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Were Socialism a realised ideal to-morrow there would be no actual change: only the dead corpse of Christendom floating up again upon the tide.—JOHN DAVIDSON.

Carrying the Host in the Streets.

AN old friend of mine, and a charming writer, Mr. F. J. Gould, in an article which appeared in the *Freethinker* of September 18, raised (not for the first time in this journal) a very important question in the philosophy of toleration. His exact words were these:—

"For myself, I believe not merely in toleration, but in the most generous interpretation of religious liberty (and I may add, in parenthesis, of political liberty also). I understood Mr. Foote to intimate, at Queen's Hall, that while he would freely allow religious processions in the public highways, he was not prepared to recognise the right to perform the religious function implied in an open-air worship of the Host. But I am; always providing that traffic and convenience are not unreasonably interfered with; and I should take that attitude even if the Church which thus did its worship in the street was a very pattern of bigotry and uncharitableness."

Regular readers of this journal will, I think, be prompted, first of all, to smile at my being twitted with a deficiency in toleration. A love of liberty is one of the passions of my nature. I love it for myself—and I love it for others. I have defended it for others again and again, even at the risk of serious misunderstanding. Liberty has never cried for help without finding me at her side. With respect to the Catholic Church itself, it was a curious thing, as Mr. Stead noticed in his monthly magazine, that the only English journalist who protested against the attempted oppression of that Church under what was, generally speaking, a wise and just measure, the French Law of Separation—was the Editor of the *Freethinker*. I insisted that Separation should be really a divorce between Church and State, and that the divorce should be absolute; and that *Freethinkers* had no more right to control or coerce the Catholic Church than the Catholic Church had to control or coerce *Freethinkers*. Quite recently, too, I have defended this policy against the strenuous criticism of another old friend of mine, Mr. Thomas Shore. I declared, and I repeat the declaration now, that I am prepared to maintain for Catholics every right that I claim for *Freethinkers*. I am unable to understand liberty in any other way. But I go no further. The liberty for all must be equal liberty for all. No less—and no more.

It makes no difference to me that the Catholic Church is hypocritical in using the language of liberty when it pleads for toleration for itself. It means all the time to trample upon toleration wherever it has the opportunity. I know it, and I never forget it. Nevertheless, I am not going to be a party to doing the Catholic Church a wrong because it is prepared to do me a wrong. Wrong will never cease in the world unless somebody leaves off doing it. Fine words alone are nothing. It is action that counts. Reprisals are like the vendetta—an endless crime as well as an endless folly. Nor is that all. Something of the very greatest im-

portance remains. If the Catholic is true to his bigotry, shall I not be true to my toleration? Must I throw away my principles and act upon his at the first moment of difficulty? My reply is: No, I will do nothing of the kind. My duty is to act upon my own principles. If I cannot act upon them myself, what is the use of my offering them to the world?

Some of my readers will remember that I wrote an article two years ago, entitled "Taking God for a Walk." It was on the occasion of the Catholic fiasco at Westminster. The Eucharistic Congress was held there, and a procession through the streets was planned, in which the Host was to be carried. Everything was ready, including the enrolment of thousands of Catholic young men to protect the Host from insult along the line of march. But on the eve of this daring and illegal enterprise a polite but firm letter from the Prime Minister put a stop to it. Mr. Asquith had tried private dissuasion, but it was lost on the Catholic leaders, who always act like the trespasser who was met by the owner as he was crossing a field, and being asked where he was going, replied, "Back again." They only yielded when he wrote them a letter which was bound to be published. Then they affected to "defer" to the "wishes" of the Prime Minister. But everyone knew that this was a diplomatic expression for something very different. They were decisively challenged, and they went "Back again."

Now in my article on this matter (*Freethinker*, September 20, 1908) I wrote as follows:—

"We are for giving Catholics fair play. No less and no more. This was our attitude in the late "Separation" trouble in France. It is our attitude on the present occasion. Catholics have a right to organise their own Church, and to carry on their own religious worship in their own way. But no one has a right to do what he pleases in the public thoroughfares. Regulation is inevitable in such situations. Processions are one thing; acts of worship are quite another; they are more liable to provoke breaches of the peace; and the carrying of the Mass in the streets, in a country like England, is very likely to lead to riot and bloodshed. For it is the nature of religious quarrels to reach the very depths of bitterness. Statesmen have always recognised the explosive character of religion. That is why, in all ages, they have endeavored to bring it under secular control, by making it give hostages for its good behavior.

The carrying of the Mass in the streets might lead to a terrible row in a few minutes. Not only because it is a challenge to Protestant fanaticism. A *Freethinker* might be on the pavement as the "Host" passed by, and he might smile at it, or even laugh at it—which he has as much right to do as the Catholic has to pull a long, adoring face. That laugh, even that smile, might lead to an assault; for the Catholic regards the holy wafer as very God of very God, and is maddened by the slightest sign of disrespect to his fetish.

The rule for Catholics should also be the rule for *Freethinkers*. Both should be free to say and do what they like in their own buildings or in open spaces set aside for the purpose. But not in the streets. We would not let Catholics carry the Mass through the streets; neither would we let Atheists carry banners in the streets with "Down with God" or "Death to Christ" on them. This is not a question of toleration; it is a question of public peace and order; and no party has any right to complain if the law is the same for all."

I still adhere to the position I took up then. I had thought the matter out, as I have done since, and I see no reason to change my opinion.

"Processions," I said, "are one thing; acts of worship are quite another." Now with regard to processions I may be allowed to repeat what I said in the course of an article on "Catholic Toleration" (*Freethinker*, September 19, 1909) with reference to the religious riots at Liverpool:—

"Mob violence should not be tolerated for a moment in a civilised community. It makes no difference whether Catholics attack Protestants, or Protestants attack Catholics, or both of them attack Freethinkers. The first duty of the public authorities is to maintain public peace and order and secure to every citizen the free exercise of his rights. If it takes all the police in the place to do this, and the soldiers behind them, it should be done. There should be no temporising. Disorder should be sternly suppressed. Those who attack their fellow citizens in the name of religion, or anything else, are waging war against human society; and mere self-preservation dictates that they should be brought to heel as promptly as possible, and with all the severity that may be necessary. We would protect the Liverpool Catholics at all cost, just as we would protect Protestants, Jews, Freethinkers, or any other denomination."

Here again it must be understood that toleration means equal liberty for all. If street processions were found to be an intolerable nuisance, and were prohibited altogether, the principle of toleration would not be affected. It would be a breach of that principle if some processions were allowed and others forbidden; which, by the way, is virtually the case at present. It is a scandalous fact, and a disgrace to Christianity generally, that municipal authorities strain their powers to the utmost to the disadvantage of Secularists, who pay rates and taxes like their Christian neighbors, but are as far as possible denied the common rights of citizenship.

Now with respect to acts of religious worship in the public streets. A procession *must* go through the public streets. It is really meant as a demonstration. (I may add that its rarity is an essential condition of its existence. If it became frequent it would have to be put a stop to.) But surely no one can claim a right to perform his devotions in the public streets. If such a right were claimed, and generally acted upon, it would be reduced to an absurdity. This is decisive against it; for the sane rule of public life, as well as of private life, is that no one should do what others might not do also. Selfish and insolent people are always violating that rule, and their better-conditioned neighbors put up with them to a certain extent, but are obliged to resent their conduct when it calls for something more than contempt. Now, in this case, it is obvious that the streets are intended for movement and transit. This is the justification of the law of "obstruction." The policeman's "Move on, please," is really a protection of the rights of the general public against a section of monopolisers. He may overdo it, of course—but everything may be overdone in this faulty world; and every policeman (on twenty-five shillings a week) cannot be expected to be a perfect philosopher. He is right in his general policy of keeping the streets open for people who want to get from one place to another. Now I contend that acts of religious worship in the public streets, if they were at all common, would make a policeman's task impossible, and would be a frightful provocation to the general body of citizens, who (whether there be a God, or a heaven and hell, and all the rest of it) are bound to get their earthly business transacted.

Mr. Gould may reply that he only pleads for the right of religious worship in the streets on special occasions—say on the occasion of a Eucharistic procession. But who is to wield the discriminating authority in such cases? I deny that it could safely, or should rightly, be left in *any* hands. Moreover, it is becoming more and more a settled conviction of civilised societies that religion is a private matter. Every gratuitous thrusting of it on public attention, through public agencies or by means of public facilities, is an offence. People might as well hold family councils in the public streets.

There is another question of grave importance. Mr. Gould admits the proviso that "traffic and convenience are not unreasonably interfered with." But he says not a word about the public peace. He does not allow for what I call the explosive character of religion. It is not from Freethinkers in England that Catholics need expect molestation. It is from Protestants. And *vice versa*. The temper of religionists, when they differ, is proverbial. To let them loose on the public streets every now and then to carry their controversial methods to an extremity, is not consistent with public order or public safety. The adoration of the Host in the public streets could only take place peaceably in a town where the Protestants are in a hopeless minority. It is possible at Montreal. It would be impossible in Liverpool. I hope Mr. Gould is not optimistic enough to think it would have been possible at Westminster. Riot and bloodshed would have been inevitable.

Even at Montreal, by the way, where the Catholics are three times as numerous as the Protestants, the former seem to have thought it necessary to overawe the latter by a flagrant display of force. When the Host was carried by Cardinal Vannutelli, the Pope's Legate to the Eucharistic Congress, at the head of a great procession, consisting of five thousand clergy and tens of thousands of laymen, it was guarded by a regiment of Militia with fixed bayonets and drawn swords!

The supreme difficulty in the case of the Catholics is that the Host is really their God. When they carry the Host in the public streets they are carrying their God in the public streets. When it was found that the performance would not be tolerated at Westminster, Archbishop Bourne, in an address to the Eucharistic Congress in the Albert Hall, on the Saturday evening (September 12, 1908), said: "I want all the other arrangements to go on as before—although it is not permitted to us to carry with us our Divine Master." What they wanted to carry was the Deity himself—very God of very God. Surely such a situation—so full of explosives and inflammables—is too dangerous to the public peace to be tolerated. A laugh, a sneer, a contemptuous gesture, might easily cause a conflagration. And I submit that if Catholics, or other religionists, have a right to perform their devotions in the public streets, the spectators have an equal right at least to *look* their opinion of it.

I love liberty so much that I am always prepared to strain a point, if anything, in its favor. I would give it the benefit of a doubt. But I repeat that I am not prepared to endorse the view that Catholics should be allowed to carry their God in public processions through the streets. While processions are allowed let them have their processions like other people. I should draw the line at the Gods. Such beings or objects should be kept in private houses or churches or museums. They ought not to be permitted to stir up disorder, and possibly riot and bloodshed, in the public thoroughfares.

