

THE Freethinker

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The entire theory of the Church is antagonistic to any concentrated or consistent scheme for raising the earthly condition of the suffering masses.—W. R. GREG.

The Wicked Black Man.

ALL England (we don't think Scotland, Ireland, and Wales are involved yet) is intensely agitated over a boxing contest. The newspapers are full of it, the clergy are preaching about it, the very lawyers have taken it up, and the courts are occupied with it. There never was such a fuss about a boxing contest before. Walking through Fleet-street this morning (Tuesday) we saw crowds looking at pictures of Johnson and Wells in a sporting-paper window. Newspaper lads paraded the street with periodical placards, bearing such announcements as "How Johnson Trains"—"Johnson's Superstitions," etc. Fleet-street was all alive with Johnson. And we hear of him in trains, tramcars, and omnibuses. It is Johnson first, and the rest nowhere. The Canadian elections, the French battleship explosion, the Italian expedition to Tripoli, all sink into insignificance beside Johnson; while the Railway Strike in Ireland is lost sight of altogether.

What is the reason of all this fuss over a boxing contest, which is precisely similar to hundreds of others that take place in the course of a year, except for the standing of the competitors in the boxing world, the size of the place they are to box in, the probable amount of the gate money, and the fee payable (win or lose) to the men themselves?

We take it that there are several reasons. The first is that this is the "silly season" with the newspapers. They are short of exciting copy, and above all of a catching cry; and "Fighting the Fight" came in the very nick of time. Johnson is a better catch than the colossal sea-serpent, or the phenomenal gooseberry, or the "signals" from Mars.

In the second place, England—particularly Paritan England—must have her orgie of virtue every now and then. Macaulay noted this long ago. Millions of sins are committed, and nobody notices them; thousands of well-known sinners walk about and attract no attention; but suddenly one sin strikes everybody, one unlucky sinner is pounced upon, and is made the scapegoat of all the rest. Is he worse than the others? Not a bit. Paritan England has an acute attack of virtue, and demands a victim on the altar of righteousness, and this unlucky sinner happens to be handy. And when he is duly sacrificed, sin and sinners—and other things too—go on just as before.

In the third place, it fills a lot of people with envy that one boxer is to get £2,000 and another £6,000 for a single evening's work. Now envy is a very powerful passion. It cannot allege itself as a reason for anything, but it can throw its weight into the scale, on the side of a pretended principle, against the objects of its ill-will.

In the fourth place, one of the competitors in this boxing match is a black man. And he is extremely likely to win. That is the trouble. It pains all the Chosen People—who are no longer the Jews—to think of a white man (like themselves) being thrashed

by a nigger. It hurts their racial vanity. It also makes it harder for them to rob and oppress the "colored" people in all parts of the world. And this, of course, is serious. It "raised hell"—to use an Americanism—on the other side of the Atlantic when Johnson beat Jefferies. Indignant whites went about with revolvers looking for blacks who hadn't any. Let it be remembered, too, that a desperate, and successful, effort was made to prevent the use of the cinematograph films on this side of the Atlantic. It was declared that the pictures of a black man boxing a white man would stir up racial animosity—especially when the Ethiopian was getting the better of the Pierrot. Most of the "brutality" seemed to lie in that fact.

If Johnson were only a thinker and an orator as well as a boxer! What eloquent scorn he might hurl at the virtuous English mob, including the clerical screamers, who are worrying him for all they are worth. He might tell them that they, and their cousins in America, had inflicted every conceivable cruelty upon his race—without even a shadow of provocation; and now forsooth, when a black man stands up in fair fight—in which there may be discomfort but very little danger—and everybody believes he will defeat his white opponent, they cry out against it in the name of Humanity. The hypocrites!

Yes, and the clerical hypocrites are the worst of all. What do they really care for humanity? Nothing but the instinct of self-preservation ever drives them into any advance upon their brutal old superstitions, which are embodied in the brutal old book that they thrust into the hands of the children in the nation's schools. What is a boxing match to the horrible atrocities which the Bible states were perpetrated at the direct command of God? What is a stripped athlete to the beastliness of Lot and his daughters, Judith and Tamar, the Levite and his concubine, and other tit-bits of Holy Scripture? Let it be noted, also, that the very clericals who howl the loudest against this boxing match are the very same who fight the hardest to stop such innocent recreations as the cinematograph pictures. It was creatures like these that Shakespeare immortalised in "Marry! Don't think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" They hate the very thought of human enjoyment. Their morality consists in restricting somebody else's pleasure—especially in ways that minister to their pride, their privileges, their power, and their profits. Where they see no advantage to themselves they lift no finger to abate the world's misery. That is why their action is usually so spasmodic.

We are sorry to see the Directors of the Rationalist Press Association dancing to the tune of these clerical busybodies. We should scarcely imagine that the members appointed them to pass resolutions on such matters, though that is rather their concern than ours. It would have been much better, in our opinion, to give support to the Secular Education League and the Rationalist Peace Society, or to do something more valuable towards breaking down the Blasphemy Laws than advise Mr. Boulter to apologise and promise never to offend again. But, as the proverb says, tastes differ; and there we must leave it.

G. W. FOOTE.

Our Beliefs.

THERE is an unconscious arrogance in the religious use of the word "unbeliever." As a descriptive epithet of the relation of certain people towards specific religious beliefs it is accurate enough; but there is more in it than this. In application the word is enlarged until it is made to cover practically the whole of life. Not to believe in religion is by implication to render all other beliefs valueless; with the result that the non-religionist is depicted as a bundle of unbeliefs or of negations with no specific belief in anything of consequence. The professed unbeliever—in religion—is lacking something, and that something is assumed to be of so valuable a character that nothing can atone for its absence. Any believer in a god, no matter what kind of a god it may be, is superior to the man who dismisses the whole species of deity as myth. A man may, without serious ill, disbelieve in anything else under the sun; let him disbelieve in a god, and he is pictured as a poor, hesitating bundle of negations, without a single positive conviction to sustain his intellectual faculties. A convenient picture for the religionist, since it may warn others against drifting into the same deplorable condition. Whether it is a true picture or not is another question; but the truth of anything is never a very powerful factor in religious considerations.

The truth is that doubt very frequently, and unbelief invariably, has a positive aspect which the religionist finds it convenient to ignore. If I study the evidence as to the Homeric origin of the *Iliad* I may find it of such a nature as to be unable to come to any decision. In this instance my doubt as to whether Homer really wrote the *Iliad* may represent a state of pure suspense, or it may mean that the evidence has led me to doubt the reputed authorship of the poem. My doubt is, then, the mark of a certain amount of knowledge concerning the matter in question, although it is inadequate to command conviction. But suppose I definitely disbelieve that Homer wrote the *Iliad*? In this my disbelief represents a positive conviction that some person, known or unknown, but certainly not Homer, wrote the poem aforesaid. Unbelief manifested towards a particular subject is thus the negative aspect of a positive conviction. When I disbelieve a particular statement, as, for example, the earth is flat, I affirm my conviction that it is some other shape. Or if I affirm its roundness, I am a disbeliever in regard to any other shape. Unbelief and belief are thus not opposite frames of mind, but two aspects of the same mental state. One cannot exist without the other, and the strength of one is proportionate to the strength of the other.

To some this may seem a trivial point to labor, and yet it has a considerable and important bearing on the dispute between religion and Freethought. To begin with, the plain and simple meaning of the words have been obscured for obvious reasons. It would not have suited the religious policy at any time to admit that all opinions, as such, are of equal value, whatever differences of value may result from their expression. It was far better to label opinions as moral or immoral, which is fundamentally as defensible as speaking of the color of a sound or the size of a smell. Still less would it have suited to acknowledge that the religious unbeliever was a person of very strong and very positive convictions, and that his unbelief usually proceeded by way of definite knowledge concerning the subject of his disbelief. It was far better to link the expression of of an unwelcome opinion with an undesirable moral disposition, and to treat disbelief in Christianity as a negation, and nothing but a negation. In this way the unbeliever acquires the reputation of mental and moral leprosy, and all will shun him, even though a select number of sympathetic souls may pity his infirmity.

Let us glance at some of the beliefs that form the groundwork of our religious unbelief. Our widest and

most important disbelief concerns the existence of the supernatural. We see no reason for believing that at any time in human history there has been an intervention of any supernatural agency either for or against man. We observe that any alleged supernatural happening resolves itself on examination into either pure myth or a misunderstanding of the natural. Our knowledge of man and of nature and our belief in the supernatural vary in inverse proportion. The principle of causation which applies in all known instances, we believe will apply to all unknown cases so soon as our knowledge of them is adequate to range them under this or that category. Our unbelief in the supernatural is thus no more and no less than the reverse side of our belief in the principle of universal causation. Remove this, and the basis of our unbelief is gone. Consequently, to talk of this as a "pure negation" is nothing more nor less than pure nonsense. It is the affirmation of a belief without which all science is a sheer impossibility. It is the religious believer who is committed to scepticism concerning a generalisation which has withstood the application of all tests, and in the absence of which no sane ordering of life is possible.

This belief lies also at the root of the unbeliever's rejection of such teachings at the divinity of Jesus or the inspiration of the Bible. We believe that the conditions under which any ordinary John Smith is brought into the world govern the birth of the greatest individual that has trodden this planet. We do not admit that any degree of human excellence, no matter how great, can lift one out of the ranks of humanity altogether. The Christian's position is, substantially, that the laws of human procreation are not universal. There are certain exceptions, as in the case of Jesus. We are unbelievers in relation to an event on behalf of which no evidence is or can be offered, and which is in conflict with all human experience. The Christian is an unbeliever in the sanity of scientific procedure and in the trustworthiness of human experience. We disbelieve in the divinity of Jesus, because we believe in the humanity of man. We disbelieve in the miraculous birth, because we believe in the naturalness of all birth.

It is the same with our disbelief in the inspiration of the Bible. Our rejection of the orthodox view is based upon our knowledge concerning the Bible. We see that these inspired literatures, or traditions, or oracles, crop up all over the world, and that they are most flourishing in a relatively low state of civilisation. Knowing this, we believe that the Christian Bible has the same kind of origin, and the same kind of inspiration that all other books have, and must be judged by the standards applicable to all other books. In rejecting the Christian belief, we are affirming a principle, not uttering a "bare negation." We stand for the principle that the past is to be judged in the light of our present knowledge, as against that of interpreting our own experience in the light of past teaching. We judge what man said and did in the past in the light of what we know men say and do to-day. For human nature does not alter in its fundamentals. The brain of the savage functions in exactly the same manner as does that of the greatest of thinkers. The same feelings that stir us stirred our most remote ancestors. The forms under which human thought and feeling find expression differ with each generation, but the laws governing their expression remain unaltered.

