

1911
ES

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXI.—No. 42

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1911

PRICE TWOPENCE

Nothing good to man but man. Let man, then, leave his gods and lift up his ideal beyond them.

—RICHARD JEFFERIES.

The Fight of the Future.

SINCE the days of the famous Tractarian movement at Oxford, which culminated in the secession of Newman, Manning, and others from the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church has made great and steady advance in the chief land of "No Popery." It may be true, as Gladstone remarked, that Rome has grown richer in acres than in men; but this simply means that her converts are made among the rich and well-to-do rather than among the poorer classes of the community. After all allowances and explanations, the fact is palpable that she has vastly increased her strength and improved her position. Her churches, colleges, and schools have multiplied; her priests have become numerous, and they walk the streets with no particular air of humility; her dignitaries are enterprising, astute, and successful; and wealth—the great secret of organisation and influence—appears to flow with over-increasing volume into her coffers.

Meanwhile the "No Popery" cry has died away in England. Occasionally a faint broken-winded protest against the Scarlet Whore sounds from a Low Church pulpit or a Nonconformist platform; but the Roman Catholic Church is generally recognised as a sound portion of the religious life of the country. It would be false to say that the late Cardinal Manning was respected *because* of his Catholicism; he made himself popular by being, or professing to be, a friend of the democratic movement towards better conditions of life for the masses of the people. Yet the way in which the public tolerated his haughty claims to precedence, shows that the old hatred of Rome is practically dead amongst the English people.

Much of this altered state of things is undoubtedly due to Catholic Emancipation. While the Papists were under a legal stigma, their martyr spirit was necessarily cherished; but something more than this is needed for the success of a Church in an old, complex society. "Respectability" stood aloof, with timidity and vacillation, and all the elements that "let I dare not wait upon I would." But when the legal stigma was removed, those of the upper and "respectable" classes who desired a Faith unadulterated with Reason, a Faith of antiquity and gorgeous ritual and superb dogmatism, were free to gravitate towards the Holy Mother Church from whom their forefathers had parted in anger and contempt.

Looking beyond our own country, we see the Romish Church everywhere holding its own and in some places positively advancing. She is bound but not crippled in France; she came unimpaired out of her tremendous struggle with Bismarck in Germany; in the United States of America she is already threatening the Constitution.

Was it not Macaulay who remarked that the Roman Catholic Church had survived every shock, including that of the Reformation, and emerged from

every trial with her vital powers uninjured? "And she may still exist," the historian exclaimed, "in undiminished vigor when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's."

The Roman Catholic Church has an immense advantage over Protestant bodies. She has been troubled with heresies and dissensions, but she has always purged herself and maintained her ecclesiastical and dogmatic continuity. Protestantism, on the other hand, appealing as it does to private judgment, at least in the interpretation of Scripture; and to that extent applying the solvent of reason to the mysteries of faith; is ever breaking up into a wider diversity of sects, and sliding down into the gulf of Rationalism. Nor is this all. Protestantism has its *Churches*, but Roman Catholicism is *the Church*. Her organisation is a perfect model of strength and efficiency. The celibacy of her priests secures their absolute devotion to her interests. She is republican in the selection of her agents, and imperial in her use of them. She combines the aspiration and enthusiasm of democracy with the power and foresight of a dictatorship. Thus she moves to her ends with incomparable force and decision.

Protestantism has merely abandoned some of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church; it has added nothing, and its partial appeal to reason only opens the flood-gates of Scepticism. They are grievously mistaken who imagine that either Revelation or Natural Religion can stand upon a purely intellectual basis. Not in any court of reason can miracles, immortality, future rewards and punishments, or even Theism, be successfully established. This is practically admitted by Protestants, or why is Revelation necessary? But how is Revelation anything but a perplexity and an absurdity, if a book like the Bible is put into the hands of the people for individual interpretation? Let the discord of Protestantism answer this question.

Atheism makes a clean sweep of supernaturalism, of which the Roman Catholic Church is (at least in Christendom) the historic and logical champion. Between these two mortal enemies the war has been covertly going on for centuries. Where it is most critical, as in France, the struggle is open and undisguised. So it will be everywhere. Protestant sects will fall "between the fell incensed points of mighty opposites." Some of their members will go over to Rome; others will go over to Atheism. The process in fact is already obvious to men of discernment. Yes, the illegal sectaries will disappear, and leave the field to the two great logical protagonists of Faith and Reason, who march steadily forward to their Armageddon.

The victory of the one or the other will decide the fate of modern civilisation. The combatants will not fight for a platonic triumph, but for practical sovereignty. It is *ideas* that govern the world. Faith moulds society in one fashion, and Reason in another. They cannot sign a treaty or make a truce; they must fight to the bitter end; for the issue involves not only the *beliefs*, but the *lives*, the hopes and fears, the rights and duties, the character and happiness, of a countless posterity.

G. W. FOOTE.

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Personal Identity.—II.

(Concluded from p. 643.)

THE cardinal weakness of all criticisms of Materialism in favor of a "soul" as the true basis of conscious identity, is that they ignore the physical substratum that undoubtedly underlies all mental phenomena. In arguing that, independent of mental states, there must be a conscious self which is the cause of the blending of these states into a whole, the function of the nervous system is completely ignored. Mental states are not merely treated as separate and separable things, but as independent things. The criticism that a mental state which appears disappears before its successor arises, and, therefore, lacks the condition of fusion or connection, takes this much for granted. But this is really ignoring one-half the factors that constitute the problem. For a mental state is always the accompaniment of a neural process. And in considering the nature of this neural process we shall, I think, find all that is essential to the establishment of a feeling of personal identity persisting throughout constant change.

Let us take, for example, the case of muscular action. We are all familiar with the truth that, within limits, a muscle becomes stronger as it is used. It not only becomes stronger, but it responds with greater efficiency and quickness on receiving the appropriate excitation. To put it briefly, the muscle not only conserves the benefits of past exercise, it tends to reproduce the same kind of action. This is seen in the ease with which athletes and gymnasts perform actions, often very complex, which originally required a long time and reflection to consummate. This quality, however, is not confined to muscular fibre. It is characteristic of all nervous tissue. Its essential quality in this connection is its power to *repeat the response* to previously experienced stimulation. We see this in the manner in which acquisitions are made by young children, and also by adults. Actions first repeated slowly are later repeated rapidly and automatically. Put in psychological terms, the nervous tissue is all the time learning that particular stimuli require certain responses. The nervous elements contract, so to say, a memory. They not only remember—they forget. For just as frequent repetition makes that action easier, so desisting from it for any length of time makes it more difficult to repeat. In the one case, using psychological language, the cells remember, in the other case they forget.

It may be said that to speak of nervous tissue remembering and forgetting is a mere figure of speech, and I am treating a mere symbol as a concrete thing. This criticism is not as valid as it may seem. For memory, from the standpoint of physiology, can only mean that each nervous discharge effects a molecular change, and that with every repetition this change in the molecular arrangement of the tissue becomes more permanent. Each discharge thus, to use Romanes' phrase, treads in the footprints of its predecessor. On the psychological side there is a memory of previous events, because there is on the physiological side an arrangement of a nervous tissue that undergoes modification with every stimulation, which always conserves to some extent the effect of past stimulations, and repeats itself when identical stimuli recur. Indeed, to say that *memory* registers and recalls changes conveys no knowledge; it merely gives a name to what actually occurs. To say that the nervous structure registers impressions does give us positive information, since we have here an obvious machinery for the registering and recalling of such impressions.

Moreover, although it would take too long to elaborate the point now, it may be pointed out that the sense of personal identity, or the feeling of sameness, depends not so much upon a mysterious "me" as it does upon the things thought about. If we were to imagine an organism living in a universe where no

two sensations, or no two experiences, were alike, it is difficult to conceive how a form of personal identity could arise. We feel ourselves to be the same person as yesterday because we see familiar objects and experience familiar sensations. It is not a mysterious "ego" that impresses its consciousness of self upon the world, but the other way about. It is the things thought about, the uniformity of experiences, that are appropriated by the organism which gives rise to a feeling of self.

We can actually observe this conscious self being built up on a basis of physical change and continuity. What notion of self is there with a new-born infant? For some considerable time after birth, even if such a conception exists, it is of the weakest possible kind. One can actually observe a child discovering itself. It *discovers* its limbs as it discovers their uses. Its hands and feet appear to it, at first, to be more or less autonomous, and it will appreciate their being blamed for doing something forbidden long before it is able to appreciate receiving blame itself. Hands and feet are discovered in the first place through vision, later the sense of touch is exercised, and with increased experience the notion of a physical self is elaborated. There is the same process of mental growth. Experiences of home, parents, friends, strangers, contact with social life, gradually builds up the self of each and every one of us. The self is thus not something that comes into the world seeking expression through the medium of physical organisation; it is something that is gradually evolved before our very eyes.

And just as we see the self being constituted, so we can, if we will, observe its disintegration, long before death delivers the final stroke. Loss of memory, a psychic consequence of neural derangement, may create an impassable barrier between the self that is and the self that was. In other cases, there is to be noted a gradual wasting of personal characteristics, commencing with the higher moral qualities, and terminating in absolute imbecility. Or we have cases of alternating personality, one "self" having no consciousness of the existence of the other "self." Or, yet again, there is the often-cited case of the American, who met with an accident which drove a piece of iron through his brain. He became quarrelsome, his mental power became weaker, and from a sober and reliable and respected workman, he became drunken, unreliable, and generally disliked. His workmates aptly expressed the nature of the change by saying that he was no longer the same man. Standard works on mental pathology will supply hundreds of cases similar to these. And what inference are we to draw from them. The inference drawn by all medical practitioners is that which is clearly in accord with common sense and ordinary observation. We are witnessing the disorganisation and disintegration of a personality that has been slowly organised and integrated. The hypothesis of an "ego" superior to experience is as useless here as elsewhere.

Many of the criticisms raised by Professor Compton are thus—and it is a common feature of the spiritualist position—due to the confusion caused in stating the problem criticised. People look for the undiscoverable, and complain that it cannot be found. They ask how can mental states become fused into one, without realising that it is the neurological basis of the mental states that is to be considered. We are told, dogmatically, that the self knows itself as the subject of changing states of consciousness, and as remaining identical through their "come and go." Well, one may meet a direct affirmative with a direct denial—nothing of the kind is the case. I do not know myself as persisting unchanged (identity must here mean without change if it is to carry any significance with it) through all states of consciousness. For I cannot dissociate myself from my states of consciousness. When I have a feeling of warmth, I cannot distinguish between the warmth and the "I." The two are positively identical. I can recall an "I" that felt cold, but the present "I" that feels warm is distinct

from the "I" that felt cold by all the differences that discriminate cold from heat. And this is true of any and every state of consciousness. I never am conscious of an unchanging self. I remember previous sensations and experiences. But that the "I" which remembers these is distinct from them is a pure inference. More, my experience confirms the statement that whether I am to-day exhibiting a self that is amiable or ill-tempered, gloomy or cheerful, vicious or virtuous, depends upon a multitude of circumstances to which the organism may be exposed.

