

THE Freethinker

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PRICE TWOPENCE

Otto-of-roses is good, but wild air is better.—EMERSON.

Blasphemy Against Booth.

GENERAL BOOTH was fighting the Devil (in that personage's absence) at the Scarborough Hippodrome on Sunday, and the London *Daily Chronicle* sent a "special correspondent" to do a column report of the show. Obeying orders, no doubt, this gentleman (or was it a lady?) laid on the butter with a trowel. We need say no more about that rancid performance. What we are concerned with is the ridiculous pretence that General Booth's critics are all slanderers. In the headlines they are called "detractors," and his affected replies to them appear as "calumnies denied." It is time to say a few plain words on this subject.

First, let us see whether people outside the Salvation Army have a right to criticise General Booth. We all know what becomes of critics inside the Salvation Army. They are promptly hustled out. But is the right of criticism confined to them? Not at all. General Booth begs money right and left from the general British public. His agents have called at our own front door for a subscription—so indiscriminate is their financial soliciting. They rattle their boxes in the streets, at railway-stations, and in all other places of public resort, during what they facetiously call Self-Denial Week. Moreover, the autocrat of the Salvation Army is perpetually bothering the world at large for money. Even in one of the Sunderland addresses he exclaimed: "If only I could get the Government to help me with a loan, what good I would do!" No doubt! And when the sky falls we shall all eat larks without catching them. That, however, is by the way. The point is this. It might be argued that outsiders had nothing to do with the Salvation Army's finances, and no claim to see a balance-sheet. In certain circumstances this might be very well maintained. But not in the existing circumstances. Outsiders of whom money is begged have a perfect right to ask what is going to be done with it. And the only adequate answer to this question is a proper balance-sheet.

Now the wily old chief of the Salvation Army has his own tricky way of dealing with the balance-sheet question. He constantly accuses his critics of saying that he does not issue a balance-sheet. He accused them of it at Sunderland. "It is a lie," he shouted, amidst partisan applause. But it is he that *lies*—by suggestion. His critics do not say that he never issues a balance-sheet. What they say is that he never issues a *proper* balance-sheet. The balance-sheet he issues gives no real information. That it is audited by a firm of chartered accountants simply means that it agrees with the books and vouchers presented to them. Mr. Manson has shown this in his well-known book, *The Salvation Army and the Public*—a book which General Booth does not answer because he cannot. He prefers to stand on his dignity, and let judgment go against him by default in the minds of thoughtful readers, knowing that he can still gull the mob by the aid of the British press,

which has fawned upon him ever since he was patronised by King Edward and Queen Alexandra. The fact is that the classes see that the Salvation Army is an excellent barrier against radical reform. General Booth was quite right in assuring the Czar that the Salvation Army, if it were allowed to enter Russia, would be a strong friend of "law and order" and a firm supporter of the Government.

Nothing was said at Sunderland (naturally!) about the "sweating" carried on by the Salvation Army. It has been vigorously denounced by Trade Union officials, after ample investigation; and the Trade Union Congress has passed resolutions calling General Booth's attention to it, and begging him to apply a remedy. But he declines to look that way. It would cost him too much to listen to "calumniators." Giving an able-bodied workman sixpence a week in cash, besides poor shelter and cheap victuals, and then underselling the regular traders with his products, is far too good a business to be dropped in a hurry. When the "General" gets to heaven, and is an angel, he will act as such; meanwhile he smilingly adopts the Savior's advice about making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.

Nothing was said at Sunderland, either, about the monstrous failure of Hadleigh Colony. Booth is always crying out, like the daughters of the horse-leech, "Give! Give! Give!" "Hand over your money," he keeps saying, "and see what I will do!" Well, people *have* handed over their money, and what has he *done*? Thousands of pounds a year are lost on the Hadleigh Colony, although the Salvation Army gets the men's labor for the price of an old song, and has actually received from 10s. 6d. to 15s. a week bonus for some of them from Boards of Guardians and Distress Committees. To lose thousands a year under such conditions shows a positive genius for mismanagement. Yet the hero of that almost incredible failure actually wants the public, and even the Government, to find him the money to multiply such enterprises. He talked at Sunderland about "garden villages." The grand old showman—the reporter calls him the last of the great Victorians!—wants a finger in every pie. Nothing will prosper unless he has a share in it. He is obviously afflicted with what the French call *la folie des grandeurs* and the Yankees *swelled head*. He would have had a finger in aviation long ago if it were not so dangerous. For your modern soul-saver is always precious careful to keep out of the place he is emigration agent for. "I have made up my mind to live as long as I possibly can," Booth told his Sunderland audience. He is like the rest of them, walking to heaven—backwards.

The glorious free press of England shows itself in regard to General Booth, as in regard to most other things, one of the greatest impostures of the age. While he has the patronage of royalty he will be backed up by the newspapers. They will sing his praises, hide his faults, and maintain a conspiracy of silence against his critics. But the grand old showman, while resolved to live as long as possible, is not immortal. The day of reckoning must come. His successor, whoever he is, will never enjoy the founder's advantages. Nothing can save the Salvation Army, in the long run, from its doom as a convicted charlatany.

G. W. FOOTE.

God and Pain.—II.

(Concluded from p. 531.)

MR. VOYSEY is equally unfortunate in his attempts to prove the beneficence of pain as illustrated in other directions—although he is not alone in his misfortune. It is an ill fate that has always dogged believers in Deity, and always will. So long as men persist in attributing intelligence, morality, and personality to that which is outside of human or animal nature, so long will their theories of things fall before the slightest critical examination. We are told:—

"All our knowledge has sprung out of our pain..... Had it not been for pain and the restless desire to prevent or to remove it, there would have been no cultivation of the mind, no discoveries of stored up treasure, no reading of the wonderful books of Nature which are spread out before us.....It is by pain that we are made manly and strong and our higher nature becomes noble and brave.....Without pain there would be no patience, nothing to bear; no courage, nothing to brave; the poor pessimists, if they had their way, and shut out pain from the world, would soon reduce us to a race of flimsy, flabby cowards, unworthy the name of men."

Really, Mr. Voysey makes pain such a delightful thing that they who seek to diminish it deserve to be ranked as enemies to the human race. And why religious people, believing that pain has such an elevating effect on character, should long to get to a heaven where, in the absence of pain, they must rapidly degenerate into a race of "flimsy, flabby cowards," passes comprehension.

Now, one might grant all that has been said in favor of the beneficent influence of pain, and still be able to show that the moral side of Theism gains little support from it. For all that it amounts to is a statement of what things are, it does not provide a justification for their being what they are. To say that human nature has developed qualities that enables it to deal, on the whole, successfully with the pains of existence, is to point out that the same law that has governed the development of the physical structure of man has governed his mental nature likewise. Evolution operates all round, and adaptation has been brought about all round by a weeding out of the more ill-adapted. But this, I repeat, does not justify the ways of God to man. Granted, for the moment, that without pain there would be no patience (I do not believe this, because those who suffer most pain are apt to develop impatience; while the easy going, placid nature is naturally a patient one) or that without suffering there would be no sympathy (again an error, since there is a sympathy of happiness as well as of suffering) granting all this, one may still ask, what is to be thought of a God who tortures one person that the patience or sympathy of another may be developed? Mr. Voysey appears to ignore the fact that if God provides the antidote he likewise provides the poison. A *man* who inoculated a people with disease in order to develop skill and sympathy in dealing with it would be called a criminal, and the laws of every civilised country would promptly deal with him. What are we to call a God whom we are told deliberately practices the same method?

As a matter of fact, it is not true that all these benefits follow from pain. It is not true that the cultivation of the mind is due to the desire to escape pain—that is, unless we define the word in a forced and arbitrary manner. The desire for knowledge is not pain—although one may face pain in order to gratify it. But in itself it is one of the greatest of pleasures, and there is probably no other pursuit which yields so great and so lasting a pleasure. The painter, the musician, the man of letters, the scientist, are not impelled to their work by any desire to avoid pain. It is the sheer delight of creative genius that is at work. Much labor there is, undoubtedly, but so there is in the cricketer running up his score, or the athlete seeking to break his own

record. In all these cases it is not pain that provides the stimulus, but happiness. And what is more, human faculty, in all its higher branches, produces its finest work in proportion as it finds amid itself conditions that enable it to find expression easily and naturally. It is one of the current falsehoods that genius is developed by suffering. Nothing could be more untrue. Darwin did not work because of his possessing a weakly constitution for so many years, but in spite of it. And it was because his home life and surroundings were what they were, that he triumphed over obstacles that, under other conditions, might have prevented him leaving any other reputation than that of a man interested in natural history.

And what might have happened to Darwin, has unquestionably happened to hundreds, nay thousands, of others. Some of these hitherto village Hampdens and mute inglorious Miltons have been rescued by a happy chance—the favor of a patron, the kindness of a friend, or by some fortunate accident that has lifted them above the depressing effect of their surroundings and placed them in a position where their powers could find a less impeded expression. But in how many cases does physical infirmity and suffering, or uncongenial surroundings, prevent men and women developing the more valuable aspects of their natures, while emphasising what is of less individual and social value.

It is time that this talk of the beneficial influence of suffering was dropped. Right through the plant and animal world we see that it is in proportion as the habitat is congenial that the best development is secured. And the same is true of the higher animal—the human—world. The fact is that pain does not make us strong, it simply indicates which are the strong. The physiological effect of pain is to lower life, not to intensify it. Unless it has lost its function wholly or partly, a nerve does not acquire immunity to pain by continuous irritation; it develops a supersensitiveness to such an extent, that it might reasonably be argued there is formed a pain habit. It is, in fact, precisely because pain and suffering wears and destroys that organisms have developed various defensive and protective qualities. If pain, in itself, induced strength, the evolutionary tendency would have been in the direction of it offering an attraction to the animal organism, instead of its arousing a feeling of repulsion.

Of course, given a condition of things where pain is inevitable, certain people will face it and bear it better than others. But this does not prove that their courage in facing it, or their ability to bear it, is the result of pain. Given a race of people exposed to the ravages of a deadly disease, and a certain number will face it uninjured; and, if the disease operates over a sufficiently lengthy period, this type of organism will become general. But their immunity is not the result of the disease. They represent a type that remains in possession because those susceptible to the disease have been killed off. So with pain. A certain type of being will face pain better than other types; but this will not be because pain has educated them to do so, but is owing to the possession of innate characteristics. In other words, the incidence of pain plays the same part as does disease. It helps to make plain those who are strong enough to bear it. Even where a deliberate training is undergone, pain does not act as a beneficent agent. The training itself is usually a healthful exercise of the organism, and it is pursued, not to feel the stimulus of pain, but to induce a callousness to its presence.

