

THE Freethinker

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*One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals;
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.*

—WORDSWORTH.

God's Day.

THE origin of a periodical day of rest from labor is simple and natural. It has everywhere been placed under the sanction of religion, but it arose from secular necessity. In the nomadic state, when men had little to do at ordinary times except watching their flocks and herds, the days passed in monotonous succession. Life was never laborious, and as human energies were not taxed there was no need for a period of recuperation. We may therefore rest assured that no Sabbatarian law was ever given by Moses to the Jews in the wilderness. Such a law first appears in a higher stage of civilisation. When nomadic tribes settle down to agriculture and are welded into nations, chiefly by defensive war against predatory barbarians; above all, when slavery is introduced and masses of men are compelled to build and manufacture; the ruling and propertied classes soon perceive that a day of rest is absolutely requisite. Without it the laborer wears out too rapidly—like the horse, the ox, or any other beast of burden. The day is therefore decreed for economic reasons. It is only placed under the sanction of religion because, in a certain stage of human development, there is no other sanction available. Every change in social organisation has then to be enforced as an edict of the gods. This is carried out by the priests, who have unquestioned authority over the multitude, and who, so long as their own privileges and emoluments are secured, are always ready to guard the interests of the temporal powers.

Such was the origin of the day of rest in Egypt, Babylon, and elsewhere. But it was lost sight of in the course of time, even by the ruling classes themselves; and the theological fiction of a divine ordinance became the universally accepted explanation. The fiction is still current in Christendom. We are gravely asked to believe that men would work themselves to death, and civilised nations commit economical suicide, if they were not taught that a day of rest was commanded by Jehovah amidst the lightnings and thunders of Sinai. In the same way, we are asked to believe that theft and murder would be popular pastimes without the restraints of the supernatural decalogue fabled to have been received by Moses. As a matter of fact, the law against theft arose because men object to be robbed, and the law against murder because they object to be assassinated. Superstition does not invent social laws; it merely throws around them the glamor of a supernatural authority.

Priests have a manifest interest in maintaining this glamor. Accordingly we find that Nonconformists as well as Churchmen claim the day of rest as the Lord's Day—although its very name of Sunday betrays its Pagan origin. It is not merely a day

of rest, they tell us; it is also a day of devotion. Labor is to be set aside in order that the people may worship God. The physical benefit of the institution is not denied; on the contrary, now that Democracy is decisively triumphing, the people are assured that Sunday can only be maintained under a religious sanction. In other words, religion and priests are as indispensable as ever to the welfare of man kind.

This theological fiction should be peremptorily dismissed. Whatever service it once rendered has been counterbalanced by its mischiefs. The rude laborer of former times—the slave or the serf—only wanted rest from toil. He had no conception of anything higher. But circumstances have changed. The laborer of to-day aspires to share in the highest blessings of civilisation. His hours of daily work are shortened. The rest he requires he can obtain in bed. What he needs on Sunday is not rest, but *change*; true re-creation of his nature; and this is denied him by the laws that are based upon the very theological fiction which is pretended to be his most faithful friend.

The working classes at present are simply humbugged by the Churches. The day of rest is secure enough without lies or fictions. What the masses want is an opportunity to make use of it. Now this cannot be done if all rest on the same day. A minority must work on Sunday, and take their rest on some other day of the week. And really, when the nonsensical solemnity of Sunday is gone, any other day would be equally eligible.

Parsons work on Sundays; so do their servants, and all who are engaged about their gospel-shops. Why should it be so hard then for a railway servant, a museum attendant, an art-gallery curator, or a librarian, to work on Sunday? Let them rest some other day of the week as the parson does. They would be happy if they could have his "off days" even at the price of "Sunday labor."

Churches and chapels do not attract so many people as they did. There is every reason why priestly Protection laws should be broken down. It is a poor alternative to offer a working man—the church or the public-house; and they are now trying to shut the public-house and make it church or nothing. Other people should be consulted as well as mystery-men and their followers. Let us have freedom. Let the dwellers in crowded city streets, who work all day in close factories, be taken at cheap rates to the country or the seaside. Let them see the grand sweep of the sky. Let them feel the spring of the turf under their feet. Let them look out over the sea—the highway between continents—and take something of its power and poetry into their blood and brain. During the winter, or in the summer if they feel inclined, let them visit the institutions of culture, behold the beautiful works of dead artists, study the relics of dead generations, feel the links that bind the past to the present, and imagine the links that will bind the present to the future. Let their pulses be stirred with noble music. Let the Sunday be their great day of freedom, culture, and humanity. As "God's Day" it is wasted. We must rescue it from the priests and make it "Man's Day." G. W. FOOTE.

