

# THE Freethinker

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O for a breath of Aristophanes, Rabelais, Voltaire, Cervantes, Fielding, Molière! These are spirits that, if you know them well, will come when you do call. You will find the very invocation of them act on you like a renovating air—the south-west coming off the sea, or a cry in the Alps.—GEORGE MEREDITH.

## Views and Opinions.

A NUMBER of Jews in South Wales fled to Cardiff from the pious attentions of the hymn-singing hooligans who wrecked and looted their shops, and treated them with callous brutality. Naturally they fell in with Mr. H. Jerevitch, the Cardiff Rabbi, and told him of their losses and sufferings. With reference to these the Rabbi said to an interviewer: "I have no heart to describe everything I have seen and heard among them. It was thought that religious Wales would never imitate cruel Russia, and that the Welsh people, who are all Bible readers, would strictly adhere to the Biblical command, 'There shall be one law for you and for the stranger in your land.'"

Now the "Welshers" might reply that Shakespeare noticed "how the Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose." Anybody may prove almost anything by quotations from the Bible,—as Cardinal Newman did not forget to remind the bibliolatrous Protestants. Individual texts are all very well in partisan controversy; they serve the turn, and keep the ball rolling merrily—though without leading to a satisfactory conclusion. But from a moral point of view, at least, the general tone of "Holy Writ" is of far greater importance. There are some grand and beautiful texts in the Bible, but its pervading atmosphere is one of shocking brutality and terrible cruelty. The Deity of the Bible says some pleasant things when he is in a good temper, but when he is angry, or even annoyed, he gives utterance to some of the most abominable threats in all literature, while the way in which he deals with his "enemies"—of whom he is constantly talking—is enough to make a congenital criminal's hair stand on end. How people are to be softened and refined by worshipping Jehovah, and reading his book, passes our comprehension.

Then there is the New Testament, which Mr. Jerevitch, as a Jew, naturally overlooks. If he has read it, however, he will recollect that it reeks with hatred of the Jews. All sorts of slanders on them are cunningly wrought into the Gospels; beginning with the monstrous story that Jesus was born in a stable because the inn was full-up, and no Jewish gentleman would go outside to oblige a lady, even in such delicate circumstances—and ending with the awful cry "His blood be on us, and on our children." That vile text, in a perfectly imaginary narrative, has cost the Jews rivers of their own blood. They never said it, but they have paid the penalty of it. The calumny has haunted them for eighteen hundred years. It has meant the outrage of their women, the murder of their men, the massacre of their children, the long historic tragedy of their race. That text has proved even more terrible than the

one which says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." The two together are enough to damn the Bible to the deepest hell.

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The Cardiff Rabbi makes a curious antithesis in contrasting the land of the Czar with the land of Mr. Lloyd George. He is surprised at "religious Wales" imitating "cruel Russia." But is not Russia quite as religious as Wales? Some would say that she is more so. But that point is only by the way. The real point is that Mr. Jerevitch assumes there is an essential antagonism between religion and cruelty. Now this assumption is contradicted by universal history. No quarrels have been so bitter, no wars so bloody, no persecutions so inhuman, as those taking place in the name of religion. When men differ in the name of God, charity forsakes them, the milk of human kindness deserts their natures, justice becomes a meaningless word, and toleration a laughing-stock. Nothing is seen but the madness of malignity.

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We referred last week to the revival of the Blasphemy Laws at Leeds. The two summonses against Mr. J. W. Gott and Mr. T. W. Stewart (lecturing as "Dr. Nikola") had been heard before Mr. C. M. Atkinson, the Stipendiary Magistrate, and adjourned indefinitely. Mr. Atkinson signified his dissent from some observations of Mr. Bateson, who appeared for the prosecution. "He had heard of equally vulgar and stupid things," he remarked, "said by Christians of small education when they were attempting to give accounts of the miracles." He also expressed the view that "the reiteration of admitted Scriptural facts, however offensively uttered, did not necessarily mean committal of blasphemy." We gathered that the police, who are the prosecutors, would not easily have secured a committal before Mr. Atkinson, who is known to be a friend of free discussion; and the police evidently shared our opinion,—for they took advantage of the Stipendiary's absence on holiday to get out a fresh summons against Mr. Stewart.

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Ordinary men of the world would call this police action a trick. The summons is for precisely the same sort of "offence" in a subsequent lecture. When the Stipendiary comes back from his holiday he will probably be surprised to learn that Mr. Stewart has been committed for trial at the next Assizes, which will probably take place in November or early in December. Mr. Stewart called at our office on Tuesday morning and sought our advice. We had no personal acquaintance with him,—indeed, we never saw him before, and he has not been associated with the National Secular Society; but these were no reasons against advising him as far as possible in the present circumstances of the case. Any one who is attacked under the Blasphemy Laws has a claim upon our assistance.

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We doubt if Mr. Gott's case will be heard of again, and we think that would be the best issue for all concerned. But it is still possible, of course, that the police may proceed upon a fresh summons. Mr. Stewart's case is more serious, and may require more of our attention. We understand that he means to conduct his own defence.

G. W. FOOTE.



## The Wesleyan Pastoral and the Future of Faith.

THE Annual Pastoral Address of the Methodist Conference has just been issued, and runs on the usual lines of such productions. There is an expressed regret at the decline of religious worship, and "the growing disregard for the sanctities of the Lord's Day," which has become "a distinct feature of modern life," accompanied by the belief, based on nothing in particular, that there will, in the near future, be a renaissance of religious belief that will effectually rout the common enemy. The existence of God, we are assured, "is more widely accepted as a common postulate, in the absence of which no reasonable theory of the universe can be framed," and there is a growing disposition to believe that "the Christian faith is an effective rule of conduct for the individual, a compendious and unfailing instrument of social regeneration." And in this the Pastoral sees the promise of a more hopeful future for faith. Well, the need for hope is great, and faith has a curious habit of converting fancies into facts, so taking things wished for as the equivalent of things that are.

A final grain of comfort is found in the reflection that although Church membership is everywhere declining, and "the mischief is deep-seated in the religious life of the country," although organised religion is weakening, "it is not religion proper that is losing its hold on the hearts of the people," personal religion is still strong; indeed, "its fundamental truths have rather gained than lost in certainty." So Methodists are exhorted to take heart and look forward with confidence to the future.

Now, it is quite true that many people do break with church or chapel for the avowed reason that their religious sense prevents them assisting at empty forms and repeating outworn formulæ. Yet under this is the deeper truth that but for a weakening of religious conviction this revolt from church and chapel would scarcely occur. Their revolt is a symptom of unrest, and it naturally takes the form of objecting to the more obvious anachronisms first. Other objections follow in due course. Even the doctrine of eternal hell was not, with the mass of people, rejected all at once. First, its duration was limited. It was discovered that an eternity only meant a thousand years or so. Next, the temperature was reduced to make the place more bearable. Finally, it was discovered that the very notion of punishment after death was brutalising, and a God who damned people for being as he left them was revolting to the modern conscience. But under all was the growing revolt of the modern mind and conscience against a barbaric teaching, a revolt that has been successful enough to clear the teachings from the minds of thoughtful and educated men and women.

It may also be granted that people do not usually reject their religious beliefs at once. Few people are logical enough for that. And even when they are logical enough, they often lack the strength to carry their convictions into action. Like the man who gave up the errors of the Church of Rome to embrace those of the Church of England, they exchange one form of religion for another. But even when this is the case, the texture of the religious belief is apt to become poorer and thinner, and while the change still keeps them within the borders of the religious world, it is bringing them a step nearer the complete rejection of all religion. Proof of this found in the Pastoral itself. Time was when it was declared that salvation was only to be found with this or that particular Church. Now, religious leaders are content to harp upon the "fundamental truths" of religion, and to count all upon their side who profess some religion, no matter how vague and indefinite. But religions do not gain in strength by broadening. They are strongest when

they are most exclusive. Nor do the gods gain in power by becoming more abstract. Their power lies in their concreteness and in their doing a very concrete work. To spread them out, to enlarge them until they become the symbols of a mere abstract force, a kind-of-a-sort-of-a-something, like nothing in particular and doing nothing in particular, is to label them a negligible quantity. And people soon express this conclusion in their actions if not in their words.

And apart from these there are large numbers who, year by year, definitely and openly abandon all religion. What is to be said of these? This class does not diminish, but increase. And it would increase still more rapidly were it not for the fact that owing to much of the social machinery being worked in the interest of religion, children often fall victims to snares from which their parents have escaped. But on this number the religious world makes no impression whatever. It may safely be said that a man who once rejects religion, seldom, if ever, accepts it again. He cannot rid himself of the knowledge he has acquired. Having once seen through the imposture he is secure. All that the utmost efforts of the Churches can do is to save some from leaving their ranks. They are in a business where new customers cannot be obtained—save by breeding them—and so must make the most of what they have while they still deal with them. Often preachers comfort their hearers that their lost and lapsed members are not lost to Christianity, they have only joined some other church. But as all use this plea the comfort does not seem of a very solid description.

The residual fact is, that in spite of all that can be done to prevent it, large numbers drift away from religion, and even though they do not actively oppose it, they cease to give it any support. It is urged that people need brighter and shorter services, better music and singing, that Church life must be made more attractive if it is to hold the people. All this may be true enough, but the necessity for these artificial stimulants should be anything but pleasing to the religious mind. Good, plain food is usually enough for a healthy appetite; highly spiced dishes are just as usually the indication of a debilitated digestion. Of course, there are many who do not object to how a smoking concert, or a musical evening, or a game of billiards is labelled, provided they get what they want. You may call it religious if you please, but it is not the label they are interested in. But it is a curious situation when the "glorious gospel" has to play second fiddle to a series of entertainments, and when ministers solemnly warn one another that their addresses must be very brief, and that even these brief addresses must be mainly concerned with things that are not really religious at all.

It is said that science, with all its advances, has not banished mystery from the universe, and this sense of scientific impotence leaves room for religion to flourish. But science knows no mysteries—only problems. It admits these, but it does not worship them—it studies them. It says, with Maeterlinck, "We derive no greatness, sublimity, or depth from unceasingly fixing our thoughts on the infinite and the unknown." And it induces the growth of a new frame of mind in presence of the unknown. Whenever our ancestors saw a mystery they perceived God. The unknown awakened their fear, and fear developed their religion. Science teaches that rational fear, like rational hope, should be based on knowledge; and that where nothing is known, no reasonable cause exists for either hope or fear. In presence of an unsolved problem the attitude of religion is uninquiring worship; that of science is keen-eyed investigation. One says, "Here is a mystery, adore it"; the other says, "Here is a problem, study it." Man is not made greater by his perception of the unknown, but by his utilisation of the known. The important thing in relation to the unknown is the attitude we assume towards the known; and that, encouraged by science, is fatal to all religious pretensions.