The final proof that pain is not the great teacher of the individual is that it is only in exceptional cases that a lesson is gained in that way. We really learn from the experience and teachings of others. People do not learn from the pains of rheumatism to avoid conditions of climate and soil and diet that develop it, but from a knowledge that certain conditions encourage that disorder. And the more intelligent we become, the more knowledge we acquire, the less dependent are we upon actual per-

sonal experience of pain in order to avoid it. In the vast majority of cases it is not pain that teaches us not to do certain things, but the knowledge that if we do them pain will result. Mr. Voysey would reply, as he actually does in another connection, that, all the same, the world has been taught by pain what to avoid. But wherein lies the moral justification for torturing one person that another may learn a lesson from his sufferings? We do not deliberately fill a man with drink in order to parade him as a lesson of sobriety to others. We do not hang a person, selected haphazard, in order to teach others not to murder. Why, then, should it be justifiable to inflict pain and suffering upon the race, generation after generation, in order that the lesson of how to gain strength and happiness may be slowly learned?

And consider the scant proportion there is between the scale on which pain is inflicted and the lesson that is learned from its presence. Think of the millions who have died deaths of disease before remedies were discovered. How many have died, and how many must die, victims to the deadly tubercule before we discover how to crush this disease out of existence? What is the proportion between the suffering caused by a Messina earthquake and the lessons that are learned by the survivors? By the survivors, mark. For the irony of the whole thing is that they who have suffered have not learned. It is those who have not suffered that reap the benefit. One man discovers the X rays, others develop the discovery, and in the course of their experiments contract a disease which leads to the amputation of limbs and, finally, death. And those who have not worked, and who have not suffered, reap the benefit. And the Theist asks us to admire the beauty and *love* of the process because some one, somewhere, and at some time, benefits from a pain that is undeserved, and which is often consequent upon the manifestation of higher qualities than those possessed by the mass of mankind.

But even though it were actually true that each individual learns through pain, the fact would be fatal to belief in a God such as Mr. Voysey asks us to worship. Some pain all human beings are bound to face, and often we are compelled to force ourselves or others to endure pain for the sake of a benefit beyond. But this is the result of our limitations, not of our inclinations. The man who underwent pain when he might achieve his end without it would be called a fool. And the man who forced others to endure pain to reach a certain result, when the same result could be realised in its absence, would be rightly treated as a criminal. Mr. Voysey would be shocked to find his deity placed in either category, and yet it is difficult to see by what rule of logic or principle of morals, conduct that is either foolish or criminal in the case of man becomes wise and just when attributed to God.

C. COHEN.

Nicodemus and Peter, Erasmus and Luther.

THE Christian standard of judgment is painfully peculiar; and, were it not so profoundly tragical, would be eminently entertaining. Character, as such, does not count. Goodness, in the ordinary human sense, is assigned a low place in the scale of excellence. Mere morality, as it is called, is of purely negative value. People are judged according to their attitude to Jesus Christ, not according to their ethical development and social qualities. Whenever the question, "Is he a Christian?" is answered in the negative, the deep regret experienced finds expression in some such terms as the following: "Oh, what a pity! If he but submitted to bear the yoke, what a magnificent fellow he would be! What a hopeless waste life is until it becomes Christian!" The Rev. Dr. Gunsaulus, of Chicago, who is now the *locum tenens* at the City Temple, condemns Nicodemus simply because he did not

boldly make a public confession of faith in Jesus. Had he done that, he would have occupied almost the highest niche in the Christian temple of fame; but because he did not do that he has gone "into history as the man of a lost opportunity," as the man "who never felt the ray of the Divine morning by doing the truth." Dr. Gunsaulus graciously admits that Nicodemus had learning, refinement, lofty position, and wealth, but complains that he was timid and cowardly, in that he did not, at his "first interview with Jesus, grow more able to see light, to see by light, to see in light, to see true light through light."

Now, the astonishing fact is that, in his ingenious and interesting discourses on "Nicodemus's Lost Opportunity," Dr. Gunsaulus draws wholly upon his imagination. He paints an utterly imaginary portrait of an equally imaginary personage. Nicodemus is not a historical character. The name is Greek, not Jewish. The only available evidence that the name ever occurs in Jewish history is Josephus, *Ant.* xiv. iii. 2; and this evidence is completely valueless so far as the Gospel Nicodemus is concerned. It appears that the name "belonged, a little before the siege of Jerusalem, to a 'son of Gorion,' a man of extraordinary wealth, frequently mentioned by the Talmudists"; but even so conservative a critic as Alford admits that, as that man "is found living at the destruction of Jerusalem, it must be quite uncertain whether he be the same with this Nicodemus." Moreover, we learn that the chief duty of Nicodemus ben Gorion "was to provide water for the pilgrims that came up for the feasts," while the special functions of the Nicodemus of the Fourth Gospel were to teach the law and to take his part in ruling as member of the Sanhedrin. But, so far as the three references to him in this Gospel are concerned, there is nothing to show that he was excessively intellectual, or exceptionally refined. Even on the assumption that he actually lived, and was the Nicodemus ben Gorion of the Talmudists, Dr. Gunsaulus's characterisation of him is entirely legendary. Jesus is represented as rebuking him for his culpable ignorance of the fundamental commonplaces of religion. The new birth taught by Jesus was a well-known Jewish doctrine, of which no intelligent teacher of Israel could have been ignorant. This imputed ignorance goes far towards proving that Nicodemus is a mythical character. But there is another proof more convincing still. In John vii. 45-52 Nicodemus is pictured as pleading that Jesus should have a fair trial. Then his fellow-Pharisees "answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and see that out of Nazareth ariseth no prophet." This passage is at once stamped as totally unhistorical by the fact that Jonah and Hosea, and probably also Isaiah, Elisha, Amos, and Nahum, were of Galilean origin. Indeed, that fine Christian critic, Dr. E. A. Abbott, frankly admits that Nicodemus is "a Johannine conception, representing the liberal, moderate, and well-meaning Pharisee, whose fate it was to be crushed out of existence in the conflict between Judaism and its Roman and Christian adversaries."

The chief objection to Dr. Gunsaulus's portraiture of Nicodemus, however, is not its historical groundlessness, but its extremely prejudiced and biased character. According to the reverend gentleman, the refusal to bow the knee to Jesus and address him as "My Lord, and my God," is equivalent to loving darkness rather than light, and to not doing the truth. Referring to Nicodemus's request that Jesus should have a fair trial, he says:—

"A fair trial for Jesus! Why, what is a fair trial for Jesus? What is a fair trial for love but love? What is a fair trial for goodness but goodness? What is a fair trial for heroism but heroism? What is a fair trial for Jesus, the love of God, the manifested possibility of humanity coming to you and to me, offering himself, asking that I myself may give myself unto him?"

Clearly the intellect did not play a conspicuous part in the construction of that passage; and even from an emotional point of view it is wholly unintelligible.

To describe it accurately one would have to call it sentimental trash. But the following touches a lower depth still:—

"What is a trial for Jesus? Where is Nicodemus? Going. 'And they all departed to their own homes.' Oh, what a common-place to be set down in the history of a man thoroughly distinguished! Why, anybody can go home! That great brain just going home; that fine culture just going home; that lofty position, that power to lift into glorious energy the renewed spiritualities of his age, just going home."

That is as irrelevant as it is idiotic. It is difficult to understand how a man of sense could descend to such inept bathos. Surely, going home after delivering himself of an exceedingly wise counsel was the most sensible thing Nicodemus could have done.

Let us now come to close quarters with this American divine. The only fault that the most fanatical Christian can find with Nicodemus is that he did not become a follower of Jesus. Against his character, as such, absolutely nothing can be advanced. Dr. Gunsaulus has no right to fling taunts and sneers at his memory simply because he did not see his way clear to face the risks and perils of full discipleship when he was not a believer. For example, there is not the shadow of evidence that Nicodemus was not quite as good a man as Simon Peter; but this reverend gentleman speaks of them as if they were ethically miles apart. What gives Peter the pre-eminence is not his superior character, but the bare fact that he was a Christian. Let us take up the comparison. We read in the Gospels that when Jesus got into real danger, when a violent death became a certainty, "then all the disciples forsook him, and fled." When most needed, Peter was absent. And when the end arrived, not a single disciple was on the spot to give his dead Master a decent burial. But Nicodemus came and brought with him "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight," and the deserted Teacher was respectfully laid aside. And yet this is what Dr. Gunsaulus says:—

"Put into one scale all those one hundred pounds of sweetness, and a sweet word of loyalty to Jesus in the other, and that word outweighs them all."

The meaning is that one sweet word of sentimental loyalty to Jesus outweighs a cartload of noble deeds. "Here is Nicodemus," says the preacher, "stately, dignified, safe—oh, so basely safe, Nicodemus, with that fine intellect—Nicodemus, with that rare refinement." It is neither stately nor dignified, but it *is* safe—"oh, so basely safe"—for a Christian minister to sneer at every man, even the very best, who does not belong to his sect or party. The fact that Peter played the coward, and took to his heels the moment he scented danger, is conveniently forgotten, while a genuine act of kindness performed by an outsider, Nicodemus, is treated with something very like contempt. Like all his brethren, Dr. Gunsaulus cannot even be just to non-Christians. He and they are all alike under the dominion of the most deep-rooted and obstinate prejudice, in the service of which they hesitate at nothing.

It is always the same. Though Nicodemus is depicted as an earnest seeker after truth, as possessing a strong feeling for justice, and as being tender-hearted and kind, delighting in beautiful acts, yet Dr. Gunsaulus declares that he never saw the light, never did the truth, never quitted himself like a man. His remaining an orthodox Jew, after coming into contact with Jews, was his unforgivable and unforgettable sin, in the light of which his whole character stands condemned. To differ from the Church on matters of opinion is to be morally depraved, to hate the truth, and love the darkness. Erasmus was even a Christian, with certain intellectual reservations; but because he was not a fanatic, and refused to pronounce silly shibboleths, Luther cursed him in God's name, characterising him as Godless, an enemy of religion, a slanderer of Christ, a Lucian, an Epicurean, and the vilest miscreant that ever trod the earth. But, as touching character, no one who knows the facts would hesitate to

pronounce Erasmus by far the better and sweeter of the two men. Erasmus was impartial; Luther was not. Erasmus hated partisanship; Luther lived and moved and had his being in it. Erasmus was ideally tolerant; Luther was the very embodiment of intolerance. Though himself a priest, Erasmus launched the bitterest and most trenchant satires against the ignorance and vice, the credulity and coarseness of the clergy round about him, as well as against the narrowness and fanaticism of Luther and other reformers. Indeed, we can safely affirm that Erasmus was one of the sanest, most unprejudiced and charitable men of the first quarter of the sixteenth century, and represented a force which is becoming more and more operative in the world. He was denounced as a dangerous heresiarch both by the Catholic Church, which he never left, and by the Protestant Church, to which he declined to give his blessing; but what really discredited him in the eyes of each was his Rationalism, his Humanism, his confidence in trained intelligence, his reverence of Reason.