Puritanism.

GREAT is the power of advertisement! And the essence thereof is repetition. Repeat a thing often enough, whether it be the value of a soap, or a pill, or a theory, and a large number of people will inevitably accept it at its face value. Not only will those who hear accept it, but it will eventually impress those who say it. For to say a thing gives it an air of externality. To put a thought into words gives it an objective and independent existence. It is ours and yet not ours. It fills its author with all the conscious and unconscious bias of parentage, while it is sufficiently objectified to induce a reactive influence, and so secure support by an appeal to the prejudice that gave it birth.

The current chatter about Puritanism furnishes strong illustrative proof of this. To the candid student of history it would seem that if there was one movement which more than another deserves to be called a failure, it is Puritanism. In every single instance where it has been enabled to manifest itself with anything like strength, outraged human nature has eventually flung it forth with loathing and contempt. This has been the case in England, in Scotland, and in America, the three places in which it has had the clearest opportunities for working its will. And this has occurred, not because the party of vice has gained the upper hand, but simply because normal human nature found it to be a very real obstacle to the expression of its better instincts. But the Puritan has never been eliminated from life. He remains, not quite as a rudimentary structure reminding us of a lower phase of life, so much as an acquired disease, the germs of which may remain latent over a long period, but which will, when favorable circumstances present themselves, break out into a state of virulent activity. So it happens that the dominance of English life by avowed Puritanism being a long way behind us, and popular information on the subject being at best of a very vague character, existing Puritans boldly proclaim the necessity for a revival of the "Puritan spirit," and with equal courage—or impudence—claim that the best elements of our national life owe their being to the past influence of Puritanism.

Under these circumstances, one welcomes a recent leading article in the *Times* driving home some plain truths on this subject. Not that there is anything new in it to readers of the *Freethinker*, but it is welcome because it will reach many that the *Freethinker* cannot reach, and it is not open to the charge of being inspired by "infidel prejudice." It certainly is no more than a perception of the plainest facts of human nature and of human history which leads the writer of the article to say that "the practical failure of Puritanism in the past was so complete that the very word arouses suspicions and resentments," and that the passion with which Puritanism was rejected by the nation "would have been impossible if there had not been some moral revulsion in it." For this is the most striking thing in connection with Puritanism and its history. Its intellectual consequences—the narrowing of the mental horizon, its cultivation of the spirit of intolerance and general lack of mental charity—are bad enough, but its moral consequences are even worse. Its moral obsessions causes people to see immorality where none really exists, and by banning essentially harmless methods of enjoyment, it causes them to seek relaxation in other directions. The moral paroxysms which the modern Puritan loves as the opium-eater does his drug are often little more than expressions of the want of charity and humanity that would stand better chance of correction were they less effectively disguised. It is one of the illuminating facts of the situation that Puritanism stands more thoroughly condemned by ethical than by even intellectual standards. It fails to clarify the intellect, and it fails to purify conduct. And one might reasonably argue that this dual failure is

really but twin aspects of its inability to rightly comprehend life as a whole.

The fault of the Puritan was, says the article referred to, that he was always "in a state of unnatural moral intensity, in which his mind lost all sense of proportion, and in which he found it easy to condemn with irrational ferocity whatever he disliked in the manners and conduct of others." This is a good description in its way, but it applies far more accurately to the present-day Puritan than to the original seventeenth-century article. Then it was not moral intensity applied to life that was the evil, but religious intensity applied to morals. When Macaulay said that the Puritan hated bear-baiting, not because it hurt the bear, but because it pleased the people, he put the psychology of the situation in a sentence. We have to be greatly on our guard in checking contemporary Puritan description of seventeenth-century vice. Above all, we need to beware of reading our modern meaning into such words as "immorality." For a little examination shows that often enough what was meant by vice was the wearing of a gay dress or a colored band round the hat. Or even when admitted evils were denounced, the objection was often a purely theological one. The chief objection to gambling was that it involved profanity. Casting lots was "an appeal unto God," and cards and dice were sinful because in their use "that great and solemn ordinance of a lott is expressly and directly abused and prophaned." Harrison, in his *Description of England*, and Philip Stubbs, in his *Anatomy of Abuses*, provide numerous instances of denunciation on similar grounds. Enthusiasm for morality was often a mere cloak for the theological frenzy. The Puritan was not only able—thanks to his condition of "moral intensity"—to produce a moral warrant for his condemnation of whatever he disliked; he was also able to find a moral sanction for whatever he liked in his own person or in that of others.