The two positions are seen with even greater clearness in the region of morals. We are disbelievers in either the utility of a supernatural incentive to morality, or the necessity of religious beliefs as a basis for morals. So far, the negative aspect. But this negative is only the expression of a strong affirmation. And the affirmation is that human nature, considered by itself, is strong enough to carry out all desirable social and family functions without being either bribed by the hope of heaven or terrified by the fear of hell. The Christian asserts that the man who abandons the belief in deity and a future life surrenders the basis of a moral life. So

far, he is in the affirmative. But this affirmation involves the negation of the inherent strength and ability of human nature to maintain a decent level of conduct in the absence of extraneous threats and bribes. It is a denial of the possibility of human goodness, as such. The Christian is fond of referring to the hopeless pessimism of unbelief; but there could surely be no greater pessimism than this. The unbeliever may be right or wrong, but there is no question of the greater nobility and helpfulness of a teaching that takes man at his highest, and appeals to all that is best in his nature, when contrasted with a teaching that treats him as a compound of fool and felon incapable of recognising in what direction duty lies, or lacking the strength to carry it out. If it is ever justifiable to speak of opinion as being immoral, it must surely be in such a case as this.

It is a mere cheap controversial trick to represent the unbeliever in religion as being bent upon mere destruction, or as lacking in positive convictions. The history of Freethought shows clearly enough that in all cases—in the warfare against witchcraft, against the inspiration of the Bible, against the belief in miracles, deity, or a future life—the weapons of attack have been positive beliefs drawn from the store of knowledge that has been gradually accumulated. These attacks could not have been successful had it been otherwise. Beliefs are never destroyed by a mere denial. They are only removed when real knowledge ousts pseudo-knowledge, and a belief based on fact usurps the place occupied by one based on mere fancy. The fight is not really one between belief and unbelief, it is a contest between rival beliefs, between a belief in natural causation, human reason, and human morality, and a belief in supernaturalism, intellectual impotence, and human weakness.

So, too, have the world's great unbelievers been among the most fervent of believers. From Lucian to Voltaire, from Epicurus to Bradlaugh, their outstanding characteristic has been their intense belief in the value of human life and the strength of human reason. Their most emphatic denials were only veiled forms of equally emphatic affirmations. It has suited religionists to emphasise the one and to ignore the other; but the policy is one that deceives only those who lack either the courage or the ability to look facts fairly in the face. Unbelievers we all are, and are bound to be so long as we have any beliefs worth talking about. It is not a question of whether we disbelieve or believe, but what it is that we believe or reject. And in the history of human thought the Freethinker may well feel confident in contrasting his beliefs with those that are summed up under the name of religion.

C. COHEN.

Biblical Criticism.

A HUNDRED years ago Christians were almost unanimous in regarding the Bible as the inspired and infallible Word of God. It was firmly held to be a perfect and final revelation of the Divine character and will; of the fall of all mankind in Adam, and of their glorious redemption in Christ. There are still a few who zealously cherish that view, who have the temerity to declare that they believe every word between the two covers of the sacred volume; and it must be acknowledged that they are the only consistent believers. But they form only a miserable minority of present-day Christians, and are decreasing in numbers every year. The popular attitude to the Bible, even in the Churches, has radically changed during recent years, and is still changing. The overwhelming majority of divines to-day affirm either that the Bible *contains*, among many other true, untrue, and irrelevant things, a revelation of the Supreme Being, or that it is simply a *record* of the granting of such a revelation to the Israelites. There abideth these three views of the Bible, namely, that from beginning to end it is the Word of God,

that here and there it *contains* the Word of God, and that it neither *is* nor *contains* the Word of God, but is merely a *history* of its progressive impartation to a chosen people; and the greatest of these, the one most likely to supersede the other two, is the third. We maintain that logically, ethically, and historically the whole three are utterly untenable, and must be repudiated in the interest of truth. The first strictly orthodox doctrine no longer needs to be formally refuted, as the number of its adherents is a negligible quantity; and the same may almost be said of the second view. We therefore confine our attention to the third view, which is becoming more and more popular with the younger generation of educated divines.

A straightforward and perfectly lucid statement of this theory was recently made, in a lecture before the North London Christian Evidence League, by the Rev. R. Bruce Taylor, M.A., a Presbyterian minister of great ability, who has just become the pastor of a large church in Canada. Mr. Bruce Taylor rejects the view that the Bible *is* the Word of God, nor has he much sympathy with the view that the Bible *contains* that Word. His words are emphatic:—

"There were days in the history of religion when it was thought impious to exercise one's judgment upon the letter of Scripture at all. The result was bad in two directions. For one thing it tended to put the Bible, as compared with all other sources of knowledge, in a false position. It made the Bible itself the object of worship rather than the God who was revealed in the Bible. A man was judged from the narrow standpoint of his acceptance of the very letter of a library of books ranging in date over nearly a thousand years, instead of by his faithfulness to the God who was revealed throughout all that Scripture. After all, the Bible is the *record* of a Revelation, not the Revelation itself. God was leading Israel in act before any man thought of putting the circumstances of that leadership into writing."

Such is the latest theory about the Bible; and the question naturally arises, Is it any more reasonable, any truer to facts, than the other two? It is to Criticism we are indebted for it; but does Criticism justify it? Mr. Taylor says:—

"Biblical Criticism throws into the strongest lights the history of Israel, and the more that history is studied the more wonderful it becomes. Israel was not a people; she was little more than a clan of the great Semitic race. But yet she, and she alone, was chosen to be the instrument for the conveying of the truth of God to mankind."

The theory is now before us in all its fullness, and the first impression it makes upon us is distinctly unfavorable. *It involves God in an act of gross injustice.* Why should he have chosen this semi-savage Semitic tribe to be the recipient of the revelation of himself? Israel was as stupid, as ignorant, and as low down in the intellectual and moral scale as any of the surrounding clans when her election took place; and we ask, what justified the election? For one thing, Israel never conveyed the truth of God to mankind. But if God could reveal himself to Israel, could he not do so, in the same way, to all mankind? Why did he practise such cruel partiality? It is easy enough to say that God's elections are *inclusive*, not *exclusive*; that he blessed Israel in order that through her he might bless all the nations of the earth, just as it is said that he commanded that the seventh day should be kept holy in order that all days might become holy. But, as a matter of fact, all the nations of the earth have not been blessed through the seed of Abraham. The truth of God declared to have been communicated to the Jews has not become the possession of all mankind. Therefore, we claim that the choice of Israel to be the depositary of Divine revelation was essentially unfair, as well as futile, because it represents Jehovah as a respecter of persons.

Nor did the election of Israel result in any perceptible benefit to herself. If Jehovah chose Israel for his own special heritage, Israel did not respond for many centuries, by definitely choosing Jehovah as her sole object of worship and service. Even

down to the time of Jeremiah the great complaint was that Israel's deities were as numerous as her cities and towns (Jer. ii. 28; xi. 13). And yet we are asked to believe that from Abraham's day downward the Jews were the privileged pupils of Jehovah; that he loved them, called them his sons, taught them to go, took them on his arms, and drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love (Hosea xi. 1-4). As Mr. Bruce Taylor puts it:—

"God takes people as they are and sets before them an ever progressive view of what, by his grace, they may become. He chose this little nation ere yet it was a nation: he revealed himself to them by slow degrees and in many modes until it was their privilege at last to be the people from which the Redeemer sprang."

Now, the altogether unintelligible thing is that, in spite of such Divine tuition and paternal solicitude, the Israelites persisted in a mode of life which was wholly offensive to Jehovah, and the despair of moral reformers. Such great teachers as Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah never ceased to condemn the moral degradation and positive wickedness which at every turn shocked their sense of right. The God in whom they believed and whom they preached, and the people, were at loggerheads, and peace between them seemed impossible. Hosea speaks of the fierceness of Jehovah's anger against them, and represents him as saying, "Ephraim compasseth me about with falsehood and the house of Israel with deceit." At this time, however, Judah was not so deep sunk in iniquity, but is described as still "ruling with God and faithful with the Holy One." But only some ten or fifteen years later Isaiah gives Judah as bad a name as the house of Israel had ever borne—"a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that deal corruptly." Thus the Jews of the eighth century B.C., who had been under the special care and guidance of Jehovah for many generations, were as far from truth and righteousness as the imaginary Pagans depicted by Paul in the first of Romans. And this fact establishes beyond dispute one of two things, either that Jehovah as father and teacher of his chosen people was a lamentable failure, or that the glib talk of the prophets about his holiness and justice and special providence was mere bosh. Of course, a true and living God, infinite in power, wisdom, and love, would be absolutely incapable of failure, and this shuts us up to the alternative conclusion, namely, that he does not exist. The history of the chosen people, as related in the Old Testament, furnishes an unanswerable argument against the existence of an almighty champion of justice and benevolence.

Mr. Bruce Taylor ingeniously excuses God by saying that he must "work through the understandings that men possess"; but, then, if God existed, "the understandings that men possess" would be his gift to them, and would, certainly, be of such dimensions and power as to be incapable, from the very first, of misunderstanding and misrepresenting him. The slow evolution of the human race is intelligible only on the assumption that there is no infinite wisdom and goodness in charge of the process. A progressive revelation of God is incompatible with the supposed sublime perfection of his being. An evolutionary God would be a God perpetually making mistakes and perpetually improving upon himself, and such a God is unthinkable.

Mr. Bruce Taylor is a very clever apologist, but he gives his support to a losing cause. In reality, Biblical Criticism has dealt supernaturalism its death-blow. It has rendered the belief in Divine revelation perfectly ridiculous. One school says that the Bible is the one perfect revelation of God; another argues that if you search reverently and prayerfully you will at length find such a revelation in it; and another school still contradicts the other two by pointing out that the revelation is not in the Bible at all, but outside in a people chosen on purpose to receive it. Now Literary Criticism disposes successfully of the first two schools, and Historical Criticism completely shatters the claims

of the third. Thus, the Bible is dethroned and the chosen people are reduced to the level of their contemporaries.

This applies to the New Testament no less than to the Old. The fall of Judaism carries with it that of Christianity. Jesus, as well as Moses, stands discredited. Mr. Bruce Taylor comforts himself with the assurance that, whatever becomes of the Bible, Christ remains in all his ancient glory and power. Is that true? Even Mr. Taylor himself tacitly admits that it is not. "My point of view is," he says, "that a man ought to be judged by his loyalty to the highest that he knows, and for us Christians this means Jesus Christ." We are convinced that here again Mr. Taylor is mistaken. Even the Churches have outgrown Jesus. Their loyalty to him is only a thing of profession, not of veritable fact. The Christian life to-day is in flat contradiction to the life recommended in the Sermon on the Mount. Strictly speaking, there is not a single Christian in all the world. Jesus has been left behind. We are fully aware that so long as they have any following at all, the divines will shut their eyes to the truth. As they cling to the Bible after Criticism has robbed it of its alleged sanctity, so they will adhere to Christianity after it has been proved that it is futile as well as false. But, in spite of them, the world moves, and the truth slowly becomes known. The Bible denounced by Voltaire is no more, and the Christianity of Whitefield and Wesley is very largely a thing of the past. When he has got quite rid of Gods and Gods' Books man will begin to look after himself, and to find out the true path of life.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Deification of Mammon.