At bottom, the traditional Nicodemus was a Freethinker, the Matthew Arnold of his day, as Dr. Gunsaulus calls him, a Freethinker within Judaism. Erasmus was a Freethinker within the Catholic Church, without shedding, though he made no use of, his theology; and he was the precursor of Voltaire, who renounced Christianity but retained his Deism. Voltaire again was the harbinger of the twentieth-century Freethinkers, who have cast all theology to the winds, and wish to be known as pure Humanists, whose motto is Freedom and Toleration, and whose aim is the establishment of the Kingdom of Man on earth.

J. T. LLOYD.

Scripture History.

A TALE OF TWO PROPHETS (1 KINGS XIII.).

THE events about to be narrated happened in the reign of Jereboam, the first king of Israel. The mighty empire of Solomon, like the veil of the temple at a later period, had been rent in twain, and his six hundred wives and multitudinous concubines had been distributed among the harems of several other wealthy Jewish financiers. The throne of his diminished kingdom was occupied by his son, Rehoboam, but the larger portion, consisting of ten out of the twelve tribes, was ruled over by a man named Jereboam. But if Jereboam's kingdom was the strongest in point of numbers, Rehoboam's had the advantage of still possessing the capital of Jerusalem. And the value of such an asset lay in the fact that all the tribes were under religious obligation to pay periodic visits to the ancient city, as being "the place where men ought to worship." And as the worship of gods and the homage of kings have ever been mutually associated, Jereboam fully realised the danger to his power that might arise from these national pilgrimages to Jerusalem. "If," he said, "this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, as heretofore, then shall the heart of this people be turned again unto their rightful lord, even unto Rehoboam, king of Judah." Whereupon he took counsel in order that such a national catastrophe might be avoided. Whether his counsellors were the young men who had been his companions, or the old men, or the wives of his bosom, or the concubines of his harem, we are not informed; but the result of their deliberations showed considerable wisdom. The distinguishing characteristic of "this people" was their religious genius; they were always running after gods and graven images, and Jereboam rightly gauged the lofty height of their spiritual requirements. Once before in their history, Aaron, their great high priest, in the absence of Moses, who had gone on a mountain-climbing expedition, made them two golden calves; and the people had a right high old time feasting and darning, until the venerable leader

descended like a thunderbolt into their midst, and played holy war. So Jereboam took a leaf out of Aaron's book and made two golden calves. And when he had assembled the people together, with a few priests whom he appointed to the Sacred Order of the Golden Calves, he said unto the multitude: "Ye have gone up long enough to Jerusalem"; and with a dramatic gesture, pointing to the gilded calves, he said, "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." And, strange as it may appear, in the whole of that vast company of Hebrews there was not a single "Moses" to raise a protest. So Jereboam instituted sacrifices and feasts in honor of the calves, and gradually weaned his people from the love of Jerusalem, and from the practice of their holy pilgrimages to the ancient city.

One day, however, during the procedure of a holy festival, an untoward event happened. An old prophet from Judah appeared upon the scene, and the old fellow played holy Moses about the idolatrous worship of those two golden calves. Jereboam could not stand any interference with his kingly and priestly authority, so he made a savage grab for the old man's collar. But a curious thing happened. The hand and arm that he had thrust out vanished into space. The king, stricken and subdued, stood trembling before his accuser, and implored his mercy. The hand and arm were travelling towards the nearest fixed star at the rate of two thousand miles a second, when the old prophet, gazing intently at the king, cried, Hey, Presto! and they were back again through space in less than the one hundred and fifteenth part of the twinkling of an eye. When the arm had jerked itself into the socket, the king again put forth his hand, but this time it was to clasp in friendly gratitude the hand of his benefactor. "Ask what thou wilt," he said, "even unto the half of the kingdom, and it shall be granted thee—always excepting, of course, the divine rights of the harem." But the old prophet availed himself not of the offer, even refusing a pressing invitation to dine at the palace, on the ground that he had been commanded neither to eat nor drink in that place. So he departed on his way, and the worship of the golden calves went on as before.

Now it happened that there lived in Bethel another old prophet, who, amid all the idolatrous worship of the calves, had been sitting as tight as though he had been peacefully dwelling under the shadow of the Most High. This prophet's son had been a witness of the altercation between the king and the man of God, and related to his father all that had transpired at the sacrifices. Learning which way the man of Judah had gone, the prophet of Bethel saddled his ass and set out after him. He found him, at length, sitting counting his beads under an oak-tree. "I thought I was *never* going to catch up to you," said the local prophet; "this old ass of mine is not so nimble on her pins as she used to be. Return now with me, and take a little wine for thy stomach's sake." "I could have done with a drink, truly," said the man of Judah, "but the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 'Neither eat nor drink in that ungodly place, and get out of it as quick as possible.'" "But," said the prophet, "don't you know that Revelation is not final, but progressive? And, since your message, the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Go after the man of God from Judah, and bring him back to thy house.'" So the two prophets journeyed back to Bethel, each man riding upon his own ass.

But it transpired that the hospitable promptings of the man of Bethel were not from the Lord at all, but arose from his own generous and feeling heart. And the Lord was angry, not with the false prophet, but with the one who was unwittingly deceived. His divine notions of justice in those days were a little mixed, and his ideas of punishment were often erratic and barbarous. The false prophet was exalted into the position of a special *medium*, for no sooner had the man of Judah taken one long drink than the word of the Lord came to his host breathing ven-

geance against the poor fellow to whom he had lied. "His carcase," said the Word, "shall not come unto the sepulchre of his fathers." And although the old prophet was sure, in the event of a calamity, that his "spirit" would immediately wing its flight to the abode of the blest, he was so concerned about his "carcase" that he left the repast unfinished, and saddled his ass for the return journey with a heavy heart.

He had not gone far when the instrument of the divine vengeance made its appearance—a lion met him in the way. And with its huge paw the beast knocked him from off the ass's back, saying, "Take that, you disobedient prophet." And when the ass knelt down beside his master's body, and felt his heart, it had ceased to beat. The ass and the lion stood one on each side of the dead body of the prophet, marvelling at the mysterious ways of Providence. "This is a sad day's work," said the ass, "and where I am to find another such indulgent master, I know not." "Well, I am not to blame," said the lion, "because the word of the Lord came to me in the forest, saying, 'Go down into the way that leads from Bethel, and thou shalt meet a man of God riding upon an ass, and behold it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.'" "You may have *thought* it was the word of the Lord," said the ass, "but I expect it was only the promptings of your own evil nature. The other prophet with whom my master supped said that his message was the word of the Lord, but it turned out to be a *lie*. Such silly beliefs may be good enough for lions and prophets, but certainly no sensible ass would entertain them for a moment." "You are on very dangerous ground," remarked the lion, "and I fear me that thou art a wicked unbeliever." And then, with a roar that nearly brought the dead prophet back to life, he cried, "What has your Atheism ever done; where are your 'ospitals?'"

Just at that moment the man of Bethel made his appearance. He had been told that an ass and a lion were standing in the way, holding a philosophical discussion over the dead body of a human being, and he suspected it was the remains of his late guest. Whether it was that the prophet on his way had been reading a Bovril poster, or whether the ejaculation was a mere coincidence, the fact remains that at sight of the prostrate, lifeless body, he cried out with a loud voice, "Alas! my *poor* brother." The ass and the lion helped him to place the dead body upon the back of his own beast, and he took it back to Bethel, and buried it in his own tomb. As for the lion and the ass, they went their respective ways—the ass to find another crib, and the king of the forest to look for a female of his species that might happen to be in want of a protector.

Some readers may be of the opinion that the foregoing narrative belongs rather to the realm of fable than to the domain of serious history. But all students of the Scriptures are aware that many of the animals at that remote period possessed, not only the power of speech, but considerable intellectual ability. It was a serpent who first initiated our first parents into problems of ethical conduct, and taught them the knowledge of good and evil. It was a whale that argued with Jonah for three days and three nights; and sometimes when honorable citizens were in monetary difficulties some of the smaller fish actually paid the tax-collector. The ass particularly had reached a high stage of development; and, as in the case of Balaam's animal, could even see further through a brick wall than its human master. The evidence of the Scriptures as to the rationality and culture of animals is fully confirmed by the testimony of the Greek historian Æsop, who himself records many wonderful conversations and dialogues which he heard at different times.

The ass in this story had attempted to dissuade his master from giving heed to the supposed "word of the Lord," and advised him to leave Jereboam and his worship of the golden calves severely alone. This ass was of the opinion that all religions were

very much alike, and that whether the gods were in the shape of calves or bulls, or cats or bull-pups, was a thing that really didn't matter. And considering the untimely end of the prophet, which resulted from obeying the word of the Lord, it is evident that the wisdom of the ass was superior to the blind faith of the man of God.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

Acid Drops.

Mr. Francis Grierson's article on "Materialism and Crime," which we dealt with in our leading article last week, elicited letters from four correspondents in the *New Age*. The first was signed "Chester Keith"—who is evidently a very superior gentleman, and probably a "respectable" or "reverent" Agnostic. One striking sign of this is his apparent belief that Freethought begins and ends with Haeckel,—who, by the way, must often smile at the foolish fanaticism of his worshipers, for he is modest by nature, and modesty is written on his face. Chester Keith is quite willing to join Mr. Grierson in denouncing one kind of "Materialism." There are two sorts of materialism—thoughtful and thoughtless; the former, of course, being Chester Keith's, the latter other people's—probably poor people's. Thoughtless materialism, we are told (as if thoughtless people ever budged from the faith they were tied up to in childhood!) "drops its religion from carelessness and not from conviction, and often does lead to relaxation of moral principles, and thence, under temptation to crime, though the criminal classes are not recruited only from this class." Now this is the language of pompous folly. We defy Chester Keith—whoever he (or she) is—to justify any of these statements but the last, which is as obviously true as the statement that twice two make four—a proposition that is not usually pressed on the attention of educated adults. We want to know (1) how there can possibly be such a thing as *thoughtless* materialism; (2) how *any* materialists can drop their religion from carelessness, or for any other reason but their materialism; (3) where are the figures or other evidence to prove any special liability to vice and crime on the part of "this class"? All the figures we know of point in the opposite direction. More than 95 per cent. of the inmates of English prisons belong to some religious denomination. "Materialists" do not seem numerous enough to require classification.