Both of these qualities were peculiar to the Puritan, and together served to give him an unenviable reputation for humbug and hypocrisy—a reputation not ill-sustained by his modern representatives. Or, if it be said that there was no conscious dissimulation in this moral fervor, and therefore the term hypocrisy is misapplied, the reply is that to others it had all the appearance of the genuine article, and to the Puritan himself the consequences were as bad, if not worse. For the man who sees that he is treading a wrong road, and who consciously simulates a virtue, there is some hope. But the man who disguises from himself the sources of his conduct, who envelops them in a cloud of attractive words, and so guards against his own appreciation of their nature, the chance of improvement is comparatively small. A wall of verbiage stands between him and the facts. The real motive, for example, of the outcry against Sunday shows, etc., is pure Sabbatarianism. And if this were realised a very large number of those who join in the outcry would withdraw their support. But by much talk of the rights of labor, the need for moralisation, and the like, people persuade themselves that in opposing Sunday entertainments they are playing the part of social and moral reformers; and thus the really animating and ugly motive is obscured by an inoperative but, in itself, admirable desire. So, too, with the Johnson-Wells affair. Sheer race prejudice, and the desire for cheap and safe notoriety, were the motives at work here. But these had to be disguised under professed concern for the moral welfare of the onlookers—even while the same parties that organised the protest lent their countenance to lavish military displays that serve to keep the desire for physical fighting alive and active. To have with us the conscious hypocrite is bad enough; but he is preferable to the unconscious one, because he is less poisonous to all around him.

The essentially diseased moral state engendered by Puritanism is seen in the solemn discussions among its representatives as to whether a Christian ought to smoke, or drink alcohol, or

play cards, or go to a theatre, etc., etc. Each question is raised and discussed as though it constituted a moral problem of first-rate importance, and eventually those who answer in the negative persuade themselves that they are monuments of virtue, while all others are cesspools of vice. All sense of proportion, and eventually all sense of reality, is lost. The Puritan never understands himself because he never permits himself to see his own nature out of its moral uniform. Persuaded that all he does springs from an unusually developed moral nature, he finds a moral justification for all his actions. If he imprisons or boycotts a Freethinker while shouting for freedom, or imposes a State religion on the child while resenting the right of the State to teach religion, or accepts financial aid from the State while protesting against the State endowment of religion, he is at no loss for complete moral justification. As represented by him, morality becomes both ugly and objectionable, and there is small wonder that by contrast immorality wears an alluring aspect it could not otherwise assume.

In this way does Puritanism demoralise the world it sets out to moralise. All its protests against the immorality of the theatre—granting their soundness—did nothing to make the theatre purer. On the contrary, by inducing timid but decent people to shun the theatre, it left it open to those who sought the coarseness of action and expression. To make an institution morally healthy, one needs to bring it into direct and vital communication with social life. Isolate it, and its isolation tends to become a condition of degradation. Nor has all the Puritan emphasis on sexual purity done anything to make people sexually pure. Instead of doing this, it has taught people to look for uncleanness where none need exist, and has thrown an atmosphere of impurity around things essentially harmless. It has created a public opinion so essentially unhealthy that it has made any public discussion of a sex question a practical impossibility. And having created this, and secured a libidinous leer whenever the relation of the sexes is dealt with, it reaps a sanctimonious profit by pornographic announcements of sermons to "Men Only." Hobbes was not far from the truth when he said that the Puritans only knew two commandments—the third and the seventh.

I agree with the *Times* writer that the triumph of Puritanism was "the greatest disaster which civilisation in this country has ever suffered; and it is one from which our minds have not yet recovered." As intolerant as the Roman Catholic Church at its worst, it succeeded in giving to intolerance the character of a personal duty which made it infinitely more objectionable. Its repudiation of the artistic side of life coarsened the national character. Less consciously worldly than the Roman Church, it tried to apply asceticism to the whole of life. Without actually making people better, it blinded them to the necessity for improvement. The meanest and most sordid desires could become, when necessary, coated with a moral purpose. It made England the one country in Europe which annexes territory in the sole interests of morality, and conquers a people from a sheer desire for their spiritual advancement. Puritanism has indeed left its marks on the national mind. And we shall never, perhaps, see life whole, and therefore sanely, until it has become a mere historical reminiscence.