With the customary clerical inaccuracy, the Pastoral says that the existence of God is more widely accepted as a postulate than ever. The truth is, that never, at any stage of human thought, has the existence of God been more generally ignored than it is to-day. There is not a department of human thought, in a civilised country, in which it has any vital force. All men completely ignore it in practice, even though some may honor it in theory. The really curious thing about the present situation is this: once upon a time it was the ordinary man who saw God in nature; the leader and thinker who saw through the belief and recognised its hollowness. Now, it is the ordinary man who is casting off the belief in God, and the spinner of semi-metaphysical subtleties who, in the name of science, professes to find a God working through natural processes. If this is what the President of the Conference has in mind when he speaks of the existence of God being generally recognised, he is welcome to all the consolation he may get from the phenomenon. Those who gauge the position more accurately will see here little more than the power of social prestige enlisting the support of certain individuals, while the average man with no axe to grind offers a truer index of the real tendencies of the time.

Of course, no one imagines that there will be any sudden giving up of religious beliefs, in the manner that a town is surrendered to a besieging army. Mental changes are not brought about in this manner. What is much more likely to take place is a gradual transference of the feelings generally associated with religion to social objects and purposes. As a matter of fact, we can already observe this in operation. The humanising of religious doctrines is one of its signs. It is the dominance of social over religious considerations. The growing emphasis laid upon social topics in the pulpit is another indication of the same thing. A feeling of responsibility towards our fellows is taking the place of a feeling of responsibility towards God. The comfort that the mediæval saint found in solitary communion with fictitious angels, the modern man finds in social intercourse with men and women. Heaven itself is fast becoming an expanded and idealised human society, as God is an idealised man. It is all a matter of development. The process may be slow, but, on the whole, it is sure. One cannot increase the sum of knowledge in any direction without weakening the influence of supernaturalism. The perpetuity of religion means the perpetuity of helplessness and ignorance, and religious leaders may be left to estimate the vitality of the one by the duration of the other.

C. COHEN.

### The Newest Teleology.

It is exceedingly refreshing to find an eminent divine naïvely confessing that "the conception of an unoriginated First Cause is very difficult to grasp"; and it is more amusing still to meet with another who grants that "an uncaused Cause is inconceivable." And yet these very divines aver that "it is a logical necessity by which we think of a First Cause—a cause, therefore, not itself the effect of a preceding cause." It is quite true that the idea of a First Cause necessarily excludes the possibility of its being also an effect, and it is equally true that to ask what caused the First Cause is equivalent to asserting that the First is the Second; but the fallacy involved in such reasoning is self-evident. The truth is that we are under no logical necessity to think of a First Cause, the very idea of it being a gratuitous assumption. Even Sir Oliver Lodge, who is at present the Church's most valued asset, has repeatedly expressed his belief in the eternity of existence. In his *Life and Matter* (p. 101) he says:—

"We may all fairly agree, I think, that whatever really and fundamentally exists, must, so far as bare existence is concerned, be independent of time. It may go through many changes, and thus have a history;

that is to say, must have definite time-relations, so far as its changes are concerned; but it can hardly be thought of as either going out of existence, or as coming into existence, at any given period, though it may completely change its form and accidents."

Sir Oliver's statement is all the more valuable in that it comes from one who claims that science is on the side of religion. The notion of the eternity of existence logically excludes that of a First Cause.

Now, does the abandonment of a First Cause imply the rejection of a Final Cause? If existence is eternal and passes through endless changes, does it not follow that it cannot be thought of as consciously working towards a definite end? No form is permanent, and there is no hint of finality anywhere. "Change and decay in all around we see," as the hymn says, without the slightest suggestion of "some far-off Divine event," towards which the whole Creation moves. It was a deep and far-seeing wisdom that led Herbert Spencer to adopt the word "evolution" as the best expression of his theory of the Universe; and nothing is clearer than the fact that evolution does not inevitably mean development, or progress. Both development and progress are suggestive of a goal. We often speak of the evolution of the flower from the bud, or of the oak-tree from the acorn, as if the flower or the tree were a designed goal; but, in reality, both are but passing phases of the eternal process of change. The flower dissolves and the grand old oak dies. If goal there be its name is dissolution or death. What is beyond doubt, to the impartial student, is that there is no intelligible design perceptible in the evolutionary process. It is true that every change is subject to law, and not a matter of chance; but there is no evidence whatever that the process is consciously aiming at anything at all, because everything comes and goes, appears and disappears. Buddha was absolutely right when he referred to impermanence as one of the three signs of every individual, god, animal, or man; and what is true of the living is equally true of the not-living.

Of course, the theologians who are evolutionists still cling to what is called the argument from design. They frankly admit that, as elaborated by Paley, that argument has completely broken down, and gone the way of the special creation theory; but they claim to have so reconstructed it as to render it more telling than it ever was under the old orthodoxy. Professor Peake, of the University of Manchester, for example, adduces the human eye, voice, and ear as instances of adaptation that "seem to speak of purpose on a scale so vast, and betokening an intelligence so profound, as to suggest very strongly that they are due to a personal Creator of the wisest wisdom." Here we have the prejudiced theologian in all his glory. Even the eye is by no means a perfect organ. Johannes Müller, the distinguished German physiologist, said that "its power of correction for aberration of light was poor," while Helmholtz, confirmed by Professor Metchnikoff, asserted that the optical study of the eye brought complete disillusion. The words of this famous man of science are so emphatic that they deserve to be quoted again and again:—

"Nature seems to have packed this organ with mistakes, as if with the avowed purpose of destroying any possible foundation for the theory that organs are adapted to their environment."

While recognising the truth of this statement, we have no desire to deny the existence in the Universe of many most beautiful adaptations. Nature abhors non-adaptation, and the penalty of those who are afflicted with it is ruthless extinction. Our only contention is that natural adaptations are of so mixed a character that it is impossible to regard them as having been designed by an infinitely powerful and beneficent Being. The tsetse fly is extremely well adapted to suck a blood-parasite from a wild animal, where it is harmless, and then to drop it into the blood of a domesticated animal, or of a human being, where it invariably proves fatal. The sleeping-sickness, caused by this blood-parasite, has



killed some 800,000 persons in Uganda during the last ten years. Was the tsetse fly designed by a God of love? Were the Californian poison-vine, which, lightly touched, produces eczema on the whole body, and the mucuna bean of Zambesia, whose spines, when trodden on, exude a powder of such skin-burning qualities that to relieve the agony the natives jump headlong into a crocodile-haunted river—were these brought into existence under the superintendence of a loving Heavenly Father?

All this is perfectly familiar ground, and we need not linger on it; and the only excuse for going over it at all is the persistency with which the divines allege that adaptation proves design, and that design implies a designer, under whose infallible guidance the whole evolutionary process has been conducted. Let us examine this allegation from another point of view. This is one statement of it:—

"It is only when we put intelligence, working consciously towards a given end, into the process of Natural Selection and Evolution generally, that we have an explanation which covers the facts to be explained."

The contention is that, from its very commencement, the process of evolution aimed at a clearly defined goal, always consciously in view, which was the production of man in the image and after the likeness of God. This view implies that everything that is has had a beginning, except the Designer and Director. It is still held that at some point, called "the beginning," we are now permitted to put it as far back as we please, and in some manner—and this, too, is now to be settled by science—"God created the heaven and the earth." What for? To be a fit home for man when he appeared. Now, mark, while the Universe has had a beginning, God has not. He has been in existence from all eternity, and it follows that from all eternity he was absolutely alone until he saw fit to create the stuff—the ether ocean, perhaps—out of which was slowly evolved the existing Universe, culminating in man. Now, both the initial act of creation and the subsequent process of evolution were prompted by an unspeakable sense of loneliness which troubled the Divine Heart. God yearned ineffably for a friend and companion with whom he could live in sweetest fellowship. Now, the pseudo-scientific theology of to-day endeavors to convince us that such a friend or companion had to be made or produced, and that the process of making or producing him extended over a period of several hundred million years, and that when at last he did appear he turned out a lamentable disappointment. Just think of it. For countless ages God's sole company was what we term dead or gross matter, in a state of constant flux. Then, some forty or fifty million years ago, life appeared. For a long time, between so-called dead and living matter there was scarcely any perceptible difference. Starting at the lowest rung of the ladder of life, God had to be satisfied with the slimy, sticky, organless monera; and as he ascended from rung to rung, he came across all sorts of living things, such as coral animals, worms, spiders, snails, insects, serpents, wolves, and tigers, all produced under his own perfect direction; and as we think of this curious process the pseudo-scientific divine says to us: "That was God's method of providing himself with a friend and companion."

Such is the newest doctrine of teleology. In spite of the active presence of a perfect Designer and Director, it is freely admitted that something went wrong, at some point, with the process of evolution. The goal aimed at was never reached. When man appeared he was anything but a worthy companion for the Supreme Being; he was a sinner doomed to perish for ever. There was in his constitution a taint, a virulent, rabid poison; and God was so disappointed that he repented having made him. As is well known, Christianity professes to be an infallible antidote for that fatal poison; and to become a Christian is tantamount to acknowledging God's total failure as Designer and Director of the evolutionary process. The only sane conclusion is that the new argument from design is fully as irrational as the old, to say the least. The products of evolution are

such as to preclude the possibility of their being the fruit of conscious and purposive mind, mind itself being one of the products, rather than the producing agent. Evolution is simply a series of unintelligent changes, working towards no intelligible end. One preacher recently delivered a sermon, the object of which was to show that mankind—no, not mankind as such, but mankind cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, that is, Christians—are God's most beautiful poems. We would so much like to see them. Are they confined in dark dungeons, invisible to the world? Visible Christians are very much like other people. To call them poems is to damn the poet for ever. No, men are not a credit to any creator; they are but bubbles from the ethereal sea, and, like all bubbles, destined to burst and vanish out of sight. "But," someone objects, "evolution has somehow produced Raphael's Madonna, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Newton's *Principia*, and Goethe's *Faust*." So it has; but it has also somehow produced Nero, Torquemada, Iago, Jack the Ripper, and all the other villains whose horrible records darken the historic page. The world has had its vile as well as noble geniuses; and both are equally the products of evolution.