G. W. FOOTE.

Militarism and Christianity.

THIS is a Christian country. A statement of such obvious truth requires little buttressing in the shape of proof. Thousands of preachers assure us of the fact week by week, and whether or no repetition be the most powerful thing in rhetoric, it is certainly with the mass of mankind the principal method of securing conviction. Besides, the same people assure us that man is essentially a religious being; and as the British people are—on their own confession—chief of the world's inhabitants, they could hardly be wanting in this most complete manifestation of man's most dignified characteristic. Therefore, I repeat, we are a Christian people. We proclaim aloud to the world the message of peace, of brotherhood, of a

love that passeth all understanding, of a humility that heaps coals of fire upon the head of him who would do us wrong, and of the worthlessness of earthly goods, with a fervor that should teach other nations to surrender all thoughts of their acquisition.

But alas for our expectations and our intentions. We are not the only Christian nation on the face of the earth. There are others. And they, too, preach peace and brotherhood and humility and all the ordinary and extraordinary Christian virtues. There are two—and more than two—Richmond's in the field. And these other Christian nations complain that we will not conform to their benevolent desires, as we complain that they will not conform to ours. In sheer self-defence they must annex territory to prevent us monopolising the earth. In sheer self-defence we must annex territory to prevent the aggressions of our Christian brothers. We struggle for trade to prevent them being demoralised by the demon of worldly wealth; they capture our markets to keep us spiritually clean. We enlarge our Army and increase our Navy because others are not so devoted to peace as ourselves. And they enlarge their's because they are suspicious of our peaceful intentions. Therefore, I say, we are a Christian people, they are Christian peoples—all are Christians; for none other than a congeries of religious peoples could maintain a game of such transparent humbug with so solemn a pretence of sincerity and candor.

Among so Christian a people as ourselves, there is not another subject that commands so large and continuous an interest as war and warlike preparations. In the morning's paper that lies before me while I write, no less than six columns, adding all the items together, are filled with military matters. The only other subject that comes near it in quantity is a murder. Here and there one comes across a paragraph concerned with science or art, or perhaps a column or two of book reviews—written with an obvious eye on the publisher's advertisement. But everything seems to yield in importance to militarism. A Christian daily paper—our only Christian daily paper—may exclude betting news, but it finds nothing incongruous in publishing more or less picturesque accounts of military manœuvres and the like. It is said that an Englishman's idea of a day's enjoyment is to go out and kill something. Judging from appearances in a Christian country, speculation on the potentialities of a new invention turns chiefly to its destructive possibilities. With the development of aviation there has been much discussion as to how it might be utilised, but the really serious note was struck when it was pointed out how useful aeroplanes might be to enable Christians up in the air to drop bombs on the heads of Christians crawling on the earth. Christian governments that would never have voted five pounds towards experiments in aviation, had they promised only peaceful or industrial development, were ready to spend thousands in developing their destructive possibilities.

The humor, or the satire, of the situation is, that all these warlike preparations are made by Christian nations against other Christian nations. The peace of the world is threatened by Christian nations alone. The world's armaments are not maintained against Turkey, against Japan, against China. Indeed, if China ever forsakes its traditions and better teachings and becomes a military power, it will be solely because Christians make the development of militarism the condition of her maintaining an independent existence. In Japan this has already been brought about. And as one of her statesmen reminded English readers, through the columns of the *Times*, it was the Christian powers that made militarism the test of Japan being accepted by them upon a footing of equality. Not until Japan had demonstrated, in the war with Russia, its capacity for absorbing the military science of Christendom, and showed an ability equal to that of any Christian power of slaughtering thousands of men, did these same Christian powers admit the right of the Japanese to rank as a civilised people. Proficiency in the art of warfare was made, by Christian nations, the supreme

test as to whether a non-Christian people were to be accepted as civilised or not.

Among ourselves, the latest attempt to give the world a practical lesson in the peace-loving proclivities developed by Christian training, is the promotion—with the sanction and support of the Government—of a travelling military exhibition. A body of 1,000 men is to be organised, equipped with everything necessary, and are to visit every town of importance in the British Empire, giving an exhibition of military life, in the hopes of attracting recruits. Colonel Burn, of the Indian Army, is organising all details, and he gives the spirit of the movement in the following:—

“The main idea of the whole scheme is to popularise the Army. It is surprising, though absolutely true, that at the present moment many parents, particularly the mothers, will not allow their sons to join the Boy Scouts because they think it will foster in them a military spirit, and they are afraid of them joining the Army. We want to show to the people of the British Empire what the life of the soldier really is, and to show them that the Army, instead of being a profession to be shunned, presents one of the finest openings in the world for strong, active young men. We shall endeavor to get the local Territorials and patrols of Boy Scouts to take part in all our performances at every town we visit. We hope that they will assist in a display which we shall call “Modern Arms.”

Every effort is being made to provide absolutely up-to-date performances, and we shall have an airship of some kind or other, arranging flights at each performance, when the weather permits, under service conditions.”

One is pleased to hear that parents are objecting to the Boy Scout movement, with its thinly disguised religious propaganda on the one side and encouragement to militarism on the other. It is also to be hoped that people will realise that no fancy exhibition of the kind proposed will show “what the life of a soldier really is,” still less will it exhibit the spirit and consequences of militarism. A soldier's prime business is to kill. It is not, as Ruskin said, to get killed. The soldier who gets killed is, so far, a dead loss to those who have invested in him. His function is to kill, and it is only so far as he does this that any balance appears on the profit side of the account. When Colonel Burn talks of exhibiting the life of a soldier, he means, at most, presenting a portion of the life led in barracks or under canvas, with harmless and picturesque manœuvres. But if this was all a soldier did or was expected to do, no one would expend sixpence on the maintenance of an Army. War—real war—is the justification of the soldier's existence, nor is it any the less so because, during any given period, war may never transpire. If Colonel Burn's perambulating circus gave any real picture of this, with the demoralising and brutalising effects of a battlefield, and—if it were possible—the reactionary social consequences of warfare, no one would wish his performance a larger body of spectators than the writer of this article. If a cinematograph film, depicting with the realism of a Verestchagin all the actual scenes of a battlefield, and another showing all the details of a soldier's life in times of peace, could be exhibited, the Government would find it much more difficult to raise recruits than is at present the case.

The other Sunday, in a sermon delivered in Westminster Abbey, Canon Hensley Henson argued at some length that Christianity offered no opposition to military service. On the contrary, it approved it. Well, whether he is right or wrong in this, one thing is certain. Never in the whole of its history has Christianity prevented war; it has often been the direct cause of its existence. Sheldon Amos's statement that “past experience of professed Christianity certainly shows it to be compatible with every phase of the warlike spirit, and, indeed, to afford the occasion, or the pretext, for the bitterest of all wars,” puts very mildly the plainest of historic truths. No civilised country of antiquity ever gave to the profession of a soldier the religious, and even sacred, character given to it by Christianity during the Middle Ages—a remnant of which still survives in

our blessing of battleships and consecration of banners. And as though to drive home the moral, the more religious the war the more brutal the warfare. For sheer lust of blood and callous brutality the Crusades, typically religious wars, take easily the first place. William of Normandy's descent on England was a war of conquest, but it was a peaceful skirmish at the side of the Thirty Years' War in the seventeenth century, between Catholics and Protestants. Or let anyone compare the Wars of the League in France, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, with, say, the Civil War in England, and he will see how every circumstance of brutality was intensified by religious feeling. And the Civil War in England was positively humane at the side of the Irish wars in the same century, when difference of religious belief was added to difference of political opinion.

Even had Christianity not deliberately sanctioned and sanctified war, its obstruction to the development of the higher intellectual and social aspects of life would have encouraged militarism. You cannot suppress the higher without encouraging the lower. When Christianity set its face against the ancient Roman learning and civilisation, it did what it could to plunge Europe on a career of militarism and barbarism, from which we have not yet completely emerged. And its sectarian divisions and quarrels made the recovery still more difficult. How much of a set-back to civilisation Christianity was may be seen by the following from Canon Scott Holland—who is not likely to be biassed against historic Christianity:—

"The Roman Empire far more nearly succeeded in giving unity of life, culture, government, and intercourse to the entire body of civilised men, European, Asiatic, and African, than we, in our wildest dreams, could ever imagine possible to-day. Ancient Rome got far nearer to realising the fusion of black and white races.....than our Empire ever ventures to attempt. Her citizenship embraced with perfect ease every variety of race, from barbaric Scotland to hot Africa..... All fell under one policy, under one municipal system, and recognised each other on a legal equality of rights and duties. A Roman citizen might journey from Edinburgh to Babylon and never cease to find himself perfectly at home amid a circle of familiar scenes and usages and institutions; and the throne of the Cæsars was open to Slav or Spaniard alike.....A common unity for Christian Europe is infinitely less conceivable now, eighteen hundred years after Christ, than it was for pre-Christian Europe. It is Christian Europe which gives us the spectacle of race divided against race by implacable enmities.....Racial differences grow more intense, and let us note it is Christianity itself which tends to sharpen them."

When Christian preachers are driven to these admissions, one may well suspect that the full truth would be, to believers, more startling still.

C. COHEN.

Pulpit Fiction.

THE preacher has always been a notorious idealiser. It is his chief characteristic that he hands over the reins to his fancy, and then calls the curious fabric woven by it the only absolutely true interpretation of the world. He paints pictures out of his own brain, and labels them genuine portraits. He deals in illusive legends, and offers them as facts of history. The New Theologian is distinguishable from the Old in that he often tells the plain truth as to the nature of his work. He does not hesitate to confess that, to him, the New Testament is a kind of religious picture-book. He imagines himself great enough to hold history in derision. But all preachers of the Christian Gospel are alike reciters of fairy-tales, whether they admit it or not. Those of them who treat fables as actual incidents, who supply you with minute details of information concerning supernatural beings and powers, and who preach Jesus as the omnipotent and eternal Christ, the Savior and King of mankind, are usually devoid of the

historical conscience. They read history in the light of their imaginary Christ, instead of their imaginary Christ in the light of history. This cannot be done with impunity, especially in this twentieth century. Facts are stubborn things, and possess a knack of resenting dishonest treatment. The preacher who plays fast and loose with them is bound, sooner or later, to be overtaken by disastrous exposure.