Professor Compton says that if we are to dismiss the notion of a real or permanent self because it cannot be perceived either by the senses or by introspection, then we are on the same grounds bound to dismiss the atom, or the permanence of matter despite all changes of form. The two cases are not analagous. The atom is assumed as a means of explaining a certain class of facts, and by its aid certain facts are made understandable that would otherwise remain inexplicable. If the soul did the same service, there would be first-class scientific warranty for assuming its existence. But it obviously does not do this. We do not understand the facts of mental life a bit the better by postulating it. Whatever difficulty there may be in anyone realising how successive nervous states give rise to cognition and recognition, the difficulty of understanding how a "soul" works is just as great. For on the mental side cognition implies comparison and differentiation. A thing can only be known for what it is by being separated from what it is not. And how can a "soul," destitute of experience, cognise its first sensation? And if it cannot cognise its first sensation, how can it re-cognise its succeeding sensations? There would be an endless succession of first sensations, and knowledge would become an impossibility. It is precisely because the "soul" explains nothing, that, to quote James, souls have gone out of fashion.

One of the most amazing things in life is the zeal with which people cling to old ideas and their consequent disinclination to face fairly a rival theory. Of all the criticisms of Materialism I have had occasion to notice, an overwhelming proportion of them proceed by way of a misunderstanding of the position criticised, due, one cannot help thinking, to sheer prejudice against it. And the remainder dwell upon difficulties attending its acceptance, as though a theory to gain credence must solve at once every possible problem, or as though the rival theories were free from every difficulty whatsoever. True, there must be no facts against a theory, or it is doomed. In science the exception does not prove the rule, it proves the rule to be a bad one. But that problems and difficulties remain is a proof only that we still have much to learn. And certainly no Materialist ever claimed finality in knowledge. And with equal certainty our intellectual perplexities are not made the less acute by invoking agencies which not only fail to shed light on the problems in hand, but raise a new and unnecessary crop of difficulties concerning their own existence.

C. COHEN.

The Growing Day.

SIGNIFICANT utterances have recently fallen from the lips of high-placed officials of the Churches, from which many important lessons may be learned. One thing, at least, is certain, namely, that the servants of the Lord are at present in a severe fit of depression. The Rev. Dr. Edwards, of Cardiff, in his address from the chair of the Baptist Union, makes most humiliating admissions regarding the present condition and the immediate prospects of the Christian religion. "We must state facts," he says, "although sorrow should almost break our hearts"; and some of the facts he gives are, from his point of view, truly heart-breaking. He is afraid that "social prayer, so far as the bulk of our Church

members are concerned, has almost become non-existent." The consequence is, of course, that "we have fallen on evil, barren days." Another depressing fact is the general neglect of family worship. This shows that religion has ceased to be a reality in daily life. The sense of God and of the need of personal dealings with him has nearly died out everywhere.

Another sad fact is the complete degradation of the Bible. "The Bible has been subjected," he tells us, "not merely to the severest but also to most unjust criticism, and ruthless hands have endeavored to tear out of it some of its most precious and essential truth." Then the President naively observes: "We welcome reverent criticism," as if he did not know that "reverent criticism" is no criticism at all. Criticism, as such, knows nothing about reverence, being simply a dispassionate, scientific search for truth. He who approaches the Bible in the conviction that it is a thesaurus of most precious truths is incapable of doing the work of a critic. In the following passage Dr. Edwards betrays his total lack of the critical faculty:—

"We welcome reverent criticism. The Word of God invites it, and can stand it all. But when men, whether outside or nominally inside the Church, stand on the assumed premise that the supernatural is impossible, and then arrive at their deductions, they are devoid of any qualification to judge the contents of the sacred volume. The most illiterate believer occupies a vantage-ground far higher than the most learned critic devoid of the spiritual faculty; for spiritual things are spiritually discerned. But such criticism has stultified itself. It has spoken with such an air of authority as to win over to its side the inexperienced and undiscerning. But its certainties of yesterday are the doubtful things of to-day and will become the falsehoods of to-morrow. Its pendulum swings most irregularly and capriciously, whilst the Word of the Lord standeth for ever as the unerring guide and the unfailing standard of saving truth. It is the absolutely scientific book, but then its science is the salvation of the lost through Jesus Christ."

It is impossible to reason with a man who talks in that superficial, irresponsible, and preposterous fashion; but the wonder is that there are people in these so-called enlightened days who can listen to and pretend to appreciate such sorry stuff. Our consolation, however, is derived from the fact that the sharers of Dr. Edwards' unreasoning faith are becoming fewer and fewer every year.

Another fact bemoaned by the Baptist President is the dissection of Jesus Christ "on the anatomical table." What the dissection really means we are not told; but it is clear that its object is to discredit and do away with the Christ of the New Testament and the Church. The critics—Schmiedel, Neumann, Schweitzer, Drews, and others, have taken away the Lord and substituted a shadowy man for him; and Dr. Edwards can do nothing but abuse the critics by calling them anatomists who can go "only deep enough to find bones." Sir William Robertson Nicoll is equally powerless. In his address to the Clergy Home Mission Union, at St. Paul's Chapter House, he says that "no doubt the disbelief in miracle is widely spread, and leads straight to the abating and dissolving of our Lord's immeasurable claims." Of necessity, the disbelief in miracle "brings Christ to the level of mere humanity," and reduces Paul's Gospel to a tissue of "cunningly devised fables." Now, Sir William meets the non-miraculous conception of Christianity not with argument, but with pure dogmatism. Referring to the various attempts to account for Christ on the ordinary naturalistic assumptions, he says:—

"Schweitzer is successful in tearing to pieces one explanation after another. When he ventures on his own he is as helpless, as unsatisfactory, as incredible as any among his predecessors. There is no escape from the inexorable trilemma. Christ either deceived mankind by conscious fraud, or he was himself deluded and deceived, or he was divine. The riddle is not read till we say, 'Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ; thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.'"

That is the old orthodoxy so eloquently expounded by the late Canon Liddon in his famous Bampton Lecture; and the reverend knight is quite right when he says:—

“Deny miracle, and logic will in the end compel the denial of Christianity, and affirm, with Provost Salmon, that a non-miraculous Christianity is as much a contradiction in terms as a quadrangular circle, because when you have taken away the supernatural what is left behind is not Christianity.”

Here, again, our encouragement comes from the fact that the number of the orthodox is rapidly decreasing. The unmistakable trend of the age is decidedly away from supernaturalism. Sir William and Dr. Edwards are already in a dwindling minority.

Christianity has outlived its day and is effete. It is a superstition that is out of touch with the spirit of the age. People are no longer able to believe in it. This is virtually admitted by Dr. Edwards when he asserts that “the Church as a body has ceased to be a praying Church.” If the Church verily believed in a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God her prayer-meetings would be both numerous and crowded. The Churches are shrinking simply because belief is decaying; and belief is decaying because knowledge is growing from more to more. Compare, in this respect, the Scotland of the seventeenth century and the first half of the nineteenth with the Scotland of to-day. Less than a hundred years ago the Scotch were declared to be the most priest-ridden nation in Europe; Spain and Portugal not excepted. That declaration was made by Kaspar Spurzheim, the eminent German phrenologist, and it was confirmed by George Combe, his Scottish disciple; while Buckle furnishes several instances of its truth. Priests and ministers were always Heaven’s first care, and they were used by Heaven as watchmen to protect the faithful. They claimed to be rulers and governors; and the people had to acknowledge them, provide for them, and submit to them. They were as the angels of God, and God was continually interposing miraculously in their behalf. No wonder that “their hearts were so lifted up with pride that they believed—horrible to relate—that they had audible and verbal communications from the Almighty God, which bystanders could hear.” No wonder that intolerance was more cruel and lasted longer in Scotland than in scarcely any other country; and blood-curdling in the extreme is the story of persecution as carried on within her borders. Down to the middle of the nineteenth century she continued in ecclesiastical bondage, tolerant of priestly tyranny, but intolerant of ordinary human rights. To go out walking in the fields on the Lord’s Day was a heinous sin visited with suspension from the Communion, if not with complete excommunication. But what a vastly changed Scotland we see to-day. The clergy are no longer all-powerful, nor are their ministrations held in such high esteem. Bowing and scraping to them as if they were superior beings is now a thing of the past. Even the Scottish Churches have made enormous progress towards reason and freedom. Some of the ablest and boldest Higher Critics in the world are to be found in Caledonia, stern and wild. She had a specially long night of intellectual sleep; but now, at last, she is rubbing her eyes and beginning to feel what it is to be awake and free. Thousands of her people have outrun the Churches, and succeeded in completely throwing off the supernatural yoke, and in putting on the easy yoke of loyalty to humanity. And what is happening on so promising a scale in Scotland is taking place, in some measure, in every other country in Christendom. This is fully attested by the wailings and lamentations indulged in by the leaders of all the Churches.

The night of ignorance and superstition is passing, and the day of knowledge and power has dawned. We are basking in the morning light which shall shine more and more unto the perfect day.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Rocks of Reason.

THE huge, majestic waves, foam-flecked and sparkling in the sun-rays, rolled and tumbled in towards the shore. As far as I could see, and farther, beyond the yellow-barred horizon, till they leaped upon the Canadian coast, the motionful waters rose and fell tirelessly and ceaselessly. The consciousness of that vast expanse of unquiet waters, the wonder of it, the inexpressible beauty of it, acted upon my mind as an opiate. There was a queer feeling of repose within me, as if the very restlessness had the power to induce tranquillity and peace. Innumerable colors glinted and changed interminably. Grey and green rushed on to lose themselves in patches of purple and blue. Places there were where the waves were caught into swirls of white foam that flowed magnificently over inky black. Places, too, where the movement was lulled and uncannily stilled in pools of corrugated silver. The western wind, fresh and brackish, blew health and gladness and wild mirth around me as I sat, with my back to a rock on the shore, looking at the panoramic pictures Nature painted with marvellous dexterity before me. The loneliness and silence, and the overpowering, grand solitude of the place were but emphasised by the water-music and the discordant screaming of the sea-birds. Just as the outlines and colors changed and changed again, picture after picture, nuance after nuance, so, within the continual monotonous murmuring, were there notes that ranged through the whole gamut of exquisite sound. They filled my ears with strange and wonderful harmonies that rolled, like some far-off undercurrent of inextinguishable peace, beneath the happiness of my mind.

The world’s cesspool of struggles and strivings, of tears and sorrows and cynicisms, of ruined desires and hopeless failures, of cruelty, baseness, injustice, and deceit, was forgotten. Humanity’s wailings, at other times so terribly significant, so remorselessly heart-rending, so bitterly suggestive of the crushing burdens of ignorance and superstition, seemed to have quietened into untroubled sleep. The stern grandeur of unconquerable voices demanding the establishment of truth, the recognition of reason, the doing of justice, became, as the grave is, silent. Error and antidote the waves and wind had cleared from my thoughts, leaving me the plaything of beauty, the child of an unconscious selfishness. I had become a human abstraction, a human cypher, for the time being. Even the sting of the salt-laden breeze seemed to accentuate the remoteness from man; and the cry of the birds was more natural than human words.