CHRISTIANITY is no longer a serious religion; it is now a business, and is worked on purely commercial lines. Missions and meetings are advertised in the same way as patent medicines or theatrical ventures. Revivalists and preachers adopt similar methods to music-hall artistes, with the same financial results. But the purely business side of religion is seen clearest in the methods now adopted in order to raise revenue for the propagation of a religion founded by a pauper, and professedly "without money and without price."

The extent to which ordinary commercial means have displaced voluntary contributions so long in vogue in connection with religious bodies is very significant. The old-fashioned method of collecting "threepenny bits" during the service is no longer considered adequate. Even the sale of work is being largely superseded by more topical and efficient substitutes. So much is this the case that religious trading is considered by business men as a menace to the welfare of the trading community. Bazaars are held everywhere for the reduction of church debts and the erection of costly places of worship. Missionary and other propagandist societies owe a good deal of their large income to sales of goods, and many thousands of pounds are raised annually in this manner for religious interests. At a bazaar held at Lincoln, over a thousand pounds was realised, and a week's missionary exhibition at Southend-on-Sea brought £200 clear profit. A common sale of work in South London produced £250, and a score of similar functions realised over £2,000.

Imagine the many similar exhibitions and sales held annually throughout the country for the various evangelical organisations, Bible and missionary societies. Add to this the 18,000 parish churches, and 10,000 chapels, mission halls, and tin tabernacles, all of which to-day look to bazaars, exhibitions, and sales as a legitimate and easy means of raising money, and we begin to realise the extent of the practice. Where is all this to end? Its logical outcome is seen in the vast trading organisation of the Salvation Army, which regularly sells among its members tea, clothing, toys for children, musical

instruments, and all manner of requisites, and uses the profits for its propaganda.

This inclusion of Mammon as the fourth person of the Christian Trinity has had another result which would have shocked the sober Christians of the ages of faith. It has led to the desire to make Christianity a pleasant pastime. Painful Sabbaths have been replaced by Pleasant Sunday Afternoons. String bands and sweet-voiced soloists take the place of leather-lunged preachers. Labor members of Parliament and other tame publicists share the platform or pulpit with professional evangelists. One sometimes wonders how the spiritual work of the Church was conducted before the introduction of these alluring attractions. Faith, one must suppose, was stronger in those days, not needing the artificial and meretricious impetus of alien amusement. Our believing ancestors went to church or chapel, and their children with them. It was counted a duty which must be attended to; but nowadays the majority of men stay at home or make for their golf club or other recreation, and even the children have to be bribed to attend.

For there is no question that Sunday-school excursions, Church Lad outings, and socials for young people are bribery, and nothing else. It is said that the Churches organise these holidays with the object of taking children into healthy surroundings. In theory the practice is excellent, but the effect can be gauged better from the point of view of the children than the parson. The scholars regard these holidays, not as a privilege, but as a right. They had attended the Sunday-school, and the holiday was a payment. Take away the bribe, and they would have considered themselves under no obligation to go to church at all. A smart juvenile can attend the excursions of every religious denomination for which it is possible to qualify. By a neat arrangement of the program he can get near a week of holiday-making, and figure in religious statistics as four boys instead of one. All these straws show which way the wind is blowing. Christianity is undergoing a transformation, and is no longer a serious religion. It is not even comedy, but is now passing from farce into the region of harlequinade. And the sooner the man in the street realises this the better it will be for everybody. The God of the Christians is no longer the sad-faced figure of the poor Nazarene, but the rubicund, self-satisfied form of Mammon, with the leer of the miser. Gone are the crown of thorns and the spear wounds in his side, but in each jewelled hand of the new deity is held the money-bag and the bribe. The purple robe covers the huge imposture of an organised hypocrisy. Could the pale shade of Christ that slinks past the altar rails but speak it would bewail an agony of spirit deadlier than that which drenched Gethsemane in blood. Mohammed has a direct influence over his professed disciples; Gantama Buddha still colors and controls human life; Brahma still affects the lives of millions; but where, in all Christendom, is the Christian?

MIMNERMUS.

Romanism is the greatest foe of the individual. The Church is all; the man is nothing. Every Roman Catholic is a part of the vast machinery of Romanism. The man who is a tool of the priest can never make anything of himself. He does not count, although he is counted. Roman Catholics are so many ciphers. They make the tail of the Pope's kite. The only man who deserves the name of man is he who dares to think for himself and who respects his reason enough to follow it.

Did you ever think how different this world might have been if God had been female instead of male? Perhaps a feminine creator would have had better taste in making things. Just imagine, if man had been created in her image, how much fairer human beings would have been? Angels might have been of another gender, or, half of them at least, and women instead of men would have been our priests. If we could have a "Mother in heaven," we cannot believe that there would be a hell for poor sinners anywhere in the universe.—L. K. Washburn.

Acid Drops.

Macaulay said that the Puritans objected to bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. Something similar may be said of the clerical gentlemen who have dropped their regular animosities in order to co-operate in opposition to the Wells and Johnson "fight." One of them let the cat out of the bag quite plainly, by saying that if it were not for the money and the gambling he would not say a word against it. He did not say how professionalism can be avoided in any "sport." If cricket is played, there will be professional cricketers; if football is played, there will be professional footballers; if billiards is played, there will be professional billiard players; and if boxing is carried on, there will be professional boxers. Men like Jack Johnson don't pretend to be philanthropists. They admit that they are out to make money. And what is the Archbishop of Canterbury out for? We consider Jack Johnson the more honest man of the two.

The South African press has joined in the protest against the Wells and Johnson contest. Why? Simply because the black pugilist is pretty sure to knock out his white opponent. It would be all right if it were the other way about. The natives mustn't be allowed to know that a colored gentleman is able to defeat a bleached one in a physical encounter. The difficulty of ruling them—with or without their wishes—will be greatly increased if the negro wins. Which means, if it means anything except vulgar race prejudice, that the white man's position in South Africa is based upon the ignorance and credulity of the natives. Surely *this* objection to the glove-fight is the meanest and most contemptible of all—after that of the hypocritical men of God.

Dr. R. F. Horton writes to the *Times* concerning the coming boxing contest between Johnson and Wells that the example of the monk Telemachus and the gladiatorial games "suggests what must be done to-day. We have no fear that either Dr. Horton or Dr. Meyer will rush in between the combatants and give their lives to stop the fray. That would be a good advertisement, certainly, but they will prefer their present easier methods.

Dr. Horton repeats the story of Telemachus with the utmost gravity. Telemachus, he said, repeating the legend, went to Rome, entered the Colosseum, flung himself between the swords of the gladiators, and was killed by the spectators. "The martyr killed the games.....Never again did men fight in Rome to make a public holiday." This Dr. Horton repeats as though it were one of the most unquestionable of historic facts. Now the sole authority for this statement is a passage in the writings of the Christian monk Theodoret—and Christian writers are certainly not authorities that any candid student will accept without corroboration. And in this case not only is there no corroborative evidence, there is very strong evidence against it. It is true that Gibbon repeats the story, but against it he puts the significant note, "I wish to believe the story of St. Telemachus," and adds the caustic comment, "No church has been dedicated, no altar has been erected to the only monk who died a martyr in the cause of humanity."

But this is not all. The clerical editor of Gibbon properly notes that the gladiatorial contest could not have been terminated by the martyrdom of Telemachus, if there ever was such a martyr, as "the gladiatorial shows continued at a later period." Salvianus, a Presbyter of Milan, writing after the time of Honorius, complains of the delight taken by Christians in the games, and speaks of "numberless thousands of Christians" as daily spectators. Other testimony is available as to the continuation of the games. There is, of course, no reason for denying that the better class of Christian disapproved of the gladiatorial games; but in this they were only following in the steps of the better class of Pagans. In Greece there had been sharp limitations placed on the displays. In Rome laws were also passed to the same end, as when Nerva prohibited contests of gladiators, and Marcus Aurelius compelled them to fight with blunted swords. The more brutal practices were actually revised under Christian auspices, and it is easily seen that in most of the cities the games came to an end, not because of refinement of feeling on the part of the people, but because of the poverty of the municipal treasuries. It is almost comical to find people who practised the most horrible brutalities in the name of religion credited with so gentle a nature as to revolt at the contests of gladiators. And we may remind Dr. Horton that the

most Christian country in Europe still maintains its bull-fights, nor is cock-fighting and similar "sports" very long deceased practices in our own pious land.

A Canadian, with an accent as broad as the Atlantic, broke into St. John's Church, Southend, while the Apostle was out, and smashed the vestry safe with the altar cross—without being struck dead on the spot. He suffered more prosaically by falling into the hands of the police. It appears that his total "find" was four-and-twopence. This he disbursed at various Bible Temperance establishments in the borough, and in the state of brain that followed he fell an easy prey even to an Essex constable.

Sir W. Robertson Nicoll says he once lived on eight shillings a week. It was before he became an apostle of the gospel of poverty.

The *Southend Standard* comments editorially on the incident we referred to last week,—a pretended address by the great Charles Bradlaugh through the mouth of a Spiritualist medium called Rundle. Our contemporary points out, as we did, that Bradlaugh had anything but improved as an orator in the spirit world. "Eternity," it says, "has dealt rough with him." Then it proceeds:—

"I understand the last of the leading Victorian Freethinkers is resident in Southend, and if he will excuse the use of his name for the illustration of my view, I proceed that if the late Mr. Bradlaugh wished his communication to earth to be really effective, he should have materialised to and through Mr. Foote. Otherwise, the effort was largely wasted. If that gentleman really saw and heard Mr. Bradlaugh, he must believe; and, believing, teach with convincing, establishing power. Without disrespect to Mr. Rundle—whose sincerity will not be challenged by me—half-a-dozen words from Mr. Bradlaugh through the mediumship of Mr. Foote would be more fruitful of conviction of this claim by Spiritualism than a thousand words repeated a thousand times through the agency of a believing Spiritualist."

Just so. But dead sceptics don't send messages through living sceptics, and Bradlaugh isn't likely to be any exception to the rule. He has been dead twenty years already.

From the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, September 20:—

"A stained glass window is to be put up in Chilvers Coton Church, where she was christened in 1819, to the memory of George Eliot."

We beg to suggest that George Eliot took no part in her christening. Every item of the ceremony was transacted by others. The fact that they carried her to the church, and carried her away again, does not constitute any real association between herself and the place. She lived all her mature life outside churches altogether. She believed neither in God nor in a personal future life. We admit that she had only one objection to Christianity—that it wasn't true; but that one objection was sufficiently fatal.

The *Streatham News* announces its receipt of a copy of last week's *Freethinker* "with an inset in the form of a handbill advertising Harry Boulter's suits," etc., etc. We know nothing of the said "inset." It was probably put there by Mr. Boulter himself. Anyhow, we don't quite see what it has to do with the controversy on Streatham Common. It would have been much better if our contemporary had pointed out the "lewd" language which we were unable to find in its report of Mr. Boulter's speech.