In the *Christian World Pulpit* for September 21 there appeared a remarkable sermon, entitled "The Rediscovery of Christ," by Canon Scott Holland. This reverend gentleman asserts that, from the beginning, Christ has been perpetually rediscovering himself. Christianity undergoes innumerable transformations. When Julian mounted the throne, the Christian Church was dead in trespasses and sins. The new Emperor "is disgusted with a Christianity which has lost all semblance of sincerity, a Christianity that is worldly, greedy, mean, and hypocritical. It exhibits no heroic virtues; it is false to its Founder; it has nothing in it that would justify it in displacing the dignity of the immemorial Hellenism. It has become popular, it hangs about the Court, and is infected with the vices of the courtiers. The bishops squabble and jostle in petty place-hunting; its rank and file has no seriousness, no philosophy, no culture, no honor." What a humiliating delineation of the Lamb's Bride, or the Body of the ever-living Christ! One wonders why the Lamb allowed his Bride to become so corrupt and degraded, or why the ever-living Christ did not take better care of his Body. However, God raised up Julian to apply to Christianity the infallible test, with the following result:—

"Under the discipline of the persecution that he (Julian) inflicts upon it, this Christianity purges itself of its disgraces. It shakes off all its base disguises, and discovers some deep secret of enduring strength. All its softness and levity and worldliness and vanity drop away from it, and lo! it stands forth as a noble athlete, stripped and keen for the conflict. These courtier bishops, with their silky softness, whom he looked to see cowed and crushed, suddenly recover themselves out of their bad dream. They pass under discipline, they stubbornly resist, they take their risks, they die like martyrs."

Julian's object was to wipe out Christianity and restore Paganism; but there is no truth whatever in the allegation that he inflicted persecution upon the Christians. Of direct persecution, under his reign, there was none. The nearest approach to it was made when he forbade the Galileans to teach rhetoric in their schools. The truth is that he was a firm believer in toleration. As Gibbon says, "The only hardship which he inflicted on the Christians was to deprive them of the power of tormenting their fellow-subjects, whom they stigmatised with the odious titles of idolaters and heretics." He even recalled from exile the bishops and clergy who had been banished by the Arian monarch, and restored them to their respective sees and churches. Christians assure us with pride that Julian utterly failed to destroy Christianity—a failure described by Dr. Holland in the following extravagant language:—

"So it comes about in this play (Ibsen's) that he who meant to slay Christianity finds that, by slaying it, he has brought it to life. He has evoked out of its slumber and death a splendid and invincible creation of God, against which all his blows are vain. Who would have dreamt that such power lay hid behind all this superficial infamy? How could he have saved himself from making this disastrous miscalculation? We see what a tragedy speaks in that last bitter cry which, some report taken up from the hot Persian sands tells us, fell in the hour of defeat from the lips of the poor, wounded, dying man, who had had his eyes opened only to know that he had blundered and failed, 'Thou hast conquered, O Galilean!' 'The Galilean has conquered!' Yes, and he has already conquered long ago. The victory had been won before the Emperor made his attack. That was why the attack only served to disclose it."

That whole extract is steeped in falsehood. It is the grossest misrepresentation of the facts. Only a

person immersed in prejudice could have written it. The merest tyro is aware that the desperate cry, "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean," was never uttered by the dying monarch. As is well known, he died of a wound received in battle; and Ammianus, who was "an intelligent spectator" of the closing scenes, has preserved for us his dying speech, which was of the most heroic character, very different from the one which late Christian legend puts into his mouth. Among other things, we find this:—

"I die without remorse, as I have lived without guilt. I am pleased to reflect on the innocence of my private life; and I can affirm, with confidence, that the supreme authority, that emanation from the Divine Power, has been preserved in my hands pure and immaculate. Detesting the corrupt and destructive maxims of despotism, I have considered the happiness of the people as the end of my government."

That is a brave, noble utterance, the utterance of a good man and true, who was conscious of having lived an honest and useful life. Canon Scott Holland falsifies the only known facts when he says that in his dying moments he "had his eyes opened only to know that he had blundered and failed." The very last words that fell from his lips were these:—

"I love and reverence this the supreme God who causes me to die, not by hidden treachery, or after a long illness, or by the condemnation of others, but has vouchsafed me a brilliant exit from this world, in the full bloom of my glory."

It is true that Julian did not succeed in slaying Christianity; but it is forgotten that he was Emperor for much less than two years, and that, dying on the battlefield, he did not nominate an associate and successor who would have endeavored to execute his designs. Jovian, who was appointed Emperor by the army, was an exceedingly pious Christian, but lacked all the higher qualities of character. He was a lover of wine and women, and died a mysterious death, after a debauch.

"Thou hast conquered, O Galilean." Where and when? We wait for an answer in vain. Dr. Holland knows of no single period in history during which the Galilean ruled over the smallest portion of the world. That he ever won Europe is the emptiest and falsest of claims. The Canon himself virtually admits it. Listen to what he says about the existing state of things:—

"Yes! how easy, how obvious it is—this bitter, biting contrast between the profession made by a Christian nation and the actual practice that it carries out. Anybody can parade it abroad. Everybody can feel it. Nobody can deny it. It is the commonplace of all our oratory; it is the normal platitude on which everybody can ring the changes. For, indeed, it is so horribly, so wickedly true. The dreadful fact stares us in the face. The Church is this caricature of Christ. It is the Christian world which puts him to open scorn and derision. Not one of us, if we are in the least honest with ourselves, can bear to gloze over the hideous disaster. The world that is named after Christ spits at his creed."

What the Canon says is perfectly true, and proves that the God in whom the Christian believes, and the Savior in whom he trusts, are but nonentities who have never stepped forth out of the darkness of silence and inactivity. What we are told about them is nothing but pulpit fiction of the deepest dye. To call upon and wait for them is to waste precious time and energy and leave life's work undone. And yet we find the Rev. Edward Shillito solemnly calling upon believers, not to work for the advancement of the race, but to wait until God's hour strikes, which will be never. God's hour has never struck yet. Piety is nourished on fiction mistaken for truth, and remains an impotent emotion. What is needed is not "the truth as it is in Jesus," but the truth as it is in Nature, the truth about ourselves and our relation to the environment; and this truth we shall never learn from the pulpit, but from a patient, scientific study of economic and social problems, with which we are daily confronted. J. T. LLOYD.

The Bible Against Vegetarianism.

IN the hospitable pages of the *Vegetarian* a literary fight has been waged between "An Eclectic Humanitarian" and an orthodox Christian Vegetarian. The Christian apparently sees no inconsistency between his various principles. "Eclectic" has no difficulty in showing that the Bible as a whole is a series of contradictions, and that common reason and common sense are much safer guides to conduct than the authority of Moses and his successors.

Modern reformers are, unfortunately, too easily satisfied to find a certain amount of sympathy existing between otherwise reactionary semi-thinkers and themselves. It is good to welcome recruits from all schools. The Secularist platform must not require all its converts to proclaim themselves Socialists and Anti-vivisectionists. The Humanitarian societies need not ask their members to renounce religion. But there is a danger lest the immediate reform of the moment should obliterate the intellectual basis, which is its chief strength. The maudlin exaggerations of certain Anti-vivisectionists, for example, would be impossible if sympathy were supported by science, and if it were fully recognised that the nobler a cause the greater necessity not to soil its banner with untruth. It is needless to multiply instances. There is hardly a reform movement in recent years which has not alienated masses of thinking people, because Freethinkers, who are always pioneers of these movements, are insulted, if not excluded, as soon as the reform has advanced far enough to be patronised by piety. We have seen this in the Peace and Anti-Slavery movements. The early Teetotalers were justly labelled "infidels" until the cause became fashionable, and then we began to hear that Thomas Paine, being a Freethinker, was probably *therefore* a drunkard too.

The Vegetarian movement, just emerging into a semi-popularity, needs warning lest its desire for converting Christians into Humanitarians leads its advocates into vain channels. An appeal to Christian and non-Christian is possible, if science, humanity, and hygiene are the arbitrators. A pretence that God, Christ, and the Bible desire mankind to abstain from a flesh diet is bound to frustrate logic, discourage common sense, and divert attention from the true criteria of judgment, reason, sentiment, and experience. It is amusing to study the vagaries of religious apologies for the carnal bias of the Bible. First we are told "the Jewish sacrificial system is no guide for the present dispensation." Clearly this line of argument will not bring Bibliolaters into the fold, nor will it, for all its unctuous phrasing, placate those who accept Christ's description of his own work. "I am not come to destroy [the law and the prophets] but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17). If this plea as to the uselessness of the old law for "the present dispensation" is valid, why not discard it altogether? It is never an easy task to "justify" the past, even in an evolutionary sense. A supreme genius like the author of *Psyche's Task* shows us incidentally the pitfalls of such an undertaking. We may well take for granted that the ascertained stages in evolution were inevitable without seeking to justify their details to a generation possessing different needs and greater knowledge. This particular correspondent may be dismissed when he adds to this repudiation of the Mosaic law a contradictory plea for the "unity of the Bible," while his honesty (intellectually) may be gauged by his concluding remark: "Vegetarianism and Humanitarianism will not be much advanced by offending religious susceptibilities. This arouses opposition, and if we will persist in linking Vegetarianism with Rationalism, who can be surprised if the former is rejected with the latter?"

Much more amusing is a serious little work by William Harrison, published by the Manchester Vegetarian Society, entitled *Bible Testimony against Flesh-Eating*. It is very easy to claim that a Vegetarian régime is "the original Edenic diet described

in Genesis i. 29." It would be equally easy to assert that there were no wars, no kings, no parliaments, no churches, no Bibles, no police-courts, and no gramaphones in Eden. As there were also no newspapers, it is not easy to contradict these assertions. According to Mr. Harrison's only authority, Jehovah permitted man to eat "herbs" and "trees." Simultaneously he allowed the carnivorous and other animals to eat "green herbs." To any but a religious mind it would be obvious that, if I tell a boy he may eat toffee, I do not necessarily forbid him to eat cake. It is up to the Christian Vegetarian to produce a text saying "Thou shalt not eat flesh," or he must leave the Bible out of the question. Genesis i. 28 gives man "dominion" over all fish, fowl, and beast. The permission to eat vegetables, taken in conjunction with the dominion over the animals, is more suggestive of lamb and green peas than lentil cutlet and tomatoes. The Creation story is too fragmentary to build on it any theory of diet. The first incident recorded after the expulsion from Eden is significant of much. To Adam and Eve are born two sons, and, as Mr. Foote points out in *Bible Romances*, the necessities of the case force Cain and Abel into the provision business. Cain is a green-grocer and Abel a butcher. Bible Vegetarians will find it impossible to explain away Abel's slaughter-house. His intimacy with Jehovah, the latter's conversations with Cain, and the incident of the two sacrifices gave such opportunities for a Vegetarian lecture that Jehovah's antipathy to a flesh diet is inconceivable. Mr. Harrison's explanation of God's preference for Abel's meat over Cain's cabbage is the old theological twaddle that "God saw the moral character of Abel as superior to that of Cain"—a view which condemns Mr. Harrison, for the only biographical incidents recorded of Abel is that he kept sheep and offered the lambs as a sacrifice to Jehovah. A moral superiority of which a Vegetarian can scarcely boast!

