Lecky, *History of European Morals*; 1902; vol. ii., p. 118.

† Dill, *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*; 1899; p. 127.

‡ Cited, *The Lost and Hostile Gospels*, p. 28.

when I look at that paper I can hardly believe my eyes." His students would say to him, "Dear Teacher, why are your English novels all filled with nonsense about love and women?—we do not like such things." Hearn declares that the Orientals feeblest passion is that of sex; he marries very early, and all that sort of thing belongs to the natural appetites, which he would no more think of talking about than he would of any other of the natural functions of the body. He concludes:—

"The whole truth is always suggested to me by the Sunday paper. We live in the musky atmosphere of desire in the West—an erotic perfume emanates from all that artificial life of ours.....An Oriental would almost faint with astonishment and shame to see a Western ballet. He would scream at the sight of a French nude. He would be scandalised by a Greek statue. He would rightly and instantly estimate all this as being exactly what it is—artificial stimulus of dangerous senses. The whole West is steeped in it. It now seems, even to me, almost disgusting" (vol. ii., p. 121).

After nineteen centuries of Christian repression, and teaching of celibacy and continence, the net result seems to be that we are looked down upon by the heathen—to whom we send missionaries to improve their morals—as a filthy minded people. And it requires a residence among these pure-minded pagans to clear the mind of its native prurience.

Before the Christian throws stones at Secular morality, let him look well to his own windows.

The verdict of history is that Christianity, by its treatment of sexual matters, has injured civilisation.

W. MANN.

Correspondence.

THE WORLD'S MISSIONARY CONFERENCE AT EDINBURGH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Now that the World Missionary Conference is drawing very near, ministers and defenders of religion are vying with one another in writing lengthy articles to the local papers in praise of the forthcoming Conference, which is supposed to mark an epoch in the history of Christian religion, the so-called best religion in the world. It is, however, very amusing to find that the object of this large concourse of the world's purest and holiest men (as is evident from the lengthy correspondence in the Edinburgh press) is not so much to improve Christianity by purging it of its absurdities and paradoxes, and make it more acceptable to men of religion, as it is to consider what measures have to be taken to spread it in the lands of the "heathen," the "uncivilised," and the "barbarian." These immaculate followers of Christ do not display the least anxiety to save Christianity from becoming extinct in the very heart of Christendom; for no amount of priestly casuistry can make an impartial judge overlook the apparent fact that in all western countries which are said to be the fountain sources of Christian religion, faith in Christianity is slowly dwindling to the vanishing point. No, they have not the slightest thought of setting their own house in order; but they must needs poke their nose in the affairs of other peoples, and call their religions "barbarous," "wicked," and "diabolical." How many of these holy shepherds themselves are true to Christianity? On May 30 alone I found in the local papers two very characteristically significant paragraphs: the one describing how a reverend gentleman was put in the police lock-up for drunken riotousness, and the other detailing how legal proceedings were taken against a pious product of ecclesiastical purity (a grey-haired gentleman of over sixty years of age) for misconduct with a young woman. These are the kind of gentlemen that are coming here as representatives of the holy Church from all the farthest corners of the earth to sit in judgment over the religious destinies of the world, especially those of the "heathen," whom, they think, they are specially commissioned by their "Heavenly Father" to save from perdition. It is harassing to think of the huge sums of money that are being lavished every day at the expense of the poor people to maintain these epitomised monstrosities of piety. Even the building of innumerable Dreadnoughts would repay the expenditure more profitably.

It is still more amusing to find from this plethoric verbiage of epistolatory fanaticism how, with all the vaunt of Christian tolerance and Christian sincerity in the welfare and progress of other people, the accredited mouthpieces of the

Christian Church not unoften reveal their inner nature in its real perspective. One writes that the "heathen in Japan and China are rising; we must take such steps that their rise may not prove a menace to Christianity and civilisation." Another grinds his teeth in rage and cries out that "negroes in Africa are going over to the side of Mohammedanism and are turning traitors to Christianity, and we must take all means to crush these savage Mohammedans." In the so-called civilised societies of the West a Mohammedan's intensity of faith is considered an intolerable fanaticism, and his aversion to Christianity a cynical and satanic malevolence; but a Christian's hysterical outburst of bitterness against the followers of other religions passes current as a pious and righteous indignation.