But deliverance was at hand. From the village in the distance came the clanging of an old rusty iron bell. The sounds crushed through the sunbeams like an intruding bully. They fell upon the peace and quietness and savagely scattered them into hopeless confusion. It was the villagers’ gala day, the Lord’s Day, and the kirk bell was needlessly reminding them of a custom that was a part of their natures. Once, I had been told, the beadle turned suddenly ill on the Sabbath morning, and was unable to execute his musical duties. The unprecedented happening cast a gloom over the whole community. Consternation gripped even the youngest; and it was seriously alleged that the Devil had something to do with it. So effectively had the voice of that sanctified and glorified tin-can become an absolute necessity to worship that the occurrence was still mentioned with awe and misgiving; and the villagers looked back to the service with dubiety, wondering how they managed to survive it.

Custom had worked its mind-corrupting way even where the ringing of the bell was concerned. To the villagers it represented the demand of Christ to come and worship. The harsh, unmelodious notes did not grate on their ears nor fill them with loathing and distaste. Notwithstanding the unpoetical ruggedness of their hard lives and the consequent unimaginativeness of their minds, they could hear

within the notes the sweet voice of the Jesus they thought they loved telling them to gather together as was their wont.

Religion, practically, was their sole escape from the laboriousness of their dirty, disagreeable, thankless work, and had been from their youth. It had given an antidote and stolen their minds. It had successfully robbed them of independence and substituted, insidiously, a slavery from which they drew counterbalancement to the daily hardships and the constant poverty of their limited lives. Is it remarkable, then, that the fishermen should actually regard the observance of the Lord's Day with holy respect, and receive from that observance a dim, but, nevertheless, satisfying happiness, however false that paltry pleasure assuredly is?

I saw the straggling procession of solemn, kirk-going fishermen and their wives and children depicted on the spray around the rocks. I saw, too, the dirty, ill-kept huts in which they lived; the fish-boxes that did duty for chairs; and the putrid heaps of refuse that filled the air with poisonous odors. I saw the village kirk, built of sea-boulders, stone slated on roof and grass-grown spire, nestling on the sheltered side of a hill. It seemed as ancient and immovably fixed as the rutted ideas of the men and women who congregated there to praise the Lord for the sparsity and thinness of their life-comforts. Bare highland beauty surrounded and imprisoned it with rough emphasis. Unfertile stretches of damp peat ground bordered the miserable graveyard where so many "toilers of the sea" had found a calm haven to rest their weary, workworn limbs. The hills bore only rank rushes and tufted grass. Isolation and stagnation seemed to have concentrated to cripple vitality of body and of mind. The bleak barrenness of the place was enlivened but by a flicker of life from the brilliant sunshine and the kirk-going worshipers.

For a quarter of an hour the bell discharged its message. Why it took so long perhaps custom again can only tell; for all the possible attenders lived within site of the spire, and all had been preparing for the service since morning. Quietness returned somewhat tentatively when the last loud clang sent its demand to my objecting ears; but the appreciation of the beauty had been killed by the horrible unnatural noise. Rebelliousness had poured in and drowned rest. Where tranquillity had spread her covering of relief there was commotion of thought. The insurgent clamor of the Lord's message had given birth to dispeace and riot, not untinged with a sense of hopelessness.

These fisherfolk were listening to lying words and knew not the untruthfulness of them. The poor, narrow minds were being fed to fullness with death-stricken ideas, and impurified with the conceit that Christ had especially honored them by selecting some of his disciples from their own ranks. For generations of these fishermen had been taught this consistently and continually. And now a visiting minister from the mainland was wrapping the old-fashioned falsehoods in new glory of language, language that suggested the world-wide recognition of the fishermen's signally honored craft. To them the minister's words would be as rain is to the thirsty ground. His beatifying tributes would reflect a triumphant Christianity. Even supposing the unlikely possibility of a stray objection, his deft manœuvring of the turnstiles of interpretation would close up the orifice of doubt, and make certainty absolute. The old, old lies were being recemented, glossed, and glamored by trumpety oratory. The old parallels were being drawn, and delighted in: Christ's poverty and their poverty, his contentment and their contentment, his simplicity of life and theirs, his heroic character and their manly strength and quick courage, his power over the winds and waves and their dexterity of seamanship in storm and stress, and the grand climax—that he was the great fisher of men, while they were fishers for men.

To have stepped into one of the groups soberly eulogising the sermon, and to have denied the authenticity of the ministerial statements, would

have been to court physical disaster. So deeply imbedded in the ditch of mental death were these fisherfolk that anything suggesting irreverence was looked upon as a sin against the Holy Ghost, and would be punished with blind severity. And yet what an incomprehensible amount of ever increasing harm was regularly being cast into the young minds of the children. No man, had he the mental combination of a Shakespeare-Darwin, could possibly compute the terrible and far reaching effects of this constant instillation of religious falsehood. As the fathers were, so would be the children, and their children. Trained to servile obedience to a vague master, who dwelt beyond the skies, who blessed their poverty and mocked the riches of their London Landlord, it is not ununderstandable that the conditions of their lives seemed to be the very warranty of their nearness to Christ.

Religion to those fishermen was the essence of existence, and the satisfaction of it. Their Christianity was something of value to them. If it had no mellowing influence over the coarseness of their lives—and they could not see how grotesquely this much vaunted influence belied its hypothetical power, thus self-proving its utter incapability to thwart stronger material things—it, at least, had little obvious hypocrisy in it. If, during an encounter with the storm-tossed waves, when death seemed to rise on every wave-lip to meet them, they forgot that Christ once walked upon the waters, and once bade the storm be still, it was not that their belief in his all-powerful divinity was superficial, or that he could not, even yet, perform the same miracle, and save them. Fearful nights and lashing waves did not terrorise: they were accepted as essentials in the arduous work. So it was that the suspicion of Christ's unappearance never dawned upon the minds of those hardy fighters for food, nor did the peril ever demand the need for his immediate interference.

They looked forward to the Sabbath and its psalm-singing and sermonising with infant minds. On this holy day the wrinkles were smoothed out and the crooked places made straight. Never was the benefit of it disparaged or questioned; rather was it worshiped with as much reverence as was ungrudgingly bestowed on the God who had given it to them. Although it was deemed worthy to sing on the Lord's Day, to whistle was accounted irreverence. To walk any distance was unheard of: that represented so much work, which was wrong; yet it was permissible for the women to perform their household duties.

The bulwarks of custom seem, often, with communities as with individuals, unbreakable, enduring when the hulk is rotten and serviceless. That they, too, must inevitably decay, sooner or later, I knew; but as I thought of the narrow limits that they set around those poverty-stricken fisherfolks I wondered how long suffering would be gilded by religion's subtly-working sugar; how long it would be before these secluded, out-of-the-world hamlets, scattered around our Scottish coast, and inhabited by God-fearing men and women, would become permeated with the new mental life; how long it would be before the yoke of superstition, borne with such unmistakably glad submission, and deeply revered because of its assumed divinity of character, for so long worshiped, would be shaken off as despicably puerile.

It may be that the signs of the times manifest a rapid disintegration of religious beliefs; but there are villages whose inhabitants have never dreamed of the word "Freethought"; where religion is as strong to-day as it ever has been; and where not the faintest glimmering of its evil power breaks on the ignorance of its devotees. And so long as these remote God-worshipers remain on their knees the fight can never finish. Not in the towns and in the cities, but on the outskirts of civilisation, in the lonely hamlets by mountain and by sea, can the mind-thwarting power of religion be properly estimated, and the glorious war for mental liberty be justly judged. All the grand heroism is here seen

in its real strength and indomitable valor; for the odds are against it with all their established might of unconscious imperviousness.

I looked out upon the turbulent waters dashing themselves into beauty against the foam-crowned rocks. I saw the seething waves curl and swirl in white, and break and retreat in a glory of curves. These rocks would perish and become sand and be washed away; but the rocks of reason would withstand the storms of time, unmarred, undinted, undiminished by the impetuous waves of religion; for the intrinsic worth of reason is right, over which wrong cannot prevail.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Acid Drops.

Special attention is invited to the following extract from a letter by the Rome correspondent of the *London Daily Chronicle* :—

"As showing the remarkable enthusiasm which this war has created throughout Italy, I cannot do better than mention the unlooked-for favorable attitude of the Church as exemplified to-day at Lucca at a banquet which followed the celebration of a local religious festival. Monsignor Marchi presided, and several Franciscan friars and leading notables of Lucca were present. Toasts were drunk to the honor and glory of Italy. The Archbishop in the course of a fervent and patriotic speech gave his archiepiscopal benediction to the Tripoli expedition. He recalled, amidst the fervent plaudits of the hearers, the life of Father Justino, who suffered martyrdom for the faith of the Fatherland in Tripoli. The soldiers and sailors now in Tripoli (he said) were fighting for civilisation, the Cross, and the tricolor of Italy. Victory for the tricolor would also be victory for the Cross which they were carrying into a Moslem land. He invoked the blessing of God upon the arms of Italy, and also upon their young King."

Such is the outcome of nearly two thousand years of the reign of the Prince of Peace! Cardinals blessing war and bloodshed, and pious mobs applauding their utterances. And the war itself is nothing but sheer brigandage. But to rob and murder Turks is "a victory for the Cross." "Onward, Christian soldiers."

The Baptist Missionary Society, at Brighton, on October 4, bade farewell to a group of missionaries who were going out to India, the Congo, and other places. The chairman couldn't help noticing that those who were going out to preach Christ to the Mohammedans had a very awkward job to tackle. He remarked that "One great European nation, whose sign was that of the Cross, had, without, so far as they knew, any justification whatever, bombarded and seized the port of another country. They could not realise how difficult such actions made the task of the noble men and women they were sending out to win the Mohammedan to the Christian faith." We might add, for our part, that this task was difficult to the point of impossibility before; and how difficult it is now may be left to imagination. Nor do we think the Baptist missionaries, if they are at all like other Baptists, are likely to display a genial and persuasive spirit to "unbelievers"; for later in the day the assembled Baptists at Brighton listened with great pleasure to an acrid and malicious sermon by the Rev. A. C. Dixon, of Spurgeon's Tabernacle, one of England's latest and worst importations from the United States. According to the *Daily News* report, this gentleman (we beg pardon, *reverend gentleman*)—who is known to Freethinkers as the obscenest of Ingersoll's slanderers—said that "Rationalism was reason without a wing, crawling, grovelling, wallowing." That was a good beginning, but he improved upon it later on. "The man who worshiped at the throne of reason," he said, "was shackled by lust, prejudice, ignorance, and sin." Now it is easy to judge men who talk in that way. Only a lustful Christian would suspect others of lust who are not under his (real or supposed) religious restraints. Such a Christian feels that if he gave way to his natural bent, not being under the fear of God, it is lechery that he would run to. That is why the Christian slanderers of leading Freethinkers always accuse them of sexual offences. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

We are waiting a little quite patiently, and keeping this foul-mouthed Dixon waiting, for his promised dose of strong disinfectant. The psychological moment will arrive before very long. We are letting him settle down a bit in London and get better known, and then we shall loosen the avalanche upon him. The former avalanche crushed Torrey; this one will crush Dixon.