Mr. Harrison takes us through thirty-six pages of texts to establish his thesis—"that the Vegetarian diet is the divinely appointed food." The Mosaic law against "eating fat or blood" is emphasised by italics to give the impression that meat-eating is inconsistent with such a proviso. Mr. Harrison can find no room in his mass of quotations for the simple brief context which absolutely disposes of his pretensions. This is one of his many omissions: "And the Lord spake unto Moses and to Aaron, saying unto them, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is cloven-footed, and cheweth the cud, among the beasts, that shall yet eat" (Lev. xi. 1-3).

I have given specimens of omitted and misinterpreted texts. There is nothing unusual in this style of controversy. No Christian habitually uses the Bible fairly; Christian evidence-makers are bad enough, but Christian "reformers" are the worst of all. I have been a Vegetarian for many years, and I have found the principal enemies of diet reform are the clergy of all denominations. On the other hand, I have found the only way to make converts is by ignoring religion and trusting to reason. Reason includes humane reasons. Christianity and the Bible are steeped in blood from beginning to end. Sacrifice of human beings and animals is part of their history. Some Christian saints have abstained from flesh, it is true; but only as part of a general abstinence from the things they really loved, never from the humane reason that animals are sentient beings, never from the scientific reason that humans are animals too, never from the sensible reason that a Vegetarian diet is more wholesome.

If man progresses from the meat-eating stage (as a vegetarian, I consider it an advance) he must discard a Bible based on slaughter. The Lamb of God becomes a repulsive image (as impossible for a Vegetarian to use as Jeremiah iv. 4 to a decent modern writer). "The Good Shepherd" who gives his life for his sheep does not lose the human side of its

suggestiveness, but a Vegetarian finds his thoughts wandering to the ultimate destiny of the sheep. If the sheep are only shepherded while they fatten ready for slaughter, their suicide might be preferable to their murder.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Acid Drops.

Rev. Silvester Horne says there are investors who "would take shares in hell, if it paid." He forgot to add that they would probably all be Christians. He also omitted to mention who it was that started hell and made the shareholder list possible. It wasn't the Devil. He's only the caretaker. Or should he be called the secretary?

The British and Foreign Bible Society last year sent out six and a half million Bibles, some printed in "cannibal tongues." What the cannibals think of the sacred volume we do not know; but we should think that even a cannibal would be revolted at the account of Ezekiel's banquet.

If the British and Foreign Bible Society is in need of a new telegraphic address, we would suggest that it uses "Ofal, London."

The churches of Bath are determined to fight hard to prevent the monopoly of Sunday from passing out of their hands. They have just held a public meeting, at which resolutions were adopted calling upon the licensing justices to refuse the seven day licence of the Palace Theatre. On this occasion Anglican and Nonconformist ministers pocketed their differences, and worked shoulder to shoulder in defence of what is common to both. But God's people, by this protest, made a full exhibition of the two main attributes of the Christian character, namely, egotism and cowardice. They imagine that they are the only people worth considering, while all others should be ignored as mere nobodies. And there is nothing they dread and oppose more than competition, because they know that, subjected to competition with the theatre and the music-hall, they would soon go to the wall.

It is not often that the State and the fancy religions work in harmony, but when they do their unanimity is wonderful. At Southend-on-Sea, when the local Hippodrome applied for a stage licence, the Rev. F. Dormer Pierce, vicar of St. John's, and Mrs. "Colonel" Lamb, of the Salvation Army, both opposed the granting of the licence.

Parson Pierce said that he interfered in the interest of "the young person." We know that young person who keeps all the books worth reading out of the libraries, and on whose behalf it is now sought to strip public amusements to the paltry level of a curate's penny reading.

Readers of Buckle's *History of Civilisation* will remember his description of the manner in which in Scotland, under Presbyterian rule, to speak disrespectfully of a minister of religion became a grave offence. Evidently the kind of character that created and enforced such conditions is not yet extinct. If some Nonconformists had their way, to speak slightly of Free Church leaders would entail at least a mild dose of imprisonment. The other day, for example, a deputation of ratepayers waited on the St. Pancras Borough Council asking that certain dissenting chapels which were used for purposes other than religious should be duly rated. Special mention was made of Whitefield's Tabernacle. Now it is bad enough that Nonconformists should demand State endowment to the amount of the rateable value of their chapels, and thus compel others to contribute to their support. The matter becomes worse when the conditions under which the State grant is legally obtainable are not complied with. The latter fact was clearly pointed out by the deputation, and in the course of doing this mention was made of the Rev. Silvester Horne, whereupon one of the Councillors said it was "an outrage on justice and fairplay" to complain, "in view of the noble work" done by Mr. Horne. He also said that the deputation was "insulting an absent man." Now the question of whether Mr. Horne was doing a noble or an ignoble work was quite beside the point. The question was whether the Tabernacle was being used in such a manner that it could legally claim exemption from rates. How this becomes an "outrage on justice and fairplay" it is difficult to see. Even legal justice demands that if people claim State aid they should comply with certain specified conditions. And

fairplay would suggest that Nonconformists should pay for the upkeep of their own places of worship, and not compel the rest of the community to contribute. Evidently the outrage the Councillor had in mind was speaking disrespectfully of a "meenister."

Testimony is borne by *The Baptist* that ex-President Roosevelt is "a man of deep-rooted, sound religious principle; one who, above all, fears God, and regards the Divine Word." We are not in a position to deny it, nor have we any desire to do so. All we know is that his deep-rooted religious principle did not prevent him telling a vile falsehood about one whose services to America were much greater than his own, nor did his regard for the "Divine Word" lead him to apologise for the falsehood when it was pointed out to him. Of course, Roosevelt is not the only man who has lied in the interests of religion, and it may be that he thinks the practice is too common for his own share in it to call for any particular comment.

Mr. Philip Snowden again offers the suggestion to the Trades Union Congress that the question of Secular Education might be allowed to rest. He says it is a pity to raise it year after year. He reasons are that no government is likely to take up the question in the near future, people are tired of the sectarian quarrel, and the fighting spirit of Nonconformity has been damped by the last two Education Bills. Well, as the "fighting spirit" of Nonconformity was only exercised to secure religious instruction in the schools, we quite fail to see why its weakening should lead to a cessation in the demand for Secular Education. For the rest, Mr. Snowden is a politician, and looks at things from the point of view of a member of parliament. If the Government is not likely to bring in a measure of Secular Education on its own initiative, there is all the more reason for an agitation that will force it to act in a just and proper manner. And if people are tired of the sectarian wrangle, so much the more reason for a propaganda that will show them the only way of ending it. What we seem to need is public men who will pay more attention to principle and less to the conveniences of governments or the opportunism of politicians.

A United States Government report states that ministers of the Gospel will have received during 1910 the sum of £20,000,000 in salaries. Several New York preachers receive £3,000 a year each. "Boss" preachers of the Gospel of Poverty do better than that in effete old Europe.

Wild flowers have, from time to time, been discovered in the heart of the City of London. We wonder if they were found growing inside the City churches.

Rev. F. A. Jones, of Ilford, is one of the few who still believe in the historicity of the first three chapters of Genesis. Mr. Jones assures us that these people are not "absolute fools." We agree with him, simply because there are no "absolute fools"; but we beg to inform him that it is extremely difficult to conceive of *greater* fools. Science has discovered and demonstrated the true origin of man, and it is a radically different origin from that described in Genesis. If Mr. Jones prefers the Biblical fable to the scientific fact, he is perfectly free to do so; but, in doing so, he only shows how ineffably stupid theological prejudice makes its victims.

One of the speakers at the Trades Union Congress said that a man should be allowed to select his own religion as he selects his wife, and choose the best. To this we add that there should also be proper facility for divorce. The present evil is not only that a man is mated to a creed, as in some countries men and women are mated without mutual consent, but separation is treated as though it properly exposes one to all the punishment that a vindictive religious spirit can inflict.

The Bishop of London is at present in Canada. We hope his lordship is enjoying his holiday, and that he will not be induced to curtail the length of his visit. In fact, if the Canadians can stand him, we should be pleased to hear that he had settled there altogether. Being so far from home, the Bishop doubtless thought that a little exercise in exactitude would be good; and we read that in the course of a speech in Halifax he said that, "In spite of the efforts of the Church among working-men in England, they had failed." We are pleased to record the confession, and if it will give the Bishop any satisfaction—and we have no doubt, he being a Christian, it will—we may point out that other churches have failed also. The working-man offers no exception to the general trend of things, and men—and women—of all classes are, in increasing numbers, forsaking

a creed that represents nothing more than a survival of primitive animism.

Having said the above, Bishop Ingram made a statement much more characteristic. He regretted "that there was no religious teaching in the schools in Canada," and felt "that a child without religious teaching would go down before temptation." Now we are not concerned with the Bishop's regrets or feelings. Both are quite natural and, we repeat, characteristic. All we are concerned with are the facts. And the fact in this case is that children without religious teaching are not more liable to go down before temptation than those with it. Our own experience and reflection would quite reverse Bishop Ingram's dictum. The one constant regret in all the churches has been that religious people were not saved from "falling" by their religious training. And the regret of the pulpit is fully endorsed by the experience of the layman. Indeed, one might ask the Bishop of London—not, of course, with any expectation of getting an answer—if religious teaching does save people from succumbing to temptation, where on earth do all our failures come from? For all but a very small percentage of the population have had religious instruction in their earlier years. And it is precisely the fact that religious belief and religious training do co-exist, not only with the larger offences that constitute legal offences, but with the smaller, often graver, evils of untruthfulness, uncharitableness, dishonesty of speech, and bigotry of disposition. Still, bishops will be bishops whether at home or on holiday, and a sea voyage can hardly be expected to wipe out the consequences of a life-long education.

That old chemical trick, the liquefaction of the blood of St. Januarius, took place duly at Naples cathedral on Tuesday, September 21. A quarter of a million people assembled in the vicinity, and received the announcement of the annual "miracle" with delirious enthusiasm. Cannon were fired from the forts and all the church bells were rung. The "miracle" this year is supposed to indicate God's intention to preserve Neapolitans from the cholera. Such is human reason after nearly two thousand years of Christianity!

Mrs. Weldon has been delighting the *Daily Chronicle* by drawing attention to the "John Dory" tradition. This was the fish caught by Peter when he was sent to find the money demanded of Jesus by the Roman taxgatherer. The fish had the requisite coin waiting in its mouth, but Peter had to pinch the poor creature hard to get it out, and the mark of his finger and thumb has been perceptible ever since on the John Dory's gullet. The *D. C.* always finds room for foolish superstitions—but none for reports of Free-thought meetings.