The Christian Evidence Society and the Christian Evidence League—who agree in nothing but slandering every leading Freethinker, living or dead—are united ("when they do agree their unanimity is wonderful") in calling on the County Council to drive Mr. Boulter off Streatham Common on the ground that his language is "indecent and obscene." They declare, the Rev. C. L. Drawbridge declares, that "the line must be drawn somewhere." Yes,—but by whom? It certainly ought not to be drawn by the champions of the religion which Mr. Boulter attacks. That is what the Christians have done in past ages, backing it up with the most unscrupulous abuse of power. But the time has gone by for that. We beg to tell these bigots—whose own language is often disgusting—that the only proper way to deal with a public speaker who uses "indecent and obscene" language is a legal prosecution by the public authorities. There must at least be some pretence to truth and fair-play in a court of justice. There is none in a mock trial on Streatham Common. When the inhabitants of Streatham are called upon (by Christian partisans) to hound (an Atheist)

speaker off the Common, they should decline to be made the tools of a faction, and quietly ask "Where are the police?"

We see that the Rev. C. L. Drawbridge, who "runs" the Christian Evidence League, and was selected by the Christian side to take the chair on the opening night of the Warschauer-Foote debate, contributed his quota to the mock trial on Streatham Common. It was he who said "they must draw the line somewhere." Now this reverend gentleman is a far worse sinner than the man he condemns. Vulgar language is not as bad as vulgar actions. The rough fellow who damns your eyes in the street is not as bad as the well-dressed, well-behaved person who picks your pocket—or tries his best, perhaps in the most cowardly way, to damn your character. Mr. Drawbridge takes the chair and smiles while his hirelings spend their time in blackguarding and slandering prominent members of the National Secular Society. He enjoys the luxury without the danger of defamation. He *is* a Christian.

There is comedy in everything if you only see it. The *Streatham News* is proud of the "ready and liberal response for financial support towards the campaign to boycott Boulter." Fancy raising funds to boycott a man! Collecting money to pay the expense of leaving him alone!

The *Daily Telegraph* quite naturally, considering the descent or ascent of its proprietor, devoted a good deal of space, in its issue for September 22, to the doings of the Chosen People (not Britishers, but Jews) during the past twelve months. September 22 was the first of the ten days of preparation for the great Day of Atonement. It is known as the Day of Judgment and the Day of Memorial. "It is regarded," the *D. T.* said, "as the occasion on which the Heavenly Judge reviews the actions of all the inhabitants of the globe." What an exquisite picture! Almighty Omniscience, on the bench, knowing nothing of the "next case" until it is called in court.

The Rev. Dr. C. R. Brown, President of the Yale Divinity School, America, does not yet know what Atheism really is, and, consequently, whenever he refers to the subject he grossly misrepresents it. For example, he maintains, in a published sermon, that when Atheists say, "We do not believe in God," they simply mean that they will have nothing to do with a God "who is interested chiefly in the ecclesiastical activities of people," who "is very attentive to the things they do in sacred buildings and on sacred days and in connection with certain sacred ceremonies, but feels much less concern as to those secular interests which, after all, consume the bulk of their time and strength." But this is an inexcusable lie. Atheists do not believe in any Deity at all, no matter what the character ascribed to him may be. They are *Atheists*, not without this, that, or the other God, but absolutely, unconditionally, unambiguously without God. They reject John Wesley's Loving Father no less than John Knox's Implacable Sovereign.

Dr. Brown makes much of the fact that in the New Testament, God is spoken of as King only five times, while he is called Father five hundred times. That is totally without value. One may speak of God as Father five million times; but what is the use of repeating words which are flatly contradicted by all the known facts of the Universe? Dr. Brown himself paints a beautiful and fascinating picture of a Divine Being, but it has no original except in Mr. Brown's own brain. The reverend gentleman virtually admits this when he says that, face to face with situations incompatible with Infinite Fatherhood, he finds comfort and strength only "in falling back upon the authority of Jesus Christ," that is, in flying from "monarch reason" to blind faith.

Westminster Cathedral (Catholic) has been so much the scene of thefts by night that the authorities have introduced a watch-dog named Jack, who is expected to beat "Providence" hollow in vigilant protection of the premises.

Mr. R. J. Campbell pretends to portray a world without God. As a matter of fact he can do nothing of the kind because he has never seen such a world. The only world with which he can claim any acquaintance is a world *with* God, ostensibly a world created, sustained, and governed by an ever-present loving Father; but is it a world of which a perfect Being could be proud? Why, Mr. Campbell himself is under the necessity of confessing that it is by no means a thing of beauty, and that the contemplation of its phenomena is not calculated to engender perpetual joy. Without a moment's hesitation, the reverend gentleman frankly admits that if God were to disappear the world would probably go

on much the same as it had done before. The following passage is worthy of quotation:—

"Morally it [the world] might not be a pin the worse. Religion and morality are not absolutely necessary to each other, although the former has been a dynamic of great value to the latter; we can generally trust the moral sense to go on moving in the right direction. Men are brave, generous, and fair-minded—when they are so at all—not because they want to win heaven or escape hell, but because they feel like it.....No, I do not wish to contend that human nature would revert to the law of the jungle if the sanction of religion were withdrawn from conduct. For many people that sanction does not exist now, and yet they succeed in being honorable and upright, and often evince a considerable amount of moral passion and zeal for the well-being of the race."

Observe, then, that "morally" a world without God "might not be a pin the worse."

And yet after talking sound sense through nearly a column, Mr. Campbell lapses into the usual nonsensical vein of the pulpit. Whilst morally the world might not be one whit the worse off in the absence of God, yet spiritually it would inevitably become a vast heap of black ruins. It would be a world in which nothing would possess any value. Why does the Universe exist? Why is virtue better than vice? Why should we serve one another? These are sentimental questions, and only in close association with the belief in God and immortality can they be satisfactorily answered. Mr. Campbell asserts that the Atheist can give no reason whatever "why any individual should ever sacrifice himself for any other or for the good of the race." This is utterly false; but the reverend gentleman becomes more unreasonable still, and declares that "in the long run the noble act itself is worthless if there be no God, for it will not even preserve the race from destruction." Why, can anything preserve the race from destruction? Long on earth it may yet have place, but the natural probabilities are that both it and the earth shall be swallowed up in the all-consuming sun. But the value of altruistic service lies in the fact that it contributes to the welfare of the race *while it endures*; and this fact renders such service in the highest degree rational. Such is the moral life; and it is the highest life known to us. The so-called spiritual or religious life is an excrescence, a morbid development, a troublesome superfluity, and, consequently, a source of injury to the natural life of man.

Bishop Gore (oh that awful name!) has addressed a farewell letter to the clergy and laity of the Birmingham Diocese which he has left for that of Oxford. With regard to the reason of his "translation" he writes:—

"When I was invited to go to Oxford some five weeks ago I did not at first think of accepting the invitation, but there are special features about the diocese which cannot be ignored, and, by the advice of those who can best be regarded as impartial and authoritative, I was finally, after much hesitation, led to believe that I had better accept the offer."

Now one of the "special features" of the Oxford diocese is indicated. There is one, however, that we may indicate ourselves. The Bishopric of Oxford is worth £1,500 a year more than the Bishopric of Birmingham—the income being £5,000 a year as against £3,500. We suppose this "feature" was not overlooked.

With regard to the social conditions of Birmingham, Bishop Gore makes an important admission. "The longer I lived in this great industrial centre," he says, "the more I have felt that, as Christians, we are not justified in tolerating the conditions of life and labor under which a vast mass of our population is living." But the Christians *do* tolerate these conditions; indeed, the Bishop laments the fact that he has "signally failed" in "stirring among Churchmen in general a sense of their duty to contribute to the social and industrial reconstruction of our nation." What, then, is the use of Christianity?

It is quite amusing to read Bishop Gore's assurance that these conditions of labor never will be "remedied until Christian hearts and Christian heads energetically demand and insist that they shall be altered." Evidently it is the Christian hearts and heads that are being waited for. They are behind all others in the march of progress—as usual. But they will come in when the hour of victory is near, and claim it as theirs—also as usual.

The Rev. Dr. Orchard is generally a fair-minded critic whose supreme concern is to find the truth about the universe; but occasionally he lapses into something very like religious prejudice. One of his correspondent's relates how, when a child, she asked her governess "Who made God?" for which audacity she was locked up in a room by

herself. Dr. Orchard suggests that she may have asked the question, not because she was clever, but because she was ignorant. But, surely, all honest people ask questions because they are ignorant, and not because they imagine that thereby they will convince their friends of their cleverness. We maintain that the question "Who made God?" is fully as legitimate as the question "Who made the universe?" It is quite as reasonable to assume a self-existent and eternal matter as it is to assume a self-existent and eternal God. We are powerless to trace the chain of cause and effect to a first link. The existence of a First Cause is as baseless an assumption as the existence of a Final Cause. Self-existence and eternity may be "included in the general connotation of the idea of God"; but is not Dr. Orchard aware that "the general connotation of the idea of God" is merely the outcome of countless ages of purely speculative and metaphysical thinking, and that there is nothing in the realm of facts to which it can appeal?

Dr. Orchard asserts that Atheism "entails that there is no meaning in the universe at all"; but is there any meaning at all in the universe? Dr. Orchard *imagines* that there is, but does not *know*; and when he endeavors to define that meaning he does but vainly speculate. The meaning is a child of his own fancy. There is absolutely no proof that there is a purposive intelligence in and behind the universe; and it is by the use of our intelligence alone that we introduce meaning and purpose into our own lives. The universe recognises neither.

Speaking of the Salvation Army, an American Church dignitary said: "I must say I do not like it; but, at the same time, to be perfectly frank with you, if I don't like it I think God Almighty does." If that is so, we deplore God Almighty's bad taste, and we admire his servant's courage in venturing to differ from him with such fine emphasis. And yet what an unfathomable pit of impiety underlies the reverend gentleman's blasphemous utterance. Fancy the creature of an hour disagreeing with the Ancient of Days!

It is needless to say that General Booth is in complete agreement with God Almighty. At Swadlincote, the other day, he delivered a long oration in fulsome praise of his pet organisation, preparatory to taking as big a collection as possible at the close. In this connection the triumphant showman paid a most flattering compliment to his Lord Jesus Christ, saying, "I borrow, hire, or beg motor-cars simply in order that I may the more rapidly and readily get on the track of the Master in seeking and saving those that are lost." Poor old Master, how badly he would fare if the Grand Old Showman and his ilk did not get on his track, and do the work for him.

The *Hackney Gazette* is alarmed at the progress of Sunday cinematograph shows, and the "threatened decay of the Churches." "It is a condition of things," our contemporary says, "which every high-minded person will deplore." But no definition is given of a high-minded person. Presumably it means a person who agrees with the editor of the *Hackney Gazette*. We beg to assure him, therefore, that there are many sensible and well-meaning persons who do not agree with him. They look upon the emptying of churches and the filling up of other places on Sundays as a gratifying sign of the times.