Rev. J. D. Jones, of Bournemouth, described as a Free Church leader, has been preaching a special sermon at Leamington. Judging by the report in the local *Chronicle*, we should say that his "large congregation" never read the New Testament—and perhaps not the Old one either. The preacher told them a lot of novel things about Jesus Christ. He took life blithely, he was the greatest optimist the world had ever seen, and the only person who "never turned back." This is what the "man of sorrows" comes to when it suits the men of God. Mr. Jones ignores "Oh, my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He ignores "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He has a Jesus Christ of his own to suit the changed requirements of the day; and we dare say he would have another Jesus Christ if it were necessary to-morrow. He belongs to the most hypocritical and fraudulent profession on earth, and he plays his part in it with what Lady Teazle would call "a tolerable grace."

Salvation Army Assurance (financial assurance, not "cheek") is thoroughly exposed in Mr. Manson's book. We now see it denounced in the *Insurance Truth*. The following extract is from the September 30 issue of that paper:—

"Some folks are righteous all the time, some folks imagine they are righteous all the time, whilst some folks suffer from righteousness in spasms, and it is under this last heading that we must classify an exceedingly large number of the Salvation Army Assurance Agents—a sufficiently large number to make them representative of the whole. I know that some of my readers will say that their righteousness doesn't even come in spasms. But there are little spasms as well as big spasms, and there are frequent spasms, and spasms that come at *very long* intervals—these latter are specially warranted not to interfere with business!

"But, to get to business, let me say that the Conference convened at Morley Hall, Hackney, on September 22 by the Life Assurance Agents' Protection League, showed the real interest that is taken in this subject. True, a large proportion of the big gathering were local Agents, and they are the Agents that have suffered most severely by the sweet persuasiveness and the lying tongues of some of these Army Agents; and although the meeting laughed and recognised the humor in some of the incidents related, these tales left a nasty taste in the mouth—a nastier taste than the 'smokiest' smoke-room story that I have yet heard.

"There is a nauseousness in philanthropic deeds—subscribed for by other than the donors—being made the occasion for 'getting business,' and to think that such deeds should be made the basis of gratitude in order to rob another man of part of his living—well, well!"

The Morley Hall meeting resolved to convene "a large gathering of Agents of all Offices in a central part of London" to discuss the matter, with a view to united action against the Salvation Army's policy.

Principal Edwards's presidential address to the Baptist Union contained the following passage:—

"In the world of philanthropy Christian men seem to stand alone. I never heard of a Tom Paine's shelter for the aged, or a Bradlaugh's home for the infirm, or a Blatchford's orphanage for the parentless child."

Quite so. Principal Edwards never heard of these things—and he never will. Freethinkers, to begin with, don't want their names plastered or painted over the front of public buildings. They are not egotistic enough for that. Moreover, they don't endorse the Christian social method of "charity"—which has been, in their opinion, and still is, one of the greatest hindrances to reform, by prolonging the conditions producing the misery that "philanthropy" only mitigates. Freethinkers aim at changing the conditions which produce social evils. Thomas Paine, for instance, did not start a shelter for the aged. He wanted to see aged people in a position not to need such assistance. He wanted to see them living in a human way in human homes. He therefore propounded the policy of Old Age Pensions, and worked out a practical scheme which may be found in the *Rights of Man*. He was far more the author of Old Age Pensions than Mr. Asquith was. And the realisation of Paine's scheme, more than a hundred years after, confers more benefit upon the poor than all the "shelters for the aged" that "philanthropy" without sense ever erected. And it is not *charity*, but *justice*.

"Secretary of State Lazansky, of New York, has been served with a notice that an application will be made to the Supreme Court in this city on September 23 to require him to show cause why he should not file the certificate of incorporation of the proposed corporation the title of which is 'Hell.' Several days ago Secretary Lazansky refused to file the paper because of the title. In the letter announcing his decision he said that 'while the statute does not prohibit the use of such a name, in my opinion it would be against public policy to permit it.' He pointed out that those seeking to incorporate the company had recourse to the

courts if they questioned his right to reject the paper. The company is organised to conduct restaurants and cafés. Goldstein and Goldstein of New York city represent the incorporators."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Christianity hasn't got all the great poets—far from it—but it has plenty of imagination. Take the following, from a Shanghai paper, the *North China Daily News*, writing in defence of the Christian missionaries:—

"The great philosopher, Spencer, in his *Autobiography*, written just before his death, at the age of seventy-three, expressed himself in these words: 'So these great affirmations (of the Christian Faith) remain the best solution. We come from God. In him we live and move and have our being. From our sin and suffering he alone can save us. To him we go and by him these lives of ours are to be judged.'"

This is first rate—of the sort. Spencer was a great philosopher; he *did* write his *Autobiography* at the age of seventy-three; but he didn't die soon after, for he lived another ten years. All the rest of the story is pure falsehood, undiluted by a single drop of truth. There is no such passage in Spencer's *Autobiography*, nor anything like it. If Spencer could see what is attributed to him he might say that was "Shanghaied."

A correspondent of the *Methodist Times* has a quite happy way of describing the present slump in religious belief. He says: "A wave is passing over the Churches—not of scepticism, but of religious energy and anxiety." This is quite a charming description of the situation. Every Church in the country is suffering a decline. The most successful ones only maintain their relative success by dropping doctrinal religion and preaching a gospel of sloppy social sentiment. Yet the Churches are not oppressed by scepticism, but by an overdose of energy and anxiety! Presumably a fitting epitaph for the Churches will be "Died from too much energy." And we are really not particular what they die from so long as they die.

Mr. Lloyd George said, in the course of a recent speech, that there was a danger of the masses leaving the Churches. The Rev. Evan Jones, of Carnarvon, ex-President of the Free Church Council, comments on this that, taking the kingdom as a whole, the masses have already left the Churches. And he adds: "In Wales a strong section of the working classes have not only no respect for religion or Church, but are strongly hostile to both." This is the best feature of disputes between rival religionists—outsiders enjoy the rare pleasure of hearing the truth from the most unexpected quarters.

That insufferably stupid person, the Bishop of London, contributes to the new *Hibbert Journal* an article on "social service." Part of his "Appeal to English Gentlemen"—there is episcopal snobbery in the very title—is taken up with advising them to encourage boys to join the Church Brigade, as a convenient feeder for the Army. Of course many others encourage these Brigades for this reason, but they usually keep quiet on this point. The Bishop blurts it out. He also says he has long thought we shall come to "universal service"—a synonym for conscription—thinks "it will be a good thing for the morale and physique of the nation when we do." Religion and militarism! The two things have always gone together, and always will. The feelings upon which both live belong to the more barbaric stage of human development, and he who encourages one encourages the other. And this is to be the end of all the fine talk of Christian brotherhood and the gospel of love. A nation of conscripts, forced into military service because of the supposed need of protection against the Christian nations, who are as we are because they too have been dominated by the Christian Gospel.

Another article in the *Hibbert* is by J. B. Pratt, on "The Religion of William James." Judging from the article, and from what we know of James's writings, his religion appears to have been of a very attenuated kind. Mr. Pratt says that to an inquiry, "Do you believe in personal immortality?" he replied, "Never keenly, but more strongly as I grow older," which looks as though his only basis for belief was a dislike to dying. He had "no living sense of commerce with a God," but envied those who thought they had. And of Christianity he said, "I have so grown out of Christianity that entanglement therewith on the part of a mystical utterance has to be abstracted from, and overcome, before I can listen." He confessed to a leaning towards mysticism, and this appears to have been the extent of his convictions concerning religion in general. But he had evidently altogether discarded Christianity.

The new President of the Baptist Union has a very Christian, but none the less curious, conception of history. He points out that while Egypt and Assyria sought the glory of empire, Greece glory of art and letters, and Rome glory of arms, Israel looked for the glory of God. Well, there is plenty of evidence in the Bible that Israel was as ready as Egypt and Assyria to grab territory and overcome their neighbors when they could. And there is plenty of evidence elsewhere that Egypt and Assyria troubled about religion quite as much as did Israel. The truth is that Egypt and Assyria had possessions, art, and literature, in addition to religion, because they were—for the time—great nations. Israel had religion alone because it was a small Semitic tribe of no great consequence to other people, and was without the art and science and literature that distinguished other nations. But it would never do to admit that this is the fact about God's chosen people, and so the theory is elaborated that they were specially devoted to religion, and were great because of that devotion. Most Christians are fed upon such stupid teachings, and meanwhile some Christians are admitting that the very best of the Biblical teachings were only second editions of those that were current in Egypt, Assyria, and Babylonia.

One of the subjects down for discussion at the Church Congress was "The Training of Youth." Naturally the speakers emphasised the importance of religious training, and quite as naturally betrayed the usual misunderstanding of non-religious training. Thus, Miss Wolseley-Lewis said that "homes and schools which did not aim at the Christian ideal, and which ranked energy, determination, and self-reliance as more important than unselfishness, initiative, and courage as superior to courtesy and consideration, must fail to train character in the best way." Certainly, if courtesy and consideration and unselfishness are incompatible with giving the other qualities named a high place. But are they? We think it will be found that without courage and initiative, energy and determination, there will be very little of either real courtesy or true unselfishness. Timidity is not courtesy, and true unselfishness requires both courage and determination. It is the strong character that shows consideration for others; the weak one merely gets out of people's way for fear of what may happen. And we have a strong conviction that courage—not the common courage of the fighting man, but the courage that springs from sincere conviction and lofty moral feeling—has a deal to do with most virtues worth bothering about.

Another speaker said they ought to ask themselves the question, "How do you account for the enormous leakage of our young people as soon as they are able to throw off obligatory courses of attendance at services and classes?" If this question were honestly faced, the answer could take but one form. Children are ordered to attend religious classes when they are too young to offer resistance, even if they thought of doing. They continue to attend as youths so long as the persuasion of elders, or the force of custom, or some other social consideration exerts any influence over their minds. But as they grow older, and are exposed to the normal play of contemporary culture forces, religious lessons lose interest and religious considerations their power. Were religion vitally connected with the life we daily lead—that is, if it sprang from current life and feeling—the religious bonds forged in childhood would grow stronger with age. As it is, the fact that "our young people," freely exposed to the play of vital social forces, drop off from church and chapel proves conclusively that for all reasonable and practical purposes religion is useless.