J. T. LLOYD.

### The Utility of Praise and Blame.

AMONG the numerous psychological curiosities manifested in public discussion, one of the most amazing relates to the problem of the utility of praise and blame. The utterly illogical position is frequently advanced that the Determinist has no rational justification for praising anything or anybody. We are told that as man collectively, like Mr. Pickwick on a certain celebrated, if embarrassing occasion, is entirely the creature of the force of circumstances, it is, therefore, the acme of absurdity to extol or deprecate his good or evil deeds.

Before we decide to glorify or condemn, it is, of course, necessary to know why we disapprove of certain lines of human conduct, while regarding other courses of action with approval. Nevertheless, people in general rarely pause to consider why they almost instinctively regard some attributes or actions as good, while viewing opposite qualities or deeds as evil. But when they do stop to consider they invariably discover that all good actions and all good things are precisely those entities and energies which provide them with pleasurable sensations. On the other hand, all phenomena ranked as evil either directly or indirectly give rise to painful sensations. No normally balanced creature has ever really regarded pestilence or disease with favor. One never hears of good ailments or happy calamities, beneficent vices or consoling catastrophes. Conversely, no one has ever seen or heard of unhappy joy or distressing kindness, unwholesome cleanliness or bad goodness. The adjective "good" is meaningless and absurd when applied to pain producing phenomena; the term "evil" is equally ridiculous when associated with sensations that minister to our happiness and health.

If we take an umbrella from its stand on a foul night and find it the reverse of rainproof, or even worse, with one of its ribs in a state of fracture, we immediately pronounce it "bad" or something worse, as the case may be. A shockingly blunt carving knife, particularly in the presence of a keen appetite, may produce a grimace or possibly some horrid ejaculation. Our finest weather is that which is serene and beautiful; our bad or indifferent weather is damp, dull, and doleful. Good weather raises the tone of the body and mind, thereby creating agreeable sensations; bad weather lowers the tone of the system, and is consequently productive of disagreeable feelings. And thus it is that when we appreciate the pleasant, and deprecate the unpleasant, we are really praising or blaming the conditions which exalt or depress our states of con-



sciousness. Nothing is known to us with which we associate the quality of goodness, which does not immediately or ultimately yield us pleasure. In the same manner, all ill things, proximately or ultimately, lead to pain.

Comprehensively considered, our actions are exclusively self-regarding. Even the ultra-pious Puritan derives a certain satisfaction from his self-mortification. One outstanding feature of his morbid pleasure quite conceivably consists in his much lampooned self-righteous superiority to other sinners. Obviously, very widely different degrees of pleasure may co-exist in a complex social organism such as ours. Masses of our population undoubtedly delight in vulgar, obscene, and commonplace exhibitions, each more sinfully atrocious than the other. A refined and thoughtful minority derive a higher aesthetic and emotional satisfaction in witnessing the dramatic representation of the masterpieces of Shakespeare, Ibsen, or Goethe. Many thousands revel in grossly inartistic pictures and post-cards, but other thousands enjoy the magnificent masterpieces of a Turner, Dürer, or Meissonier. Those to whom Mrs. Henry Wood and Marie Corelli represent the high water mark of prose literature are on a somewhat lower plane to the more discriminating few who can appreciate the profundities and subtleties of George Meredith, the patiently depicted creations of George Eliot, or the old-world fatalistic Wessex pessimism of the all too sombre pages of Thomas Hardy. The painful sensations experienced by the reader or spectator of the world's tragic masterpieces, are more than compensated by the higher intellectual and emotional states they call into existence.

Many who will assent to the foregoing propositions very probably retain some faint and distant remembrance of ephemeral pleasures which have been paid for in terms of headache, deranged liver, and other terrible things. But if any such sufferers still abide in our pill-taking land, the majority would, after a short meditation, take up the position that, in by far the larger number of instances, the abuse rather than the legitimate use of pleasure has led to a sorrowing repentance. It is almost invariably conceded by those who may at times have drunk too deeply of the spirit, that the exalted sensations which denote intoxication weigh very lightly when balanced with the succeeding consciousness of misery and self-abasement. The same principle governs all other phenomena of this nature.

Some writers have preached—even Tennyson has defended—the doctrine of wild oats. It has been contended with great plausibility that, had the wild oat not been sown, the completest mental and moral stature might never have been reached. This seems the blackest and most dismal pessimism. But even if a tiny minority do learn to profit from their experiences in the uncultivated oatfields, what is to be said of that greater number whose will power has been enervated by the seductive glitters of the blossoming season? In nine cases out of ten, what might have been a glorious summer and golden autumn of life is blighted by the wild cereal sowings of a misspent spring. The feeling so deeply embedded in the social consciousness, that intemperance of all orders is evil, is the resultant of the almost universal experience that the pleasures afforded are as ephemeral as a summer's cloud, while the pains they engender leave their mark through life. A further important racial consideration lies in the fact that the seeds scattered in one generation impress their hereditary mark upon the innocent offspring of those that succeed.

The average Libertarian calmly contends that he alone is justified in rebuking transgressors for their sins. He takes for granted the proposition that the Determinist has no such justification either from a logical or moral standpoint. He argues in effect: Your contention is that the human will is completely determined by circumstances quite outside the controlling influence of man. It therefore follows by logical necessity, that you are splendidly illogical in

condemning those human machines who travel on lines laid down by iron necessity for their earthly journeyings. The answer of the Determinist, however, is clear and cogent. While fully realising that his conduct is determined by his hereditary heritage, conjoined with the influences wielded by his environment, the facts of daily experience compel him to understand that he is incapable of withholding disapproval of unsocial acts. He, also, has been so fashioned by the giant forces of nature that he cannot help blaming the sinner for his sins. That noble social and religious reformer, the anti-Theistic Robert Owen, among his manifold services to human society, lent material aid in establishing sound secular schools. The story goes, and Bernard Shaw once told the story, that when one of the pupils was threatened with punishment for some class-room misdemeanor, this bright and promising boy informed the master that as all human acts are conditioned by uncontrollable circumstances, no ethical or logical right existed for the correction of a pupil's offence. The headmaster, who seems to have possessed a sense of humor as well as a philosophic mind, made the following reply: When boys misbehave, I cannot help my indignation; feeling indignant, I cannot help ordering your chastisement, and, in consequence, chastised you must be in your own interest and to the advantage of all other inmates of this educational establishment, who cannot help profiting from their knowledge of your punishment.

Two distinct views of the ultimate bases of morality hold sway in the intellectual world. These views may be classified as the evolutionary or scientific on the one side, and the theological and metaphysical or unscientific on the other. These theories are diametrically opposed, and no compromise is logically possible. That the ethical or moral sense in man is the special gift of God is alleged by the theologians of all the creeds. Even at this time of day, representatives of supernaturalism assert that morality is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The anthropological and other scientific investigators, however, continue to trace the genesis of morals to rude beginnings in lower animal and human animal social groups. All the higher qualities extant in civilised societies are foreshadowed by the ant republics and the bee monarchies. And were we to apply the term "moral" to the vegetable kingdom, those plants would be considered most moral that best succeeded in adjusting themselves to their environment. They would thus secure the amplest range of growing and developing activity the incident forces rendered possible. In a community of social insects such as ants or bees, those social units are most moral which render the most efficient services to the community of which they are members. The term "morality" is utterly devoid of meaning when divorced from the practical benefits it confers on the family, tribe, clan, or state. The most upright citizen is he who is of greatest utility to himself and his neighbors; the most moral parents are those that most adequately guard and develop their offspring. Criminals, lunatics, or other dangerous or anti-social members of society must be restrained, cured, or reformed, because their uncontrolled actions are inimical to the stability—in other words, to the happiness—of the social structure, which is unfortunate and unhappy in containing them.

T. F. PALMER.

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What can it profit any mortal to adopt locutions and imaginations which do not correspond to fact; which no sane mortal can deliberately adopt in his soul as true; which the most orthodox of mortals can only, and this after infinite essentially *impious* effort to put out the eyes of his mind, persuade himself to "believe that he believes." Away with it, in the name of God, come out of it all true men!—*Carlyle*.



## Acid Drops.

South Wales is inhabited by too many people who are full of religion and beer. The riots there during the railway strike were the worst in the whole country. The rioters did not fight for Trade Unionism but for loot. They were like the Scotchmen in a certain place, who not only kept the Sabbath but anything else they could lay hands on. They broke open shops and appropriated the contents, and their bigotry against Jews, in particular, was heightened by the fact that Jews' shops are generally well supplied with valuables. Even after the strike was over the rioters continued operations, for it was too profitable to leave off in a hurry. At Tredegar, for instance, they had a rare innings several days (or rather nights) after the strike was declared "off." "Towards nightfall the streets were thronged with people," the *Daily Chronicle* report says, and "the riotous section callously sang favorite Welsh hymn-tunes before commencing their work of ransacking business premises." But why "callously"? The rioters were bent on robbery, but they were going to give Jews the preference; and doesn't that show a great respect for the Christian faith? Surely the singing of hymns was very appropriate.

The hymn-singing hooligans in South Wales kept on rioting and looting to the very last possible moment. What heroes they were may be seen from the following incident. On the night of August 23 a crowd of them surged into Hanbury-road, Bargoed, and attacked the premises of Mr. J. B. Barnett, a Jewish jeweller. They shattered his door and three windows, and were anticipating the delight of successful plunder, when the man they were going to rob stood in the entrance to his shop with a gun in his hand and threatened to shoot the first man who ventured in. Nobody wanted to be the first man. One Jew, with a gun, meaning business, cowed the whole gang of Christian thieves and bullies. They thought it prudent to pass on to another shop with a less dangerous man inside it.

It is a slander to say that the *bona fide* English working man is in favor of rioting and looting—even when he is on strike. He himself would put down disorder if the police and the troops were not tackling the job. The Justices of the Peace at Ebbw Vale hit upon a capital idea. They kept the police and soldiers in the background and relied upon special constables. And the result is thus described:—

"But what best preserved order at Ebbw Vale last night was the enrolment as special constables of some of the burliest navvies and colliers, who were so flattered by their badges and brief authority that they checked with crushing severity the slightest disposition to turbulence."

This is a good "wrinkle" for future use.

One lesson of these strike scenes should be laid to heart. England, who sends out missionaries to the well-behaved heathen, has within her own borders a large hooligan population who delight in disorder, looting, and arson. Let her attend to her own goths and vandals before trying to "civilise" distant countries. Let her remember the maxim, "Physician heal thyself."