According to our *Hackney contemporary*, it is too late to stop the Sunday picture shows. A complete remedy is out of the question. But partial remedies might be applied. Children, for instance, might be prevented by a by-law from attending on the Holy Sabbath. Then again, the "Churches themselves should endeavor to get possession of these places on Sundays." That is a good idea—if it could be carried out, but we doubt its feasibility. Fancy a series of nice lively Sunday pictures under the management of the local Free Church Councils! The Prodigal Son, with music—"Johnny Comes Marching Home": Jesus Walking on the Water, with music—"A Life on the Ocean Wave": The Ascension of Jesus, with music—"Up in a Balloon, Boys": or the Raising of Lazarus, with music—"Slap Bang! Here We are Again!" Some grand pictures, with appropriate music, could be worked out on these lines. We make a present of this suggestion to the *Hackney Sabbatarians*.

A number of clerical gentlemen have been co-operating on a book entitled *Facing the Facts*, which is to be published shortly by Messrs. Nisbet & Co. The book is no doubt written seriously, perhaps solemnly—for we know the style of some of the contributors. But the title is a joke. Fancy the clergy facing the facts! Whenever a meeting takes place the facts face them.

If the clergy ever do face the facts, it is after the manner of one of Bunyan's characters,—Mr. Facing-Both-Ways.

"Carry neither scrip nor purse," said Jesus Christ to his apostles. How things have changed since then! We see an announcement of "the report of the Archbishops' Committee on Church Finance." The gist of it is that more money is wanted, over and above the millions per annum which the Church already commands. It was ever thus. The Church of Christ has everything but—Christ!

The last hope of the Church is in the "Brotherhoods," the praises of which are just now being so vigorously sung in all the religious papers. By means of them the Church is, after all, going to be saved. But the amazing fact about these "Brotherhoods" is that human brotherhood is conspicuous in them only by its absence. Only members of the "Brotherhoods" are treated as brothers. Outsiders are strangers and aliens, who have no true citizenship anywhere. Such has been the spirit manifested by the Church in all ages. Recently, in her preaching, she has been laying great emphasis on what are called two fundamental truths, namely, the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man; but, in her practice, she has always claimed God as the Father of believers only and Christians alone as true brethren. In the Church even now brotherhood is nothing but an empty catchword.

And for this unbrotherly attitude of the Church to all outsiders there is ample apostolic warrant. "We know that we are of God," says St. John, "and the whole world lieth in the evil one"; that is, in the Devil. Between the two classes of people there is an impassable gulf. The children of God and the children of the Devil have nothing in common. They are not even distantly related. The sense of brotherhood between them is a natural impossibility. The Church is free to preach what she likes; but between her and those outside her pale there never has been, there never can be, any real brotherhood. The only consistent advocates of human brotherhood are the Freethinkers, whose country is the world, and all whose religion consists in doing good.

Dr. Grenfell reports that in the five hospitals scattered along the Labrador Coast nearly six thousand cases were treated last year. Most of these were, we presume, natives; and we venture to say that 90 per cent. of them were the result of diseases that would hardly have afflicted the natives but for European missionary enterprise. And this exemplifies the normal method and the normal result. A people who are well enough if let alone, or who, if interfered with at all, should have the strictest regard paid to their history, traditions, and normal mode of life, find themselves afflicted by a number of missionaries. By means of the hundred and one methods at the disposal of a more highly civilised people, the latter gain the ascendancy. Old customs are ignored, old methods of living are ignorantly suppressed, or new ones as ignorantly introduced. Economic poverty follows the introduction of European habits, and disease exacts its toll as the price of ignoring the customary ways of living. And this gives the missionary his opportunity. Charity becomes necessary, medical missionaries are also required. Appeals are made for funds, and people give, seeing only the good done by the missionary, and not seeing that the evil he is there to remove is mainly caused by his presence. The real disease that afflicts the primitive peoples of the world is missionaries. And this needs drastic treatment.

In its obituary notice of the late Sir Robert Hart the *Daily Telegraph* sadly confessed that "no other people on the face of the globe, not excepting the most fanatical Mohammedans, are less open to the message of the Gospel than are the countrymen of Confucius and the followers of Buddha." How sad! The only consolation is that Confucians and Buddhists are rather more moral than Christians already.

Mr. William Knight, of Jireh House, Hayward's Heath, Sussex, was a Baptist minister, and a nurseryman and florist. We say "was" because he is dead. He left £16,157. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth."

Police-Constable Harris, at Station-road, Swindon, on Sunday evening, September 17, saw a clerical gentleman "staggering drunk" with a crowd of people around him. He was using bad language, and he was sober-drunk or drunk-sober enough to call an inspector "a mangold-wurzel-faced turnip-hearted monkey." Two days later the bench fined him ten shillings and costs. It may be added that the

Rev. Arthur Wellesley Batson asserted, in his defence, that "he did not use anything but Biblical language." Perhaps he meant he did not use anything worse. Which is no doubt true.

It was reported that Stolypin's wound would have been far more serious if the force of the bullet had not been broken by the "crucifix" he wore round his neck. The report looks rather sarcastic now that he is dead. Possibly a pack of cards, instead of a crucifix, might have saved him.

Five burglars broke into the house of a Roman Catholic priest at Rouck, near Lille. They compelled an old servant to direct them through the house, but being unable to find any valuables they rang the night-bell and brought the priest down the stairs. Had he obeyed the teaching of his Master, in the Sermon on the Mount, the burglars would have had an easy job. But being a strong man, with a lot of the "old Adam" in him, he went for them, in spite of their revolvers, knocked two of them over with one blow each, and eventually cleared the others out of doors, although he was wounded. We are glad to hear that his wounds, while keeping him in bed, are not serious.

Dr. Crozier, Lord Primate of All Ireland (including the pigs and potatoes) seems upset at the nearer prospect of Home Rule, and hopes "all who believe in the power of prayer" will, in "this crisis of our history," supplicate the Lord something in this style:—"Grant O Lord we beseech Thee, that the course of this world may be so peacefully ordered by Thy governance that Thy Church may joyfully serve Thee in all Godly quietness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." "Thy Church," of course, means the Protestant Church. The Catholic Church is "Somebody Else's" Church. And that Somebody is the gentleman politely called "Satan" and familiarly "Old Nick." Dr. Crozier's prayer is purely professional.

The London *Evening Times* interviewed Edison some time ago (August 11) at the Carlton Hotel. The great electrical discoverer repeated in briefer language what he said to an American interviewer last year. "Work," he said, "made the earth a paradise for me, and I don't believe there is any paradise up above.....The earth is all right if you take it right." Edison is clearly a Secularist. His philosophy is one world at a time—this one first.

Sir Joseph Compton Rickett, M.P., in an address at St. Austell Congregational Chapel on "Church Membership, Past and Present," confessed that nowadays "The whole position of the Christian Church was challenged by a reputable part of what they might call, without any depreciation, the world. There was a steady, gradual rise in the good conduct of what they were pleased to call the masses, with their thriftiness, temperance, fulfilment of duties to one another, and sense of responsibilities." It was no use failing to realise this, or failing to realise that it had not been done through the Church.

According to the daily paper a man of fashion spends £250 a year on silk socks. Of course he is an American, and equally of course he professes to worship a God who wore no hose and whose chief raiment was a blue blanket.

Rev. Charles Loafe, of Chandos-avenue, Oakley Park, London, N., writes to the *Retford, Worksop, and Gainsboro' News*, with regard to the labor trouble at the Gainsboro' Gas Works. We judge from this epistle that he is an extra good Christian. "I hope," he says, "that if we have another strike such as we have had recently, we shall have the soldiers out and shoot down the agitators." This reverend gentleman is a Primitive (*very primitive*) Methodist, and he is sixty years of age, so he is old enough to know better.

The Labor Exchanges have proved their utility by finding occupation for a curate, an elephant trainer, a carter, and a two-headed lady. The curate must have felt like St. John amidst "the menagerie of the Apocalypse."

There seems no limit to the nonsense that a man will father when he is in the pulpit. Outside the pulpit common sense places some restriction on even the most stupid. Inside, it is a case of farewell to all restraint. Dr. Gunsaulus, for instance, remarks that the fact of England being so powerful was due to the sea making a rhythmic music on the coasts of Britain, thus stimulating the morality of the people. In a nonsense competition Dr. Gunsaulus should come out an easy winner.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 1, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.; at 7.30, "Modern Female Prophets: (1) Mrs. Annie Besant."

October 8, 15, Queen's Hall, London; 22, Birmingham Town Hall; 29, Liverpool.

November 5, Leicester; 12, Manchester; 19 and 26, Queen's Hall, London.

December 10 and 17, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 1, Glasgow; 15, Birmingham; 22 and 29, Queen's Hall, London. November 5, Stratford Town Hall; 12, Hammersmith Ethical Society; 19, Stratford Town Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 8, Manchester; 15, Glasgow; October 29, Birmingham. November 5, Queen's Hall, London; 12, Queen's Hall, London; 19, Leicester; 25, Stratford Town Hall. December 31, Haringay.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £290 19s. 9d. Received since:—W. P. Murray, 2s.; J. Hammond, £1; Col. B. L. Reilly, £1; Kimberley, S. Africa: F. J. Goss, 5s.; H. B., of Woolwich, 5s.; A. E. Allnutt, 5s.; F. R. Blako, of Blackheath, 5s.; N. O. Ruffel, 5s.; "Supporter," 5s.; H. Ward, 5s.; "Friend," 2s. 6d.; J. E. H., 3s.—Total £2 0s. 6d.

THE VANCE TESTIMONIAL FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £139 10s. 6d. Received since:—Wylam Yael, 1s.; W. P. Murray, 2s.; C. S. Ingham, 10s.; F. G., 2s.; W. C., 2s.; Harry Shaw, 5s.; A. Hopkins, 2s. 6d.; Col. B. L. Reilly, 10s.; J. Hammond, £1; J. C. Goodfellow, 2s. 6d.; Robert Wilson, 2s. 6d.; G. Hill, 1s.; J. Macartenev, 1s.; M. Power, 1s.

WYLAM YAEL.—Amused at your "open confession" that you are one of the "laggards" and "the cussedest procrastinator living."

W. P. MURRAY.—See acknowledgment. The other items were passed over to Miss Vance, who is now attending to business, and is a good deal better, though the "tug of war" will come with the winter's work.

C. S. INGHAM, subscribing to the Vance Testimonial, writes: "After being twenty-three years in the Wesleyan Church, I am sampling Freethought, which I think is grand."