Here is the report of an interesting conversation, and one that throws considerable light on the mental calibre of some of our religions members of Parliament. Mr. Harwood, M.P., says he recently asked Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, "Has it ever struck you that the fundamental principles upon which the Labor party exist are entirely owing to Jesus Christ?" "How do you make that out?" queried Mr. Macdonald. The answer was, "The doctrine of brotherhood had no place or conception in the world until Jesus Christ taught it." And Mr. Harwood adds that no literature or civilisation of the world had, previous to Christianity, any conception of the truth that man as man had certain rights. It is a pity that Mr. Macdonald did not tell Mr. Harwood what an ignoramus he was, and is. This might not have been polite, but it would have been wholesome. For our part, we would seriously advise Mr. Harwood to retire from Parliament for awhile, and spend a little time in learning what pre-Christian civilisations and pre-Christian moralists really did teach upon the subject. An outlay of about ten shillings would provide him with a fair collection of representative Pagan moralists, and he would certainly rise from their perusal a wiser—and more truthful—man.

As a matter of fact, the whole of the Stoic philosophy, of which Marcus Aurelius stands as a magnificent outcome, was based upon the doctrine of human brotherhood. The great doctrine of Stoicism was that nature made all men equal, and virtue alone creates differences. And when did Christianity say anything better than did Cicero, "Men were born for the sake of men, that each should assist the other"? Nor is this an isolated expression; the Roman moralists are full of similar utterances. Further, we would remind, or, perhaps, we had better say *inform*, Mr. Harwood that the Roman lawyers based their main principles upon the common rights which they assumed all men to possess as human beings, as against those created by government and law. Nor was it wholly a matter of theory. In practice, Rome gave equal rights to all men, irrespective of race or color. A Roman of the Empire would have stared at legislation, such as exists in some of our colonies, and which fixes the rights of men by the color of their skin. And could he have read our papers of recent date and discovered that a prize-fight must be prohibited lest a black pugilist should beat a white one, he might reasonably inquire how much progress the doctrine of brotherhood had made under Christian influences? Mr. Harwood's ignorance is only partially excusable because it is so common, and his impertinence in standing forward as a teacher of his fellow-men is a fair illustration of the type of mind that Christian church and chapel loves to honor.

"The Rev. F. B. Meyer has thought fit to publicly pray for the 'conversion' of two boxers. Might I suggest to the reverend gentleman that there may be others for whom his prayers are more urgently needed—for instance, that preacher of the Gospel who saw in the lynchings at Cairo, in Illinois, 'a blessing in disguise'; or those ministers of his own communion in the United States who, by a guilty silence, have made themselves participators in such crimes. There have been many expressions of disgust at the Reno 'fight.' Is it not the greatest reason for shame that the prize-ring is one of the few places in the United States where black and white receive equal justice?"—S. H. Swinny, "The Positivist Review."

Rev. F. B. Meyer delivered the inaugural address to a Holborn Town Hall meeting of the "United Young People's Campaign." There were "no gloves" by request.

Sir Ray Lancaster, in his "Science From An Easy Chair" column in the *Daily Telegraph*, severely criticises an orthodox scribe who has been writing about what is now called "the bankruptcy of science." Here are a few sentences from Sir Ray Lancaster's article:—

"The assertion that the theory of organic evolution as left by Darwin is now generally held to be inadequate is fallacious. Darwin's theories are generally held to be essentially true. It is obvious that they are capable of further elaboration and development by additional knowledge, and always were regarded as being so by their author and every other competent person. But that is a very different thing from holding them to be 'inadequate.' They are adequate because they furnish the foundation on which we build.....Men of science do not invent an 'aqueous principle' or 'aquosity' with the notion of explaining water. And I have yet to hear of any duly trained and qualified biologist who is prepared at the present moment to maintain the existence of a 'vital principle,' or a force to be called 'vitality,' which is something different in character and quality from the recognised physical forces, and has its existence alongside, yet apart from, the manifestation of those forces."

It is to be regretted that so many scientific men lack Sir Ray Lancaster's courage, and let the public mind be abused by "anonymous and incompetent interpreters" in the interest of antiquated religious ideas.

St. George's Church was completely destroyed in the recent great fire at Leicester. The fire broke out in a hosiery factory, and soon spread to the house of God, which was crowded with a big congregation, assembled at a harvest thanksgiving service. "The clergy," the *Chronicle* says, "with the Dean of Lincoln, were in their vestments, Dr. Barrow was at the organ, the church was beautiful with decorations of wheat, corn, fruit, and flowers in the chancel, in front of the pulpit, and in all the windows." But "Providence" didn't care a straw about all that. It lets a church burn as readily as a brothel, a gambling hell, or a thieves' kitchen. Fortunately the congregation were all got out safely.

"Providence" has had two previous "goes" at St. George's Church. Some years after its erection the east window was struck by lightning. In 1846 the spire was

struck by lightning and badly damaged, the restoration costing £800. The third time was lucky.

The Vicar of St. George's desires it to be known that the parochial bazaar, arranged for the end of October, will not be postponed; he hopes, indeed, that it will be all the more successful in consequence of the sympathy aroused by the misfortune which had befallen the parish. The vicar doesn't display any overwhelming sympathy with the 750 work-people whom the fire has thrown out of employment.

Atheists will go on committing suicide. It is the natural outcome of their melancholy belief. Talmage and Torrey have said so—and who can doubt them? Kate Hirst, fifteen, and Florence Jaques, also fifteen, drowned themselves in a reservoir near Huddersfield. Their hands were tied together with a shawl. In one of Hirst's stockings Sergeant Ibbotson found a Church of England Hymn-Book and a Prayer-Book. Oh, those Atheists!

Rev. Wilson Carlile is holding a novel thanksgiving service. He is offering prizes for the best and largest apple brought by any member of the congregation. Perhaps it will serve as a model of the pippin that caused all the trouble in Eden.

Westminster Abbey seems to be becoming the haunt of blethering superstitionists. After the Coronation, which was silly enough for a lunatic asylum, came Archdeacon Wilberforce with his Jacob's pillow, which was also the stone that Moses struck, and from which he brought forth a fountain of pure water in the wilderness. Now we have another foolish preacher letting the world see how imbecile Christianity can be even in the twentieth century. We take the following report from the *Daily Mail* of September 30:—

"Preaching the Michaelmas Day sermon at Westminster Abbey yesterday, the Rev. H. Mayne-Young, of St. John's, Westminster, said more than a thousand years ago in Rome one of the greatest bishops pleaded with God for the removal of the pestilence, when a vision of St. Michael seemed to pass, alighting on the summit of the tomb of Hadrian and sheathing a blood-stained sword, and from that moment the pestilence was stayed.

To-day, as the traveller threaded his way amid the ruins, his heart cried out, 'Why should that be a legend? Why should it not have been the clairvoyance of supernormal ecstasy, drawing aside the veil that hid the world of spirits from mortal view?' Surely we must believe that we were still environed by the bright sentinels from the spirit world."

Prayer stopping a pestilence is good, especially at this time of day. Evidently the answers to prayer all occurred a long while ago. At present the clergy can't get so much as a turnip by praying ten hours a day during a drought such as we have had in England this summer. The price of milk goes up, through the shortage of pasture, and thousands of poor babies suffer in consequence. Why on earth don't the clergy try to keep up their reputation in a practical way, instead of chattering about the wonders of past ages?

As for the great bishop who saw the vision of St. Michael on the tomb of Hadrian, what would he said if a bishop saw such a vision to-day on the top of St. Paul's? Wouldn't people say that he had been dining not wisely but too well?

Lord Halifax advised the Church Congress "against any tampering with the Athanasian Creed when the forces of infidelity were rising around them." We appreciate his lordship's testimonial.

Having obtained a voucher for the stone on which Jacob slept, and which Moses struck in the wilderness, Archdeacon Wilberforce should turn his attention to other relics. Couldn't he produce one of the stones thrown at the woman taken in adultery? It might bear finger marks of the Jewish gentleman who threw it, and give the celestial police an opportunity of finding him in the "beyond."

Some prayers are heard. Here is an instance. A Yankee evangelist prayed so loudly that he disturbed his neighbors.

A firm of London entertainers offer £20 for the best short story in which the leading characters are "ghosts." How the Christian clergy must smile at this modest remuneration! Their own ghost story, in the Gospels, has brought them millions.

Catholic Italy wants the Mohammedan turkey for Christmas. She may find it indigestible.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 15, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W.; at 7.30, "Modern Female Prophets: (3) Miss Marie Corelli."

October 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 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 15, Glasgow; October 29, Birmingham. November 5, Queen's Hall, London; 12, Queen's Hall, London; 19, Leicester; 25, Stratford Town Hall. December 31, Harringay.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £297 2s. 2d. Received since:—John Sumner, £1 1s.; "Ernest," 10s.; J. de B. (S. Africa), £5; J. Tomkins, 2s.

THE VANCE TESTIMONIAL FUND.—Previously acknowledged, £151 17s. 9d. Received since:—G. L. Alward, £1 1s.; Felix Hermann, 10s.; C. & T. S., 10s.; Mr. & Mrs. Khan, 5s. L. B., 10s. 6d.; F. J. Gould, 2s. 6d.; R. D. Williams, 2s.; W. B. Brockley Rise, 5s.

F. J. GOULD writes us:—"My only reproach against Mr. Lloyd's article on 'Namby-Pambyism' is his omission of my name as the sinner. Why should not the readers of the *Freethinker* know my faults? I should not have had the least objection. Anyway, I take all his admonitions in good part. If I did not, I should be guilty of the very narrowness I attacked. So if you should see him, please tell him I owe no grudge. You see I know the case all round, and could have written our friend's article for him. I suppose I shall have to be drummed out of the Emancipated Regiment some day!" We did not know that Mr. Gould was alluded to. But, of course, we are all open to criticism. Neither do we think Mr. Gould will ever be drummed out. We shan't beat the drum, anyhow.

G. L. ALWARD.—Quite correct. See list. Thanks for "kind regards."

T. W. HAUGHTON.—We are obliged. See paragraph.

W. H. HARRIS.—Thanks for reference.

Novo.—Pleased to hear the *Freethinker* cleared your mind of "the fog of Christian superstition." We find the whole of your letter interesting and encouraging. On one point we would suggest that sympathy with those who suffer is no guarantee of the efficacy of any particular remedy. A soft heart in a doctor does not do away with the necessity of a hard head. With regard to Mr. Foote's visiting Newcastle, he is almost tired of offering to do so.

JOHN SUMNER.—Better late than never. Thanks. There are some others who have overlooked their subscription to the President's Honorarium Fund, but we cannot notify them of the oversight. Glad to have your "best wishes for our health and vigor during the coming season."

C. & T. S.—Too late for last week, of course, but in time for the supplemental acknowledgments this week.

T. B. WAKEMAN.—Extremely sorry we missed you in London. We missed Mr. Morton also. In neither case was it our fault. Nor do we suggest it was yours. Fate was against us. We should have been specially glad to see you, whom we met at New York in 1896, and whom we remember so well.