We stated our opinion at the outset that the rioters in Liverpool, for instance, were not the strikers but the city hooligans. This has been amply demonstrated since. The hooligans belonged, for the most part, to the districts where Catholics and Orangemen are in the habit of attacking each other in the name of Christ for the glory of God. It is significant, too, that they had an innings on the very morning that the question of the 250 tramcar strikers was being settled. No doubt they regarded it as their last opportunity. That very morning, too, something happened at the Stipendiary's Court. We give it from the *Daily Mirror*:—

"James Quin, described as a leader of the Catholic Defence Association, was sentenced to six months at Liverpool to-day for threatening a policeman who was giving evidence."

Liverpool folk will quite understand this. Probably others will see how it bears out our contention in this paragraph.

For some time the bishops have been agitating for more clergymen to go out to the colonies to minister to the religious needs of emigrants. The Bishop of London went so far as to say that if a number of his best men would volunteer, he would—go and see them off. Now a Birmingham vicar suggests that violent hands should be laid on one of the archbishops and a round dozen bishops and they should be packed off, just to show people that the Church

is in earnest. Hear, hear! We would willingly support a movement for the encouragement of the emigration of bishops, and even of the inferior clergy. We might even be induced to go and see them off, and wish them a safe journey and a long stay. But we fancy a good way, perhaps the only way, that will lead to the emigration of this class, will be the establishment of a number of good livings abroad. Then they will begin to have a "call" from the Lord.

Another American lynching horror! The following is a Central News telegram from New York, dated August 25:—

"Another lynching affair is reported this morning from Purcell, Oklahoma. A negro who was accused of an assault on a farmer's wife was seized by an infuriated mob of whites yesterday, bound to a stake, and burned to death in the main street of the town, in the presence of a great crowd of people. Men, women, and children alike climbed into automobiles and carriages drawn up in good positions for watching the dying agonies of the man, and greeted his screams with enthusiastic cheers."

What a devilish scene! And in a country which boasts of its Christianity—whose most popular President of late years had the lying impudence to call Thomas Paine a "filthy little Atheist" and which sends out a crowd of missionaries to convert the heathen.

The black problem cost the United States a long civil war, with the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of money. And the worst of it is that the problem wasn't settled. It has been growing bigger every year, with the growth of the negro population. We wonder if the great Western Republic will find a statesman before it is too late. If not, it is certain that these lynchings will create a state of things in which the black problem will have to be dealt with in the midst of hell-fire. Yet black and white are both *Christians*. That is what Rabelais would call the "sanguinary sarcasm" of the situation.

Maggie Papatara, guide and queen of the White City's Maori village, and daughter of a line of chiefs stretching back for thirty-two generations, has been interviewed by a representative of the *Daily Chronicle*. She admires a good many things in England, but there are some that she dislikes. She was brought up as a Protestant Christian, but she appears to hanker after the "beautiful Maori religion."

"You ask me what there is that is not good—what there is that makes me still glad that I am a Maori? I will tell you something that I was thinking about only this day, for I am always learning and thinking. I used to believe that the English were serious—too serious. I have come to fancy that they are not serious enough over a great many important things. Shall I tell you what one of them is. It is love.

In England people laugh at love. They make jokes about it. They think that when a boy and girl love one another it is something to smile about. I look around me in this White City, and I see all sorts of young people 'flirting,' as you call it. I go to a dinner party and I hear marriages being discussed. 'Oh, yes, I love him well enough; but I love his money better!' that was a phrase that caught my ear only the other day. It sent a shudder through my whole body.

As a Maori I cannot understand how it is that you make light of this—the most important thing in the life of every man and woman. With us, both love and marriage are sacred things."

What is the use of Christianising these Maories? It would only degrade them. They are far better off with their old religion of nature.

"A married woman," the Maori lady said, "is with us more holy than anything else in the world." Excellent! The Maoris should send over missionaries to preach that to Christian England.

When a Greek of ancient times met a woman who was about to become a mother he bent low and reverently saluted her. When a modern Englishman meets a woman in that state he is very likely to indulge in more or less disreputable joking. Such is the immense improvement that Christianity has effected in the morals and manners of mankind.

When the Christian missionaries first went to New Guinea they found practical communism there; not the communism of law, but the communism of good feeling. If a man wanted anything he just took it out of his neighbor's hut, and his neighbor returned the compliment when necessary. There were no doors and they shut nothing away from each other. But the missionaries soon changed all that. The invariable sign of a convert of theirs was his possession of a lock and key. The communism of good feeling was displaced by the selfish lust of property.



The Maori lady drew a similar picture of the uncorrupted Maoris, much to the disadvantage of Christian England:—

"Then there is the power of kindness, both in laws and in the home, which you don't seem quite to understand. When, for instance, a girl or boy is found doing wrong he or she is rarely punished, but, on the contrary, pitied and forgiven. And generally the offence never happens again. Theft we simply do not know, for the stranger is always welcome to what we can give him. He may take what he likes, and there is no word in our language either for 'Please' or 'Thank you.' To us it is natural to share our goods. We have no locks, and in most cases no doors. The result is that there are no Maori poor and no unemployed."

Human happiness at bottom is not a question of religion, nor of legal jugglery, nor of social constructions; it is a question of good feeling; and Christianity, which is the most selfish religion in the world, has always militated against it. You cannot make a community of sharks or tigers—not even by offering them heaven and threatening them with hell.

The greatest boasters and biggest hypocrites on earth are the Christians. Listening to them, and believing them—as you might if you didn't know them—you would conclude that all the Christians were moral people, and all the non-Christians immoral. Especially out in South Africa, where a colored native who looks at a white woman must be shot as an intending assaulter. Sexually you would infer that the Christian whites in South Africa were the very pink of purity—men and women alike, and that the natives were lustful devils. But the truth is far otherwise. Generally speaking, the Christian whites have no regard at all for the honor of native girls. That is why native parents do all they can to prevent their daughters from going into domestic service. Nor are the native females any more inclined to immorality than white females. Mr. Stanley Portal Hyatt, in his *Off the Main Track*, just published, writes as follows:—

"Because I have written plainly of half-castes, I do not wish to imply that the native women are naturally immoral. Far from that. In the kraals the standard of morality is very much higher than amongst the whites in the townships, and in the average village it is by no means easy—in fact it is often impossible—for a white man to get possession of a native girl; but, unfortunately, it is always easy to secure one in the neighborhood of the mission stations. The moment a native woman is taught to wear clothes, she seems to develop immoral tendencies, or it may be that those with such tendencies gravitate to the missions."

The heathen natives, living their own lives uncorrupted by contact with the drinking, gambling, fornicating white Christian settlers, are more moral, in all the elementary relationships of life than those who treat them with such haughty contempt.

Now that there is a lull in the industrial warfare, the clergy are seeing what capital they can make out of it. The Rev. F. B. Meyer, secretary to the Free Church Council, "intended" calling a general meeting of that body and issuing a special prayer—which would have been of great help to both the strikers and the employers. In a sermon delivered directly after the announcement of the close of the railway strike, that gentleman solemnly remarked that it was obvious—

"the Church could not take one side or the other in this grave dispute. It is her province to care for the spiritual interests of each party in the quarrel.....All she could do was to save the rich man from avarice and the poor man from violence.....to show each where there had been a violation of Christian ethics and to announce the principles of the kingdom of heaven, which alone could afford the basis of a just and permanent settlement."

This is all the Churches can do, according to Mr. Meyer, and we hope all concerned will derive comfort from the reverend gentleman's flatulent utterances.

We would remind Mr. Meyer that if it is the duty of the Church to save the rich from avarice and the poor from violence, its failure has been complete and obvious. "Violence and avarice catch men as in a net" quite as much to-day as when Lucretius wrote. Look at the Christian money-kings of the world and at the armed camps of Europe. Nor do we quite understand Mr. Meyer's distinction. Avarice may be as strong with the non-rich as with the rich. And violence may be used by the wealthy as well as by the poor. Indeed, it may well be that the violence which takes advantage of the poor man's necessities is far more socially disastrous than the violence which expresses itself in throwing stones or breaking heads. The damage done by the latter may be quickly and easily repaired. The damage done by the former lives on in a demoralised and degraded population. But, as Mr. Meyer says, it is the duty of the Church to care for the spiritual

interests of all—particularly of those who keep the Church in funds.

We quite agree with Mr. Meyer that there had been a violation of Christian ethics in the recent strikes. For the Christian ethic is that servants, or slaves, are to be obedient to their masters, whether they be good or bad. They must bear their stripes patiently. If they are rightfully punished, they must submit; if they are wrongfully punished, they must also submit; and the more complete the submission the greater the glory. They must render obedience to the powers that be; to resist them is to merit damnation. Certainly, there is no mistaking the New Testament teaching on this point, and we are surprised that Mr. Meyer, instead of intending to call a meeting of his Council, did not hasten to Liverpool, Manchester, and South Wales, and read the Christian ethic to the people on strike.

The Rev. Dr. Adeney, referring to the strikes, says that—

"The inability of the Churches to render any direct service in the social crisis of the hour must be disconcerting and disappointing.....They do not seem able to do anything either as champions of justice, or as friends of the poor, or as impartial peacemakers. No doubt the principal reason why they do not attempt to interfere is that they know they are not wanted. Whole sections of the community would have no faith in them as mediators."

The last sentence is certainly true. But we fancy none of the clergy were anxious to interfere. Their safest policy is to mouth maudlin platitudes about love, and Christian charity, and brotherhood, which may mean anything and usually means nothing at all.

The latest "find" is a correspondence between the prophet Elisha, King Ahab, and Queen Jezebel. We hope it contains a proper reference to Elisha's want of thatch on his roof, and the awful doom meted out to the unfortunately playful children who reminded him of it. But the report is, perhaps, only kite-flying—to see what the public will stand.

Canon Hammond has been preaching on the Problem of Suffering at St. Austell, Cornwall, and his sermon is reported in the local *Star*. The reverend gentleman did not argue, as some theologians do, that pain and misery are *not* pain and misery; he admitted there was far too much of them in this world, which made men ask serious questions about the goodness of God. But the answer to such questions was very simple. "God had made men and he would take care of them." This is the solution of the problem,—and it is certainly very simple. The reverend gentleman is right on that point. For the rest, he talks out of his imagination, and not according to knowledge. How does he *know* that God made men? There is much more evidence that men made God. And how does he *know* that God will take care of men. What care God *does* take of men, supposing he exists at all, is shown by the awful evils that Canon Hammond himself admits and deplors. What reason—we repeat what *reason*—is there for supposing that God ever *will* do better for mankind? If this is the best that God can do here and now, is it not illogical to believe that he will do better elsewhere and hereafter? We wish the reverend gentleman would apply his real, instead of his professional, mind to these questions. Meanwhile we make note of his confession that "the Churches are in a bad state" and that "religion seems to be decaying."