H. B. DODDS.—The way to be certain whether you are "worshipping a false god" or not in William Shakespeare is to read him yourself. You need not trust to Frank Harris, or G. B. Shaw, or G. W. Foote. We shall deal with both Harris and Shaw when we have leisure. Other work, as you know, has the first claim upon us. Meanwhile you may ponder what Swinburne wrote of *King Lear*: "Among all its other great qualities, among all the many other attributes which mark it for ever as matchless among the works of man, it has this above all, that it is the first great utterance of a cry from the heights and the depths of the human spirit on behalf of the outcasts of the world—on behalf of the social sufferer, clean or unclean, innocent or criminal, thrall or free." We cheerfully admit (in passing) that Shakespeare never started a Trade Union, never founded a Socialist Club, never held a meeting in Trafalgar Square, and never read *Justice* and the *Clarion*, nor even the *Pantheon*. He had his drawbacks. So did the ancient philosopher, of whom Swift said that he knew nothing of the British Constitution and was absolutely ignorant of the Thirty-Nine Articles.

BOB McB.—You say there are no "pale Galileans," who are "not quite as dark as a Bombay Babu, but distinctly darker than a Portuguese traveller." Jesus, therefore, was a man of color, and this makes it hard to understand the British Christians' aversion to Jack Johnson.

F. D. RITZ.—Received with thanks. Will have attention.

W. P.—We dealt with Waldron's brag last week, as you will have seen by this. We have repeatedly asked him to name any person who ever knew him as a Freethinker. The statement that he was "the young friend of Charles Bradlaugh" is simply disreputable.

W. J. L. ANDERSON.—Next week; too late for this.

COUSIN JACKY.—See paragraph. Thanks.

A. E. ALLNUTT (Kimberley).—Kindly convey our regards to all the subscribers on your list. It is good to see "saints" so far away taking such an interest in the Freethought battle in the old country. South Africa has done well for the President's Fund this year.

J. HECHT.—Mr. Drewett admits that money has been refused at Tottenham as well as elsewhere from Sunday cinematograph shows. That is enough. The £1,000 was probably a calculation over a future period. Several pounds each Sunday amounts to a good deal in twelve months, especially when several shows are contributing.

W. STYRING.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.

C. GOODFELLOW.—Good wishes of the Hawick "saints" for Miss Vance will be appreciated.

J. W. PYLE.—It is impossible to say. It is probable that you will be able to obtain a ticket at Queen's Hall this evening (Oct. 1), but there is no certainty. If you are coming from such a distance, it might be prudent to secure a ticket beforehand through the N. S. S. secretary, at 2, Newcastle-street, E.C. Father Vaughan's sermon on suffering is only common sentimental clap-trap. Suffering appears to be a grand thing—for other people. We don't observe Father Vaughan making any great effort to obtain a large quantity of it for himself. See also "Sugar Plums."

A. TOMKINS.—We dealt with the Waldron stuff in *M. A. P.* a fortnight ago. You must have overlooked our paragraph. Thanks, all the same.

W. P. BALL.—Your batches of cuttings are always very welcome. T. MOULT.—Always glad to hear from you.

A. HOPKINS refers to Miss Vance as an entirely good woman, whom all Freethinkers must deeply sympathise with."

A. E. MADDOCK (Ceylon).—Shall appear. The statement you are looking forward to will appear very shortly. Glad to have your good wishes.

HARRY SHAW.—See paragraph. Thanks. Glad to hear the *Freethinker* steadily gets more readers in your district, largely through your own efforts. Shall be pleased to meet you at the "social" next Thursday.

J. HAMMOND, subscribing to the Vance Testimonial Fund, says: "I have been a laggard in delaying my mite so long. However 'better late than never' is particularly true in this case, and I hope all my fellow slow-coaches will hurry up and stump up. Miss Vance, as secretary, has not had a 'fat' part, but her work for Freethought has not been any the less valuable on that account, and she deserves all (and more) that we can do for her."

R. H. GRANT.—Lecture notices must be sent direct to our office and arrive by Tuesday morning at the latest.

T. O'NEILL.—You must be thankful for small mercies.

J. E. REMSBUrg.—Your two years' subscription for the *Freethinker* is duly placed to your credit. We are glad to read of you from time to time through our gallant contemporary, the *New York Truthseeker*.

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.

Mr. Foote resumes his platform work this evening (October 1), when he opens the new course of Sunday evening Freethought lectures at the Queen's (Minor) Hall. "Modern Female Prophets" is the general title of the course of three lectures with which he starts,—the special subject on the opening night being "Mrs. Annie Besant." Mr. Foote knew Mrs. Besant, of course, in her old Atheistic days, and he has, therefore, some ground for believing that he may make this lecture interesting, both to veteran Freethinkers who heard Mrs. Besant lecture at the old Hall of Science and to persons of the newer generation who are curious about her personality and her present-day opinions. There will be vocal and instrumental music before Mr. Foote's lecture, and possibly a reading from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

Next Thursday evening (October 5) another "social," under the auspices of the National Secular Society's Executive, will be held at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street. There will be music and a little dancing, and ample opportunity for conversation; and during the evening the President will present to Miss E. M. Vance, the N. S. S. secretary, the Testimonial that has been subscribed to by a large number of Freethinkers through our columns. There ought to be—we expect there will be—a big gathering on this exceptional occasion. We know of several "saints" who are coming up from the provinces.

There is just time to make the Vance Testimonial Fund up to the £150 we asked for. October 5 is the last day for subscriptions.

Four special Sunday evening lectures, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., will be delivered at the Stratford Town Hall during November. The lecturers will be Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, and Miss Kough. Mr. Foote has been unable to take one of these four dates, having a prior claim upon him at Queen's Hall, where the Freethought enterprise, if not more important, is at least more costly.

Mr. Foote was unable to open the lecturing season for the Glasgow Branch this fall, but the task has been committed to competent hands. Mr. Cohen opens to-day (October 1) in the Secular Hall, Brunswick-street, lecturing at 12 and 6.30. We hope to hear of large audiences.

The Liverpool Branch opens its winter season at the Alexandra Hall this evening (October 1). The lecturer will be Mr. Joseph Bates, who is conducting a months' Freethought mission in the city, which wants it as much as any place in England. We have not heard Mr. Bates lecture, but all reports that reach us agree that he is a competent speaker with his heart (as well as his head) in the work. No doubt he will wake Liverpool up a bit, and we hope the local "saints" will rally strongly round the Branch standard while the mission is proceeding, especially on the opening day. There will be an open-air lecture at Wavertree Park in the afternoon, and other open-air meetings on week-nights, which will be duly announced.

Mr. Joseph Bates, who reported the Leeds "blasphemy" case for our columns, was "greatly impressed by the impartiality of Mr. C. M. Atkinson, the Stipendiary Magistrate." It was impossible for him to deal with a "blasphemy" case himself. A statute provides that it must go before a "red" judge.

The South Shields Branch is to hold Sunday evening meetings this winter at the Victoria Hall Buildings, Fowler-street, beginning at 7 p.m. to-day (Oct. 1), when an introductory discussion will take place on Secular Education.

A correspondent, who hopes to hear us lecture at Birmingham a few weeks hence, says: "It's twenty years or nearly since I heard you at Wolverhampton, and you nearly frightened me to death. But that was in my callow days." Ploughing up the soil is *not* a hindrance to the fruitful sowing of the seed.

Mr. J. W. de Caux, of Great Yarmouth, has saved us the trouble of hunting up the details of the witch-trial at which Sir Thomas Browne (mentioned in our last issue) was a witness. Mr. de Caux went into the case closely some years ago and made copious notes from an old printed report of the trial. Rose Cullender and Amy Dany, two old women belonging to Lowestoft, were indicted for witchcraft; and the trial took place on Thursday, March 13, 1662, at the Assizes held at Bury St. Edmunds for the County of Suffolk, before Sir Matthew Hale, Lord Chief Baron of His Majesty's Court of Exchequer. "Norwich" must have been a slip of J. M. Wheeler's pen—probably caused by the fact that Norwich was the place of Sir Thomas Browne's residence. We presume our correspondent who raised the question will see this paragraph—with satisfaction.

Robert Buchanan left it on record that Robert Browning confessed to being no Christian. We should say that he could not have been a Christian in anything like the orthodox sense of the word. This seems to be confirmed by one of the extracts from the Note-Book of the late Professor John Churton Collins published in the *Bodleian*. At a meeting of Collins with Browning the poet declared that he did not put Christianity "on a level with any other Creed or Dogma, but thought it stood alone in unique greatness and importance." Browning went on to say that "its historical basis was of no importance." With that declaration, of course, orthodox Christianity disappears. Browning said that Christianity was "the revelation of that God whom he had felt. We have," he continued, "at least I have, a knowledge of a God within me. I know Him, He is here (pointing to his heart) and it matters little to me what tales you tell me about Him. I smile, I care nothing for any stories you tell me about Him, I know Him." This is really not Christianity at all. It is mystical Theism. "Tales" and "Stories" show what Browning thought of the Gospel records.

Winding Up the Clock.

"I HAVE given way a good deal, Mr. Trevor, over this wearisome village-hall business. I never liked the project. What we want with such a building here I cannot tell. You know I will never permit mixed dancing; and as for entertainments—well, my flock are chiefly farmers and farm laborers. Sunday must be a sacred day of rest for them. They have their devotions in the morning—the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and my sermon; the rest of the day they can spend as they please. And now you tell me of this man Carnegie's offer—to help us with the money if we use the hall as a library. To this I most strongly object, and I know I am at one in this with my revered bishop. What books are there but English books? And if English books, then Protestant or infidel; and if not infidel, then wanton, vain, silly, and immoral—all of which slacken sadly the sinews of faith. No, never in my dear village shall I permit a shelf to be nailed up or a case to be fixed to hold these evil works. We want no books here. The English papers that creep in are horrible enough, and I have preached upon them on more than one occasion. Let the tired man read his *Examiner* if he will, and become an intelligent member of our Noble and Ancient Order of Hibernians. We must keep our faith alive among us; and what is pleasure or recreation compared with the priceless and divine gift of faith? But, of course, I speak foolishly; you as an Englishman, and I presume a Protestant, cannot conceive the purport of my words."

Trevor listened in silence while the old man spoke. No muscle moved, but his cold, blue eyes gazed calmly at the other. Then he slowly rose to his feet and faced the priest.

"Father O'Toole," said he, quietly, "I have listened to you patiently, not only this time, but many a time before, and I have not answered. Now, with your permission, I will speak and tell you much that is in my mind. You will allow me?"

Father O'Toole waved his hand and prayed Trevor to proceed.

They were a curious contrast. The priest was old and stout, and sleek with good living and no worry, with small, hungry eyes, beaked nose, and an outrageously fleshy chin that hung in festoons over his soiled collar; his hands were dirty and ugly. Trevor was a man just past the prime of life, a giant in stature but splendidly proportioned, with a handsome face and a kindly expression in his eyes. Yet this time there was no kindly expression, but rather a look of deep sorrow and pain.

"Father O'Toole, you believe in Christ—I do not; but even so, I would rather be one of those executioners who hammered the nails into his flesh than be you. Oh! do not start; it is unusual language for such as you to hear—an Irish parish priest—but you must remember I am only an infidel and an Englishman, a plain-spoken Lancashire cotton-spinner who has worked hard and seen the world, and knows a thing or two. And, had I to lose my personality and to choose, I repeat I had rather be his executioner than you. He did but his duty; it was all in a day's work. But you—five-and-twenty years pastor of this village and the fair country round, and—good God! what have you done? When have you done your duty? You exist for yourself alone, you are wrapped up in yourself. You want a steady and rising income, every home comfort, veneration from your flock, and—as little labor as possible.