What is still more astonishing and unaccountable in a Christian is that the evolution of his intellect has all along taken characteristically audacious lines. All Christians think—they have the temerity to think—that Christianity and civilisation are convertible terms. To them, sanitation is Christianity, surgery is Christianity, all scientific advancement and culture is due to Christianity, and even the discovery of Halley's comet is the result of Christian teaching. A gentleman in the *Edinburgh Despatch* of May 30, writes:—

"To whom does Japan owe its civilisation but to Christian nations, especially Britain? She has given men who have taught Japan most of what she knows about sanitation and surgery. She has provided naval and military instructors, and it is mainly due to them that Japan owes all she knows about the arts of war. And, again, to whom does Japan owe her courtesy and gentleness but to Western teachers? This brings us to the crux of the matter. From whom did the British receive their moral education? I merely content myself by saying that Western nations have received their moral instruction from Christian teaching and ideals. You see the results in their laws, in their sanitation, and in their enterprises about social amelioration of the people. These are the effects of a cause, and that cause is—Christianity."

This is the kind of intellect that Christianity begets among its faithful votaries. Christians are not ashamed of appropriating to their intolerant fanaticism and bigoted dogmatism all that is the result of the glorious struggles and victorious martyrdom of the pioneers of Science and Freethought—but for whose manly work and endeavors the condition of civilisation would not have been what it is at the present day. Christians are not ashamed to say that civilisation and science are the results of Christianity. Can we afford to forget that Christianity was the greatest stumbling block to progress and science when it was in the plenitude of its power and influence? Was not Bruno burnt alive for his astronomical opinions? Was not Galileo persecuted and hunted for life on account of his heretical doctrine? Were not religious inquisitions of the most savage nature held to stamp out all liberty of thought? All this ignominious record of humiliation and shame has to be expunged from the pages of history before Christians should dare to pose themselves as champions of civilisation and science. The present mildness of Christian propagandism, and its pretensions to humanity and gentleness, are not due to its inherent genius for peace and goodwill, but only to its inability to translate its bigotry into persecution. It is the steady advancement of human thought and emancipation of human intelligence consequent on the progress of science, that has brought peace to humanity and secured mankind from the persecutions of the Christian Church. It is monstrous to say that civilisation owes any debt to Christian pretensions.

A "HEATHEN" FREETHINKER.

Edinburgh, June 11, 1910.

FREETHOUGHT AND REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Having been greatly interested in Mr. Cohen's articles on "Freethought and Reform," and these being, I think, the only articles of Mr. Cohen's I have ever read which have not been convincing to me in their conclusions, I would crave permission to raise a few points which perhaps he would kindly clear up.

Firstly, I think Mr. Cohen misunderstands the materialist conception in this way: the acceptance of the theory that all mental and moral life depends on the economic conditions does not necessarily involve that mental and moral ideas should not be attacked—just the reverse. Mr. Cohen (following, perhaps unconsciously, Belfort Bax) reasons in this way, but I suggest that the true logic of the position involves that all believers in it (Socialists) should likewise be Atheists, and attack supernatural religion accordingly. The economic materialist would agree with Mr. Cohen that there is no weapon like "the idea." But they contend that it is the altered economic condition of the present that produces the idea which destroys the idea representing the economic condition of the past.