ANONYMOUS (Liverpool).—Nothing could be more precise than *Robinson Crusoe*, but it is all fiction. That Bible events are dated so precisely does not prove that they happened; it only proves that they were believed to have happened, or that the writers wanted the people to believe that they happened. When Mrs. Jones backbites Mrs. Brown she is always very careful to give time and place (though it may be all lies) and the very words used by the parties that are mentioned.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

G. R. BALLARD.—Can't you see the impudent silliness of the assumption that the bitten boy was bound to die of hydrophobia without the Pasteur treatment? Such an assumption would justify any quackery. And what do you mean by "sentiment"? We will just put a case so that you may feel the force of it yourself. Suppose the deliberate torture of a dog would save your life, and the decision rested with us; we would give it against you. And for two reasons. Nobody has a moral right to torture another being, and it isn't worth while committing atrocity to preserve the life of a scoundrel—as you would be if you wanted to buy longevity at such a price.

J. PARTRIDGE.—We wish the Birmingham Branch every success.

SIMPLE SANDY.—In our next. No room this week.

HORACE DAWSON.—Favor us with a sight of the reverend gentleman's reply—if you get one. Someone may have imposed on his simplicity. No "great champion of Freethought called Davis" (or anything else) has lately made "a public confession of his conversion to Christianity" either at Finsbury Park or elsewhere. As to our "not being able to answer the Rev. Dr. Warschauer's questions," well, you know all about that.

W. H. HARRAP.—Must leave him for next week. Look out then.

H. T. HILL.—Will be useful. Thanks.

DICK EDWARDS.—Glad to hear you still "derive inestimable benefit" from the *Freethinker* and "never open an 'ordinary' number." We understand your loneliness in such a place.

O. T. BENNETT.—Overwhelmed with matter this week. Next. Thanks.

J. DE B. (S. Africa).—We are sure your "all good wishes for Mr. Foote go along with the money" and would go without it if they had to go alone. Our sincerest regards to your wife, who joins you in the subscription and the good wishes.

ROBSON PAGE.—Will be useful, though we cannot deal with any of them this week. Thanks.

J. MUIRHEAD.—Will deal with it next week. Glad your "forwards" enjoyed Mr. Cohen's lectures at Glasgow.

J. KNOX.—Thanks. It shall have attention.

M. E. PRIGG.—Glad there was some improvement—though less than there ought to have been—in Mr. Lloyd's audiences at Manchester on Sunday. The rest of your letter shall have a reply by post.

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.

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.

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.

There was another good audience at Queen's (Minor) Hall on Sunday evening; not quite so good as on the previous Sunday evening, as Mother Eddy was not quite so attractive a subject as Mrs. Besant. Mr. A. B. Moss occupied the chair, and persuasively invited discussion after the lecture. Several questions were asked, and two critics (one a lady) spoke from the platform in opposition. Mr. Foote concludes this special course of lectures on "Female Prophets" this evening (Oct. 15), the special subject being Miss Marie Corelli. Such a subject, in Mr. Foote's hands, should be interesting, and even entertaining.

The presentation of the Testimonial to Miss E. M. Vance, who has so long been the secretary of the National Secular Society, took place at the "social" which was held at Anderton's Hotel on Thursday evening, October 5. A large company assembled on the occasion, and Miss Vance was very warmly applauded. She acknowledged the presentation, which was made by the President, under a great strain of emotion; but, as it did not quite break her down, it gave color and tone to her speech, rendering it a little masterpiece in its way. Miss Vance has always underestimated her power as a speaker. She is not Irish for nothing. We may add that the cheque handed over to her was for £151 17s. 9d. The £150 was thus exceeded. The late subscriptions acknowledged this week will be handed over to her informally.

Miss Vance desires us to express her heartfelt thanks to all the subscribers to her Testimonial, and especially to those whose donations were accompanied by words of sympathy and encouragement. She could not do more than thank them if she wrote volumes, and she is not a waster of words.

Miss Vance, in her brave speech, made one slip—unconsciously. She credited Mr. Foote with participating in the public breakfast held at the Hall of Science on the morning of his release from Holloway Prison. He participated in it only to the extent of a cup of tea. He had eaten every crumb of the six ounces of dry bread, forming the solid part of his prison breakfast, soon after seven o'clock; and as he had to make a speech at the public breakfast, after being twelve months without practice, he determined to run no interior risks, but to let the six ounces of dry bread do for that morning. This was stated in Mr. Foote's *Prisoner for Blasphemy*.

Mr. Cohen lectures in the King's Hall, Birmingham, to-day (Oct. 15). We believe these are the first "special" lectures there since the N. S. S. Conference. Midland "saints" will please note. On the following Sunday (Oct. 22) Mr. Foote will deliver two lectures in the Town Hall. It may be mentioned that further meetings will be held in the King's Hall throughout the winter, and that the Birmingham Branch is receiving financial assistance in this effort from the Secular Society, Ltd.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti sends us a cheerful account of the successful open-air work he has been conducting during the summer months at Laindon, a small but growing town—not much more than a village as yet—in the county of Essex. Very orderly meetings have been held on Saturday evenings. Imported opposition has been changed this year for the boycott, but the latter has been also a failure, and the meetings have begun to be looked upon as an institution. Mr. Rosetti has done most of the lecturing, but much has been due to the gentle and persuasive chairmanship of Miss Pankhurst, and Mr. A. C. Rosetti has been busy distributing and selling Freethought literature. It is an interesting experiment, and shows what might be done in a great many other places if workers were only there to do it.

Mr. George Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, has favored us with a copy of the new edition of his *Ingersoll As He Is*. That was the title of the book when Ingersoll was living, and it cannot easily be changed now he is dead. Besides, in the case of a man of Ingersoll's greatness, "was" and "is" are pretty much the same thing. We are glad to see that the new edition is right up to date. It contains a refutation of all the slanders that Christian bigots have cast against the memory of one who was not only an intellectual giant, but also admired and loved by everyone who really knew him. Even the "recantation" story is disposed of by the legal affidavits of the Ingersoll family, in whose midst he died of heart disease so suddenly that death fixed the smile upon his face as he said "Better now" in reply to the query of his devoted wife.

We hope Mr. Macdonald's able and useful book is having a grand circulation. May we suggest, however, that he should correct a slight blunder in the next edition? It occurs in the following passage on p. 164:—

"Ingersoll did not believe in any supreme being which the theologians of any religion have yet defined. He never declared himself an Atheist, because he did not wish to be as dogmatic as the Christian, and would not commit himself on any subject where he had no positive proof. But he said many, many times that 'the supernatural does not and cannot exist.'"

Now we suggest to Mr. Macdonald that there is no more dogmatism about Atheism than there is about Agnosticism. Has our American colleague fallen for once into a Christian snare? Does he entertain the idea that the Atheist says "There is no God"? Bradlaugh, the Atheist, who, by the way, was a less dogmatic person than Huxley, the Agnostic, distinctly repudiated that conception of Atheism, as may be seen in his careful *Plea For Atheism*. Moreover, if Ingersoll denied the existence and the possibility of the supernatural, he must have been an Atheist in the only sense of the term as Atheists understand it. But there is no need, after all, for that elaborate argument. Ingersoll himself declared that he was an Atheist. In his last published lecture on *What Is Religion*, delivered only a year before his death, Ingersoll stated his own "theory" of the universe, and wound up by saying: "If matter and force [as he asserted] are from and to eternity, it follows as a necessity that no God exists." Long before that he had said the same thing. In the Dresden Edition of his works (vol. v., pp. 245-248) there is an "Interview" headed "My Belief." The interviewer asked him if he did not think "that the belief of the Agnostic is more satisfactory to the believer than that of the Atheist." Now listen to Ingersoll's reply:—

"There is no difference. The Agnostic is an Atheist. The Atheist is an Agnostic."

It is no use, therefore, to argue that Ingersoll was an Agnostic but not an Atheist. We have his own word for it that every Agnostic is an Atheist.

We have always been saying the same thing ourselves. We have invited—we have begged—the Agnostics to tell us what difference there really is between Agnosticism and Atheism. But we have never had an answer. Will some Agnostic kindly tell us now? We don't want to be informed that the word "Agnostic" is more personally convenient and less publicly offensive than "Atheist." We are perfectly aware of it. What we want to see indicated is something entirely different,—the logical and essential difference between Atheism and Agnosticism. And now, as the orator said, we pause for a reply.

It affords us much pleasure to note that our gallant monthly contemporary, the *Humanitarian*, is able to announce that the Humanitarian League "has never stood better than at the present time, its membership having steadily increased during the last two years." We are not surprised to hear, though, that the League's income, which is "well maintained," might be increased with advantage.

Secularist Work.—II.

BY JAMES F. MORTON, JNR.

(Continued from p. 652.)

SECULARISM, then, is the consistent application of the principle of an absolute and eternal separation of Church and State. It is as uncompromising as logic itself, since in so vital a matter no halfway measure can suffice. It stands for complete religious liberty, and against all subsidies or other forms of favoritism and unjust privilege for any creed or group of creeds. It invites church and synagogue, temple and ethical society, to carry on, at their own cost, such propaganda as they see fit, and to win such supporters as their demonstrated merits entitle them to. No honest believer should resist so elementary a demand for common justice.

Secularism cannot be identified with Freethought. There are (regrettably enough) Freethinkers who, by some extraordinary quirk of reasoning, are not by any means Secularists. They are ready to do evil that good may come of it. One of this type, Benjamin Kidd, wrote a large book to prove that the human race is so stupid and base that Nature herself invented the religious instinct, to cajole and frighten men and women into acting with some degree of decency, and into creating some form of social institutions. Huxley, staunch Agnostic as he was, recoiled from the thought of dethroning the Bible from its usurped place in public education. In Australia, the erudite and generally progressive Frankland, radical as he is on almost every question, insists that the Bible must be taught in all the schools. Stanton Coit, one of the foremost representatives of the Ethical Culture movement in England, although personally opposed to the dogmas of supernaturalism, seeks to remould the State Church rather than to break the ill-omened union. Many other Freethinkers, less flagrantly inconsistent, are yet cold and indifferent on the vital subject of the protection of their own liberties against ecclesiastical encroachment. Some of these live in a Fool's Paradise, dreaming of the speedy evanishment of superstition by some miraculous means, without the need of a finger being lifted for the purpose. Others are simply lazy, and willing to allow others to do all the work for them, although not disputing its importance. Still others regard the maintenance of a virulent propaganda against the authority of the Bible and the idea of God as all-sufficient, meanwhile sitting still, and letting the theocratic plotters organise their followers into a compact body for the destruction of the foundation principles of American democracy.