"What do you do for your flock? You say Mass for them—at an hour to suit yourself—certainly not them. You drone them out a sermon, so dull, so insipid, that one and all dread seeing you descend the steps and approach the communion rails. You hear confessions weekly, at an hour to suit yourself—in the morning from eleven to one, after you have had your savory breakfast, read your precious *Examiner*, and smoked your excellent tobacco. The

farm laborers dare not—cannot, leave their work to trudge to church; the lads neither, save their masters are Protestants, and then they beg the morning off and are let freely go. You have a mill here—close at hand—doing well, employing some sixty hands, mostly girls. Can they leave the mill and come to you and relieve themselves of their burdens in your Sacrament of Penance? No, they cannot—unless they lose a half-day's wage. And this they cannot afford to do; and so they neglect their duties, and they are none the better, none the happier for it. But what do you care? Have you not periodic "Stations," visitations to sundry farm-houses in the outlying land, and are you not received there as the Lord's anointed, and do you not sit there at your ease and collect all fees?

"What—Christ is your God, is he? Maybe you mumble out the words of your breviary and nonchalantly patter through your Mass, but there is a God above that God, and deep enthroned is he in your heart of hearts—Mammon. You worship Mammon, man; you grovel at the knees of this gold deity, and you grind these gentle, simple, generous, trustful folk of their pence and poor earnings—all for the glory of God! Compare the bare, cold, dismal church where they worship with the house wherein you dwell. Examine the cheap altar-cloths—worn thread-bare, and not patched—the cheapest candles obtainable permitted by your rubrics, the ugly and dirty imitation flowers, the tawdry vestments, the ragged carpet; compare your house of prayer—nay, according to you, the dwelling-place of the Most High—compare it with this house. What fine linen here, what splendid mahogany furniture, what superb Sheffield plate and silver, what expensive wall-paper. Compare that majestic chair—early Victorian, is it not?—whereon you sit enthroned, with the poor, painted box and ragged curtains, the tabernacle that contains your God!

"Faugh! I have said enough. Was it not last week you whined for more money to buy Stations of the Cross?—and yet I see paintings and engravings and mezzotints of great value here.

"You tax your flock when they enter your church. Your trusty henchman stands at the door, and sees that everyone entering pays—and swiftly does he report should anyone fail to do so; and quickly do you denounce that person from the altar. Man, how much a year do you make on marriages? What a business is this of farmers to interview the priest in fear and trembling, terrified at the price he may name; for well he knows the number of the farmer's cattle—aye, of his very pigs. You are but a witness to a sacrament, and yet for your ugly presence there how do you bleed the people!—farmers and laborers, none shall escape your nets. And what price a burial? A fixed charge, no charge at all, or what the poor bereaved ones can afford? Alas, no! None of this will satisfy you. It is, give as I please, or else bury him yourself—or selves. And once you get your fee, what care you for the dead?

"If I loathe you and recoil from you, Father O'Toole, for one thing more than another, it is that you so horribly neglect your dead. You do not see that all is fresh and pure around them; that the blinds are drawn and the sun can enter—Is there no such word in your lexicon as 'morticulture'?—no cleanliness, no purity of atmosphere around what we call the corpse, though we know not that its late in-dweller has departed for the judgment seat. Not so. The room where the poor, cold body lies is the centre for buzz and chatter and drink and smoke for two days and a night before you bury it. You can scarce see the icy-cold, ashy face for smoke, and the fumes of the whisky and the stench of stale porter fill the room with smell worse than your hell with its sulphur and brimstone. An' there be angels hovering round us—God strengthen them during those hideous hours!

"I have lived here a couple of years, and never in my life have I witnessed sadder scenes—scenes, Father O'Toole, whereof you are stage manager. Here the community suffers for the individual; in

other countries the process is reversed. I have referred to you, and your pernicious influence over your sheep and lambs; but I will cite three others, all of your parish; and every word I speak is true—and you know it.

"Your postman is a drunkard. Last Corpus Christi morning he staggered through the gates of my garden, with no letters for me—they were forgotten, and lying at his house. Letters have been delayed—lost—as also photographs of some value. But, after all, what do you care? You get your letters; it is not for you to interfere.

"Your dispensary doctor is a confirmed drunkard—one never knows when he is sober. The poor tremble when they have to call for him. Those who can afford it will go elsewhere; others, again, will not have him, and disaster follows. And what do you care? He is a friend of yours and has private means; he is very generous and has been useful to you. Thirdly, your village schoolmaster is a drunkard. All the children—there are some four-score under him—know it; they do not shrink from him—they are so used to drunkenness; but his health is not pleasant, neither is his aura, especially at night, when he is borne along helpless to his home by friendly hands. And what do you care?

"Your men come to Mass—the coin is put down openly on the plate—what matters the rest? See them on the weary Sabbath afternoons and evenings, like a cluster of flies round a honey-pot, sitting or lolling on the public-house walls—at the Cross! Their saints are all out—and they are supplied freely with liquor. Was it not a week ago there was a brutal fight there and young Sheeham was taken to the town hospital with a broken jaw?

"You have had your good bishop here within a month to confirm the pretty children, to strengthen them in their faith, to administer them the great Sacrament, and give them the armor of the Holy Ghost. Well—shall I tell you I rarely encountered a more superstitious and lying set of kids? God bless them—for I love them one and all—and my blood seethes to see their young limbs shackled with such loathsome chains.

"Shall I tell you of two or three of them? Take Mike. He was confirmed. He flatly denies the existence of a hell for Catholics, because he saw a donkey devour one of your flaming hideous pictures of that abode, and did not drop dead for his temerity. Here's Jack, my bright-faced little under-groom—'For-why Because' I call him—as he knows everything from tomato growing to salmon fishing. Did he not tell me the other day that he had no mortal sin on his soul; no, nor never could have, because, forsooth, he had killed some weird centipede with an unpronounceable name. On my begging for further particulars, he said that in the long ages past these creatures had cruelly betrayed our Lord to the Jews, and that they were accursed; and that for every one killed seven mortal sins would be wiped out from the debit account of the killer. 'I, sir, have killed millions, so I am safe for heaven.'

"And if the men lounge and smoke on the Sabbath and drink as they can, what do these handsome, bonny lads do? Gamble, man, and gamble hard; enticed too often by vicious men.

"'Tis a fact, I do not exaggerate. Have I not been asked over and over again by lads, and young lads, too, for dicky packs, and in my innocence have I not given them freely, until lately my eyes were opened. Jem came to me—a merrier-faced, honest-looking boy than Jem you could not meet—and asked for a second pack within a week. I remonstrated, but his reasons were so strong I yielded and gave him a second pack. The weather had been so bad. They had played a good bit; he was clean, but his mates were not, and their hands had soiled the cards, and now one could scarce distinguish red from black. I found out later Jem had sold the early pack for fourpence and had gambled with the proceeds.

"And superstitions—thank God, not so many of your flock believe still in your power of white magic—that you can, if they are unruly, change them into

goats or other weird creatures; but they do not hold strongly to yonder miracle—you know the one I mean—the graveyard that felt lonely by itself, away from the church, and floated over the river *en masse* and settled itself comfortably by the side of the church. Three graves were left behind—graves of bad men—whose consciences were apparently at rest; moreover, as proof of the miracle, did not a corner of the churchyard wall fall into the river, and is it not to be seen now when the water is low? Father O'Toole, I have heard this story from a man, a woman, and a lad, all living close to me, and they believed in it—as much as they believe in fairies.

"They manage things better in England, Father O'Toole. I am a Rationalist, and not blinded by the light of Christianity, but I have lived and toiled in Lancashire, and I have mixed with Catholics and found them good fellows and citizens, and their priests poor, clean, and unselfish and hard-worked—worthy shepherds, truly, of devoted flocks.

"We had one man there—aye, he was a man. You may have heard of him, and doubtless sneered at him—many Irish did. When he discovered the dangerous position of many Catholic children in his huge diocese, did not the great cardinal cry out in anguish and remorse, 'Why have I not known this? Why have I been so blind and deaf? I pray that I may have no peace—I hope you will give me no peace—and I promise I will give my priests and people no peace until this work of saving the orphan, the wastrel, and the child abandoned, be accomplished.' And he acted as he spoke, and he denied himself worldly things to help with money. Somehow, unbeliever though I am, these words echo through my heart and vibrate in my brain.

"Father O'Toole, you are casting your flock to perdition. Think it over, deny it if you can—oh! how unlike Christ you are!

"Personally, I would cast you out into oblivion as a creature obnoxious to his fellows, but I would do it painlessly and as a duty—methinks the Master might give you a scourging first. The vendors in the Temple deserved less than you. And do you still prefer yourself to the executioner? Are you not a greater murderer?"

Father O'Toole spoke no words as Trevor, bowing gracefully, walked quietly out of the room and bade the housekeeper a cheery "Good night" in the hall.

He sat crouched in the big throne-like chair, his hands gripping the massive mahogany arms and his fat fingers digging their nails into the rich velvet paddings. He heaved and quivered, and inane mumblings dribbled from his coarse lips.

He stamped loudly on the floor: "Go to bed, Mary, it is late." She crept away noiselessly, startled at the palsied look upon him. He listened with staring eyes and heard her mount the stairs and close the door of her room.

"There is but one thing left," he murmured. He tottered slowly out of the room. The lamp was high and bright, but his sight seemed dazed, and things played tricks with him as he sidled along to the hall. A superb painting after Raphael of the Virgin and Child that hung over the mantelpiece startled him. The babe seemed to shrink from him and cowered on its mother's breast, and the mother's eyes seemed to stare upon him with horror, as if he were some strange and impure beast. Other pictures summoned his gaze, and against his will he looked. A parishioner from London had presented him with a copy of Bocklin's "Hermit," and the gentle old monk, playing before the crucifix, seemed to be intoning the dread "Dies Iræ," and the bright little angels fled away at the strains of the menacing music.

Bathed in a terrible sweat, his head icy cold, he reached the hall and with a sigh of relief clutched the huge grandfather's clock that stood sentry at the foot of the stairs. He paused for a few moments, his arms encircling its old frame, and his heart beat rapidly in strange discord to the solemn swing of the pendulum.

A gleam of sly cunning stole over his face. "'Tis winding up time," said he, with a hollow, mirthless smile. "Winding up time for both of us, but I, my friend, shall have first turn to-night. I need it more than you." Nervously, with clumsy, shaking fingers, he opened the door with the key that hung on his chain, and fell on his knees before it—the pendulum moved steadily, the weights were almost at their lowest. He drew a cardboard case from out the recess underneath. It was oblong, and labelled "Glass with care," and bore a well-known chemist's name. Father O'Toole sat down—he was never fond of kneeling—and wiped his forehead. He drew a bottle out of the package. "Yes, I am unstrung, I need winding up," and he drank and he drank—his medicine; but one other person, a faithful friend in the big city, and a brother priest, knew that it was whisky. The clock needed no winding that night, nor evermore, for Father O'Toole had somehow shaken the heavy upper portion, and the whole structure fell upon him with a mighty crash, even as he held the bottle to his lips.