Paris—"infidel" Paris—has been in a fever of excitement over the theft of the superb "Mona Lisa" of Leonardo da Vinci from the Louvre. London—"Christian" London—would never get excited over such a thing as that. Such is the difference between bright artistic Paris and stodgy philistine London.

A correspondent, whose name and address need not be disclosed, asks our advice. He and his wife are Freethinkers, and have been so since 1883. His brothers are Wesleyans. When he visits one of them, and Bible reading and prayers follow breakfast, what ought he to do? Should he listen and kneel with the members of the family present or not? We have answered this correspondent by letter, as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—I cannot give personal advice. All I can say is that if I had a brother I should not join his family devotions when at his house, and should think him ill-conditioned if he expected me to.—Yours truly, G. W. Foote."

This correspondence may be interesting, and perhaps useful, to other readers of this journal.

The inquest on Henry Norman Lambie who was killed by lightning on Clapham Common resulted in a verdict of



"Accidental death caused by a flash of lightning." "A few years ago," the Coroner said, "I suppose the verdict would have been, 'Death from the visitation of God.'" The difference shows the progress of common sense and the decline of religious superstition.

The decline of religious superstition really means the decline of Christianity. The doctrine of Providence—of honest Providence; that is special Providence—is plainly taught in the New Testament, and is supported by the universal Christian practice of prayer. Those who argue that God does everything in general but nothing in particular are simply playing fast and loose with their intellect or their conscience.

Catholics and Protestants hate each other pretty warmly still, but in former ages they used to curse and spit at each other like devils. The improvement in their bearing towards each other is not, however, due to anything in their faiths, but to the general progress of toleration and civility in the outside world. A good many people, not knowing this, are too apt to think that Protestants never persecute, and that Catholics have forgotten the way to and lost the inclination. But this is far from being true. Protestants have always persecuted to the full extent of their power; their indulging in less of that luxury being due to their smaller opportunities. And the Catholic Church is always the same. Wherever it has the power it still acts as it did in the past, and it always must act in that way, for its practices, however brutal and bloody, flow logically from its principles. Every throne would be filled by a Catholic king or queen if that Church had its way. If Great Britain were as full of Catholics as Ireland is, a Catholic ruler would soon be wearing King George's crown. Just as Pope Pius V. issued a Bull dethroning Queen Elizabeth, so would Mr. Sarto (Taylor) who now dwells in the Vatican issue a Bull dethroning George V. if the oracle could now be worked in that fashion. Pope Pius V. in the aforesaid Bull declared that "he hereby deprives the Queen of her pretended right to the kingdom, and of all dominion, dignity, and privilege whatsoever; and absolves all the nobles, subjects, and people of the kingdom, and whoever else have sworn to her, from their oath, and all duty whatsoever, in regard of dominion, fidelity, and obedience." In the same Bull the Pope laid it down that he, as Pope, was the boss of this planet:—

"He that reigneth on high, to whom is given all power in heaven and in earth, hath committed the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, out of which there is no salvation, to one alone on earth, namely, to Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and to the Roman pontiff, successor of Peter, to be governed with a plenitude of power: this one he hath constituted prince over all nations, and all kingdoms, that he might pluck up, destroy, dissipate, ruin, plant and build."

No wonder Baronius asserts that "there can be no doubt of it, but that the civil principality is subject to the sacerdotal," and that "God hath made the political government subject to the dominion of the spiritual Church"—while Ballarmino affirms that "by reason of the spiritual power the Pope, at least indirectly, hath a supreme power even in temporal matters." These are the principles of the Catholic Church; as they were of old they are now, and will continue to be; and they are quite inconsistent with the least freedom of thought, speech, or action on the part of the great bulk of mankind. All the freedom there is belongs to the Pope and his priests; the rest of the world have to take whatever liberty they are permitted to enjoy as a special favor at the hands of these tyrants.

The *Church Times* Birmingham correspondent says that surprise has been expressed in that city that so little notice has been taken by the Church of the long-continued absence of rain. He says that once upon a time prayers invariably followed dry weather, and it impressed the people as a very real and opportune petition. He wonders whether the Church is becoming impressed by the idea that "natural causes" are outside the scope of spiritual influence. Well, some of the Churches did pray some six weeks before the drought broke up, but we presume the slowness of "Providence" in responding did not encourage others to persevere. Prayers for rain were "real" when people believed that the state of the weather could be influenced by a crowd of people droning or howling their needs to God—who must have known what they needed before they spoke. But they became ridiculous as people became acquainted with the causes of meteorological phenomena. Besides, what the Churches should do, if their prayers are of any value, is to pray before a drought sets in, and so avoid its presence. To allow the country to be parched up, and then pray, looks like reminding the Lord that he has been neglecting his business.

Bishop Gore has gone up higher—from Birmingham to Oxford. Higher, of course, means a higher "screw." This right reverend father in God's ascension (he may be archbishop some day) is a comical commentary on his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount; which, by the way, is now in a cheap edition, for working men.

Canon Charles Edward Brooke, vicar of St. John the Divine, Kennington, left £71,127. Blessed be ye poor!

Another apostle of the "poor carpenter of Nazareth" has gone—God knows where, but we can guess. Rev. George Stott, of Barnet, left £31,211. "For their works do follow them"—but not their cash.

When the Protestants, in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries were busily engaged in opposing the pretensions of Rome, they did not scruple to use the most trenchant language, and they told the plain truth, as they saw it, about the "great lying Church." We were looking the other day at the Preface by Archbishop Tillotson to Barrow's great *Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy*. He called the Pope's supremacy "not only an indefensible, but an impudent cause, as ever was undertaken by learned pens." This was followed by a statement which is not wholly true, but contains enough truth to make it remarkable. "And nothing," Tillotson says, "could have kept it so long from becoming ridiculous in the judgment of mankind, but its being so strongly supported by a worldly interest." True as this is, Tillotson would not have said it if he had reflected sufficiently on the use to which it might be put by "heretics" who were farther from the Romish Church than he was himself. It is just as true that Protestant doctrines would also have become ridiculous in the judgment of mankind, but for their being so strongly supported by a worldly interest. Money and social privilege are the chief supports of Protestant Christianity. They are, indeed, the chief supports of every form of Christianity. The fact will be denied with indignation; and some superfine Freethinkers will object to crediting the Churches with improper motives; but fact is fact, and truth is truth, and Tillotson's charge against the Church of Rome is equally to be pressed against the Church of England.

Three laborers were fined £1 each at Harlow in Essex for stealing a few apples. The sentence looks heavy. But we must remember that stealing a few apples led to the fall of the whole human race. It is not a crime to be encouraged.

The papers are making a fuss about the appearance of a Viscount in the Gaiety Theatre chorus. What a chance the yellow press missed by not being published in Palestine when "god" worked at a carpenter's bench!

For some weeks a series of articles has been appearing in the *Guardian* on the question of miracles. As is to be expected, the articles are very solemn, very learned, and quite wide of the mark. The writers all argue as though the belief in the miraculous were a question of evidence, or of what consequences will follow to Christianity if miracles are given up. As a matter of fact, miracles are not accepted because of the evidence produced in their favor, and they are not usually rejected because of the evidence produced against them. It is a question of social or physiological development. People are not reasoned into believing in fairies and witches, and they are not reasoned out of believing in them. Belief in such things is quite incredible at one stage of mental development, and equally impossible at another stage. So with the belief in miracles. This is simply the other side of an inadequate conception of natural causation. It belongs to a frame of mind to which all things are possible, because little or nothing is certain. As knowledge grows possibility narrows, and to the mind that has adequately realised the fact that all that is is the result of all that has been, that identical conditions produce identical consequences, and that identical consequences are the product of identical conditions, there is no need to argue about miracles—they are simply impossible.

A safe prophecy. "Old Moore" for December, 1912: "For weal or woe another year will soon be born."

A new publication entitled *Where is Heaven?* is dedicated to elderly people who "feel that they are drawing near the close of their earthly career." What about the elderly people who seek "life eternal" by the "pit" entrance?

There is balm in Gilead—in spite of the drought and the strikes and dear milk and short water. Compensation is at hand for all our woes. The Rev. A. J. Waldron is preparing a reply to Hæckel's *Riddle of the Universe*.



**Mr. Foote's Engagements.**

October 1, 8, 15, Queen's Hall, London; 22, Birmingham Town Hall; 29, Liverpool.  
 November 5, Leicester; 12, Manchester; 19 and 26, Queen's Hall, London.

**To Correspondents.**

**PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.**—Previously acknowledged £285 14s. 9d. Received since:—C. J., £2; R. E., 10s.  
**THE VANCE TESTIMONIAL FUND.**—Previously acknowledged, £126 3s. 6d. Received since:—C. J., 10s.; A. E. Hickling, 5s.; J. T. Griffiths, 2s. 6d.; T. S. (Wimbledon), 2s.; J. de B. (S. Africa), £2; Richard Green, £1; Lover of Justice, 3s.; G. Butt 2s., Goddard 2s. (*per J. Burrell*); S. H., 5s.  
**C. J.**—It arrived safely. Thanks. But wouldn't it be better to register when you omit name and address?  
**J. T. GRIFFITHS.**—Our reply must have miscarried. We have credited the amount to the Vance Testimonial—the other matter being behind date now. Hope that will be satisfactory.  
**J. DE B. (S. Africa).**—Glad you give Miss Vance the preference. The President's Fund can wait a bit. The year isn't out yet. We wish you health and good fortune.  
**RICHARD GREEN.**—Glad to hear that you and your wife have both such pleasant memories of Miss Vance, and that you both think "she deserves all that the party can do for her, and more." Shall be happy to see and speak with you at the Bradlaugh Dinner. We note your appreciation of "God and the Strikers."  
**E. BURKE.**—The matter shall have attention. Thanks. But we shall never overtake the last Christian lie—as long as there are Christians.  
**LOVER OF JUSTICE (Malay P.).**—We have put the balance to the Vance Testimonial, which is nearest our heart at present. Order passed over.  
**G. D.**—You owe us no apology. Yours is an interesting letter—and we had much rather you thought for yourself (as you do) than played the echo to our utterances. We will deal shortly with some of the points you raise.  
**W. STEWART.**—Pleased to hear the Edmonton Branch had such an "enjoyable and successful" excursion.  
**JOHN HECHT.**—Our reference to the Tottenham Hospital's refusal to take the "charity" part of profits from the Sunday Picture Shows was based upon what appeared in the newspapers. There was nothing exceptional in it. Other hospitals, under orthodox management, have done the same thing. The Hospital Sunday Collection Committee has passed a resolution in favor of that policy. Your suggestion as to an article (it would have to be a long one) from our own pen on Hospitals from pre-Christian times shall be considered.  
**J. W. OERDER.**—Passed over to shop manager.  
**W. P. BALL.**—Much obliged for cuttings.  
**THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED,** office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.  
**THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S** office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.  
**WHEN** the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.  
**LETTERS** for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.  
**LECTURE NOTICES** must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.  
**FRIENDS** who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.  
**ORDERS** for literature should be sent to the Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.  
**PERSONS** remitting for literature by stamps are specially requested to send *halfpenny stamps*.  
**THE *Freethinker*** will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

**Sugar Plums.**

Next week's *Freethinker* will contain an advertisement of the three special lectures with which Mr. Foote is to open, in October, the new course of Sunday evening lectures at Queen's (Minor) Hall.