C. COHEN.

Did Jesus Ever Live?

AT the recent meeting of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, one whole session was devoted to a discussion of the question, "Does Christianity necessarily stand on an Historical Basis?" As a matter of course, the answer was in the affirmative; and it will be interesting to examine some of the arguments advanced in support of it. Principals Franks and Forsyth, Dr. Warschauer, and Mr. R. J. Campbell were the gentlemen who undertook to

confirm the faith of the assembled believers. Principal Franks started with the admission that the problem raised by such writers as Mr. J. M. Robertson and Professor Drews is "a real one and not to be shirked." This means that the mythical theory of the origin of Christianity is not so groundless as many Christians imagine, and that unless it is adequately refuted it may gain the day. The contention of Professor Drews is that Christianity "never really depended upon history at all," but was solely mythical in its nature from the first; or, in other words, that the Gospel Jesus never lived. Now, did the Congregational divines aforementioned succeed in overthrowing the proposition? Neither Principal Forsyth nor Dr. Warschauer even attempted to face it seriously, but both contented themselves with making dogmatic assertions of the wildest character. The latter went out of his way to sneer at the advocates of the mythical theory, charging them with "lack of psychological insight," and asserting that Jesus "is probably the best known historical character of all time." "The historic basis of Christianity," he exclaimed, "is none other than the historic Son of God." Mr. Campbell's one argument was that the Christian religion could not have triumphed over all other religions in the West had it not had an historical founder. Principal Franks was the only speaker who honestly endeavored to state the case accurately and without prejudice; but even he left the arguments of the critics unanswered.

It is quite true that to surrender the historical Jesus is tantamount to renouncing Christianity itself. Principal Franks is entirely correct in claiming Paul as a tacit supporter of the orthodox view. It is impossible to ascertain what the Apostle actually believed, but his language concerning Christ is calculated to convey the idea that he is treating of an historical being. He refers to his birth by a woman, he describes his atoning death and his triumphant resurrection, and he offers salvation through his name. He calls him "God manifest in the flesh," "Lord of all," "the Son of God," whom we are exhorted to worship with grateful hearts and to serve with self-denying ardor. Such is Paul's Christ, and such a being has, of necessity, only a mythical existence. By the time the Gospels came to be written the myth had developed considerably. The interval between birth and death was now declared to have lasted upwards of thirty years, and to have been characterised, towards its close, by wonderful deeds and beautiful words. But the Gospel Jesus is only Paul's Christ living a quasi human life, at the beginning of which a supernatural birth occurs, and at its end, a supernatural death. In other words, the Gospel Jesus is fully as mythical as Paul's Christ. It is wholly immaterial whether Paul and the authors of the Gospels believed in the actuality of such a being or not, because their attitude to him is evidentially valueless. Neither their belief nor disbelief has any bearing whatever upon the problem. What is beyond the possibility of a doubt is that the writers of the New Testament wished their readers to take the Gospel story as literal history, and that the Church has always so taken it. In sermons, prayers, hymns, and Bodies of Divinity, the God-man figures as a supernatural person who actually sojourned on earth in fashion as a man, and who, by dying, purchased the salvation of our lost world. But suddenly the science of literary and historical criticism arose, and not all the piety of Christendom could have prevented it from exercising itself upon the Holy Book. It began its work of investigation in the Old Testament, and soon robbed it of every shred of a title to infallibility. For a long time the divines comforted themselves with the delusion that, whatever happened to the Old Testament, the New was absolutely safe. They fondly imagined that even profane criticism was not profane enough to touch the Gospels and the Epistles. But they were mistaken. The critics have been at work on the New Testament long enough to discover that it is every whit as

vulnerable as the Old. The impregnable rock of Holy Scripture has already been shattered to atoms, or, rather, proved never to have existed. We are thus, at last, finding out the truth about the Bible; and the comparative study of religion has revealed the fact that Christianity is only one of a large group of essentially similar cults.