It is also true that there are Secularists who are not Freethinkers. The little sect of Seventh-day Adventists, narrow and irrational as is the creed to which they give their sanction, are clearcut and uncompromising in their antagonism to religious legislation. Not only where the law invades their rights, as with reference to the keeping of Sunday, but wherever the principle is at stake, they are active in behalf of the Secularist principle in all its fulness. Of a large percentage of Unitarians, though unfortunately not of all, the same may be said. Among the larger and more "orthodox" bodies, the Baptists have not wholly lost their historic tradition of religious freedom; and although many, perhaps the majority among them, are traitors to their best heritage, a saving remnant stand where Roger William stood, in defence of the equal rights of all the citizens, and against any meddling with theological matters by the State. The need of the hour is a union of all anti-theocratic elements in one strong movement against the common enemy. The non-theocratic Christian has nothing to fear from alliance with the Freethinker for this common purpose, since the Freethinker has no desire to win recruits by any other weapon than that of reason. He simply asks that, in the eyes of the State, all theories be placed on an equal footing,

with equal freedom of propaganda. He is willing to trust to the judgment of intelligent men and women, under these equitable conditions. Shall the Christian, who honestly believes what he pretends to accept, show fear that his creed will prove unworthy to bear the light?

It is true, however, that the theocratic movement to-day includes so large a percentage of the professed believers in Christianity as to lend much color to the charge that Christians know themselves to be maintaining a huge fake, and are deliberately seeking to maintain by brute force and by practices one of the grossest dishonesty, an imposition so monstrous that in a field of fair competition they know that it could not last an hour. The accusation may well be an unjust one; but that it can be made at all, and that it is seriously believed by an ever-growing multitude, is solely the fault of the Church itself. If the friends of Christianity would act like honest men and women, and like true Americans, they would greatly advance their own cause. It is probable that a vast majority among them are rather bigoted than hypocritical. The people, however, who find themselves robbed for the benefit of the Church and the priesthood, Romanist and Protestant, cannot be expected to comprehend the distinction, or to give credit for honesty to the institution which is shamelessly filching from them their possessions, trampling on their liberties, and seeking always favors for itself which are denied to the ordinary citizen.

The theocratic conspiracy against human liberty knows no bounds. It grows by what it feeds on, and demands always more. In Spain, the death of the martyr Francisco Ferrer proves that the Roman tiger is as ever athirst for the blood of the innocent and the brave. France and Portugal have been compelled, in sheer self-defence against an ever-encroaching hierarchy, to sever all State alliance with a polluted Church. Throughout all Europe, wherever the sufferers from autocracy are struggling for liberty, the Church is found enthusiastically upholding the oppressor, sanctioning the blackest acts of despotism. In every Republic in Europe the same Church is found in closest alliance with the vile elements which seek to re-establish monarchical institutions over the corpse of freedom. It is no wonder that the anti-clerical movement there becomes bitter and almost savage. The people are fighting for their lives, and have no time to consider the wonted amenities of life.

In our own land, the menace is no less grave, although the tactics of the enemy are different. Here, the people have been taught to consider themselves free; and they give no hearing to any emissaries of undisguised despotism. The Church here dares not bluster and threaten; it finds more profit in crawling and insinuating itself into the public treasury, and in securing favoring legislation under the pretext of public service. No matter how violent a blow they prepare against American liberty, they will never confess that the union of Church and State is any part of their aim. On the contrary, their lip-service to democratic institutions is indeed admirable. They have not the common honesty of the rattlesnake, who warns before he strikes. Bad as the principle of a State Church is proven to be, the open avowal of a purpose to introduce it into this country would deserve more respect than the sneaking hypocrisy with which Sunday laws and similar outrages on liberty are publicly defended.

The open threat, however, is not altogether wanting. Here and there enthusiasts are occasionally found who believe that things have gone so far that it is safe to throw off the mask. Even Gibbons, clever, unprincipled diplomat that he is, has blatantly avowed the will to make disbelievers in religion ineligible to public office. At the recent great Catholic Convention in New Orleans, resolutions were adopted actually demanding the exclusion from the mails of literature attacking the Church. "If they do these things in a green leaf, what shall

be done in the dry?" On the Protestant side, the National Reform Association, numbering members from all the great denominations, grows more and more impudent in its warfare against liberty, justice, and honesty. It demands a recognition of a God in the Constitution of the United States, and a recasting of all legislation to correspond, involving in the end, of course, the snatching of all civil rights from the honest and outspoken disbeliever in the established faith. That there are even limited groups of so-called Americans, to whom these monstrous crimes against justice and humanity seem right and reasonable, is an ominous sign.

A full rehearsal of the legislation already secured, in shameless hostility to the American principle of the separation of Church and State, would fill many pages. It is easily grouped, however, under a few heads. In every State in the Union the Churches are exempt from taxation, having dishonorably shoved their burden on the backs of the rest of the community. In a large proportion of the States the Bible is still used in the public schools, in some cases by absolute compulsion. Sunday laws exist in nearly all States. In State and Federal institutions and legislative bodies, in the Army and in the Navy of the United States, chaplains are supported out of the money raised by the taxation of Freethinkers, Jews, and other non-Christians. In several States, including New York and Pennsylvania, it is made a crime to present on the stage plays which bigots consider "sacrilegious," or which include the representation of some personage whom some people choose to call "divine"; and other equally despicable and unconstitutional invasions of free speech are continually being enacted. Several States either rob an Atheist of the right to testify in an alleged court of justice, or permit an unprincipled slyster to appeal to the religious prejudices of the jury to discredit his testimony. Even so monstrous an anachronism as a blasphemy law prevails in certain States. And with these mediæval and invasive statutes, inexpressibly unjust and dishonest as each one of them is, the theocrats are by no means satisfied. They wish to make these outrages on liberty merely the tiny beginnings toward their main end. In view of these conditions, is it not worse than insanity for any Freethinker, or for any decent American, Freethinker or not, to slumber in self-complacency and to raise no voice against this gigantic conspiracy for the overthrow of human liberty?

To meet the Devil, the American Secular Union has a definite and well-defined program. It is the one organized body, with just this work and no other to do; and that such a body is needed there can be no serious dispute. Those who fail to give it not only passive sympathy, but active and energetic support, voluntarily surrender their manhood or womanhood to the theocratic traitors, and yield their consent to the enslavement of their children's children. To join this Union is the first and most obvious duty of every full-blooded Freethinker, and ought to be the duty even of Christians who are not part and parcel of the treasonable conspiracy to destroy religious liberty, and to unite Church and State.

To the demands of the theocrats the American Secular Union opposes the declaration of principles known as the "Nine Demands of Liberalism." Not one of these demands is an attack on the legitimate rights of the Churches or of Christianity. The Union simply asks that the State keep its hands off of religious controversy, and allow creeds and philosophies to stand or fall, according to their respective merits, and according to the voluntary support which those merits can attract to them. Could anything be more just, or more in accordance with the principles of American democracy? We demand that Churches be taxed, not as a blow against them, but as the abolition of an improper subsidy. It is manifestly infamous to drag money out of the pockets of those whose honest convictions are opposed to the doctrines of the Churches,

in order to help forward the spread of those doctrines. So self-evident is this as a matter of elementary honesty, that it is difficult to respect the sincerity of any person who undertakes to defend the right of the Church to pick its neighbors' pockets.

Equally reasonable are the remaining demands. There is no justification for the employment of any species of chaplain at public expense. The State officially does not, and cannot, know whether one theory of the universe is more true or more likely to be true than another. Religious belief is a personal matter, which cannot in any way be affected by majorities. Hence the Government has no right whatever to take even a single cent from a single citizen, against his will, to assist in the preaching of doctrines to which unanimous approval is not given. Inasmuch as a certain percentage of the citizens honestly believe that the doctrines of Christianity are not only erroneous in many particulars, but in certain respects positively baneful, the right of private conscience in a democratic Republic renders it no less than indecent to require these citizens to contribute involuntarily to the spread of such doctrines. No sophistry can provide a shadow of excuse for the present course. It is merely the claim of the strong to rob the weaker, the power of the bludgeon, the denial that the individual has any rights which the controlling body is bound to respect. The demand for chaplains, on the part of those who desire them, should be met out of their own pocket-books. If the inmates of institutions cannot afford to pay for the services of the clergy, such chaplains as are wanted should be supported by the funds of the Churches or by voluntary religious organisations, as other missionaries are supported. If the Christian apologists are sincere in their pretence of the great value of the ministrations of such chaplains, they should be willing to maintain those services at their own cost, and not insist on stealing the money of non-Christians for the purpose. A thief has no business to prate of piety and morality; and a legally sanctioned theft is no less unethical than one not authorised by a legislature which has abused the trust of the people.

(To be concluded.)

God: Yesterday and To-Day.

Yesterday.—“God is omnipotent, omniscient, all-good Father, unchangeable and everlasting.”

To-day.—“God is a blank sheet upon which nothing is found but what you have yourself written.”

THE Christian God is a God of love, and he created hell. He is forgiving and merciful, and said “Vengeance is mine.” He is unchangeable, but alters with time. These seem paradoxical, but with the true believer they make belief more commendable. As the old lady remarked, she not only believed that the whale swallowed Jonah, but, had the Bible said so, she would have believed that Jonah swallowed the whale. Her true faith enabled her to swallow anything.

Freethinkers know that the “idea of God” was born of man’s ignorance. Faith, which is ignorance, revealed God. Science, which is the sum of demonstrable knowledge, has with every step made in advance caused God to retreat a step backwards. If this evolutionary idea persists God will finally be evolved right out of the human mind, and will vanish into thin air like the baseless fabric of a dream.

It is easy to understand that the Church retained the “vengeance of God,” for it formed a useful sword of Damocles to keep poised over the heads of dupes. But we have progressed, and the modern theologian possesses an utterly different conception now. Hell, for instance is not a *place*, but the *conscience*. So, when he includes heaven under the heading con-

science, we shall ask him, “Where is the land of immortality?”

The anathemas of the Church are impotent to-day. Yet the world is better. Why? Because knowledge has supplanted ignorance and Freethought has ousted Faith.

Yesterday “Infinite Wisdom” said, “Thou shalt have none other gods but me.” To-day this god says nothing, and is on the shelf with the other faded and dusty ones. It seems anomalous, for the infinite cause of all things must have caused us to put him there; must, in short, while manufacturing believers, have manufactured unbelievers—an extraordinary course if he desired belief. “Oh, the Devil caused unbelief,” we are told; and we reply, “Why did God let him?”

God is dying. No one is now left in the theological camp to doggedly affirm the old attributes of omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence, as Professor Flint did. It is not long ago, but “Iconoclast” broke that argument into smithereens, pulverised the bits, and blew the dust to the four winds of heaven; in short “played hell” with it once and for all. The clergy are now more artful, and there is considerable difficulty, say, in attacking a being alleged to be “incomprehensible.” We can only walk round such a conception. These old attributes are seldom trotted out now, for the veriest tyro in theology knows that omniscience must dictate what is necessary; omnipotence make that necessity possible; and benevolence assure it.

The real old crusted conception of God was the anthropomorphic one. This was a brand which gave to Deity not only arms and legs, but the masculine gender. No one can doubt that he had legs then, for he “walked in the garden in the cool of the evening,” just as paterfamilias might do, with a cigar, after dinner. But to-day how different! He doesn’t walk in the garden, or anywhere else; and though he once had an argument with poor old Moses, and almost came to blows, now he won’t even answer the Archbishop of Canterbury. If he’s on nodding terms with Mr. R. J. Campbell—well, we’ve only the reverend gentleman’s word for that.