A descriptive report of the Bradlaugh Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Wednesday, September 27, will appear in the following week's *Freethinker*, together with a verbatim report of Mr. Foote's (the chairman's) special speech on the life, achievements, and character of Charles Bradlaugh.

The four Sunday evening lectures at Stratford Town Hall in November will be delivered by Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, and Miss Kough. Mr. Foote has found it impossible to take even one lecture of this course. It was made up after his dates were fixed for Queen's Hall, which, of course, has a prior claim on his attention, if only on account of the heavy expenses there. Mr. Foote much regrets this; for he likes lecturing in the Stratford Town Hall, where he is always greeted by a large, appreciative, and even enthusiastic audience. Perhaps he may pay Stratford a visit in the early spring.

London "saints" will bear in mind that the next "social" under the auspices of the N.S.S. Executive takes place at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street, on Thursday evening, Oct. 5. There will be the usual program of music, dancing, and a brief address by the President. And possibly the presentation of the Testimonial to Miss Vance.

The Brockwell Park N. S. S. Demonstration took place on Sunday and was a gratifying success. Mr. Wilson more than kept his promise to provide a platform in the shape of a brake with a pair of horses, for he put on four handsome creatures, and his son acted as driver. This evening (Sept. 3) at 5.30 sharp—as the park closes early now—there will be another demonstration in Victoria Park, the speakers being Messrs. Cohen, Moss, Davies, and Heaford. South London "saints" will, of course, rally round the platform and bring a lot of their friends.

The Liverpool Branch picnic was postponed on account of the strike. It takes place to-day (Sept. 3), the destination being Eastham. Tickets, including lunch and tea, 3s. each. The party meets at the Liverpool landing-stage at 10.45 a.m. Local "saints" are heartily invited.

Mr. Richard Green, whose name appears elsewhere in this week's *Freethinker*, is an ex-Mayor of King's Lynn. He was elected in spite of his avowed Freethought, having won the respect and good will of his fellow-citizens. Of course he broke the rule of attending "divine service" officially. But it was known that he would do this beforehand.

The Portuguese Assembly has elected Senhor Manoel Arriaga as the first constitutional President of the Republic. His affirmation in accepting the post contrasts, in its sense and simplicity, with the coronation oaths of European monarchs. Here it is in full:—

"I undertake solemnly on my honor to maintain and observe with loyalty and fidelity the Constitution of the Republic, to fulfil the laws, promote the welfare of the nation, and uphold and defend the integrity and independence of the Portuguese fatherland."

The President appears to be respected by all parties, and is known as a sound Republican, who forfeited a family fortune long ago by fidelity to his advanced convictions.

Dr. Braga and his Ministry now disappear from the scene. They have governed Portugal for ten months under an inevitable Dictatorship, during which time they made all necessary arrangements for the advent of the Constitutional Republic, to which they have handed over the reins of power. The good work they have done in those ten months is summarised by the Lisbon correspondent of the *Daily News*:—

"It abolished the old House of Peers; nationalised most of the Royal palaces and land property; abrogated all executive legislation; decreed (within the limits exacted by the precarious political situation) the liberty of the Press and the right of public meeting; granted a new law of divorce and a weekly day of rest; and instituted secular education in all State-supported schools."

That is how Freethinkers and Humanitarians labor for the good of the nation.

Dr. Braga will live in history. His ability and integrity have been of the greatest service to the rationalised Government of Portugal. He stepped into the breach when everything was in disorder and the position he cheerfully accepted was full of peril. It is largely, if not mainly, to his intellect and character that the Portuguese Republic is now successfully established. The simple, earnest, modest scholar, believing more in education and the growth of ideas than in anything else, accepted power and responsibility for the sake of his country. His record still unblemished, he steps down from the pedestal he did not seek and did not desire, and leaves his country in possession of the splendid fruits of his heroic labors. No lover of God—for he is an Atheist, but a lover of his fellow men, he has shown (as Ferrer did in Spain) with what noble serenity Atheists can face the heaviest tasks and the sternest duties.



## Ruskin's Christianity.

RUSKIN'S Christianity was of a type which is gradually sucking orthodoxy from the Church, and is slowly draining away its heart-blood. Simultaneously those two processes are working; and, perhaps, could we but fathom the minds of those whose Christian heterodoxy is responsible for the attempts to correlate Christianity with social progress, and could we but distinguish the teachings of the greater minds that prompted the smaller to such endeavor, John Ruskin's teachings, we might find, are not the least powerful. No doubt Ruskin would have unhesitatingly denied the title, Anti-Christian. Yet his concepts of Christianity were not those of professional Christians, nor was his attitude towards what is nicely called Christian duty such as to bring forth commendatory appreciation from Christ's modern apostles. He spoke more forcibly than sympathetically of their methods. He scathingly mocked their hypocrisy and canting humbug. He sarcastically questioned their belated sincerity of purpose. He condemned them in words, quoted from their Holy Fetish, that sound rich and vibrant in the Freethinker's ears. And he denounced in unequivocal language the industrial system, hitherto so carefully forgotten by Christian leeches, from which they derive their leisure, and happiness, and comfort, soothing, the while, their un suffering souls, in sight of social misery, by the sweet reflection, "Blessed are the poor." Ruskin, in fact, was near to the portals of Freethought. He was a Deist with a Humanists' heart.

Perhaps, were the question asked—was Ruskin really a Christian?—it might be answered in the peculiarly evasive way generally adopted by Christians, when their beliefs are assailed. It might be said that the Christianity attacked by Ruskin was not the *real* Christianity: it was the false, shallow, superficial. The reply is characteristic. To-day it is the only loophole of escape, but escape from one dilemma into another. In the endeavor to net all the grand intellects that have increased our wisdom, Christians tell us that these men simply destroyed the impurities of Christianity; that they fought valiantly against intruding influences; that they attacked the worldly injected falseness, while remaining devotees of the true Christianity, and loving its intrinsic beauty. It would be difficult to get a consensus of satisfactory opinion at the present time, or at any time, as to what differentiated true Christianity from false. Oppressed by the gathering necessity of social reform, many religious officials, it is true, would have no hesitation in defining, in their opinion, the true and the false. But their number is comparatively small, although the seeds they have sown are growing so strongly that the reply to our question could be looked upon as inevitable. But it leads to some curious conclusions, to escape which would tax all the subtle seductions of the acutest Christian apologist. The reply infers that, up to the present epoch, all Christianity has been of the false type. It also means that only to-day have students of Christ's teachings discovered the real significance of them; which is certainly an excellently effective way of disposing of all the interpretative erudition of past times. And it serves to throw a wonderfully suggestive side-light on a feat that probably eclipses all others referred to in the Holy Scriptures.

Christ came to the earth two thousand years ago to teach us of to-day, and not, as it is generally suspected, to teach the people who congregated to hear him, and the millions who, after his death, were taught by his pupils. During all those centuries the seeds have lain asleep in the dark earth of the human intellect. Only now are they sufficiently ripe to spring up into the sunlight of true interpretation. Hence it also follows that Christ's teachings were not really understood by the people whom he addressed; that he was, in truth, deluding them, filling their minds with unintelligibilities, and their

hearts with misty hopes. Christ is convicted of the foolishness of teaching, by proxy, people especially elected, who were to live two thousand years after his death—convicted, too, by his own sycophants.

Christianity exists only in its concepts. It is solely a bundle of concepts; and when we find a man attacking, or ridiculing, or contradicting their asserted truths, we must put him amongst those who are anti-Christians. Ruskin, in this respect, although he did not deny Christ's divinity, certainly denied the righteousness of many of the distinguishing and essential characteristics of Christianity. He knew, as we know, that the bundle of concepts could easily be loosened or tightened according to the needs of the moment. Its contents could easily be re-shuffled. The items could be renewed or re-garnished when they were becoming thin or lustreless. But the bundle invariably remained the same in character. The same respect was lavished upon it; the same systematic protection given to it; the same veneration demanded for it and accorded to it; and the same bigotry and ignorance always surrounded it.

Ruskin's estimate of the hypocrisy of an audience composed, in the main, of Christians, was an acute and irrefragable one. Notwithstanding the ostentatious emphasis laid upon a semblance of Christian practice, he recognised that such was purely negative. When it came to obeying the supposed commands of their Lord and Master, Christians proved their religion to be no more than nominal. It requires, therefore, no reasoned argument of actual facts to show how far remote morality is from religion. The mental figment that Christianity has been outstandingly responsible for all human advancement during the last few centuries receives its death-blow from the mouths of Christians themselves when they are forced to admit that God's commands are impracticable. That an impossibility can have influenced in any way the characters and conduct of those who merely regarded the words with awe and reverence, because of the notion Christ said them, is too depthless a foundation on which to place reliance. These ideas seem to shine through Ruskin's words when he says:—

"For if you address any average modern English company as believing in an Eternal life, and endeavor to draw any conclusions, from this assumed belief, as to their present business, they will forthwith tell you that 'what you say is very beautiful, but it is not practical.' If, on the contrary, you frankly address them as unbelievers in Eternal life, and try to draw any consequences from that unbelief,—they immediately hold you for an accursed person, and shake off the dust from their feet at you."