The correspondence which begins with "Chester Keith" winds up with "A Curate"—and the beginning and the end are not quite unworthy of each other. "It is some time," the fatuous man of God says, "since England had such a far-sighted and implicit declaration of faith in God and duty to man as is contained in Mr. Grierson's article." Now we pointed out that Mr. Grierson said next to nothing about God; his whole argument turned on belief or non-belief in human immortality. So the Curate is thankful for extremely small mercies. He sees in Mr. Grierson's method a nice way of filling what he admits are "our empty national churches." He darkly hints that old laws ought to be enforced against unbelievers and people generally who don't attend divine service. Something, at any rate, he says, will have to be done "if England is to remain a Christian country." And he concludes this with an eminently clerical peal of thunder. "We need wise writers like Mr. Grierson," he exclaims, "to say plainly that a man who disbelieves in the immortality of the soul is a potential criminal." The impudence of the "curate" tribe! Haeckel a potential criminal! Of course Haeckel *is* a potential criminal, but only in the sense that every man is a potential criminal, the fatuous "curate" included. About the fatuous "curate" there is no doubt whatever. His religion teaches original sin; there is none righteous, no not one; all men are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity. Fancy a priest of *that* religion describing his intellectual opponents as potential criminals! It is perfectly ludicrous. But there is no gleam of humor in this gentleman. Otherwise he would have held his tongue. For some of the dirtiest scoundrels who appear in the dock belong to his own profession.

The English clergy, of all Churches, are great friends of humanity when it costs them nothing. They are particularly loud in denouncing the Congo horrors—which are certainly terrible enough. The question is, apparently, to be "discussed" at the next Church Congress. This is fairly safe. Belgium is a small country, and can be lectured and bullied with impunity. Besides, she is a Catholic country, and Protestants can enjoy an extra go at her on that account. Some strong things, therefore, are likely to be said at the Church

Congress. But not a word will be said about the police torture of untried prisoners in India, which happens to be a part of the British Empire.

Mr. Stead tells a Roosevelt "profane story" which he says he had from a professor in a Southern university. George Washington arrived at the gate of heaven, and, having stated who he was and what he had done, he was let in by St. Peter. Abraham Lincoln arrived and was let in. Then came Roosevelt. "Who may you be?" asked St. Peter. "Theodore Roosevelt," was the answer. "And who is Theodore Roosevelt, and what has he done?" No answer. St. Peter repeated the question. "Look here, old man," said the Colonel outside the gate, "you just hurry up and tell the Almighty that Theodore Roosevelt is here."

King George is sending out a Prayer Book as a present to a church where the Anglican service first started in Canada. The sacred volume (we suppose we may call it so) has been got up regardless of expense. The binder's art has been lavished upon it, and the covers are set with amethysts. The book, indeed, is treated exactly like a savage's fetish.

Father Gapon, the Russian revolutionist, who sold himself to the police, and was killed by representatives of the people he betrayed, was sincere enough at the start. He gave a warm account of the morals of the Greek Church monks in the book which he wrote after his flight from Russia. Nobody acquainted with his revelations, or with the facts of monastic life in general, where it is not watched by too many critical eyes, will wonder at the following telegram from Odessa, dated August 16, and printed in the *Daily News* of August 18:—

"A Kieff telegram of yesterday's date states that, as the result of a consistorial revision ordered by the Holy Synod, the Prior Melchisidek and 171 monks of the Troitzki Monastery have been placed in close monastic confinement pending further disciplinary procedure.

The prior, who holds the ecclesiastical rank of archimandrite, will, it is understood, be unfrocked and criminally prosecuted for the misappropriation of nearly half a million of roubles from the monastery treasury; the incriminated monks will in all probability be subjected to lengthy terms of severe church penance.

According to the evidence elicited by the consistorial commission, the Troitzki monastery has for some three years past been the scene of nocturnal orgies.

The banqueting tables in the monastic refectory were always laden with the choicest viands and vintages. The Prior Melchisidek was the master of these Bacchanal revelries."

We very much doubt if these monkish boasts will be punished according to the schedule. The sentences will probably be designed to hoodwink the public.

Father Gapon, in *The Story of My Life*, relates that he went to the Crimea as a young man for the benefit of his health. He was offered hospitality at the famous monastery of St. George. "I soon found," he says, "that the great natural resources of the place were left unused, while the monks, evading any real work, passed their time in serving the visitors who stayed in the hostel of the monastery. The hostel was always filled with rich holiday-makers, of whom many were young ladies; and the relations between the monks and these guests were anything but what they ought to have been. A large majority of the monks, in fact, passed their time in a frivolous and parasitic way of living upon the income which the hostel brought in; and at the same time over two thousand acres of most beautiful vineyards belonging to the monastery, which might have produced an annual income of twenty pounds per acre, were left in a state of desolation.....Everywhere I saw rich lands lying idle, the monks living on the superstition of the people, and feeding that superstition in order to maintain themselves in a sluggish and depraved life.....The priors, mostly ignorant men, not only did not resist the immorality and idleness reigning in the places entrusted to them, but even encouraged it; and if any among them proved to be too severe, the monks knew how to get rid of him. Every day I saw more clearly that these thousands of monasteries—there are more in Russia than in any other country in the world—are nothing but nurseries of vice and machinery for increasing the superstition of the people."

Mr. H. Lee Jones, a well-known Liverpool philanthropist, who does not perform good deeds merely to push along a religious enterprise, thinks something ought to be done to stop the spread of suicide in England. He has therefore made an offer to assist those "oppressed and depressed by poverty to the verge of suicide," who would write to him privately. He is indifferent to the religious convictions of those who desire his help. The letters he has already

received have not only surprised but startled him, and he has decided to form a national fund for the prevention of suicide by people "in the last ditch of despair." It appears that the Salvation Army have lost no time in criticising "the absence of any religious factor in his proposals." But that is one of its best features. Mr. Lee Jones replies that a great many people keep away from the Salvation Army "because of their religious and sectarian associations." General Booth's organisation practically says to the unfortunate people who would be glad of help, "Here is charity for you if you will accept our religion."

It is officially reported that some Welsh Calvinistic Methodist ministers have to live on fifteen shillings a week. How sad! But they say that Jesus Christ and all his Apostles lived on less. Perhaps, after all, fifteen shillings a week is not too little, but too much, for preachers of the blessings of poverty. A "bob" a day seems ample. Some cynics will say, Why not nothing at all? Why not live on faith?

Protestant England has corrupted the morals of King Alfonso. So says the Marquis Tirco Olazabel. And a gentleman with a name like that *must* be right.

Every autumn—that is to say, during the newspaper "dull season"—the Catholic Church gets up a special miracle at Holywell, and, either for love or money, has it extensively advertised in the non-commercial columns of the English press. This year it is a child cured of a spinal complaint of two years' standing by being dipped in the water of the holy well. It would be a decided improvement if some of these Catholic wonder-workers could dip their tongues in the sacred water and get cured of the habit of lying.

"The hostile feeling between Christians and Mussulmans is increasing," says a Reuter telegram from Canea. What a great promoter of peace and amity religion is, to be sure! One of the latest reactionary suggestions with respect to India is that the Government should play Brahman and Mohammedan off against each other.

We referred last week to the mobbing of a "Wyckliffe" preacher at Thorpe, where the vicar indulges in the most pronounced ritualism. The sequel occurred at Chertsey, where the principal mobbers were bound over to keep the peace for twelve months and ordered to pay the costs—58s. between seven of them. The following "evidence" in the case is from the special report in the *Daily News* :—

"Inspector Stevens observed that he had never seen such a disgraceful affair. The defendants were behaving like wild beasts. He had anticipated trouble last Sunday, as he was told there was to be High Mass at the parish church.

Evidence was given by Mr. W. C. Scott, one of the Justices of the Chertsey Bench, residing at Thorpe. He stated that he was proceeding to his farm on Sunday morning last when he encountered 'a whole pack of savages'; he could call them nothing else. There were about 20 or 30 persons, including boys in their surplices, young girls, married women, and grown-up youths. One man had his coat off, and he saw another man holding Mr. Gurr by the back of his collar. Witness assisted the police to stop the disorder."

How the Christian papers would chortle if Freethinkers carried on in that way! Christians doing it is quite a matter of course.

This is what Christianity has led us to,—for it must be remembered that, in addition to a State Church, and a crowd of Dissenting Churches, we have Christianity taught in the public elementary schools and training colleges. They are discussing in a London morning newspaper, of pronounced religious views, if marriage is possible on £200 a year. Fancy such a discussion in savage or heathen lands! But you *can't* fancy it. Christianity, which began by singing the praises of poverty, and still praises them—once a week, in a church—has brought the world to the maddest race for wealth. The reason why Christians cannot marry on £200 a year is simply that they will ape the ways of life of their "betters"—that is, people with bigger incomes. Money is the test of everything nowadays. Such is the upshot of the hypocritical religion which teaches "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," and "Blessed be ye poor" and "Woe unto you rich."

Under the new Children's Act the officers of Churches and Sunday-schools are liable for all accidents befalling children while attending school. Cases have already been decided in which the deacons of churches were held responsible and ordered to pay compensation. To meet this risk the Baptist

Insurance Company is now issuing special policies. From a Christian point of view, one would think special prayers would be the proper safeguard. Evidently the deacons are not taking unnecessary risks, and a policy in the hand is worth any number of prayers in the mouth.

The Wesleyan Methodists chronicle a decrease of 33,226 scholars in their Sunday-schools during the past four years.

The Church Missionary Society reports a gain of 5,556 "native adherents" in all parts of the world during the past year. To bring about this result some 1,360 missionaries were sent out. But this does not take into account the much larger number of native "laborers," which, when added to the Europeans, brings the number up to over 9,000. Looking at the converts gained in the light of the number of missionaries, male and female, native and European, we may credit each missionary with a little over half a convert. Not a very striking result, putting on one side the question as to which half of the convert converted the other half—did the head convert the stomach, or the stomach the head? To gain these converts the Society expended—exclusive of money raised and spent locally—over three hundred and eighty-five thousand pounds. In other words, every convert made necessitated an expenditure of over sixty-nine pounds. It is a good thing for the missionary societies that their supporters are not given to critical analysis.

Christians, in their missionary work, profess to have the welfare of native races at heart; but it is plain that they most only seek welfare through the agency of Christian missions. Thus the Rev. J. R. Mott, General Secretary of the World's Student Christian Federation, writes :—

"The transition to Christianity is not so natural now as it was formerly. The non-Christian religions are.....attempting to adapt themselves to new conditions, and are manifesting increased activity, enterprise, and aggressiveness. Efforts are being put forth to regain and strengthen their influence over classes which have been slipping from their grasp, and to extend their sway over peoples who have hitherto not been reached by them. These efforts are, unfortunately, succeeding to a great degree, and many of those who were open to Christianity are being thus kept away from it."