"Our local parson," an Ashford correspondent writes to a London daily, "puts the wet summer down to Divine judgment on the present Government." The fool of the family so often goes into the Church.

This world is rushing headlong towards destruction. It is becoming more and more wicked continually, and of its salvation there is absolutely no hope. So we are assured by Mr. Viner Hall, of Sutton Coldfield. "This Godless world of nations," he says, "is being reserved for destruction at the hands of Christ and his saints in that 'war of that Great Day of Almighty God.'" There is going to be a terrible conflict, conducted by the loving Savior, out of whose mouth the sword of destruction shall come forth. What a lively prospect spreads before our astonished gaze! Fancy the Son of God, who came to save the world by dying for it, becoming the agent of its total destruction at the last. To such eminently Christian predictions, oracularly delivered by Mr. Hall, the inhabitants of Ashby-de-la-Zouch must have listened with bated breath and throbbing hearts, wondering whether they were among the wicked people who would be ruthlessly hewn down at the coming of the Lord.

The Bible has been in existence for nearly two thousand years, and parts of it for much longer. Now, on the assumption there is a God, and that the Bible is his work, how inexpressibly irksome and nauseating it must be to him to listen, day by day and night by night, to fulsome thanks for it, and to innumerable pathetic appeals to make its meaning plain. And yet, despite all these ardent thanks and impassioned appeals, there are scarcely any two men of God who are not fiercely fighting each other about the true interpretation of God's own Book. With this significant fact staring him in the face, the Rev. Dinsdale Young had the audacity, the other day, to sneer at the stupidity of doubters.

English Freemasonry is nothing if not eminently respectable. One of its patrons is King George V., and its organisation seems devoted to the Government religion. On Saturday over three hundred Essex Freemasons attended the foundation-stone-laying of a new church at Westcliff-on-Sea. Throughout Europe Freemasons are Republican and anti-clerical, and the Church will not accord them funeral rites.

The English Freemasons are very fond of referring to the "Great Architect of the Universe." Judging by some of the newest of the Lord's houses, he seems sometimes to try his hand at jerry-building.

"If there were no substantial rake-off on the distribution of charities there would be fewer religious organisations engaged in the business. The Salvation Army is noted for the size of the commission it seizes on all goods and funds passing through its hands. The following from the autobiography of the most celebrated tramp in America, known as 'A No. 1,' is an example illustrating the commercial possibilities of charity as a business: 'A few more days of hard desert travel and I landed in Los Angeles. While looking about for an opportunity to beg some clothes I made the acquaintance of a Salvation Army captain. I told him how it happened and why I was so raggedly dressed. He took me to a corner in a business part of the city, and made an appeal to the public for funds to help dress me up. He told them my story and asked them all to chip in. He kept on speaking, singing, and begging, and told them how blessed it was to clothe the naked and feed the hungry, and he collected over thirty dollars, as he had me to substantiate his appeal. He took me to a clothing house and bought me a four dollar suit of clothes, a twenty-five cent cap, fifty cents worth of underwear, and a twenty-five cent shirt, and told me to go and be a good boy. I was thankful enough for what he did, but I often wondered what became of the balance. Perhaps he bought a twenty-five dollar tailor-made suit for himself.'"—*Truthseeker* (New York).

The Rev. F. B. Meyer says that preachers must "remove people's objections and argue with them." He thinks there is "a great deal to be done in the way of argument." Certainly; all that has to be done is to remove people's objections to Christianity and—there you are. Only one reflects that the objections to Christianity, instead of diminishing, increase. They are more numerous and more vigorous now than ever they were, and preachers show an increasing objection to deal with them. Nor do we know that Mr. Meyer has ever shown any great desire to grapple seriously with objections to Christianity. What he understands by arguing with people is to preach at them from a pulpit in which no talking back is allowed, and to address people who already agree in the main with what he has to say. A most valorous debater is the Rev. F. B. Meyer.

Holy Russia! A Baptist congress was held last year at Odessa with the sanction of the authorities. As soon as the President's address was delivered the police came in and arrested everybody present. Most of them got two months' imprisonment. The President got three. Once more—Holy Russia!

Rev. Conrad Noel, the well-known Socialist, has lately been appointed, by the Socialist Countess of Warwick, as vicar of Thaxted. The church holds 2,500. The inhabitants number 1,600.

According to the *Methodist Times*, the evidences of Christianity are things of the future. Even the ground-plan of them has not, as yet, been prepared. Our contemporary provides its readers with a rough sketch of "the course which Christian evidences must pursue in the present day if they are to command the key to the whole position." Then it adds: "Upon this ground-plan the fabric of Christian evidences must be reared with the courageous and patient thought which is one of the noblest fruits of faith." After an existence of two thousand years, Christianity still lacks the fabric of its own evidence; it has not quite finished the ground-plan of it. Indeed, there is as yet nothing like unanimity as to what exactly the ground-plan should contain. As to the fabric of evidences to be erected upon it, there is at present no sign of it, not even of the individual evidences of which it must consist. It will take the *Methodist Times* more than its lifetime to discover one evidence of the supernatural. The undertaking is an impossible one.

James Coombs, the Southampton dock laborer, against whom the police are formulating twenty charges of house-

breaking and burglary, is described as "a quiet-looking man, a total abstainer, and an open-air preacher."

A Burton-on-Trent parson, on the occasion of a Harvest Festival, preached from the text Proverbs xxvi. 1, "Snow in summer and rain in harvest," eloquently enlarging on the beneficent ministry of Disappointments in human life. Everybody knows that to give thanks for a harvest that has been largely a failure is an exceedingly silly performance; but what puzzles us now is how this ingenious man of God got a sermon on Disappointments from his text, which reads thus: "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honor is not seemly for a fool." The veriest nincompoop can see that the text is a Biblical condemnation of snow in summer and rain in harvest, declaring them to be as out of place as honor conferred on a fool. Is it any wonder that churches and chapels are emptying?

Dr. Len Broughton is nothing if not rigidly orthodox. It is a mistake, he says, for the sinner to seek Christ, for he will never find him. The correct way is for Christ to seek the sinner, and, blessed be his name, he *does* incessantly seek every sinner in the world. In explanation of the apparent non-success of the Divine seeking, Dr. Broughton observes that Christ cannot actually find the sinner unless he consents to be found. "Be passive," cries this evangelist, "and Christ will find you, and you shall be a saved man in the twinkling of an eye." This is said to be the simple Gospel. We call it arrant nonsense.

General Booth goes about now "defending" the Salvation Army. He indignantly answers charges that are *not* made against him, and says not a word about those that *are*. It is an ancient trick of jesuitical controversy. Answer what your opponent doesn't say. Never answer what he does say. The fools will applaud—as General Booth discovers.

The Rev. Professor David Smith has again fallen into one of his silly, irresponsible moods. He contradicts all his brethren, and all the facts, by saying that "this is not an irreligious age," but rather "the most religious age in history." A man who says that is capable of saying anything. To such a man facts are mere trifles, unworthy of notice.

The Bishop of Carlisle has described present-day ethics as "jelly-fish morality." Maybe the Right Reverend Father in God reserves his admiration for the "billygoat" morality of the Old Testament.

The pious *Daily Chronicle* has been reprinting specimens of the "hell-fire" hymns of years ago. Anyhow, the hymns at that time were dogmatic, if brutal; whilst the sloppy sentimentalism of the present day, which vents itself in "The Glory Song" and "Tell Mother I'll be There," is neither honest nor orthodox.

"The Church's One Foundation" will soon want underpinning. If Lord Roberts has his little way with regard to conscription in England, the reign of "the Prince of Peace" will be considerably curtailed.

Chertsey Parish Church was visited by ladies to put up the harvest decorations, and they found that large quantities of cayenne pepper had been strewn about the building, especially in the pews of the leading supporters of the vicar, who has been for some time denounced for his ritualistic practices by a section of the worshippers. Of course the pepper made everybody cough and sneeze, especially the children. The "outrage" is thought to be the work of a local "Kensitite" crusader. They love one another still!

The following is taken from the *Glasgow Daily Record*, Sept. 24:—

"In connection with the death of a Cumbernauld man who has just passed away in Stirling District Asylum after a residence of many years, it is claimed that he had read his Bible from beginning to end about 100 times. He was about 70 years of age."

No wonder the poor man never got out of the asylum.

"Providence" again! Terrible floods have devastated large portions of Central Italy. Railway bridges, gasometers, and all sorts of important structures have been washed away. At Cattolica the lighthouse was wrecked. This is peculiarly "providential."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 2, Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, Glasgow; at 12 (noon), "Charles Bradlaugh: After Twenty Years"; at 6.30, "The Greatest Lie in the World."

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

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

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 2, Queen's Hall, London; 9, Glasgow; 30, Queen's Hall, London. November 13, West Ham; 20, Shoreditch Town Hall. December 4, Manchester.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 2, Liverpool; 9, Queen's Hall, London; 16, Glasgow; 23, Queen's Hall, London. November 6, Fulham; 13, Shoreditch Town Hall; 20, Manchester; 27, Leicester. December 4, Holloway; 18, West Ham.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1910.—Previously acknowledged: £250 4s. 7d.

BRUSSELS DELIGATION FUND.—David Watt, 3s.

FREDERIC DIXON.—We published your denial of Mr. Mangasarian's statement, and we published Mr. Mangasarian's reply. You may not think it adequate, but that is not our business. We may suggest to you that you are, after all, making a fuss about nothing. Catholics, especially French Catholics, even in books of devotion, refer to Jesus Christ as "J. C."

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

J. V. BARLOW.—Half-dozen copies of the "Bradlaugh" number forwarded; the delay was occasioned by your sending to Mr. Foote instead of to the Pioneer Press. Glad you think the portrait "excellently printed."

J. B. SMITH (Canada).—The opinions of all sorts of Freethinkers, living and dead, appear from time to time in this journal. How can you expect them to agree in every particular? Vital liberty is inconsistent with mechanical conformity.

H. SHAW.—Pleased to hear you read our *Flowers of Freethought* "with great delight," and that the book is "now on a round of conquest among the young men in the district." Also that you have secured some new regular readers for the *Freethinker*. The other matter was dealt with through the post.

D. EASTON.—The reverend gentleman does not want to answer you. The Protestant Alliance speaker at Stratford, if you report him correctly, is just fit to live in a kennel.