And, again, when he refers to those who believe that the Bible contains their Captain's orders:—

"To these, if to any, I once had hope of addressing, with acceptance, words which insisted on the guilt of pride, and the futility of avarice; from these, if from any, I once expected ratification of a political economy, which asserted that the life was more than the meat, and the body more than raiment; and these, it once seemed to me, I might ask, without accusation of fanaticism, not merely in doctrine of the lips, but in the bestowal of their heart's treasure, to separate themselves from the crowd of whom it is written, 'after all these things do the Gentiles seek.'"

But Ruskin, since then, had discovered that Christianity consisted merely of mouthings; that it went no farther from the lips than to the ears; that belief was no more than mental miasma. He saw Christian belief-contradiction in activity all around him. He saw it evidenced in every shape and form; and the conviction of the Christian, however dogmatically and conclusively expressed, was, to him, belief grown to vegetation, or weeds, having no flowers, and choking up the ground in which they grew. He says:—

"I know few Christians so convinced of the splendor of the rooms in their Father's house, as to be happier when their friends are called to these mansions, than they would have been if the Queen had sent for them to live at court: nor has the Church's ardent desire to depart, and be with Christ ever cured it of the singular



habit of putting on mourning for every person summoned to such departure."

And the futility of the religious convictions of the Christian to keep character clean and conduct pure, Ruskin shows in the words:—

"Nor is human conduct likely, in every case, to be purer, under the conviction that all its evil may in a moment be pardoned, and all its wrong-doing in a moment redeemed; and that the sigh of repentance, that purges the guilt of the past, will waft the soul into a felicity which forgets its pain,—than it may be under the sterner, and to many not unwise minds, more probable apprehension, that 'what a man soweth that shall he also reap,'—or others reap,—when he, the living seed of the pestilence, walketh no more in darkness, but lies down therein."

Ruskin seemed tenaciously to cling to the ideas of God and Christ. Yet we cannot but conclude his beliefs in their saving power were considerably attenuated, or spiritualised. He called upon the working man to save himself by getting rid of his ignorance; by becoming, in his dealings with his fellow-worker, thoroughly honest and straightforward; by giving right hand to right hand, and standing shoulder to shoulder. There was no advice to believe in Christ, and all would be well. Nor did he deem it necessary, as we have seen, to worship God before that standard of character could be obtained, wherewith to win the world.

It is often said that, when a person loses his faith in God, he turns to Man. Oftener it happens, I think, that we turn to Man first, and the sight of his manifold preventible misery makes us examine our puerile beliefs. In the face of man's unhappiness God's power is a mocking delusion. Before the totality of human wretchedness we stand sorrowful and silent. God's attributed goodness, and justice, and fatherliness were qualities seen only through once colored glasses. His love, that we once thought the interpenetrative and indestructible elixir of all life, we see as a picture painted in diaphaneous colors on the black background of our ignorance and apathy. When Man comes into our minds God departs. The development of Man-love means the extinction of God-love. There is no room in our minds for a reliable conviction of a divine Savior beside the knowledge of man's many needs; and the belief in an all-wise Father is an unsatisfactory antidote to the sorrows of man. Such a change was, I think, working in Ruskin. He had not renounced his faith in the existence of a God; but it had undoubtedly become, in its expression, much changed under the stress and strain of Humanitarian influences. And we find him saying, in words that cut sharply and deeply into the very heart of the stronghold of all religion, as we know it, the heart that is the only resisting power to attack, and, as ministers recognise, the only hope of the survival of Christianity: the gathering together to praise the Lord:—

"Neither is singing songs about God, serving God. It is enjoying ourselves, if it's anything; most probably it is nothing; but if it's anything, it is serving ourselves, not God. And yet we are impudent enough to call our beggings and chauntings, 'Divine Service': we say 'Divine Service' will be 'performed'" (that's our word—the form of it gone through) 'at eleven o'clock.'"

And then how bitterly come the words, summing up the whole attitude of Christians, "As much charity as you choose, but no justice!" The sting of the Freethinker is in them, as if the speaker could find no expression for his disgust at the wholesale falseness and hypocrisy of his Christian hearers. And it is from the very gates of Freethought that we hear ringing—

"Do justice to your brother (you can do that, whether you love him or not), and you will come to love him. But do injustice to him, because you don't love him; and you will come to hate him."

"Christian Justice has been strangely mute, and seemingly blind; and, if not blind, decrepit, this many a day —"

But it is when Justice comes to issue her commands that the Christian reveals the uselessness of his

Christianity, and the shallowness of his professed and belauded brotherly love, and the condemnable hypocrisy these breed. It is easy being Christianic, but it is difficult, seemingly, for the Christian, being just. It is easy to profess admiration for Christ's life and teaching; but, for the Christian, the voice of Justice sounds too far away to be sure that Justice is serious. Ruskin knew this; and he imagines the Christian answer to the commands that sound more phantastic than serious, and less serious than nonsensical, in the Christian's ears. He says:—

"And you answer, of course, that 'you don't, because everybody ought to remain content in the position in which Providence has placed them.' Ah, my friends, that's the gist of the whole question. *Did Providence put them in that position, or did you?* You knock a man into the ditch, and then tell him to remain content in the 'position in which Providence has placed him.' That's modern Christianity. You say—'We did not knock him into the ditch.' How do you know what you have done, or are doing? That's what we have all got to know, and what we shall never know, until the question with us, every morning, is, not how to do the gainful thing, but how to do the just thing; nor until we are at least so far on the way to being Christian, as to have understood the maxim of the poor half-way Mahometan, 'One hour in the execution of justice is worth seventy years of prayer.'"

The man-love in Ruskin had vaporised the God-love. His heart lay nearer to the heart of man than to the bosom of Christ. Thus it is we find him so far separated from the teachers of Christianity. Leave God alone to take care of himself; he is able to do that surely (Ruskin seems to suggest), and attend to man. Do the justice from which, hitherto, you have been for so long alienated, and to which you have been blind and deaf. But they say, Praise God; he will be just. Ruskin lays the emphasis upon the immediate need for Man-Service, knowing that every hour spent with God is stolen from man. They assert the essentiality of being in God's company in God's house, and forgetting man and the world. Ruskin considered the real service to be the uprooting of weeds; while they nourish the weeds with the manure of an evil charity. He believed the kingdom of God would come to us; but only by our own labors. They believe they go to it. Lugubrious solemnity, to them, is the true attitude in which to approach their God; but Ruskin says:—

"You hear much of conversion nowadays; but people always seem to think they have got to be made wretched by conversion,—to be converted to long faces. No, friends, you have got to be converted to short ones; you have to repent into delight and delightsomeness."

Christians are unanimous in the desire to decorate, and to make comfortable, and to beautify their houses of God, and are lavish in their expenditure for that purpose; but Ruskin demands that the houses of the people, and the factories and other places in which they toil, day after day, shall be made comfortable and beautiful. The houses of man should have prior claim to the houses of God. He says:—

"I would have you feel, what careless, what constant, what infectious sin there is in all modes of thought, whereby, in calling your churches only 'holy,' you call your hearths and homes profane."

To the Christian even of to-day, of whatever denomination, sin is inherent: it is part and parcel of our natures; and can only be eradicated successfully by coming to Christ and living our lives with him. But Ruskin knew that "human nature is a noble and beautiful thing; not a foul nor base thing."

"All the sin of man," he says, "I esteem as their disease, not their nature; as a folly which may be prevented, not as a necessity which must be accepted."

What has God to do with our heroic actions or our base actions? If God moves a man to do a noble deed then that man is only the agent, irresponsible and powerless to overweigh God's command. That religion and its figurehead, God, are abstractions, Ruskin seems to hint when he tells us that, when the captain of a sinking ship stays on board with



his passengers, to die with them, "he does not do it from any religious motive—from any hope of reward, or any fear of punishment; he does it because he is a man."

The glimmerings of the holy candle light had not quite faded away from Ruskin's mind; but the withering contempt of his words is as a cold, fresh breeze rushing through the temple corridors, breaking the sickliness of the heated, incense-laden atmosphere, bringing a breath of purity from the wide, open, clear spaces of life and thought into restriction and gloom. His rigorously keen condemnation of the human moths fluttering around the dying flame, and his superbly critical denunciations of their paltry religious conceptions, make us wonder how near he was to the stronghold of Reason. Perhaps he knew well that the holy candle, burning feebly in religion's dusky gloaming, was slowly consuming itself away, never to be renewed. Perhaps he knew well that its once brilliant rays no longer illumed the sacred church, nor cast wonderful dreams of fair, golden cities, with gleaming gates of pearl and precious stones, of streams of living waters, the very sight of which healed all aching hearts and soothed all sorrows, upon the minds of those whose weary eyes reflected them. Perhaps he knew that Christianity was doomed and dying, vainly striving against the inevitable. At all events, Ruskin stands amongst those grand liberators of the human mind, whose names are written, never to be erased, not on "the Lamb's Book of Life," but on that imperishable page that tells of heroic thought and glorious achievement in the interests of man.

ROBERT MORELAND.

### Playing at Providence.

AGREEABLY to the rigid law of supply and demand, prophets have in all times arisen to foretell events, smooth and otherwise, usually at prices absurdly cheap considering the value of their services. From the days of the augurs, who could not look one another in the face without laughing, down to those of the modern fortune-teller, who giggles in her dainty sleeve until an infidel magistrate usurps her calling and prophesies that she will spend three months in prison, an unbroken line of more or less inspired personages has existed. The entire universe, moreover, has been ransacked for information on coming events. The stars that glitter millions of miles in the empyrean have been thought of as deeply interested in the career of the inhabitants of Dunghill-on-the-Snazle, and the sediment at the bottom of a paltry tea-cup has been held to be fraught with profound meaning to blushing maidens and proud suitors. Comets have been obligingly imported into the solar system obviously for the purpose of warning us of approaching disaster, and minute insects are naturally commissioned to prepare us for approaching dissolution by "tapping" in the woodwork of old houses. Even dogs kindly consent to hold weird conversations with their distant friends in the "wee small hours" for the same dread purpose.

The ancient Romans, whose generous piety required an army corps of deities, cheerfully invested fever with divine attributes, and would undoubtedly have deified the London County Council and worshiped the National Secular Society. They could scarcely have failed to place under mythological guardianship the chances that befall mankind. They depicted fortune as blind and made its dispenser a lady. That, indeed, was a stroke of genius, and an indirect compliment to a sex, as Mrs. Candle says, "put upon from the beginning."

The apparently inconsequent nature of the events that befall mankind engendered the idea of a supernatural control which, of course, according to the prophets, was to be bribed. The rain doctors and prophets of savages are kept to their contracts.