All of which Mr. Mott deeply deplors. From the point of view of the Christian missionary it is unfortunate that the native religions should be getting rid of much that is objectionable, and cultivating much that is admirable. The great thing is that the natives should present themselves as easy prey to the Christian hunter, and thus promote the trade interests of these spiritual merchants.

We see that during last year the British and Foreign Bible Society sent out 293 tons of Bibles to places abroad. Christians quote this as proof of the immense power of Christianity. For ourselves, we are cheered rather than depressed by the figures. Consider, 293 tons of Bibles sent abroad by one publishing-house during a single year! Add to this the many other tons of religious literature produced in all quarters and put into circulation. Then add the many thousands of men and women whose lives are devoted to pushing this literature and the ideas it represents. Add, further, the help given by the secular press, by social position and power, and the many obstacles placed in the way of antagonistic ideas. Why, with all this, Christianity ought to be carrying all before it. Instead of this, there is not a country in the world in which it is even managing to hold its own. Even in relation to "Heathen" religions it is now deplored that these are now meeting them on their own ground with considerable success. Give Freethought the opportunities that Christianity possesses for a couple of generations, and at the end of that time there would be little of Christianity left to fight about. As it is, the publication of such huge figures as those quoted only exhibit with the greater certainty the ultimate doom of the Christian faith.

Rev. George Jackson is evidently in close touch with divinity. Preaching at Harrogate the other day on "The Religion of a Little Child," he said Jesus could never have spoken to a child in the stern fashion reported in the New Testament—"Damsel, I say unto you arise." What he really said was, "Wee lammie, get up." We do not profess to know more than the New Testament has to say on the matter, but on the same lines we may assume that, had Jesus been addressing the Rev. George Jackson, he would have said, "Shut up, Noddy, shut up."

Let us be thankful for small mercies. "Doubt is not a sin," says a writer in the *British Congregationalist*, and we are duly thankful for the gracious admission. Having granted this, the writer goes on to say that "every honest doubter ought to listen to the other side as well." Well,

but what this gentleman overlooks is that every "honest doubter" knows the other side quite as well as his own. Indeed, he knew it before he knew his own, and it was in all probability knowing it so well that suggested doubts. The way in which Christians assume that Freethinkers are what they are because they are ignorant of the Christian view of things is almost amusing. And it is quite as ridiculous as the older method of assuming that a man became a Freethinker because of the vileness of his character. As a matter of fact, one may fairly say that, while every unbeliever knows something of the Christian case, very few Christians know anything of the Freethought case. They deliberately avoid knowing it. They avoid its literature and its meetings, and then have the impertinence to advise Freethinkers—who were mostly Christians to commence with—to learn something of the other side. The mere fact of a man calling himself a Freethinker shows that he has devoted some thought to both sides. That a man calls himself a Christian may prove only that he has been too mentally lazy to question the opinions that were thrust upon him.

A writer in the *Catholic Times* raises a lengthy lament concerning the growth of "Infidel Literature." It is not books written expressly against literature that concern him; these, he says, "are of their very nature plain and outspoken." It is the growth of unbelief in all branches of literature he laments. He remarks:—

"I think I am justified in saying that, with rare exceptions, the literary products the last few years have shown more and more openly a declared animus against all revealed religion.....Books, travels, novels, poems—all that mass of heterogeneous literature which shades off from one class into another by almost indistinguishable coloring and character.....are evidences that the men who write to-day have ceased to be men of faith.....We can easily glean the scattered remarks and draw the not unwarrantable conclusion that belief is far from the general mass of literary workers."

The writer seems to draw a little consolation from the reflection that "Catholics do not read such books," which is a comfort of a peculiar character, since he goes on to say that "they read little of any kind of literature. They are too busy earning their daily bread to devote much time to books."

No one who is conversant with current literature will deny the general truth of these remarks. Freethought no longer reaches the people exclusively through the channel of avowed Freethought writings. Those who are responsible for these have their efforts seconded by most of the best literature of England and the rest of Europe. And it is a safe conclusion from this that religion is no longer fighting the efforts of isolated individuals, it is in conflict with the most virile thought of to-day. Poets, novelists, and men of letters feel the general tendency, and mirror it in their work. And the problem for all the Churches is to discover how they can fight a movement that derives its strength from all that is really living in modern civilised life.

A large number of American tourists visit the Parish Church of Stratford-on-Avon—the church in which Shakespeare is buried. Perhaps the Vicar was under the impression that the visitors came to hear him preach. At any rate, he is complaining that instead of attending to the service they have been seen to be actually addressing picture postcards, or conning their guide books while the preaching and singing were proceeding. Whereat the Vicar is wroth, and has closed that part of the church on Sundays in which the tomb is situated. We prophesy a falling off in the congregation.

Poor Italy! "Providence" is giving it beans this year. Hardly a tenth of the normal quantity of wine has been produced, and not more than a third of the average wheat crop. The olive groves have been devastated by flies. Finally, a mysterious epidemic, something like cholera, has broken out in many towns. Doctors say it is owing to the stale fish and bad bread on which the poverty-stricken inhabitants have been forced to subsist.

"God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world."

So the poet says. But the second line isn't true, and the first line may not be more accurate.

Jehovah must have found 1910 a very bad year for his godship. He says in his book that wine "cheereth god and man." He must be deeply interested, therefore, in the failure of this year's French vintage, which is one of the worst on record.

A country parson (so a recent story goes) was addressing a mothers' meeting—and he was boring them. "I perceive," he said, in drawing to a close, "that I am talking to weary

benches." Or rather that was what he meant to say. What he actually said was "beery wenchies."

According to the *Daily Chronicle* the Government has been bothered a good deal by false entries of births, in connection with Old-Age Pension claims, and many of these have been made in Family Bibles. Another instance of the elevating influence of religion on morality.

Rev. T. Cartmel is looking for bad times to restore Christianity to its old pride of power. "There will come a day of famine and distress," he says, "when we shall begin to be in want—then, if I mistake not, we shall return to our Father's house." Poor old Father! Waiting so long for the prodigal's return! But doesn't Mr. Cartmel's metaphor help to show, after all, the truth of the principal that pain and fear are at the bottom of religion?

The exhibition of the cinematograph films of the Johnson-Jeffries fight took place, for the first time in the British Isles, at the Rotunda, Dublin, on Saturday evening, August 20. "Influential" protests were made, in addition to the warnings of the police. Archbishop Walsh denounced the show as "brutalising." That may be. But why is this particular show so specially brutalising? Is it not simply because the black pugilist knocked the white one out? The racial vanity which hides itself behind the cloak of "religion" and "morality" is simply contemptible.

Rev. J. J. Lace, Methodist pastor, of Greeley, Colorado, has had a good job offered to him, but hasn't accepted it yet. He had denounced the city officials from the pulpit for not strictly enforcing the law, and said that if he were chief of police for a short time he would soon alter things. The city council took him at his word, and offered to enrol him as a policeman, and to make him chief of police if he showed himself fit for the post. As a preliminary he was invited to answer the following examination questions:—

"Can you distinguish between a bad woman and one who is only giddy?"

Can you tell the difference between a game of poker and a harmless game of cribbage?

Can you tell when a man is drunken enough to be sent to gaol, and when he is only hilarious enough to be sent home?

Will you walk your beat between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m.?"

It does not appear that the reverend gentleman has answered the questions any more than he has jumped at the job; so the honors, so far, rest with the city council.

The following paragraph appeared under the heading of "Anthropological Notes" in last week's *Athenæum*:—

"Mr. Andrew Lang discusses the myth of the Minotaur, which he attributes to the desire of the Athenians to degrade the whole kith and kin of Minos by the most disgusting inventions—a theory well worthy of consideration in connection with traditions relating to a people handed down by their enemies or rivals. It may tend to explain other horrors of antiquity."

For the reader who is not well up in what are called "the classics" it may be mentioned that the Minotaur was a monster, half man and half bull, the fruit of Pasiphae's unnatural amour with a white bull which her husband Minos had refused to sacrifice to Neptune, who, in revenge, filled her with a most bestial passion for the four-footed creature. It has been suggested, by way of explanation, that Pasiphae was enamored of one of her husband's courtiers named Taurus, and that the lady had twins, one of whom resembled Minos and the other Taurus, and that this gave rise to the fable of the Minotaur. But the theory of Mr. Andrew Lang is far more plausible. The fable was probably a deliberate and malicious invention. And the *Athenæum* is justified, we think, in hinting that "other horrors of antiquity" may be due to a similar motive. Mr. Foote advanced this theory long ago in the chapter on "Lot's Wife" in his *Bible Romances*, a volume that contains a good deal of pioneer criticism. Referring to the filthy story of Lot's incest with his two daughters, Mr. Foote wrote that

"From this crime sprang Moab and Ammon, the founders of two nations who became for many centuries the most implacable enemies of the chosen people. And in this fact we have probably the origin of the beastly tale. The Jews hated those hostile nations, and perpetrated upon them this ghastly libel of an incestuous origin."

Mr. Foote wrote that some thirty years ago. It has taken all that time to show a few "respectable" critics that his theory of the matter is sound. In the course of another thirty years it may be found that his Bible criticisms were right all along the line. Meanwhile we may call the story of Lot and his daughters a fair sample of the "perfect hatred" which the Psalmist boasts of as one of his virtues. We might say "holy hatred" instead of "perfect hatred." But in the last analysis they mean the same thing.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

September 4, 11, 18, 25, Queen's Hall, London.

October 2, Glasgow; 9, Manchester; 16, Queen's Hall; 23, Leicester; 30, Birmingham.

November 6, Shoreditch Town Hall; 13, Liverpool; 27, Shoreditch Town Hall.

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND: 1910.—Previously acknowledged, £244 18s. 1d. Received since:—James Brodie, 3s.

BRUSSELS DELEGATION FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £16 3s. 6d. Received since:—W. Bailey, £1 1s.; A. Harden, £1; G. Lunn, 1s.; H. Jessop, £1; W. Cromack, 2s. 6d.; J. D. D., £1; R. B. Harrison, 1s.; F. W. Walsh, 1s.; A. G. Lye, 1s. 6d.; E. J. Baskerville, 2s. 6d. *Per Miss Vance*: H. Good, 6s.

R. E. GRIFFITHS.—We do not consider it of any particular importance.

E. RAGGETT.—Thanks for your letter, but we are not at all mistaken on the point.

G. MANCO.—We noticed, as you did, Harriet Martineau's sentence about Florence Nightingale: "We saw her silent under aggressive inquiries into her religious opinions." But we have no special information as to what her religious opinions were. We have heard that she was not an orthodox Christian. Thanks for your good wishes for the success of the Queen's Hall lectures.