Now, the critical study of the Bible and the historical examination of Christianity are already bearing abundant fruit. No thoughtful person can fail to observe that the Church is breaking up into irreconcilable and mutually destructive parties. Within the Protestant fold there are three flocks in a state of mortal antagonism to one another. There are first the more or less orthodox sheep whose faith in the Shepherd is almost, but not quite, as strong as ever. Even they are obliged to introduce some modifications into their creed. They still believe in the supreme miracle of the Incarnation, though they are not as sure as they would like to be of what they mean by the Divinity of Christ. There is also a growing party glorying in the appellation of Liberal Christians, whose distinction is that they eliminate all supernatural elements from Christianity, and treat Jesus as a mere man whom God inspired to be a teacher of religion and morals. They adhere to an historical Jesus whose portrait is not drawn in the New Testament. Then we have the New Theologians represented by Dr. Anderson, of Dundee, to whom Christianity is a metaphysical idea, which neither had, nor needed, an historical founder. Dr. Anderson does not hesitate to call the Gospel Jesus a myth, a being who never did and never can exist. Even the Catholic Church is suffering seriously from internal unrest. There are those within it who are bold enough to criticise the infallible Pope himself, treating his doctrinal Encyclicals with very slight respect. According to Catholic Modernism, "the gospel of the synoptic Jesus is but the germ from which Christianity has developed." This is how Principal Franks characterises the position occupied by the Modernists:—

"If the Christ of faith has grown beyond his original starting-point in the Jesus of history, this does not mean that the Christ of faith is the less valuable of the two. On the contrary, allowing for all the limitations of the Jesus of history, we are asked to admit, in opposition to Liberal Protestantism, that the Christ of faith is the essence of Christianity. The essence of Christianity is an idea, not a person; a religious faith, not an historical fact."

The curious thing is that Principal Franks affirmed the historicity of Jesus without answering the critical objections to it. Indeed, he was forced to make several concessions to criticism. He failed to defend the miraculous, and frankly admitted that the stories of the virgin birth and bodily resurrection of Jesus are not essential to Christianity. His central contention was that the phenomena of the Christian religion can only be explained by an appeal to an historical personality. As a matter of fact, nobody denies that there was a personality involved in the founding of it, the probability being that many personalities were engaged in its origination. What the Principal really meant, however, was that only a supernatural personality could have accomplished such a task. He spoke of "the absolutely invulnerable historical element in Christianity and also the historical element on which it necessarily rests," which is "the historical element common to all the New Testament writers," namely the "Fact of Christ." This "means," he said, "that God has in reality, not in thought or idea only, manifested himself in our world. Christianity rests on the fact of Christ." But this is a pitiable begging of the whole question. It is the fact of Christ that criticism has assailed. It is the fact of Christ that Professor Harnack rejects as a worthless superstition. What is the use of asserting as fact what has never yet been verified? The present state of things is laughably chaotic. Christian divines are at sixes and sevens among themselves. The fact of Christ so ardently clung to by Principal Franks is myth to

Dr. Harnack, and Dr. Harnack's fact of Jesus the man is equally a myth to Professor Drews and Dr. Anderson. How utterly silly Dr. Warschauer's haughty dogmatism looks in this light, and Mr. Campbell's appeal to his experience as a test of truth is seen to be nothing but a sham, as religious experience always varies according to the religious beliefs held. Having what he calls his own experience of Jesus, Mr. Campbell boasts of his immunity to "all argument about his non-historicity."

Principal Franks is terribly afraid of criticism, and makes concession after concession rather than tackle it. Nothing is more certain, from the general tone of his address, as well as from several expressions found in it, than that Christ is to him a supernatural personality; but face to face with criticism the fact of Christ waxes exceedingly small.

"Christianity has always in all its forms included a belief in the resurrection of Jesus; it is the pledge and seal of our belief in a future salvation, and the guarantee of the acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ. But neither the miracles, the virgin birth, nor the details of the life and teaching of Jesus belong to the absolutely necessary dogmatic basis; a reference to the Christianity of Paul is enough to show this. As to the absolutely necessary historical basis of apologetic, this consists wholly and solely in the fact of Christ. The miracles, the resurrection, and the virgin birth, under other circumstances, did belong to the apologetic basis of Christianity; but times have changed, and in the 'present distress' of the 'modern perplexity,' as we well know, they are not proofs, but things to be proved."