J. NIXA.—Hardly up to our mark. Besides, it is not in the metre of "Excelsior."

G. F. H. McCLUSKEY.—Not very accurate, but an improvement on silence. Thanks. Glad you were "delighted with the excellent portrait" of Bradlaugh, and also with "his daughter's interesting Reflections."

W. McKELVIE.—Your letter is dated Sept. 25, but the Liverpool postmark is clearly Sept. 26, and it reached us on Tuesday, which we are quite weary of saying is too late for paragraphs. Fortunately we had already written one *re* Mr. Lloyd's visit. We wish Branch secretaries would be more "previous."

A. AND B. NELSON.—See paragraph. Thanks.

W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.

GLASWEGIAN.—Your order for leaflets is passed over to Miss Vance. Glad you mean to bring two Christian friends to Mr. Foote's evening lecture.

ISABELLA L. ROBERTS sends us 1s. (handed over to Miss Vance) as the price of the seat she was unable to get at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening. "Although I arrived there," she says, "just after the doors were opened, I was far too late. When I saw the great number turned away from the doors I hoped it was a sign of prosperous times to come for the Good Old Cause." The lady's action is fine. Some men who couldn't get in grumbled.

J. DAVIDSON.—The incident was referred to in our columns some years ago, but we cannot spare the time to hunt it up. Sorry.

G. MANCO.—Many, as well as yourself, will regard last Sunday at Queen's Hall as "a red-letter night."

DAVID WATT.—It is gratifying to hear that friends are coming to Glasgow from such distances to hear Mr. Foote.

W. H. HARRIS.—We are minded to let Mrs. Bonner's article suffice for the present. Your tribute to Bradlaugh is, nevertheless, a good one.

HARRY ORGAN.—Thanks for your pleasant and encouraging letter. Glad you will be bringing friends from Edinburgh to our Glasgow lectures.

T. W. HAMPTON.—No room this week; must keep for next issue. Thanks.

A. N. PIERCE.—It is impossible to say anything about further courses of Queen's Hall lectures (after October) at present. News is being awaited as to whether the place will be available.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote opens the Glasgow Branch's new lecture season to-day (Oct. 2). He lectures twice in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street—at 12 (noon) and at 6.30 p.m. His first subject is "Charles Bradlaugh: After Twenty Years." His second subject is a novel one, "The Greatest Lie in the World." Both should attract crowded audiences.

For the sake of Scottish readers of the *Freethinker* who may be tempted to go to Glasgow in order to hear Mr. Foote's lectures, we may mention that Brunswick-street is a turning off Argyl-street, a hundred yards or so west of the well-known Candleriggs. The Secular Hall is near the top of Brunswick-street, on the right hand going from Argyl-street, and opposite the municipal law courts.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Queen's (Minor) Hall platform this evening (Oct. 2). His subject is one in which everyone has an interest, whether recognised or not: "The Logic of Life." In the hands of a lecturer like Mr. Cohen, the subject is sure to be made attractive and informing. We hope the London "saints" will make a special effort to fill the hall during October. They can safely invite their friends and acquaintances to come and hear lecturers of the calibre of Mr. Cohen and Mr. Lloyd. We appeal to them to help the advertising in this manner. The music before the lecture will be continued.

Queen's (Minor) Hall was far too small for the "Bradlaugh" meeting on Sunday night. The *Morning Leader* admits that hundreds of people had to be turned away. Those who gained admission, and crowded into every bit of available space, including the platform, had one of the red-letter evenings of their lives. Madame Saunders and her daughter (pianists) and Madame Lovenez (vocalist) ably sustained the musical part of the program. Miss Florence Foote's recitation of Browning's "Confessional" was enthusiastically applauded. Mrs. Bradlaugh-Bonner and Mr. Foote walked on the platform together amidst a scene of great excitement. As soon as relative calm was restored Mrs. Bonner rose from the chair to begin the proceedings and received a greeting that must have afforded her much pleasure. She must have felt that the place was full of her father's friends. From her own point of view, she gave an outline sketch of her father's career, which was listened to with breathless attention and loudly applauded at the finish. Mr. Foote's rising to deliver his address on "Charles Bradlaugh: After Twenty Years" was the signal for another outburst of enthusiasm. We cannot attempt to give any report of the lecture here. Mrs. Bonner thanked him heartily for his "brilliant and eloquent" tribute to her father's memory. The crowded meeting broke up, after lasting over two hours altogether, in the best of spirits. Most of the active Freethought workers in London were present. Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Moss, and Mr. Heaford occupied seats on the platform. To give the names of all the others would be to print a directory. Mrs. Bonner had with her her husband and her son, who was a little child when her father died, and is now a strong, bright-looking young man, the evident possessor of brains.

The business arrangements of such a gathering were, of course, by no means light. Miss Vance is to be congratulated on her contribution to the evening's success, especially in view of the way in which she is now handicapped. Miss Kough and Miss Stanley were very busy helping her. A number of male friends were engaged in the same task in various parts of the building, who must be thanked collec-

tively. Speaking of ladies, it is delightful to record that they were in strong force again on Sunday night.

Mr. Bottomley gave Mr. Foote's lecture a fine editorial advertisement in *John Bull*; the *Morning Leader* and the *Star* gave generous announcements, and a valuable paragraph appeared in *Reynolds*'.

The "London Letter" of the *Western Daily Mercury*, on Monday, contained a reference to the "Bradlaugh" meeting at Queen's Hall. We should like to know if it was referred to in other provincial papers. Will our readers help us in this matter?

The *Glasgow Evening Times* noticed the "Bradlaugh" meeting by way of announcement on the Saturday. The paragraph ended quite agreeably: "The story of the man who started life in Bacchus Walk, Hoxton, the son of a solicitor's clerk, and by his own force of character made himself one of the first authorities on English law, an M.P., and a leader of public opinion, and yet died poor, is one that our age can hear retold with profit, and there should be a great muster of young and old." We believe this is the first time that a Freethought meeting has ever been mentioned in our Glasgow contemporary.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd opens the Liverpool Branch's new lecture session to-day (Oct. 2). He lectures afternoon and evening in the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square. South Lancashire "saints" will please note. We should be glad to hear of crowded audiences. Tea can be procured at the Hall by visitors from a distance.

The Bethnal Green Branch is prolonging its open-air work into October for the sake of advertising the Queen's Hall and Shoreditch Town Hall meetings. Miss Kough lectures from the Victoria Park platform this afternoon (Oct. 2). The local "saints" should give a hearty welcome to the lady lecturer.

The West Ham Branch opens its new indoor campaign at the Public Hall, Canning Town, this evening (Oct. 2) at 7.30. The lecturer is Mr. Hyatt, who will be followed by Miss Kough. There is a good list of lecturers up to Christmas.

Mr. W. W. Collins, who left England for the Antipodes, more than twenty years ago, and has been gallantly fighting the battle of Freethought there ever since, writes us from Avonside, Christchurch, New Zealand, under date of August 10:—

"Dear Mr. Foote,—

Just a short note to let you know that your many friends here rejoice as much as your home friends do at your restoration to health. You will soon be into your winter lecture season, and a few of us thought that it might add to your comfort, when travelling, and perhaps to your health, if, when on a cold northern journey, you wrapped yourself up in a warm New Zealand rug. So by this same mail we are sending you one. Will you please accept it as a very slight token, not only of our personal esteem, but also of our high admiration of the splendid services you have rendered and are rendering to the great cause of Rational Thought? The rug is, of course, entirely a New Zealand product; and we want you to feel that its closeness of texture, the strength and durability of its warp and woof, together with its warmth-giving qualities, do but represent our feelings of admiration and affection for you."

Mr. Collins signs the letter on behalf of fifty-eight ladies and gentlemen whose names he appends. They are all joined in this "tribute." The rug hasn't arrived as soon as the letter, but it will doubtless arrive in due course. Meanwhile we thank the senders very warmly. The rug is all right in its way, but their words of sympathy are the main thing.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Collins is increasing the size of his *Examiner* from eight to twelve pages, and that the Society has lately had a considerable increase of members. The outlook is bright and encouraging.

We all know the theological countenance—cold, unsympathetic, cruel, lighted with a pious smirk,—no line of laughter—no dimpled mirth—no touch of humor—nothing human. The face is a rebuke, a reprimand to natural joy. It says to the happy: "Beware of the dog"—"Prepare for death." This face, like the fabled Gorgon, turns cheerfulness to stone. It is a protest against pleasure—a warning and a threat.—*Ingersoll*.

Virgin Birth Stories.

THE legends of supernatural procreation are practically universal. Those misunderstandings of natural phenomena, which among uncritical savages give rise to the myths and dogmas of religions, have rarely displayed greater variety or vitality than in the amazing delusion of human parthenogenesis, or virgin birth. The gods and demi-gods of the preponderating majority of known religious cults are, or have been, credited with abnormal birth. Wonder and astonishment are the parents of imitation; and the unphysiological processes of supernormal pregnancy ascribed to the gods have been emulated by women, anxious to produce offspring, throughout the world.

No concept of those immutable principles of natural causation which underlie all rational philosophy formed part of the consciousness of aboriginal man. The sane and sober outlook of the modern scientific mind is the outcome of many weary centuries of painful and laborious development. But this dearly purchased mental advance is to this day darkened and degraded by the shadows which linger from world-wide superstitions of past date. For countless centuries the blood and brain of the highest of the mammals were at the mercy of the magic and mystery of the incomprehensible world in which man dwelt. Little perplexity, therefore, need be felt that men of the highest intellect have occasionally displayed the effects of pre-scientific customs and beliefs which they have inherited from the weird wonderland of the times of old.

The supernatural birth stories we are about to survey deepen in interest if we bear in mind the circumstance that the most popular divinity in the Catholic pantheon is the latest and most perfected product of a primitive superstition. Early man regarded the world in which he lived as the haunt of gods and goblins, through whose instrumentality it was possible to mould and modify his surroundings and circumstances.

In his fine work on *Primitive Paternity*, Mr. E. Sidney Hartland has divided the myths of supernatural birth into two kinds. The Märchen he defines as stories narrated as entertaining pastimes only; the Sagas he considers as stories recording actual events. But as he concedes that no clear line of demarcation separates them, and confesses that they all belong to the lowest strata of human culture, it is obvious that the evidential value of each must be considered as practically identical.

Pregnancy was regarded as a result of the consumption of certain solid or liquid substances in various parts of the globe. A young virgin in this manner became the mother of the divine ancestor of the Hottentots. She plucked and chewed a juicy grass, and swallowed the sap, subsequently giving birth to the god. Yehl, the divine hero of the Indian tribes of British Columbia, was a frequent visitant from the world of spirits. He transformed himself into a spear of cedar, a pebble, blade of grass, or a waterdrop, and in one of these disguises he was swallowed by the virgin who was destined to deliver him.