G. LUNN.—Mr. Foote's general bodily health is better, but the insomnia has been troubling him a good deal lately.

H. JESSOP.—Thanks for congratulations and good wishes.

T. AISMITT.—In our next. Thanks.

A. E. W.—We are obliged; but too late for this week.

W. CROMACK.—Sorry to hear of your illness.

A. HARDEN.—Glad to hear that your *Freethinker* generally finds its way to Brussels after you have read it.

W. WILLIAMSON.—Why take the trouble to "confute" harmless lunacies? The lost tribes of Israel are a dream.

J. TWIGG.—There is no collected edition of James Thomson's writings. His poems are collected in two volumes at 12s. by B. Dobell, Charing-cross-road. The answer to your second question is "Shelley."

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

A. G. LYE.—Mr. Foote will write you with respect to lectures at Coventry. Pleased to see Mr. Walsh's letter in the *Morning Leader*.

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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.

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Sugar Plums.

London "saints" are invited to do their best to make the new course of Sunday evening lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall a gratifying success. Mr. Foote occupies the platform during the whole of September, and his subjects, which are announced in our advertisement pages, are fresh and striking, and should prove attractive. There will be some good music, instrumental and vocal, before the lecture each evening, and Mr. Foote hopes to give a poetical or dramatic reading before each of his lectures.

Readers who see no mention of Mr. Foote in our report of the International Freethought Congress—which is brief this week, but will be longer next week—would doubtless experience some surprise if we did not tell them that he did not attend the Congress. He had important matters of

business to see to in London; he could not see his way either, to impair the efficiency of two consecutive numbers of the *Freethinker*, as his absence from Saturday to Saturday would have rendered more than probable; and there was a third reason which would have been sufficient in itself if the other two had not existed. Mr. Foote caught an influenza early in August, and, although he did not cease working for a single day, it was enough to make him very uncomfortable. Worse than that, it spoiled the sleep he had been getting beforehand, and the visit to Brussels, which would have meant a lot of hard work for him, would almost certainly have intensified the insomnia; and that was a risk he could not run just before the commencement of the new lecture season. There is one compensation, of course; namely, the saving of Mr. Foote's expenses, which is rather an important point in view of the inadequate response to the appeal for the Brussels Delegation Fund.

The Brussels Congress appears to be a great success numerically. Quite ten thousand people took part in Sunday's demonstration in the Grand' Place in front of the memorial to Ferrer and two earlier martyrs to liberty of thought. We take the following paragraph from Tuesday's (August 23) *Daily News*:—

"This morning, in connection with the International Freethought Congress, an impressive ceremony, authorised by the town of Brussels, took place in the Grand Place in commemoration of the execution of Francisco Ferrer, the latest martyr to religious liberty. At about half-past ten the foreign delegates took up the places reserved for them in the Maison du Roi. Later representatives of about 60 of the Belgian Freethought Societies—which to-day number some 290, representing some 20,000 members—marched into the square, each with its banner flying and with numerous bands. When the groups were assembled in the square, a large marble slab let into the pavement at the foot of the steps of the historic Maison du Roi was unveiled, bearing a suitable inscription. The presence of Mme. Ferrer (Mme. Solidar Villafranca), a beautiful woman, but a pathetic figure in her simple black dress, lent additional interest to an impressive ceremony."

We heard from Mr. Cohen, at Brussels, on Tuesday morning, but we find that we cannot begin the publication of the report he is writing, in co-operation with Mr. Heaford, until next week. Meanwhile, we may state that Mr. Cohen spoke as representing the National Secular Society, his speech being translated into French for the Congress by Mr. Heaford. Prior to Mr. Cohen's speech, M. Furnémont, the general secretary, informed the Congress of Mr. Foote's inability to attend, and proposed that a cordial message should be sent to him from the Congress. This was carried with acclamation. The incident is reported in one of the Brussels papers, which prints the N. S. S. President's name as "Toote." Such is fame!

Mr. Cohen closes the Victoria Park Sunday evening lectures for this season. His lecture this evening (Aug. 28) ought to draw a big crowd.

THE ETERNAL BEING.

It is constantly forgotten in this controversy that the admission that *some kind of being* must always have existed in the universe, is the common property of all the systems of philosophy. Materialist and idealist, theist and atheist, alike admit the proposition; but its admission is theologically worthless. "The notion of a God," said Sir William Hamilton—in his admirable manner—"is not contained in the notion of a mere first cause; for, in the admission of a first cause, atheist and theist are at one." So far as this argument can carry us, the being assumed to exist is, therefore, a blank essence, a mere zero, an everything—nothing. Nature remains a fathomless abyss; telling us nought of its whence, or its whither. It is the fountain-head of an ever inscrutable mystery, which overshadows and overmasters us..... That something always was, every one admits; but the question between the rival philosophic schools is as to what that something was, and is.—*Prof. W. Knight, "Aspects of Theism," pp. 56-57.*

Frederick the Great said that in studying history one feels that the whole world was made from the time of Constantine the Great to Luther. Unhappily, when we consider the circumstances of our own time, we have to admit that the after trouble of this madness is still far from over, and that many years must elapse before the sun of truth and the light of scientific knowledge will wholly dissipate the gloomy mist of superstition and ignorance.—*Büchner.*

The Rise of Culture in Ancient Greece.

NUMEROUS matter of fact citizens who have hitherto failed to understand what scientific men mean when they speak of evolution, are apt to point to the ruins of ancient civilisations as affording conclusive evidence of man's non-progressive nature. Misguided semi-critics of this type almost invariably picture a long extinct civilised Egypt, Assyria, or Greece, the monuments of whose former magnificence present to the living races of mankind a spectacle of silent and melancholy ruin. And, in high pitched tones of triumph, they ask the progressive evolutionist to account for this anomalous condition of decay.

The anti-evolutionist consistently ignores what the evolutionist has always emphasised—that the processes of organic and super-organic development are never of necessity strictly progressive in their nature; that races, like individuals, pass through their periods of infancy, adolescence, manhood, and old age; and that the proofs of man's general advance from an originally universal condition of primitive savagery have been found in almost superfluous abundance in nearly every region of the inhabited globe.

Let us consider that tiny Greece of antiquity, to whose art, philosophy, and literature the civilised peoples of modern Europe are so immensely indebted for the humanised environment which renders that civilisation possible.

When Hellas is thought of we immediately imagine the picturesque archipelago of the sun-lit Mediterranean overarched by the azure blue of heaven. Once again is visualised classic Athens, the cradle of liberty and freethought in the peerless days of Pericles. The Attic capital is studded with mighty masterpieces of statuary, combined with a noble architecture in decorating, which painter and sculptor loyally co-operated. But the triumphant splendor of this glorious age was built up, increment by increment, from very lowly beginnings. The prehistoric peoples of Greece were unacquainted with the use of metals; in Neolithic times their tools and weapons were fashioned from wood and bone, with the stone so abundant in their mountains.

When we recall the conditions that prevailed in the Stone Age of Greece, we are reminded that no superabundance of stone monuments survives such as are found in Scandinavia, in the Old World, or in Mexico, in the New. No megalithic remains in the form of cromlechs, menhirs, or dolmens have yet been brought to light on the coasts of Asia Minor or in the Grecian Archipelago. But the excavations of modern archaeologists laid bare the fact that Hellenic cities which, in the historical period, played so important a part in the social activities of the Greeks, were erected over earlier and more primitive dwellings.

Dr. Heinrich Schliemann's archaeological researches have yielded thousands of primitive stone implements in immense variety of purpose and design. The most prosaic domestic utensils, and the deadliest weapons of destruction that early period possessed, are represented in his collections.

"Beneath the Greek city of Ilium he found six small towns, one beneath the other; the most ancient of these contained but a few objects made of copper, with a number of stone implements. The four towns above this first contained bronze tools, and vases with incised ornament, unpainted. The town sixth in order from the base, yielded many fragments of painted vases similar to those Schliemann afterwards discovered at Mycenae. This town was the Troy of Priam, destroyed by the Achæans under Agamemnon. Thus it may fairly be said that the discoveries of archaeology confirmed the Homeric tradition in its main lines."^{*}

It is of course to be understood, that the Stone Age relics, so many of which have been gathered in districts far removed from the sites of cities, were doubtless, in the main, the handiwork of nomadic and semi-barbaric clans, while the archaeological

ruins represent the products of later and more settled peoples who were engaged in orderly and fruitful occupations.

Before reviewing in greater detail the evidences of mental and social evolution in old Troy, the island Thera (Santorin) and its prehistoric ruins may be accorded a moment's regard. Thera heads the list of excavated sites which have furnished evidences of the earliest culture evolved on the soil of Greece. Its civilisation was brought to an abrupt termination by a volcanic eruption which reduced Santorin to a condition of chaos. The antiquity of this convulsion is indicated by the entire absence of traditions concerning it in early historic Greece. Historians, geographers, and poets are equally mute in relation to the past civilisation of Thera. And although applying independent tests, modern geologists and scholars are in unison in dating the calamity which gave birth to the Bay of Santorin at about 2000 B. C.

The stage of culture reached at Thera, though crude when compared with subsequent Greek refinement, was relatively high. True it persisted in fabricating its instruments of utility from stone; but the presence of gold rings and a copper saw, points to commercial intercourse with neighboring races. No trace of metallic ore has been discovered in Thera; the place of origin of the gold was Asia Minor, and the copper was doubtless derived from Cyprus. The dwellings of the primitive Therans were many chambered; an examination of their contents proved that the people possessed many of the comforts and conveniences of life, while a thoughtful study of smooth pebbles, of different but definite sizes, led M. Gorceix to the conclusion that these prehistoric Greeks had evolved a rude system of weights and measures. The facts revealed by the exhumation of this Hellenic Pompeii, prove beyond dispute that their artistic aptitudes were considerable. These are clearly demonstrated by the decoration of their houses, and the designs of their pottery.

The excavation of the city rendered immortal by the pages of Homer has yielded results of tremendous interest and importance. The Trojan plain is situated in a north-western corner of Asia Minor. The river Scamander winds through the plain, and ultimately discharges its waters through four mouths into the Hellespont. Overlooking the stream's ancient and now partially disused bed, rises the celebrated hill which the Turks have termed Hissarlik (small fortress). In days when desperate deeds were in constant demand, its phenomenal defensive advantages naturally commended itself to early settlers within walled enclosures. From its watch towers the unaided human eye might have commanded the entire plain. And it was sufficiently distant from the sea to secure the immunity of its inhabitants from the nocturnal raids of pirates.