Is it surprising that in the conflict between so many contradictory opinions about Jesus and Christ, Christianity itself is rapidly dying out, and that even the fact of Christ is increasingly ignored or denied? While professional divines are busily anathematising one another, the representatives of one school calling those of another school "fools" and "idiots," the people are beginning to realise that all supernatural religions are alike false and mischievous, and that all Christs, without distinctions, are but myths to be dropped and forgotten. Of Jesus, as well as of Adonis, Osiris, or Attis, they are prepared to say, HE NEVER LIVED.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Stonebreaker.

HE was resting awhile from his labors, for it was close and sultry. Even in the shade cast by the clump of spruce by the wayside, it was warm enough to induce disinclination to work, but cool enough, in comparison, to be invitingly pleasant, after the glare of the sun. The cheery "Good morning" with which the stonebreaker greeted my approach, and the sight of the slowly ascending smoke clouds issuing from between his lips and from the bowl of his cutty pipe, seemed to beseech something more than a mere passing salutation. So it was, in response to the inward prompting and the assumed outward appeal, I dismounted from my bike, and sat down beside the lonely toiler to enjoy the more leisurely a smoke and a rest.

After a few moments' weathery conversation, there was silence, during which we smoked peacefully and contentedly, and I had the opportunity to observe my companion. He was a small man, firmly knit, clean-cut, and full of health. The more I looked at him the stronger became the impression that he was no ordinary outdoor laborer. He had a personality; and personalities are uncommon. His broad, bronzed brow was crowned by thick, but dusty, grey hair. The eyes were clear and sharp and quick. His lips were thin and determined-looking, and were closed tightly over the short shank of his pipe. There was a distinct appearance of latent culture in his face, a culture that became more evident and unmistakable as I watched the flickering manifestations of thought passing over the bright eyes. The coarse work had crystallised itself in his appearance; but not emphatically enough to

destroy the traces of mental activity, nor powerfully enough to extinguish refinement.

I wondered what lay behind the serenity of his mien, and if I could, without adventuring too far upon the obvious secrets of his personality and life, lead him into revealing the things that had, assuredly, meant much to him. Something, however, restrained me; for there are times when to probe too deeply, even though encouraged, into the deeper affairs of the heart is neither good to the confessor nor to the one who confesses; and if the priests had humanity enough to remember this and to refrain from their "soul" penetration, we could treat them more charitably. But a vast amount of their power depends upon this stolen knowledge, this base usurpation of human hearts; and we cannot but be wrathful over the soul-soothing balsam with which they decorate their mental thefts. The priestly sucking of secrets from the hearts of men and women, and the control over the lives that the power bestows into the unclean hands, are reprehensible and condemnable. If the solace satisfies at all, it can only be temporarily; while the loss of independence, the sting of unwarrantable interference, and the more or less felt sense of indignity, rankle and are permanent. The evil of the established custom outweighs all the good, until ultimately we have a complete reversal of the terms. We are led to believe that "confession is good for the soul," with the priest as the honored mediator between the human soul and the God soul; and the consciousness of the falsity of it smoulders on within our minds, unextinguishable by the loads of verbal refuse continually dumped upon the heap.

The long-imposed silences of the stonebreaker's task had been responsible, no doubt, for the quaint composure and contentment of his face. Perhaps, too, the hours and days and weeks of self-circumscription had heightened the light intensity and keenness of the intelligent eyes. Seemingly he had no desire to break the continuity of our smoke. Companionship, apparently, was quite sufficient in itself for him. So we sat in silence, each thinking his own thoughts, and enjoying the quietude that was nearly palpable around us, that had become his home and was my resting-place.

All at once I saw a strange gleam flash in his grey eyes. The lips tightened more forcibly over the pipe shank, and the glimmering of a smile shot brightly into his face and remained, giving it a lucid effect, as if the smile were always just on the verge of a laugh. A rough, scarred, and dirty hand went up to his hair, and the fingers slipped through it once or twice.