Mr. Cohen contends that "economic forces depend on gregariousness." "Gregariousness is not a physical fact, but a psychical fact." But does not this assertion overlook the origin of gregariousness? Would Mr. Cohen assert that man became gregarious from some unreasoning instinct, or would he agree that man became gregarious because he thought that it was to his advantage to do so? If so, what made him think it was to his advantage? I put it that primitive man found he could feed himself and shelter himself better by working in groups rather than in isolation; thus his mental outlook became gregarious. Would Mr. Cohen contend that gregariousness arises entirely from mind? Many animals beside man are gregarious; all have more or less mentality. How does Mr. Cohen explain, then, that some species develop gregariousness while others do not? Contrary to Mr. Cohen's conclusion, I contend that the cause is purely physical; that the secret is to be explained by studying how and where the animal obtains its means of life, food, or shelter. Speaking generally, gregarious animals, including humans, inhabit those places where food (fruit, grass, flowers, foliage) grow in abundance; non-gregarious inhabit those places (desert lands, bare mountainous regions) where food is scarcer, and has to be more strenuously fought for when found. I say speaking generally, because some instances can be given, such as ants and small monkey tribes, where animals have apparently been forced into gregariousness from individual weakness. Not being provided with strong weapons of attack to overcome natural enemies, they found, as man found, that it was more advantageous to work in groups. In both cases the cause is physical: "psychical grounds" do not explain the circumstance, it seems to me.

I do not think that Mr. Cohen realises the economic materialist's contention that, while the economic condition produces and establishes a religious idea, it likewise produces the Freethought idea which is to combat it. To explain my meaning clearly, I will take an analogous case from Darwinism. It is known the struggle to survive produces in many species the markings on their bodies; a constant killing of conspicuous individuals, resulting in the survival of the inconspicuous; thus we have certain insects and birds arrayed in colors indistinguishable from the tree-trunk or moorland they may inhabit. Yet, curiously enough, the operation of this very same physical law sometimes produces an exact reversion of this. Some species, having developed a different weapon of defence—perhaps a sting or poison-fang—inconspicuous individuals are attacked by their enemies and conspicuous ones avoided—which leads to certain bright-colored species standing out in startling prominence to their environment.

Now on the theory that the mental world is a reflection of the physical world, it is easy to see that the same result may occur. What produces the anti-Christian in an environment where Christianity is general? Is it a more personal hatred of ancient Hebrew literature, religious hymns and phrases, mental and moral teachings—i.e., psychical cause? Or is it because he sees that masses of people are in a rotten condition, that they are dupes, swindled and imposed on, starved and degraded—i.e., physical cause?

Does the Freethinker agitate because he has an invincible personal objection to Ezekiel and the prophets, or because he wants to see the material condition of the people improved? Did Darwin produce his works more because he thought people would be interested to know all about plants and animals, or was the motive contained in that famous phrase, in his letter to Karl Marx, concerning the extension of knowledge which, "in the long run, was sure to add to the happiness of mankind"?

Finally, Mr. Cohen will agree, I think, that the Christian religion was established by fire and sword—physical means. It only became possible by the support of powerful emperors and royal gangs—economic might. Their reason for establishing it was to keep slaves in subjection—on moral grounds, of course; but a physical reason.

To-day we see the Christian religion mentally a failure; a disintegrated hotch-potch, a mere ridiculous shadow of its former self. Yet a purely economic reason—the possession of vast wealth in money and property—keeps it alive, and perhaps will keep it alive, for more years than we Freethinkers care to think of. On the other hand, the increasing poverty, the growing intensity of the struggle to live (equally physical or economic reasons) will ultimately make the attack as powerful as the defence—and here is where I contend that the economic rebellion is Atheism economically expressed. The fact that some Socialists and Secularists on both sides do not see this, in no way, to my mind, alters its truth.

MARXIAN.

[Mr. Cohen will deal with this criticism in a special article in next week's *Freethinker*. The question is of too great importance to be dealt with in a note, and he is desirous of meeting the points raised in the above criticism as fully as possible.—EDITOR.]

"WHY ARE OUR CHURCHES EMPTY?"

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—After the columns of sickening cant which have appeared in certain daily papers concerning the religion of the masses, the following incident, which occurred in one of the most crowded parts of Battersea, is positively refreshing. I take the liberty of writing thinking it may interest you.

An argument was started by two men: Christianity v. Atheism. A large crowd soon collected, and my sister and I joined forces with the Atheist. After inviting us to put questions to him, and frankly admitting his inability to answer them, the Christian departed. We looked around for another to devour, but on all sides the answer was the same: "Not me, I'm not a Christian." Then I addressed the crowd: "Is there any man or woman present who knows enough about God to answer a few questions?" No one volunteered, and I went one further. "Aren't there any Christians here?" I asked. I was certainly not prepared for the result. In that large crowd—mostly men—my sister and I were the only two women taking any part in the discussion at all; there was not a single one ready to come forward and admit his belief in a God. "Why are our Churches empty?"