The excavatory work prosecuted by Schliemann and Dörpfeld at Hissarlik must be held to confirm the Homeric tradition. "The first strokes of the spades," write MM. Perrot and Chipiez,

"brought out sculptures, inscriptions, and remains of buildings in Novum Ilium, with foundations of limestone, whilst the apparent parts were of marble. Standing out amid these erections, was a temple of Iliu Athene, a goddess who found great favor with the Greeks in Macedonian and Roman times. Below this they came upon a perfect network of walls, bisecting one another in every direction; remains of houses more or less roughly built, fragments of prehistoric vases, weapons, and stone implements heaped up in prodigious masses."^{*}

But the secrets yielded up by the underlying "cities" are of far wider importance. Below the the Græco-Roman town, Novum Ilium, Schliemann rescued the remains of four settlements; lying immediately below the oldest of these were the ruins of the "burnt city," and underneath these last reposed the remains of the earliest and rudest city of all.

* S. Reinach, *Apollo*, pp. 30, 31.

* *The Art of Primitive Greece*, vol. i, pp. 164, 165.

The antiques of the oldest settlement mainly consisted in rude pottery and primitive stone implements. Traces of metals were very rare; the inhabitants were evidently a pastoral and agricultural community, with a slight acquaintance with the working of the potter's wheel, and the numerous spinning-whorls unearthed indicate a people familiar with the weaver's art. Their remains show them to have been in a similar state of culture to their kinsmen in other parts of Eurasia when about to emerge from the Neolithic Age.

After a considerable lapse of time, this city was built over by a later and enlarged Troy. Even the dwellers in this fortification were in a very backward condition, but the various relics of gold and silver, in addition to the presence of copper tools, herald the dawning of the Bronze Age. The potter's wheel of this period is in constant employment, and other improvements indicate an advance in science and culture.

When "Priam's Treasure" was disclosed, it was seen to include large large diadems, chains and pendants of gold, with thousands of rings of the same precious metal, all securely packed away in a silver jar. Bars of both silver and gold, daggers of silver with numerous other examples of barbaric art, had been hidden in a secret chamber built in the acropolis wall.

So far we have seen that all the available evidence unmistakably points to the slow evolution of Greek humanism and art from rude and barbarous beginnings.

The Pre-Mycenæan Period extends from prehistoric antiquity to about 1800 B.C. In the nature of the case, no definite date can be assigned for its commencement, nor any precise century for its close. As its name implies, it embraces the Stone and early Bronze epochs, which are proved by their position in the archaeological strata, coupled with the evidence afforded by their distinctive types, to have preceded the evolution and distribution of the markedly modified civilisation which characterised the period next in order of succession. The Pre-Mycenæan Age came to an end much earlier in some districts than in others. It lingered in the inland of Cyprus long subsequent to the appearance of Mycenæan products on the coast. Those celebrated islands of the Ægean, Thera, Melos, and Crete, produced paintings, ceramics, and buildings of scarcely inferior merit to those of the later age. The earlier remains of Hissarlik (Troy), the primitive relics on the Athenian Acropolis, the antiquities of Tiryns, the numerous burial-grounds of the Ægean islands, and the overwhelmed villages and sepulchres of Thera and Melos must all be placed in this period. Pottery, as usual, is the most characteristic and common survival. The most ancient deposits contained nothing but coarsely grained and rudely shapen vessels. But the later specimens, notably those from Cyprus and Thera, were moulded with considerable skill. The surface decorations were crude and commonplace; these usually consist of incised lines, occasionally filled in with white substance. Bodies were buried in cist graves. Superstition is indicated by rude and ugly terra-cotta, and stone idols. These appear to represent a nude female figure, and some archaeologists have identified them with the worship of the Oriental goddess, Istar, or Astarte. Marked progress distinguishes the close of this period; the powerful walls and many chambered dwellings then erected show increased capacity for manipulating material. Mural ornamentation in painted stucco, a more general use of bronze, foreshadow the departure from the rude condition of the Neolithic Age to the more splendid achievements of the approaching epoch.

The fullest record of the Pre-Mycenæan period is furnished by the island of Crete, especially at Cnossus, where the excavations of Dr. Evans "have made it clear that the culture enjoyed there the greatest longevity and the most unbroken continuity." This Cretan civilisation must have arisen far back in the New Stone Age, and was coeval with

prehistoric Egypt. Its lowest limit was definitely decided by the invasions of neighboring peoples. This Minoan culture, as it has been named, is best understood through an examination of Dr. Evans' collections from Cnossus.

The primitive nature of the pottery unearthed, coupled with the circumstance that it is invariably associated with stone celts and similar rude implements, makes us aware that we are reviewing the remains of a very barbarous race. The very nature of the yellow clay in which these deposits were embedded is held to fully justify the conclusion that the rude habitations of these prehistoric people consisted of wattles daubed with clay.

This far-away culture survived into the period which witnessed the utilisation of copper, tin, and other metals. Without any breach in the continuity of occupation, this ancient race emerged from its earlier savage state. The previous pottery, with its barbarous incisions, is now replaced by painted ceramic ware. These ceramics, so special to Crete, were termed "Minoan" by their discoverers. They are distinguished by their shiny black ground, decorated with glowing colors. The patterns are either geometric or curvilinear, while the style of the earlier stages frequently betrays a direct transformation "of the incised patterns of the Neolithic to the painted designs of the Minoan Age."*

The artificers who now shaped the many colored Minoan ceramics were destined to become the builders of commanding architectural edifices at Cnossus. The romance unfolded in the ruins of Hissarlik is repeated with variations in Crete. At Cnossus a well-constructed building rested upon the Neolithic remains, and above this first structure was erected a later and superior one.

The succeeding Mycenæan epoch, which extends from 1800 B.C. to the Dorian invasion and conquest of Greece in 1000 B.C., witnessed the development and extension of the culture already evolved by the various Greek clans.

The steadily mounting tide of social progress apparently suffered a check owing to the Dorian invasion. But this was temporary only, and the development of civilisation was soon resumed with even greater force. The whole style of ornamentation of this early Hellenic era (1000 B.C. to 500 B.C.) underwent a profound transformation. The Age of Bronze succumbed to the Age of Iron. Although in decorative art, architecture, and metal work the line of connection between the Mycenæan Period and the Iron Age may be readily traced, in the statuary arts the connecting link seems abruptly broken. It is only when we breathe the ampler air of the period that marked the close of the seventh century B.C. that monumental sculpture, whether in the round or in relief, displays unmistakable evidences of progressive change.

Our knowledge of the artistic achievements of the sculptors of this archaic period has been widely extended through the investigations of recent excavators. It is now possible to outline with considerable clearness the methods employed by the vigorous Greek artists to enable them to gain increased naturalness and lifelikeness for their sculptures. And they were, at the same time, developing a completer mastery of material and technique, thus smoothing the path for the later realisation of the sculptor's ideal.

Fragmentary as our ever-expanding knowledge of Greek antiquity still is, sufficient has been obtained to prove that the sublimest manifestations of Grecian intellect were the final outcome of a prolonged period of artistic and social evolution, and that even the mighty Phidias, and his immediate contemporaries and successors, were the mental and muscular children of the mean, primitive shapers of wood and clay, who in the dateless past laid the foundations of a sculptured Greece.

T. F. P.

* Paton, *Archæology*.

A Twentieth Century Puritan.

MY Puritan is an itinerant evangelist among the Plymouth Brethren, that narrowest, most bigoted of all Calvinistic sects. I have known him and his family intimately for some years. But he seldom comes near me now—unless I have an attack of influenza. And then, doubtless, he thinks that my "heart" may be softened, and that some magic text will work a transformation in my convictions. Convictions, the result of years of thought and patient study, to be turned upside down by "Prepare to meet thy God." They *might* change—if I had softening of the brain. There is no use my telling him that I am quite prepared; ready to appear before the effulgent glory of the Eternal Spirit of Life. And am I not in that presence now, in all the consciousness that is possible to the development of my mind! But, of course, why should I wish to quit life at thirty?

But to an itinerant preacher of a narrow sect of Irregular Baptists any such talk is sheer blasphemy—but what could he expect from an unbeliever? He gazes at me with a sheepish look of amazement when I tell him that the Bible is a far grander and a more real piece of literature now that I have read it in the light of rationalistic inquiry, of modern research and criticism. Oh, dull dogmatism! when shall the light penetrate into thine unpoetical and unimaginative brain cells; when shall that pure light, which can transform the dark vale of puritanical fears into a glistening and wondrous scene of pulsating life, touch thy heart with its magic wand?

But the Puritan cannot see beyond the impenetrable veil of his befogged scheme of things. To this preacher even the heathen who know not Jesus will be plunged into an eternal gulf of torment (Rev. xiv. 11), because they have failed to respond to the light of Nature. And if they have reached the height of a Plato, an Epictetus, a Marcus Aurelius, they will still be damned because they are sinners and know not the Gospel. For does not the infallible Paul say that "without God and without hope," because without knowledge of the Jewish Messiah, means without salvation. No Unitarian, no New Theologian, can ever hope to reach the New Jerusalem. No one who does not believe implicitly in the shedding of Jesus' blood as the only ground of forgiveness can ever reach that place of rapturous bliss. No one else can be happy, even now. And if any non-believer, or unbeliever, does profess to be happy—well, it is only a delusion. His fate will be "the lake of fire"—a literal quenchless, ever-burning, never-abating fire of torture. Good God! can men have blasphemed the pure name of everlasting Goodness by attributing to thee such an act of unthinking, unreasoning, venomous cruelty?

But such is the "message" which this slave of an ultra-evangelicalism hawks round the towns and villages of our land in this year of grace nineteen hundred and ten. At a street corner, in a little "tin" chapel down a back lane, or in a tent amid the bricks of a jerry-built township he is busy bawling out these awful lies, deluding poor ignorant and illiterate people with his crude conception of the world. And he is quite overjoyed if even a child, in its sweet, prattling innocence, confesses her faith "in the finished work of Calvary, and in Jesus as the only Savior." "Hallelujah! There is joy in heaven over a lost soul passing from death to life."

But this travelling preacher—if preacher he can be called—knows how to arrange his tours. During the summer you might have seen him at the Isle of Man. But, unfortunately, the restrictions with regard to open-air preaching are very severe. Then the North of Ireland is visited. And, of course, he "depends on the Lord" for his living—a weak imitation of George Müller, who was the great exponent of this crankism. But the Lord must have at times a short memory; for, sad to relate, this evangelist's wife and family have often hardly sufficient to eat.