“The Incomprehensible!” Why, he was comprehensible *once*! Surely there are fashions in gods as in hats. Yesterday he “walked”; to-day he is “without parts”—so of course he can’t walk, and has nothing to cool. Who knows what the next evolutionary step will be? We don’t often give tips in this journal, but we venture to commend to the Church that substance which up to the present has so largely puzzled science—RADIUM. Who shall say? The sum of this element may be “God.” Let the divines wrestle with the idea for all it is worth, and if it turns up trumps we shall all be able to have a piece in a brass box at home for emergency, a kind of Family Host to keep in the medicine cabinet with the *sal volatile*.

Verily with the change of God so wanes the night of superstition. To-day the Church is entangled in the last tattered remnant of a washed-out creed, during which the Freethinker turns to the dawn of a better future here on earth, and cries back into the darkness:—

“Your God is dead! Your heaven a hope bewrayed,
Your hell a byword and your creed a trade,
Your vengeance—what? A mere polluting touch,
A cripple striking with a broken crutch!”

A. FAGG.

A man wrote to me not long ago and asked me the best way to get rich. I wondered what I had done that I was expected to answer such a question. Finally, I felt constrained to reply to his letter, and I said: “If I knew the best way to get rich I should not be trying the poorest way, as I have been doing for forty years.” There is not a great man in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States, not a man whose achievements add to civilisation, or whose attainments make him conspicuous in the intellectual world. Most of the Roman clergy in this country are fossils or sap-heads who but for the arm of the Church would become hobos on the road of life.—L. K. Washburn.

Presentation to the N. S. S. Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

On Thursday last the largest number of Freethinkers that has ever been present at one of our Social Evenings assembled at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet-street. It was the first Social of this winter's season, and a very special occasion.

An extremely enjoyable program had been arranged. Mr. Hardisty, who is a great favorite at all our gatherings, sang; Madame Saunders's inspiring music gave energy to the feet of the dancers; and, thanks to Mr. Harry Hayward, their conductor, we enjoyed a most delightful excerpt from the program of "The Sparks" Musical Sketch Company.

Mr. Cohen, Mr. Lloyd, Mr. Moss, Mr. Heaford, Mr. Davies, and practically all the members of the Executive of the N. S. S., besides several provincial "saints," were present to swell the numbers and do honor to the chief event of the evening.

Mr. Quinton, who most ably and effectively played the part of master of the ceremonies, about the middle of the evening called for a lull in the proceedings for the presentation to Miss Vance of the Testimonial subscribed to by her friends, the readers of the *Freethinker* and the members of the N. S. S. Mr. Quinton expressed the pleasure that they all felt at seeing Miss Vance amongst them again, as during her recent severe illness many of them had felt that they might see her no more.

Mr. Foote then conducted Miss Vance to the platform, and in a telling and sympathetic speech said that it was in some respects a melancholy pleasure to preside on this occasion, and to present Miss Vance with a token of the respect and esteem which was felt for her by the party for which she had so devotedly worked. Quoting the words of Shakespeare through the mouth of Mark Anthony, he said it was wisdom to "let determined things to destiny hold unbewailed their way." Referring to the sad affliction which had befallen Miss Vance, Mr. Foote said that, as it was no use crying over what could not be helped, his advice to her had been from the first, and would continue to be, to go on as far as possible as if nothing had occurred. "Nothing has occurred," declared the President, "to change our regard and affection for her," and a murmur of applause showed how thoroughly everyone present knew that he was indeed expressing their feelings towards their beloved secretary. Knowing that the proceedings must be somewhat of an ordeal to Miss Vance, Mr. Foote did not make a long speech, but handing her a cheque for £151 17s. 9d., he remarked that though it was no insignificant sum for a poor party like ours to have contributed, he wished it could have been ten times as much, and if we had been a Christian society no doubt it would have been. A society that could pay £10,000 a year to its bishop and £15,000 to its archbishop could no doubt have contributed enough to guard against all contingencies in the future for a faithful servant such as Miss Vance had been. Mr. Foote humorously requested one of Miss Vance's friends to examine the cheque and make sure that it was genuine, as it would not surprise him to hear from our Christian friends to-morrow morning that it was nothing but a worthless piece of blank paper.

Concluding, Mr. Foote told an appropriate little anecdote of Queen Elizabeth and Lord Burleigh, the founder of the Cecils, and rather a different personage from their continuers. On one occasion, the Queen went to the Council Chamber, and Lord Burleigh, who was aged and suffering from gout, tried to rise and do obeisance to his Sovereign; but Elizabeth abruptly told him to remain seated, saying, "It is not for your weak legs I want you, but for your strong head." Miss Vance's eyes were not so good as they had been, her feet were not so nimble, but her head was as good as ever, and her heart was as good as ever, and they wanted her for both.

Miss Vance, who was deeply moved, in a voice broken with emotion, but nevertheless clearly heard by all in the room, said she knew it was usual on such occasions to depreciate oneself; but she was not going to do that, as she knew her stroke of ill-luck had sufficiently depreciated her already. She briefly reviewed her connection with the National Secular Society, saying that, although previously a Freethinker, her active interest in the Society dated from the morning on which Mr. Foote left prison and partook of the first real breakfast he had eaten for a twelvemonth. In 1887 she had been honorary secretary to a Branch, afterwards assistant secretary to the late Robert Forder, of the Parent Society, and then general secretary. No one could be more conscious of their faults, but Miss Vance hoped that she had no more faults than she knew. She knew that others in her position might have done better, that others would do better, but she had done what was her best. The Testimonial had reached a much larger sum than she had ever expected, but were it ten times larger or ten times

smaller it would have been all the same to her, for, in the words of one of the subscribers, "It was not the amount, but the expression of goodwill it carried." Miss Vance then thanked the President for the kindness and sympathy he had shown her all through her trouble. Some of the sympathy she had received had hurt her. His sympathy was of the sort that did not hurt. She also thanked the members of the Executive, her colleagues, for the help they had given her. Her personal friends did not require public thanks, though she wanted to say her friends were the best a woman ever had. She knew that paragraphs in the *Freethinker* could not be had for the asking, neither could they be bought, but on this occasion she was going to ask Mr. Foote to give her a paragraph, so that in that way she could convey her thanks to all those who had subscribed, but were unable to be there that evening.

In conclusion, she wished to say that the advice Mr. Foote had given to her she wished to give to all her friends—Would they, please, also go on as if nothing had happened? Would they still continue to write to her and to call at the office? She knew that some of them had refrained from motives of sympathy, and had passed her by at meetings rather than worry her. She begged that they would not do this, but ask her for what they wanted, as they had always done. The saddest day of her life would be the day when she felt that she was unable any longer to occupy the post of secretary.

Miss Vance resumed her seat amidst loud and prolonged applause. All present were deeply moved by her speech.

Mr. Foote, in the name of the Society, then thanked Miss Kough and Miss Stanley for the help they had given to Miss Vance and through her to the Society.

This necessarily somewhat sad interlude having been concluded, dancing was again resumed until eleven o'clock, when the proceedings terminated.

It was feared that the excitement of the evening might upset Miss Vance and cause a recurrence of the heart-trouble from which she has suffered so recently, but up to the present she is none the worse.

K. B. K.

THE USUAL THING.

Church: "I see your neighbor has a black eye."

Gotham: "Oh, yes."

Church: "Who gave it to him?"

Gotham: "His wife."

Church: "I'm surprised. How did it happen?"

Gotham: "Oh, they had an argument over where the 'God Bless Our Home' motto should be hung."

EFFECTIVE PRAYER.

A minister accepted a call to a new church in a town where many of the members bred horses and sometimes raced them. A few weeks later he was asked to invite the prayers of the congregation for Lucy Grey. He did so for three Sundays. On the fourth, one of the deacons told the minister he need not do it any more.

"Why," asked the preacher, with an anxious look, "is she dead?"

"Oh, no," said the deacon; "she's won the race."

CONSPIRATORS.

The late Bishop Williams of Connecticut tells it:—

"One Sunday morning, just after breakfast, I repaired to the rector's study, where I was soon followed by his little four-year-old son, who climbed up on my knee and began to talk. Suddenly the little fellow looked up into my face and said, 'Bishop, do 'oo want to see my piggy book?'"

"Yes, indeed," said I. So the child slid down and started to get the book. When half way across the room a sudden idea seemed to strike him, and running back and putting one hand on my knee, he looked up in my face and shook his little forefinger at me, whispering, 'Bissop, it's Sunday. We must do zis on ze sly!'"

Obituary.

I REGRET to report the death of Mr. Henry Margerison, of Port Sunlight. Mr. Margerison was sixty-three years of age, a convinced Freethinker for the last thirty-nine years, and an ardent admirer of Charles Bradlaugh. During his illness, with the certain knowledge that he would not recover, he wrote to me expressing his strong desire that he should have a Secular funeral. The Secular Burial Service was read at the graveside by Mr. Joseph A. E. Bates in a very impressive manner, in the presence of a large gathering.—W. McKELVIE (Liverpool Branch N. S. S.).

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. III.—Miss Marie Corelli."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, E. Saphin, a Lecture.

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, A. B. Moss, "The Failure of Christianity."

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.30, Mrs. Boyce, a Lecture.

ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno and Walter Bradford. Newington Green: 7.30, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture. Highbury Corner: Wednesday, at 8, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (outside Maryland Point Station, Stratford): 7, R. H. Rosetti, "Aids to Faith."

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Jolly Butchers Hill, opposite Public Library): 7, J. Hecht, "Meteorology: Biblical and Scientific."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): C. Cohen, 3, "Some Curiosities of Christian Evidence"; 7, "What the World Pays for Religion."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): J. T. Lloyd, 12 noon, "The Silence of God"; 6.30, "The King of Terrors Unmasked."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, "The Fourth Centenary of Michael Servetus, the Victim of Calvin."

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

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Fred Morgan, Miscellaneous Dramatic Recital. Pianoforte selections.

OUTDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Haymarket): Saturday, Oct. 21, at 8, Joseph A. E. Bates, "The Paradox of Christian Socialism."

LIVERPOOL (corner of Boaler-street and Shield-road): 3, Joseph A. E. Bates, "Bible Fetichism." Edgehill Church (outside): Tuesday, Oct. 17, and Thursday, October 19, at 8, Lectures on the Bible—I. "The Jewish Logos and Pseudo-History"; II. "The New Testament: A Study in Error."

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.

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Hunting Skunks*, G. W. Foote; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll. 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 6d. per hundred, post free 7d. Special rates for larger quantities. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

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Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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The Society has a considerable number of members, but a much larger number is desirable, and it is hoped that some will be gained amongst those who read this announcement. All who join it participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest, or in any way whatever.

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