Mary, hearing the noise and seeing the accident, rushed screaming out of doors. Luckily, she met the dispensary doctor reeling home from the public-house, "blind to the world," as the saying goes here. She dragged him into the house, and the sight sobered him. He sent her away and saved appearances.

Father O'Toole had a great funeral, and the revered bishop preached his panegyric.

IN CHURCH.

"And now to God the Father," ends he,
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles:
Each listener chokes as he bows his knee,
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.
Then the preacher glides through the vestry door,
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,
And a lover of his, in the Bible class,
Sees her idol stand with satisfied smile,
And re-enact at the vestry glass
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show
That had moved the congregation so.

Thomas Hardy, in the "Fortnightly Review."

WELL MEANT.

Writes a friend from Cannes to the *Gentlewoman*: "I heard a story the other night at a dinner given here which is, I believe, a true one, and as it might amuse your readers I pass it on. A little boy wished to give a Bible to his mother on her birthday, and before writing her name on the flyleaf he took down a book from her shelf to see the proper way of setting about the matter. Literally copying the first inscription that he found, he wrote: 'With the kind regards of the author.'"

A MYSTERY.

Skilful a thesis to maintain,
A student in divinity
Asked me in triumph to explain
The mystery of the Trinity.
Quoth I, my friend, I think I can,
The doctrine may seem odd;
But as nine tailors make a man
Three persons make a God.

RETURNING THE COMPLIMENT.

A pompous laird advertised for a man to do odd jobs, and an old-fashioned Scottish worthy applied. The laird interviewed him personally, was pleased with his acquirements, and promised him the situation.

"And what is your name, my man?" he asked.

"My name is Tammas Jeems Pittendrigh, sir."

"Oh, but that's too long a name. I'll just call you Old Tom."

"Well, well, sir," said Tammas, "but fat dae they ca' yorsel', noo?"

"Oh, my name is Nicholas Duff Gordon Ogilvy."

"Losh me! Ye couldna expec' me to mind sic an awfu' lang name as that. I'll just ca' yo Auld Nick!"

"Blasphemy" Cases at Leeds.

PROSECUTION OF MESSRS. GOTT AND STEWART.

(Specially Reported for the "Freethinker.")

At Leeds City Police-court, on Thursday, Sept. 21, before the Stipendiary Magistrate (Mr. C. M. Atkinson) the hearing was resumed of summonses issued against J. W. Gott (Bradford) and T. W. Stewart (London). The former was charged with "publishing" and the latter with "uttering" "certain scandalous, impious, blasphemous, and profane matters and things of and concerning the Holy Scriptures and the Christian Religion." The proceedings aroused keen public interest.

Mr. Gott's case was taken first.

Mr. V. B. Bateson (Town Clerk's Office), who prosecuted on behalf of the police, said the publication to which exception was taken bore the title of *Rib Ticklers, or Questions for Parsons*. As the evidence for the prosecution had been fully gone into at previous hearings, he would, in the present instance, content himself with merely substantiating—

The Stipendiary (interposing): The *selling* of the pamphlet is what I have to consider.

Mr. Gott: The sale of the pamphlet is readily admitted, and we intend to defend it.

The Stipendiary: Such being the case, the question of "blasphemy" is not for me to decide; it must go before a Jury under the direction of a Judge of the higher Courts.

Mr. Gott, in volunteering a statement to be placed on the indictment was compiled from the columns of an old Free-thought monthly, and had been sold openly all over the country during the past eight years, without any challenge of its contents. What, then, prompted the present action of the authorities? Well-known men like Mr. Robert Blatchford and the Rev. R. J. Campbell had given expression to similar sentiments, but in less plain language. Why were they not proceeded against? He was of opinion that these cases were contrived by cowardly, Christian bigots, who are making a determined effort to suppress the sale of Secularist literature.

Mr. Gott was committed for trial at the next Leeds Assizes, bail being allowed in the sum of £10.

Referring to the charges against Mr. Stewart, Mr. Bateson said one of their chief witnesses (Mr. G. W. Kirwan, of the Parish Church Clergy House) was about to set sail for Australia, and seeing that defendant was already committed for trial on an information of the same character, the prosecutors would withdraw the present summonses.

Mr. Stewart protested strongly against the withdrawal. He declared it was a strategic movement on the part of the police to protect Mr. Kirwan, who had been proved in the witness-box to be a deliberate liar and perjurer. They dreaded his exposure.

The Stipendiary: If there has been any perjury committed, a remedy is to be found; but the withdrawal of the summons necessarily ends the matter before the court.

J. A. E. B.

A Tribute to Ingersoll.

A BRIEF paragraph in the news columns the other day, bobbing about like a bit of driftwood in the great flood of the Coronation news, announced that the city of Peoria is to erect a statue to Robert G. Ingersoll at the entrance to one of the city's parks. But, brief as is the item, there is room enough in it for the statement that the decision of the City Council was arrived at in the face of "opposition."

The real wonder is that the world has reached the stage of tolerance when a statue of Colonel Ingersoll can be erected with public money at the gateway to the public park of any city in the country. That there should be "opposition" goes without saying, but the significance of the news lies in the fact that there was not enough opposition to defeat a project which would have buried in obloquy anyone who would have proposed it twenty-five years ago. Colonel Ingersoll's views in the matter of religion can hardly with reason be made the basis of such opposition as met the proposal, for the money comes from the public at large, paid as taxes by people of every shade of religious belief and non-belief. There is no religious significance whatever in an act of civil authorities acting as such, and therefore the decision to honor the memory of the great lawyer, brilliant thinker, and most superb prose-poet America has produced may be concurred in by those who hold religious views diametrically opposed to those of the great agnostic—"atheist" is really incorrect, though it is a term frequently applied to him.

Colonel Ingersoll possessed in amplest abundance qualities wholly dissociated from his crusade against orthodoxy—qualities which fully entitled him to such a memorial as is

proposed. He may be justly admired for these qualities by persons who hold with the greatest firmness to the religious truths which he sought so hard to refute. He was an ardent friend of the Union in the troublous times of the Civil War. He was a lawyer who adorned the American bar. In politics he was more nearly a statesman than a politician, and his political speeches read well even to this day. As an orator he had few equals in the forensic history of the nation, and as a word painter he stood alone. His impulses were humanitarian with a polar fidelity to mercy, kindness, charity, and fraternity. When Frederick Douglass was buffeted about "from pillar to post" in Peoria, it was Robert G. Ingersoll who furnished him an asylum, and Ingersoll did as much as any academic opponent of human slavery to strike the shackles from the limbs of the black race. Some day, perhaps, negro schools will be named for Ingersoll, for the race owes him a debt it has never recognised. His iconoclasm in religious matters wholly aside, Colonel Ingersoll's memory cannot be adequately honored without reflecting honor upon those who pay the deserved, if tardy, tribute to his greatness in many fields of human endeavor. Religious prejudice has dwarfed his real fame, and as the world grows more tolerant the qualities which were obscured in the smoke of religious battles will shine out with their inherent and unclouded lustre.—*Kansas City Journal*.

No one has faith in stairs until sure that they are safe. Faith is not a word that can be applied in the dark. It is repeated experiences that confirm our faith. It is when we build on knowledge that we feel confident. We have faith in persons whose honesty we have proved. We have faith in metal whose soundness has been tested. But religious faith may be assent to any imposition and endorsement of any deception. Be sure you know and then have faith.

Every man can say, "I believe," but it is no other man's business what he believes. Two men can work together, and one be a Christian and the other a Mormon. What we want is unity in work, not in belief. Religion divides the world, civilisation hates it. Get rid of the Churches and humanity will work for a common object. The priest is the disturbing element in society. He sets one man against another, and it is usually the bad man against the good one.

An infidel always smiles when someone calls him an infidel, knowing that he is the truest believer on earth. A Christian professes to believe what no intelligent person can believe. True faith rests upon knowledge. Where one is not intelligent to know, it is usually the case that such a one is not honest enough to confess his ignorance. Religion is founded upon uncertainty and doubt. Science says, "I have faith, for I know. To believe in the true compels us to deny the false."—*L. K. Washburn*.

GOD-HINDRANCE IN ENGLAND.

You have learned men but no thinkers. Your God impedes you. He is the Supreme Cause, and you dare not reason on causes out of respect for him. He is the most important personage in England, and I see clearly that he merits his position for he forms part of your constitution, he is the guardian of your morality, he judges in final appeal on all questions whatsoever, he replaces with advantage the prefects and gendarmes with whom the nations on the continent are still encumbered. Yet this high rank has the inconvenience of all official positions; it produces a cant, prejudices, intolerance, and courtiers.—*H. A. Taine, "History of English Literature."*

Obituary.

It is with regret we announce the death of Mr. Thomas Webb, of East Ham, which occurred, after a long illness, on September 15. Mr. Webb was a convinced and consistent Freethinker, although latterly circumstances did not permit of his actively identifying himself with the Freethought propaganda. Years ago, however, he was a member of the N. S. S., and used to attend the various meetings at the Hall of Science. His personal adherence to Freethought principles remained as firm as ever to the end; and all who knew him were fully aware of the fact. He never hid the light of his convictions under a bushel. He died in his 72nd year, and a widow and one son mourn the loss of an eminently good husband and father. The interment took place on Tuesday, the 19th inst., at the East London Cemetery, when a Secular Service was conducted.—*J. T. LLOYD*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "Modern Female Prophets. I.—Mrs. Annie Besant."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 8.15, E. Saphin, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, F. A. Davies, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.15, R. H. Rosetti and Miss Pankhurst, "The Necessity for Freethought."

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Ridley-road): 11.30, W. Davidson, "I'll be Vicar of Bray, Sir."

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, E. Burke, "The Case for Secular Education."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, Mr. Allison, Christian Socialism."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): C. Cohen, 12 noon, "Some Curiosities of Christian Evidence"; 6.30, "What the World Pays for Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Musical and Literary Evening.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Origin and Nature of the Christ Myth."

OUTDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Haymarket): Saturday, Oct. 7, at 8, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Tragedy of the Cross."

LIVERPOOL (Wavertree Park Gates): 3, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Booth's Bunkum: Sidelights on Salvationism." Edgehill Church (outside): Tuesday, Oct. 3, at 7.45, "The Paradox of Christian Socialism." Islington-square: Thursday, Oct. 5, at 7.45, "Kingscraft: Past and Present."

BUSINESS CARDS.

Short advertisements are inserted under this heading at the rate of 2s. per half inch and 3s. 6d. per inch. No advertisement under this heading can be less than 2s. or extend beyond one inch. Special terms for several continuous insertions.

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

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

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