"The Sia, a Pueblo people of the south-west of North America, relate that their hero, Poshaiyanne, was born at the pueblo of Pecos, New Mexico, of a virgin, who became pregnant from eating two pinon-nuts. According to the sacred legends of the Hopi, another Pueblo people, a horned *Kateina*, a mythological personage, appeared in a time of religious laxity and distress to the oldest woman of the Páki tribe, and directed that the oldest man should go and procure a certain root and that she and a young virgin of the clan should eat of it. After a time the old woman, he said, would give birth to a son who would marry the virgin, and their offspring would redeem the people. The *Kateina* was obeyed, and the old woman brought into the world a son with two horns upon his head. But the design of the supernatural power was frustrated by the people, who called the child a monster and killed it. The virgin also gave birth later to a daughter, whose offspring, twins, were

sacred beings known as Alósaka. They, however, in their turn were put to death, and the miseries of the people continued."*

Ching-mon, a Chinese maiden, found a flower on her dress after emerging from her bath; she ate the blossom and became the mother of Fo-hi, the first Chinese Emperor. The reigning Manchu monarchs of China also trace their descent from a spotless virgin, who partook of a purple fruit that was placed on her garment by a magpie. Throughout Eastern Asia this myth is everywhere met with in one or other of its manifold forms. The peninsular of Hindostan supplies examples in abundance of supernatural generation; the heroes and divinities of this religious wonderworld almost invariably make their appearance on earth through the quite unbiological processes of virgin procreation.

These remarkable occurrences did not, as is vulgarly imagined, realise their consummation in the virgin birth commemorated by two contributors to our sacred books. In a fifteenth-century Ethiopic manuscript may be read a record of the mighty deeds of a saint named Maybá Seyón. This veracious history was in all probability reduced to writing shortly after the Saint's death. Needless to relate, his career was adorned with miracles. A barren woman implored his assistance, and promised that if the Lord granted her a male child she would present him as an offering to the commemoration of the Redeemer. The holy man "gave her some of the bread of the commemoration of the Redeemer, and she ate it," the saint at the same time conferring his blessing. This experiment materialised itself at the end of two years in the form of two children.

So recently as the middle of last century it was commonly believed in Iceland that a lady of rank had been impregnated by a trout. In the New World, Brazil and Samoa furnish sacred traditions of the fertilisation of young virgins by fish, while the legends of the natives of North America favor flesh meat as the potent agency of parthenogenesis.

Leading authorities on Irish heathendom have traced to Pagan sources the various stories of supernatural birth, which were piously treasured by the people long subsequent to the enthronement of Christianity as the predominant cult. The Celtic and Iberian divinities and heroes who have survived as saints all made their mundane appearance in a most miraculous manner.

Stones have also played their part in virgin births. Quetzalcoatl, the great god of ancient Mexico, derived his descent from a justly celebrated green stone which was swallowed by his mother, Chimalma, on a great occasion. Among the cultured Chinese and the barbarous Koryaks of north-eastern Asia similar fables were venerated as veracities.

Virgins have frequently conceived as a consequence of imbibing water or some other liquid. Zoroaster's nativity is attributed, in a Parsee work of the ninth century, to his mother's draught of homa-juice and cows' milk, blended with the god's guardian-spirit and glory. The advent of Nanabozho, the culture hero of the Lenape Indians of the Delaware, was caused by his mother quenching her thirst with water from a creek.

The relics of Christian saints and martyrs are endowed with special procreative powers. There exists a Nestorian story in which a certain man was cursed with a barren wife. He journeyed with his spouse to—

"Rabban Bar Idtá, and with bitter and sorrowful tears besought his help. On the promise that if she have three sons to give one of them to the holy man, the latter says to the woman: 'My daughter, take these three little cakes of martyrs' dust, and go to thy house in good faith; and each day take one little cake.' Her compliance is rewarded by the birth of a son, whom she sets apart in payment for her vow, and by the subsequent birth of two more boys."†

Mr. Hartland also quotes from Lutzel the curious Breton legend in which the apostle Philip is burnt to death while carrying out a command of the Savior to destroy a chapel with fire. After the accidental cremation of the apostle, Jesus says: "Poor Philip! but let us see if we cannot find any remains of him, any piece of calcined bone." The Savior picked up a bone shaped like a soup-spoon and placed it in his pocket. As the night came on, the Lord, with Peter and John, sought admittance at a farmhouse. They are hospitably received, but the spoons are insufficient. Jesus at once produces the bone, and inquires as to the quality of the soup. The servant-girl testifies as to its goodness, and the Lord asks if she has tasted it. She answers "No," and he says: "Then take a spoonful and see." So he handed her a spoonful of broth, which she gulped down with the bone. "Good God!" she exclaimed, "I have swallowed the spoon. I don't know how that happened." This bone-swallowing led to the girl's pregnancy, and she was bundled out of the house. But on the straw, in a stable, she was delivered of a splendid boy, who proved himself St. Philip, born again.

It is a relief to turn from this crude fable to the beautiful mythology of Greece. From the blood of the dismembered Agdestes a pomegranate tree sprang into life. Nana, the nymph, gathered and bore in her bosom the fruit plucked from its boughs, and from this pomegranate fertilisation Attis was born. The folk tales of the Orient treasure numerous legends of a kindred character.

The faiths of ancient India, New Guinea, and British Columbia also contain legends of virgin births through the agency of simple human touch.

"Impregnation by an unusual part of the body is in fact by no means a rare incident in sacred and historical traditions. During the Middle Ages it seems to have been seriously believed—at all events the idea was current—respecting the conception of Jesus Christ. The Fathers have dwelt upon the physiological details of the Incarnation with prurient rudeness. They were as familiar with at least the negative results of the miracle, as minute and positive in their descriptions as if they had made an obstetrical examination. In their zeal for the virginity of the Savior's mother they insisted that he was conceived and born without any physical changes in the body that bore him. This naturally led to speculation on the manner of this conception. Grave divines like St. Augustine asserted that 'God spake by the angel and the Virgin was impregnated through the ear.'**

Mr. Hartland illustrates the conceptions current in the Middle Ages, and even during the Renaissance, from the pictorial art of these periods. Painters depicted the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove entering the Virgin's ear, or hovering above her, while a shaft of light issuing from the bird's beak conveys a tiny babe to the channel of her organ of hearing. A picture, ascribed to the great painter Albert Dürer, now in the Church of the Magdalen at Aix, in Provence, represents God the Father encircled with waves of glory, from which a microscopic infant floats down to the Virgin. A picture which Fra Filippo Lippi was commissioned to paint for Cosmo de Medici—which is stored in the National Gallery—portrays the Madonna seated, with a book in her hands. An angel bows low before her, and emerging from a right hand suspended in space, and surrounded by glory, is the holy dove. The bird is moving towards her navel, and, with bent head, the Virgin curiously watches it. "So Buddha," comments Mr. Hartland, "in the form of a white elephant, enters his mother's right side. The parallel is instructive. Mohammedan tradition, it may be added, ascribes the miraculous conception of the Virgin to Gabriel's having opened the bosom of her shift and breathed upon her womb."†

One of the Zulu sagas contains an account of the impregnation of the youngest of the king's daughters as a result of bathing in a stream. The ancient men of the tribe pronounced the sentence of ostracism,

* E. S. Hartland, *Primitive Paternity*, vol. i., pp. 4, 5.
† *Primitive Paternity*, vol. i., p. 16.

* *Primitive Paternity*.
† *Primitive Paternity*.

and she was driven away. After many weary wanderings, she became the mother of a male child, who was afterwards celebrated as a wise doctor. From the striking parallels provided by his subsequent career to that recorded of Jesus Christ, the suggestion was put forward—presumably by interested parties—that this Zulu legend is merely a corrupted version of the New Testament tale, originally derived by the natives from the Portuguese. Our eminent anthropologist is sufficiently emphatic on this point: "There is, however, no evidence to support this improbable suggestion: the story in all its details is purely native."*

The myth of the Virgin Birth as a result of contact with the waters of lakes and streams, the rain from the rivers of the sky, and the rays of the fertilising sun, is widespread in both hemispheres of our planet. Central Asia, North and South America, Persia, Europe itself, all furnish examples of the marvellous procreative powers of water. The mother of Montezuma, the culture hero of the Pueblos of New Mexico, was fertilised by the falling rain. California, Colorado, and other areas of the American Continent have the same wonderful occurrences to relate. The founder of the kingdom of Fou-yu, in China, was the supernatural son of a damsel on whom a vapor descended from the sky.

The rays of the sovereign sun played their part in the Greek myths of parthenogenesis. This appears to have been the primitive form of the story of Danaë. The mothers of eminent Chinese rulers were frequently fertilised by the shafts of the solar orb. The legends of Siam, Samoa, and Japan, the Admiralty Islands, the native races of North America—all these present instances of the sun's germinating powers when they were brought to bear upon the female form. Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis, in ancient Egypt, was begotten by a shaft of light descending from heaven upon the heifer who gave the god to man.

The stories of supernatural birth are legion. They crop up in prolific abundance in every corner of the inhabited globe to which the scientific explorer and investigator has penetrated. It is to be inferred that the immense number already known to men of science represent but a small fraction of those that await discovery. The explanation once offered for their ubiquity—that they all took their rise at a common source, and from that centre were spread broadcast through the world—is already on the dustheap reserved for the reception of impudent and sophisticated devices designed for the purpose of perpetuating the character and credit of Hebrew mythology and Christian tradition. The sentence long since pronounced upon the artful and disingenuous attempt of hard-pressed theologians when, in the famous case of *Evolution versus Special Creation*, they strove to blend the light of science with the shadows and dreams of superstition, must now be passed upon all the subterfuges and stratagems of the clerical enemies of truth, progress, and humanity.

T. F. P.

The Heathen Chinese.