He, of course, while away, will stay with well-to-do tradespeople, and pays fair sums yearly into the pockets of the railway companies, with his continual moving about. Remember it is the Lord who leads. Perhaps our Puritan will visit a place where the "local assembly" has no desire to hold "special meetings." But he will distribute a few tracts, visit a few sick people, hold a Bible-reading or an evangelistic service, and then he will move on.

And his wife, with a hungry, emaciated look of dumb submission, looks after the five young children. She never seems to think that God is mean; she believes that "he will supply all" the need. Any suggestion that things are not what they might be would be listening to Satan's temptations. Only poor reason can stumble; faith walks triumphant—in hungry stupidity.

No one will be surprised when I tell them that the bookshelves of this tramp-evangelist contain no volumes worth mentioning—*The Life of D. L. Moody*, Reid's *Blood of Jesus*, Gordon's *Quiet Talks on Power*, and a few missionary volumes. And yet these people are not exactly illiterate; they belong to "middle-class dissent." Both have been students at a London missionary college which is run by a well-known *medico* and interpreter of prophecy.

But our Puritan is only one of scores of these parasites who trade on the simplicity of credulous people. One of the foundation beliefs of all the various factions of this fissiparous sect is, that there should be no salaried, or otherwise appointed, ministers. The Lord gives the gifts; and an illiterate workman or a dull middle-class youth will suddenly discover that he has a gift. And, of course, no one dare "quench the Spirit." Every town has its dingy mission-hall up a back lane, with the notice-board headed "Breaking of Bread," etc. To these little Bethels this crude evangelicalism is solely confined, nowadays, and there it is churned out week after week.

So Puritanism is not dead, nor is Calvinistic theology. Though the bulk of the Christian Church has moved away from the crude, old-world conception of things. But yet there remains these exponents of a cheap and crude religion. "These are wells without waters, clouds that are carried with a tempest."

FELIX PONDERING.

PREDESTINATION.

At a recent religious meeting an incident was narrated by one of the preachers to illustrate the doctrine of predestination. He was describing life at a frontier missionary station about fifty years ago, and said it was always the custom of the good Presbyterian deacon to take his rifle along with him to church. One Sunday morning, as he started to take it from the closet, his wife remarked: "What's the use of doing that, John? If we are predestined to be killed, you're taking the rifle won't stop it." The deacon meditated a moment, and then slowly put it on his shoulder, saying: "Well, Mary, that may be true, but perhaps as I go along I might come across an Indian who was predestined to be shot." This argument was too much for his wife and for the preachers, who laughed heartily at the story.

TONGUE SLIP.

Representative Washburn, toastmaster at the prorogation dinner of the Legislature, told a story of a pastor who, coming to a new parish, got his words slightly twisted in his announcement. Said he: "I have come here to heal the dead, cast out the sick, and raise the devil."

Another ministerial friend of Washburn's, speaking to a congregation, remarked: "I am sorry to see so many absent faces I used to shake hands with."

VARYING THE MONOTONY.

In the absence of the pastor of the church a young preacher was called upon to officiate at a funeral. He knew it was customary for the minister to announce at the close of the service that those who wished should step forward to view the remains, but he thought this too hackneyed and so substituted, "The congregation will now please pass around the bier."

Odds and Ends.

The reverend editor of a parish magazine, in thanking sundry ladies for floral gifts for the altar, says there is nothing "more exquisite than a flower." Evidently he has never sat on a thistle.

Theological allusion in daily life is often the result of habit. Recently we heard a mother calling her boy at night, "Come in, you little devil, and say your prayers!"

A good Mark Twain joke is going the rounds. Mark was asked to attend a Spiritualist *séance*; and, whilst there, he was requested to name a friend he would like to communicate with on "the other side." Without realising the consequence, he said "Uncle Smith"; and, he added, "all the Smiths in Hell answered the summons."

Canon Hensley Henson, writing in *Lloyd's Weekly News*, says that "youth is a very religious time." It is when the priest gets the child in his clutches, but not otherwise.

The Rev. Father McKenna warns his readers, in the *Southend Catholic Magazine*, of the "childish and silly piety" of "chain prayer." "Codlin's the friend, not Short."

Peter's Pence is still collected, although the result is not so soothing as in the high and palmy days of Rome. The faithful of Southend-on-Sea shelled out £4 16s. 6½d. during the past year. We should like to see the Holy Father's expression when he receives those three farthings.

Some of the Sunday papers publish pious paragraphs side by side with Divorce Court reports. Those editors know their public when they serve up piety and pornography.

The statistics of the Salvation Army Suicide Bureau seem as imaginative as the details of the Suicide Club which Stevenson romanced about. In spite of the reported rescue of a large number of would-be suicides, there is a decided upward tendency in the actual number of suicides; and this discrepancy requires a lot of explanation.

Colonel Unsworth, of the Salvation Army Suicide Bureau, attributes suicide largely to the loss of faith. Mr. Lee Jones, director of the Liverpool League of Well-doers, which has taken up the work of assisting would-be suicides, showed a *Morning Leader* representative a number of letters he had received from people on the verge of self-destruction which are full of religious references. Colonel Unsworth had better try again.

The *Sunday School Chronicle* for the 24th ult. offers a prize for the best illustration of the subject, "The Israelites Fed with Manure." The only Israelite we know who enjoyed this delicacy was Ezekiel. M.

The Old Gods and the New.

APOLLO with his golden lyre
And frenzy fine,
Prometheus with his Heavenly fire
And strength divine
Were naught compared with Childhood's
And laughter gay, [smile
The gods of old or newest style
Will pass away;
But Childhood's laughter will resound
O'er field and hill
Till earth completes the final round
And all is still.

HENRY LENNARD.

In reference to the various phases which religion has assumed in the world, there may have been a progress or "increasing purpose" throughout the ages; but it may be doubted whether the masses of mankind in the nineteenth century of our era are any freer of superstition regarding it than they were in the first century A.D. There are distinct social strata—perhaps irremovable ones—to which the lower forms of pictorial religion still appeal more forcibly than the conclusions of the cultivated reason, to say nothing of the esoteric of scientific schools or philosophical coteries.—*Prof. W. Knight.*

Failsworth Secular Sunday School.

REPORT OF ANNUAL SERVICES.

THE Annual Services in connection with the Secular Sunday-school were held on Sunday, August 14, when two excellent addresses were given by Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner; in the afternoon on "Thomas Paine in 1909," and in the evening on "The Influence of Religious Belief on Morals." There were two very good audiences both in the afternoon and evening, and the collections and donations amounted to over £12.

The choir and children rendered choruses in excellent manner, ably assisted by the School Orchestra.

In addition to the ordinary proceedings, there was also gone through the ceremony of naming three babies by Mrs. Bonner. This creates a record of "namings" at one time, and speaks well, we think, for the future of Freethought at Failsworth.

Since our last Services we have lost, through death, Mr. Alfred Warren, one of the School's most strenuous workers, who has conducted the choir and orchestra for over twenty years; and during the evening Mr. John Pollitt unveiled a large portrait of Mr. Warren, and paid a fitting tribute to the services he had rendered to the School during his long connection with it.—F. JONES, *Secretary.*

A WITCH TRIAL.

In the Good Old (Christian) Times.

Towards the end of 1593 there was trouble in the family of the Earl of Orkney. His brother laid a plot to murder him, and was said to have sought the help of a "notorious witch" called Alison Balfour. When Alison Balfour's life was looked into, no evidence could be found connecting her either with the particular offence or with witchcraft in general; but it was enough in these matters to be accused. She swore she was innocent; but her guilt was only held to be aggravated by perjury. She was tortured again and again. Her legs were put in the *caschilaws*—an iron frame which was gradually heated till it burned into the flesh—but no confession could be wrung from her. The *caschilaws* failed utterly, and something else had to be tried. She had a husband, a son, and a daughter, a child seven years old. As her own sufferings did not work upon her, she might be touched, perhaps, by the sufferings of those who were dear to her. They were brought into court, and placed at her side; and the husband first was placed in the "lang irons"—some accursed instrument; I know not what. Still, the devil did not yield. She bore this; and her son was next operated on. The boy's legs were set in "the boot,"—the iron boot you may have heard of. The wedges were driven in, which, when forced home, crushed the very bone and marrow. Fifty-seven mallet strokes were delivered upon the wedges. Yet this, too, failed. There was no confession yet. So, last of all, the little daughter was taken. There was a machine called the *pinwinkies*—a kind of thumb-screw, which brought blood from under the finger nails, with a pain successfully terrible. These things were applied to the poor child's hands, and the mother's constancy broke down, and she said she would admit anything they wished. She confessed her witchcraft—so tried, she would have confessed to the seven deadly sins—and then she was burned, recalling her confession, and with her last breath protesting her innocence.—*J. A. Froude, "Short Studies on Great Subjects," vol. i., pp. 185-6.*

TOLERATION.

Why should anyone wish that others should think exactly as he does? It is like compelling them to wear the same kind of clothes, or to use the same kind of spectacles, and losing our temper if they object to do so. In reference therefore to those convictions which we may think most of all important for the human race, and the significance of which we may perhaps ourselves be long in seeing, it is best "to possess one's soul in patience." Why should we wish to hear an echo of our own beliefs around us, if it be unbecoming to "compass sea and land to make proselytes" to them? It may also be noted that a society of men and women in which belief is uniform is always a dull society. It stagnates from the want of the elements of difference. In all progressive communities, however much the individual may succeed in coming to definite conclusions on great subjects, what is growing up around him in society, as the result of the contemporary forces that sway it, is necessarily different from that which he has himself reached, or from which he originally started. This consideration alone should be sufficient to make men tolerant and sympathetic as to the evolution of belief.—*Prof. W. Knight.*

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, C. Cohen, Lectures.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15 and 6, F. A. Davies, Lectures.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Walter Bradford and G. J. Cook. Newington Green: 12 noon, J. J. Darby, a Lecture. Clerkenwell Green: 12 noon, H. King and T. Dobson. Finsbury Park: 3.30, Arthur M. Moss, "Modern Science and Modern Thought." Highbury Corner: Saturday, at 8, H. King, T. Dobson, and James Rowney.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, a Lecture.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.30, Miss K. B. Kough, "Christianity and Woman"; 6, H. Cecinsky, "Methods of the Christian Evidence League."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, J. J. Darby, "Christianity and Morality."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, a Lecture.

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

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

HUDDERSFIELD AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S.: The Market Cross Adult Bible Class meets on Saturday and Sunday evenings at 8. Saturday, G. T. Whitehead, "Praying Contest on Carmel."

OUTDOOR.

BRADFORD BRANCH N. S. S. (Market Square): John Geneva, 3, "Does God Care for Us?" 7.30, "Should We Care for God?"

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This Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are:—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of inquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularisation of the State, etc., etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

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