They are expected to bring rain when it is required, and if they do not, the consequences are summary and unpleasant. But the rain doctors in civilised countries retain all the advantages of their savage prototypes, without any of the attendant risks and dangers. The civilised dupes allow the prophet to play his little game on the principle of "Heads I win, tails you lose." If the prophet is unsuccessful, they ignore the mistake; if he is correct, they put it to his credit, or he puts it to his credit—which is much the same thing.

The phenomenon is not unknown at the present time; but we can estimate more correctly the case of the Rev. Mr. Baxter than that of the lesser luminaries who carry on similar profitable businesses. For many years Baxter's name was a household word in certain religious circles. To multitudes he was the heaven-sent seer, commissioned by a benevolent deity to receive the light of prophecy and throw it over a naughty world. Goody-goody people reserved a warm corner in their hearts, over and above their loyal obligation to the House of Hanover, for a spiritual guide who taught them precisely to whom they might point as "the whore of Babylon" and "the Beast of Revelation." That quintessence of nonsense, *Forty Coming Wonders*, was purchased with unabated credulity, although the error of Baxter's pretensions to be regarded as a seer were proved again and again, by the irresistible logic of facts, to the satisfaction of all reasonable persons. Few prophets would find it easy to go on year after year delivering a succession of silly prophecies destined to utter failure. But his dupes were the most greedily credulous of their kind. Baxter gravely announced the ascension of 144,000 Christians without dying in 1896, and the great Persecution from 1897 to 1901. The closing struggle of Armageddon and the Second Advent of Christ were fixed for 1901. The year was not without events, but they failed to fill the prophet's awful program.

This is a notorious case. Baxter was as much an impostor as a racecourse fortune-teller. They all pretend to powers which neither they nor other people possess. So are thought-readers, clairvoyants, mediums, and the whole troublous tribe of dabblers in the alleged "super"-natural. But whereas a poor gipsy who tells fortunes is sent to prison, the same fraud may be practised with impunity in well-furnished apartments, or if one uses the jargon of the Christian religion. The Vagrancy Act provides that all persons professing to tell fortunes shall be liable to a fine, or to imprisonment. Such is the modern and merciful form of the "Divine" commandment, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Selden, in his *Table Talk*, says that the old laws against witchcraft do not prove witchcraft to have existed. That is so; for it never did exist. As a fact, thousands of old women, perfectly harmless and innocent, were legally murdered on fantastic evidence, which ought to have been incredible, for doing what was physically impossible in supposed obedience to an imaginary command of a very doubtful deity.

The Rev. Mr. Baxter found fortune-telling a pleasant and profitable hobby. He did not advise a lady how her lover might be made to propose or furnish any of his congregation with the name of a "winner." He made bolder dashes into the darkness of futurity, and his courage met with its reward. Fortune-telling means imprisonment for a poor vagrant. The Rev. Mr. Baxter's career showed how it may be turned to the best account by a Christian gentleman who remembered the soothing fact that a large number of his co-religionists are fools. Savages prophesy one way and frock-coated Christians another, but the nature of the act and the results are very much the same.

MIMNERMUS.

In the days of Peter one sermon converted three thousand sinners; now it takes three thousand sermons to convert one sinner.



**Carnegie Not for Catholics.**

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

WHEN Andrew Carnegie set aside the sum of ten million dollars, called the Carnegie Foundation, for the pensioning of retired college professors, he provided that none but teachers in colleges not requiring a denominational test should have the benefit of the fund. Under these terms Protestant sectarian universities were excluded until they could abolish the test, and the Catholic ones were hopelessly out of it. The Protestant colleges, finding that teachers would not work for them on the same terms as for unsectarian institutions where their future was provided for by the Foundation, have quietly fallen into the secular line. Something of a transformation, apparently, has also been worked in the professors, who previously withstood the test, but now decline to take it.

As the life of the Catholic college is its sectarianism, and to change is to die, it only remained for Catholic educationists to denounce the Carnegie Foundation as irreligious and detrimental to the interests of true education. This was done at Chicago recently, when, after listening to a "scathing attack" by the Jesuit Timothy Brosnahan, president of Loyola University in Baltimore, the National Catholic Educational Association voted that the Foundation was a menace to everything worth preserving. Jesuit Brosnahan used this language:—

"If the evils of despotism are in store for us, should we permit monopoly of education by the Government (which, after all, with us, can be called to account), what may we expect from a private, permanent, self-perpetuating corporation, backed by millions of dollars and irresponsible to the public, whose one aim is to bring into disrepute schools under definite religious control, to band together non-sectarian schools, selected mostly for their actual or prospective strength, and through them to get control of the higher education of the country?"

He pictured the worst evils as the result of secular education. A reply has been made by a Chicago educationist, who addresses an open letter to the president of Loyola College. "Your decisive stand on the need of religious training as a part of the school education of the young," the writer says to him, "is, of course, based upon the idea that the element of religious belief strengthens the character, insures a finer discrimination against wrong-doing, and conserves the moral nature."

The language seems ironical when we contemplate the conduct of the toughs and criminals who have been turned out as finished products of the religious theory of education.

The writer goes on to say that Jesuit Brosnahan's conclusions must have been reached from statistics—comparing the lives and characters of large numbers of adults who had religious training with an equal number of those who had not; or else those conclusions were based on prejudice. It is then brought to the Jesuit's attention that "some of the finest characters this country has produced grew up entirely without religious instruction, or abandoned religious beliefs when they came to think for themselves; notable among them being Franklin, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Cooper, Girard, Carnegie, and Edison." If these had religious education, it was not of the variety dispensed in Catholic schools, and in the same catalogue are Bryant, Whittier, Holmes, Emerson, Longfellow, Parker, Hale, Higginson, and their compeers.

John Tyndall, the eminent man of science, added his testimony to the uselessness of religious teaching when he said that if he were looking for men to illustrate the virtues, he should expect to find them among a group of Atheists with whom he was associated.

The writer, replying to Jesuit Brosnahan, gives us something concrete in the following:—

"By way of assuring myself as to the actual need of religious training in the development of character, I have recently investigated forty families of Rationalists containing respectively from three to fourteen children, and find that unanimously the tendency of these Atheist families is toward sobriety, abstemiousness, simple diet, vegetarianism, etc., not a single case of drunkenness or criminality being found among them all—fully 90 per cent. being non-smokers."

The foundations of right living with unbelievers lie deep in a knowledge of worldly benefits and consequences. The writer we are quoting says:—

"I could not attribute the unusual purity of these godless families to the fact that they had been trained from infancy to think from cause to effect on all subjects, including the conduct of their own lives and the care of their bodies, a method of thought which fairy stories, ghost stories, and theology destroys, for belief in them necessarily interferes with discrimination, judgment, and a true sense of proportion.

My investigation tends to show that no system will redeem the world like training the mind of the child to think with

scientific accuracy; that traditional theology confuses and muddles the mind, rendering it an easy prey to mysticism, rascality, and degeneracy."

The composition of the Christian mind on the moral side, as we have observed it, consists of one part desire to be wicked, one part indulgence on the sly, and one part fear of being found out. A rational morality which finds its sanctions in the experience of the race, and which knows that vice is disastrous whether God forgives it or not, will have a stronger tendency to keep people in the right path than what has been called the credit system—the system that associates wickedness with pleasure, thus making virtue to consist in self-denial, whether the thing denied is good or bad; which forgives sin in this world, for a consideration, and defers the rewards of probity to another life.

We infer that the writer replying to the Jesuit Brosnahan is Parker H. Sercombe, although the reply is not signed with his name.

BAH!

I see ten thousand men advance,  
With musket, cannon, glave, and lance;  
They fight until the soil is red,  
And half have gone to meet the dead.

While in a village church, not far away,  
I hear the austere, bearded preacher say,  
Poor mortals here below,  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

I see a mother hold her child,  
A shruoken thing by croup defiled.  
She counts its sobs, she counts its sighs,  
And in her nerveless arms it dies.

While in a village church, not far away,  
I hear the austere, bearded preacher say,  
Poor mortals here below,  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

I see a fertile, sunny town,  
Fruitful on mountain slope and down,  
Pest passes; and a few remain,  
To registrate the cruel bane.

While in the village church, not far away,  
I hear the austere, bearded preacher say,  
Poor mortals here below,  
Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

—Francis Saltus Saltus.

IF HELL BE TRUE.

If the common doctrine of eternal damnation be true, then surely no more children should be brought into the world; it is a duty to let the race die out and cease. He who begets a child, forcing him to run the fearful risk of human existence, with every probability of being doomed to hell at the close of earth, commits a crime before whose endless consequences of horror the guilt of fifty thousand deliberate murders would be as nothing. For, be it remembered, *an eternity in hell* is an *infinite* evil; and, therefore, the crime of thrusting such a fate on a single child, with the unasked gift of being, is a crime admitting of no comparison. Rather than populate an everlasting hell with human vipers and worms, a hell whose fires, alive and wriggling with ghastly shapes of iniquity and anguish, shall swell with a vast accession of recruits from every generation,—rather than this, let the lights on the marriage altar go out, no more bounding forms of childhood be seen in cottage or hall, the race grow old, thin out, and utterly perish, all happy villages be overgrown, all regal cities crumble down, and this world roll among the silent stars, henceforth a globe of blasted deserts, and rank wildernesses, resonant only with the shrieks of the wind, the yells of wild beasts, and the thunder's crash.—W. R. Alger, "History and Doctrine of a Future Life."

SPIRITUALISM.

When the personal devil was believed in, he was seen daily clothed in the garments that imagination had given him, and engaged in mischief and villainy of all kinds. When witchery was the dominant superstition, all things gave evidence of that. So long as Spiritualism forms a prominent cult with a real hold upon the beliefs of its adherents, the number of mediums and manifestations will be correspondingly abundant. Create belief in the theory, and the facts will create themselves.—Prof. Joseph Jastrow, University of Wisconsin, "Fact and Fable in Psychology."



## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON.

#### OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 3.15, C. Cohen, a Lecture; 6, a Demonstration.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. A. Davies, "Let Us Pray"; 6, T. Rennolls, "Christianity and Morals."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.15, J. W. Marshall, "Dives and Lazarus."

FINSBURY PARK: 11.30, A. B. Moss, "His Majesty the Devil."

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KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, E. Burke, "The Case for Secular Education."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill): 3.30, A. B. Moss, "The Religion of the Future."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, H. Thurlow, jun., "The Book of Job."

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Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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