THAT the Heathen Chinese is "peculiar" in his notions and his ways is a fact that had been remarked by many others long before the illustrious American popularised his amusing failings. "From the thirteenth century," says M. Huc, the French Catholic missionary, "when the first notion of China was brought into Europe by the celebrated Venetian, Marco Polo, to our own day, all parties seem to have agreed in regarding the Chinese as a very singular people—a people unlike all others." Human nature, it is often said, is the same everywhere; but the racial differences among mankind are so great as to render such a general statement almost meaningless. And, says the Hon. Chester Holcombe, "no amount of general knowledge of humanity, intimate acquaint-

ance with the race, or close companionship with individual members of it, will enable an Occidental to predicate exactly what the Chinese will do under any given combination of circumstances. They are full of contradictions." In fact, John Chinaman, who is at once the hope and the despair of the Christian missionary, is an enigma that is utterly insoluble by any criterion of Western ideas. And on no subject, perhaps, are his notions and disposition in greater contrast with those of the European's than on the subject of Religion. The oft-quoted definition of man as a "religious animal" is one that does not apply to the Celestial; for, with the single exception of Confucianism—which only resembles a religion in the rites and ceremonies associated with the homage everywhere paid to the great Sage—it is a remarkable fact that there is no form of religious belief indigenous to China. Buddhism, one of the nominal faiths of the country, was imported bodily from India, but does not appear ever to have taken very deep root; and although the founder of Taoism was a Chinese, he pursued his studies and developed his theories in India—the home of speculative subtleties and divine mysteries. That religious atmosphere, therefore, which is so dear to the heart of the professional Christian is almost wholly absent from Chinese social life. Probably in no civilised society is indifference to matters of religion more pronounced than in the Flowery Land; but it is an indifference that is often cloaked in flowery verbosity of an ambiguous character. And it is because the Chinaman's mental attitude is so difficult to discover that he is such a hard nut for the missionary to crack.

Those readers who are acquainted with Father Huc's *Travels* will not fail to have been struck with his candor in reference to the Chinaman's attitude to religion and the future prospects of missionary enterprise in that vast empire of peculiar people. M. Huc's knowledge of Chinese history, social institutions, and the peculiar character of their ancient civilisation, was probably in his own day unique among Europeans; and his interesting observations have this merit, that they are altogether free from the deceptive optimism that characterise the utterances of many missionary enthusiasts. He even goes the length of warning his readers at the outset against expecting to find in his narratives any of "those edifying details which have so great a charm for pious and believing souls, and which perhaps they have a right to look for in the pages of a missionary." Father Huc was hopeful, of course, as his office and mission demanded that he should be, that Christianity would one day be accepted by China; but it was a hope born of clerical desire, and was certainly not sustained by any actual knowledge or experience of Chinese character.

In his *Chinese Empire* he relates the following incident, which illustrates the peculiar type of mind—of apparently intense interest, and yet of stolid indifference—so characteristic of the Chinese in their attitude towards questions of religion:—

"In one of the principal towns of China, we were for some time in communication with a lettered Chinese, who appeared extremely well disposed to embrace Christianity. We had several conferences together, and we studied the most important and difficult points of doctrine, and finally, by way of complement to our oral instructions, we read some of the best books. Our dear catechumen admitted, without any exception, everything we advanced; the only difficulty was, he said, the learning by heart the prayers, that every good Christian ought to know, in order to say them morning and evening. As he seemed nevertheless to desire putting off to some indefinite period the moment in which he should declare himself a Christian, every time he came to see us we urged him to do so, and made the most earnest representation of the duty of following the truth, now that he knew where it lay."

But this Chinese Felix had a logical card up his sleeve; and the naive reply of the "dear catechumen" must have considerably astonished the proselytising priest:—

"By and by," said he; "all in good time. One should never be precipitate.....It is not good to be

* *Primitive Paternity*, vol. i., p. 23.

too enthusiastic. No doubt the Christian religion is beautiful and sublime; its doctrine explains, with method and clearness, all that it is necessary for man to know. Whoever has any sense must see that, and will adopt it in his heart in all sincerity; but, after all, one must not think too much of these things, and increase the cares of life. Now, just consider—we have a body; how many cares it demands! It must be clothed, fed, and sheltered from the injuries of the weather; its infirmities are great, and its maladies numerous. It is agreed on all hands that health is our most precious good. This body that we see, that we touch, must be taken care of every day, and every moment of the day. Now is this not enough without troubling ourselves about a soul that we never do see? The life of a man is short, and full of misery; it is made up of a succession of important concerns that follow one another without interruption. Our hearts and our minds are scarcely sufficient for the solitudes of the present life—is it wise, then, to torment oneself about the future one?"

Such a method of parrying an opponents arguments before giving him—to use a sporting phrase—the knock-out blow is one of John Chinaman's dialectical "little ways," and one which the following quotation very lucidly describes. The Hon. Chester Holcombe, who was for many years Acting Minister of the United States at Peking, in reference to this peculiarity, says:—

"In a battle of words a Chinese antagonist never brings up his strongest forces first. He plays with his enemy as a fisherman plays his fish. He advances one puerile argument after another, watching closely their effect, and only brings up his real army when all these men of straw have been demolished and cast aside."

And the invincible weapon of this lettered Chinese was the practical argument of Secularism.

Another incident, which is related by Father Huc to show that in China "all Christians are regarded as the creatures of European governments," indicates at the same time the practical nature of the Chinese mind. He says:—

"The Christian religion is designated in China as Tien-tchou-kiao—that is to say, the religion of the Lord of Heaven; the idea of God being expressed by the word 'Tien-tchou.' One day we were speaking of religion with a really superior sort of Mandarin, a very intelligent fellow. He asked us who was that Tien-tchou whom the Christians adore and invoke, and who had promised to render them rich and happy in such an extraordinary manner.

'Why,' said we, 'do you, a learned man of the first class, a well-instructed man, and one who has read the books of our religion, do you ask this? Do you not know who is the Tien-tchou of the Christians?'

'Ah, you are right,' said he, putting his hand to his forehead as if to recall a half-vanishing recollection; 'you are right. I ought to know; but really I had forgotten all about this Tien-tchou.'

'Well, you know now; who is he, then?'

'Oh, to be sure, everybody knows—he is the Emperor of the French!'

The embarrassed Mandarin was obliged, out of sheer politeness, to hazard a guess of some kind; and, while "the Emperor of the French" was a guess that must have considerably shocked the religious susceptibilities of the Catholic missionary, there can be little question that the Mandarin's conception of the Christian God was more than justified by the aggressive and dictatorial policy which Western nations had for centuries pursued in their relations with his country.

The Chinese may be said to have reached that ideal of religious unity and amity which Anglican bishops and the leading lights of Nonconformity, more or less sincerely, profess to desire; but it is a unity of utter indifference to creeds and dogmas. Nothing more clearly indicates this spirit of indifference than a formula of politeness exchanged between unknown persons on their first meeting. It is customary to ask to "what sublime religion" you belong. One perhaps will call himself a Confucian, another a Buddhist, a third a disciple of Lao-tze, a fourth a follower of Mohammed, of whom there are many in China; and then everyone begins to pronounce a panegyric on the religion to which he does

not belong, as politeness requires. So lightly do the claims of any particular faith burden the conscience of the Celestial that, as M. Huc says, "All the Chinese are at the same time partisans of Confucius, Lao-tze, and Buddha"; or rather, as he significantly adds, "they are nothing at all." And if the Chinaman ever did become persuaded to add another religion to his list, and to look with favor on the absurdities of the religion of Tien-tchou, it is more than probable that, after his "conversion," he would remain a heathen still.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

PROVINCIAL.

Judge George F. Lawton, of the Middlesex Probate Court of Massachusetts, told a story the other day about a friend of his, a minister, who was spending his sabbatical year travelling abroad. Arriving in London, he made every effort to get an intimate view of the two branches of Parliament in session. Of course, no stranger is allowed on the floor of the House of Lords, but the minister, not knowing this, tried to make his way in. There is a rule, however, that servants of the various lords may be admitted to speak to their masters. Seeing the minister walking boldly in, the door-keeper asked:

"What lord do you serve?"

"What Lord?" repeated the astonished American. "The Lord Jehovah!"

For a moment the doorkeeper hesitated, and then admitted him. Turning to an assistant standing near, he said: "He must mean one of those poor Scotch lairds."

HE MADE GOOD.

Governor Marshall has a story about the pastor of a country church who preached upon the theme, "You Can't Keep a Good Man Down." When the appointed Sunday arrived the church was crowded, not because he was an especially good preacher, but because he was a preacher who always took his text from "the Word," and the people were curious to know where he would find such a text in the Bible. He arose with deliberation, while the congregation waited breathlessly, opened his Bible, and read: "And on the third day the whale spewed up Jonah."

HER QUERY.

An old lady was told the story of the boy who defined "vacuum" "as a large empty space where the Pope lives." She was intensely amused, and recovered from a fit of uncontrolled laughter to murmur: "Dear me, how extremely droll! But why the Pope?"

PRIESTS.

In all ages most priests have been heartless and relentless. They have calumniated and tortured. In defeat they have crawled and whined. In victory they have killed. The flower of pity never blossomed in their hearts and in their brain. Justice never held aloft the scales. Now, they are not as cruel. They have lost their power, but they are still trying to accomplish the impossible. They fill their pockets with "fools' gold" and think they are rich. They stuff their minds with mistakes, and think they are wise. They console themselves with legends and myths, have faith in fiction and forgery—give their hearts to ghosts and phantoms and seek the aid of the non-existent. They put a monster—a master—a tyrant in the sky, and seek to enslave their fellow men. They teach the cringing virtues of serfs. They abhor the courage of manly men. They hate the man who thinks. They long for revenge. They warm their hands at the imaginary fires of hell.—*Ingersoll.*

Obituary.

WE regret to announce the death of a well-known and highly esteemed Blackburn Freethinker, Mr. Nathan Ashworth. He never neglected an opportunity of giving expression to the faith that was in him. A good husband and kind father, he lived and died an Atheist. He loved the truth. Mr. Genever read the Secular Burial Service.—J. CARRUTHERS.

It is with deep regret that I report the death of Mr. Robert Baird, who died on September 18 at his residence, 47 Philip-street, Bainsford, Falkirk. He had just reached his fifty-seventh year, and leaves a widow and two sons and daughter to mourn his loss. He was a thoroughly honest, sterling man, and devoted to our cause. He was interred in Falkirk Cemetery on the 21st, when Mr. A. McKinnon read a most impressive Secular Service.—ALEXANDER MCKINNON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, W.): 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Logic of Life."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Public (Minor) Hall, Canning Town): 7, A. Hyatt, "This Fable of Christ maketh us Rich."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. V. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, Miss K. Kough, "Christianity and Progress."

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, W. J. Ramsey, "In Prison for Blasphemy."

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, S. J. Cook, a Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road, Kingsland): 11.30, J. J. Darby, "Christian 'Evidences' Examined."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 11.30, a Lecture.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers' Hill, opposite Public Library): 11.30, Mr. Allison, a Lecture. Angel-lane, Edmonton: Mr. Ramsey, "Some Bible Stories."

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, Brunswick-street): G. W. Foote, 12 (noon), "Charles Bradlaugh: After Twenty Years"; 6.30, "The Greatest Lie in the World."

RHONDDA BRANCH N. S. S. (Parry's, late Danix's, Temperance Bar, Dunraven-street, Tonypanyd): 3, Sam Holman, "Does Atheism Satisfy?"

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