CLARA GUNNING,

Whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle; but it is only by this small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current.—*Matthew Arnold*.

Obituary.

MAJOR JOHN C. HARRIS, R.E., whose name must be fairly familiar to most of our readers as an early and generous subscriber to nearly all the funds we have opened in the *Freethinker*, died on Wednesday morning, June 15. He was eighty-four last March, and had suffered a "stroke" since then, from which he had partially recovered, but it had left him so that he could only speak a little with difficulty, and he would never have been able to read and write again. He was also subject to giddiness, and this was the immediate cause of his death, for he fell out of a window at his residence in Gloucester-road, Regent's Park, having apparently been leaning out to look at the garden, the cultivation of which was his principal hobby. The coroner's jury had no difficulty in bringing in a verdict of "accidental death."

Major Harris had been a Freethinker for sixty years—not a concealed Freethinker, but an open and declared Freethinker; indeed, he used often to wonder at the timidity of so many sceptics who, if they all spoke out, would make the battle so much easier for the leaders of the movement. It was in India, in the military service, that he studied and reflected and threw off, not only the sour Presbyterianism in which he had been brought up, but religion altogether. Many were the stories he told us of the way in which he had been "taken down" by natives when he talked to them after the fashion of the missionaries. He was soon driven to the conclusion that his own faith was more superstitious than theirs, besides being more inhumane and less tolerant.

Major Harris was a scholar and a thinker; he was also one of nature's gentlemen, full of modesty, kindness, and consideration for others. His silent benefactions were many, and will be extensively missed. He was one of the most cheerful of men, even amidst pain and infirmity, and always reluctant to give trouble to anyone about him. His cheerfulness did not fail him towards the end; he frequently spoke to us in the sonnest way of his naturally approaching demise, and rather hoped for its speedy arrival. Happily all that the attention of old friends and loyal servants (nobody ever wanted to leave him) could do to lighten the burden of his last days was done. He had been living for a long while with two old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Bateman, who were greatly attached to him as he was to them. "They paid me a visit thirty-eight years ago, and they haven't gone yet," he said to us with one of his delightful smiles.

The funeral took place on Saturday, June 18, at Golder's-green Crematorium. In accordance with his wish it was a silent one. Amongst the mourners were Mr. and Mrs. Bateman and a few old army friends. We also noticed Mr. C. A. Watts. The National Secular Society, of which Major Harris was a life member—and it was the only Freethought society of which he was a member—was represented by the President and one of the vice-presidents (Mr. C. Cohen). The Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, was prevented from attending by further eye-trouble, but her friends, Miss Kough and Miss Stanley, attended on her behalf.

G. W. F.

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 and 6.15, F. A. Davies, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, W. J. Ramsey, Lectures.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, J. J. Darby and S. J. Cook. Newington Green: 12 noon, Walter Bradford. Clerkenwell Green: 12 noon, H. King and T. Dobson. Finsbury Park: 3.30, Miss K. B. Kough, "What Has Become of Hell?" Highbury Corner: Saturday, at 8, H. King and T. Dobson.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, F. Schaller, "Atheism."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, W. Davidson, "A Modern Instrument of Torture."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Jesus Christ, the Unknown Jew Boy."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, E. C. Saphin, "Five Points of Priestcraft."

WOOLWICH BRANCH N. S. S. (Beresford-square): 11.30, a Lecture.

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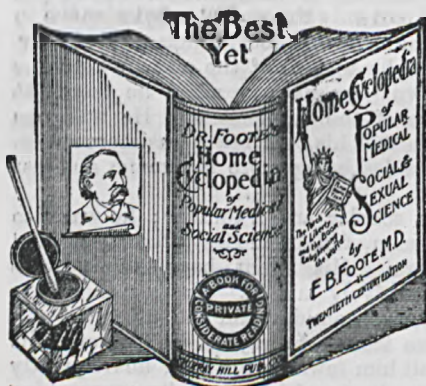
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