I looked along the road in the direction towards which his eyes were set, and I saw the object of his calm amusement. The figure was garmented in the funereal black, so expressly representative of the lifelessness of the ideas associated with it. The ministerial pace was slow and heavy: the heat had successfully reduced dignity of profession to pulpy commonplace, with a dash of absurdity. As he drew nearer, we noticed the vain endeavors to button a refractory waistcoat. Never before had I so fully realised the peculiar significance of the sartorial distinction. The soft felt hat seemed but the complement of the mental softness beneath it. The obvious attempt in the solemn attire to induce sobriety and seriousness of preconception in the minds of all observers was ludicrously negated by the parson's anxiety to regain the appearance of the unimpeachable respectability ere he reached us. The moisture-laden choker, adapted to assist in keeping the gaze heavenwards, seemed to apologise profusely for its utter inability to express stiffness of belief any longer. It hung in melancholy fashion round his neck and looked disgusted. The white tie, emblematical of the spotless purity of Paradise, had relinquished its claim and fallen foul of the Devil. The sanctimonious phisnomic assumption of close relationship to the giver of the grievous heat had been thoroughly diluted with sweat; it had become unctious.

Pictured side by side with an afternoon-calling suburban curate—the human establishment of all that is seeming and quiet and sensible, sedate and nice and proper—our black-frocked parson appeared the very embodiment of modern religious suffering under the hot sunrays of Reason. Once, those solemn and serious garments had represented the acme of unstained conventionality. Within them lodged all virtues, all proprieties, all goodness. They imprisoned the highest type of imperfections, and spoke irrefutably of propinquity to God. Now they were soiled and dust-stained, tight and cumbersome, and bore the traces of distaste. Quite obviously the wearer would have been glad at the disposal of some of them; but they adhered glutinously; and his consciousness of their absurdity only made his endeavor to conceal it in pompous pride the more vain-glorious and foolish. The heat had forced a desire for more freedom upon him, but instead of discarding the restrictive garments he had merely loosened them, and the effect was disastrously comic.

"Very warm to-day, sir. God gave us the heat."

The quiet voice of my companion was replete with tender, unassuming sympathy. It broke in upon the unutterable thoughts of his reverence like a holy voice from heaven, bidding him be patient and uncomplaining under all adversities, pleading sweetly with him to be meekly submissive and gentle.

Naturally, his reverence was startled. He stopped abruptly in front of us, quite nonplussed and speechless with wonderment. Then, somewhat gathering his suddenly overthrown wits together, he stammered, "W-what d'you mean?"

"I mean that out of the bountiful hands of the great giver of all good things there chances occasionally to fall a bad thing. Whether God should be held responsible or irresponsible, I am not sure. It may be an oversight. But we should be patient and endure amidst all things, should we not, sir?"

The ministerial lips twitched, and the face that had been red before became rubicund. Desire to say something was so acute that it actually choked him. The words refused to come. Certainly he was displeased; and yet there was not the slightest suspicion of sarcasm in the intonation of my companion's voice. Rather was it so softly modulated as to suggest the very essence of humane consideration.

After waiting a few moments, seemingly in the expectation of receiving some reply to his question, the stonebreaker continued, half meditatively, half regretfully, very quietly and unobtrusively:

"Yes! God's overflowing heart is the mystery of all mysteries. How pure it is, and how kindly! Our poor human minds are too weak to comprehend it, too distressingly limited to catch even the greatest evidence of its all-circumambient love, too debauched by selfishness to admire its inexpressible beauty. We are puny, and halting, and blind, so easily annoyed, so quickly fretted, and so simply befooled. We are children of the winds, blown about like autumn leaves, helplessly and undefiantly submissive to our impotence. And God gave us the winds as he gave us the heat of the sun, perhaps to temper and to try us. It is, indeed, strange and marvellous. Every drop of sweat upon our bodies speaks to us of the vast power of our Heavenly Father and of his nearness to each one of his children. He made us and supports us, filling us with his own breath all the years of our lives. This delicate construction of our bodies, how intricate it is, and how surely it tells us of his transcendental potentiality! Were it not for our bodies we would not sweat. His mercies are so varied and innumerable that it were folly for us to deny his existence. Surrounded, as we are, by those mercies that we cannot, even did we try, overlook them: they cannot be mistaken; the divine nature of them shines as brightly as the brilliant sun, and pours its glorious, heart-enwrapping rays even into the darkest unbelief, to the deepest depths of iniquity. And yet how thankless we are, how sodden with sin, how earthly!

"Yes! God gave us the heat as he has given us all things, our irritability, our weaknesses, our littleness: poor man; poor God! And if it so happen that the heat strikes the lives from some of our brothers and sisters why should we so bitterly complain of God's goodness, why be so prone to doubt it, why should we mourn for them and be sad of heart? It is easy to get to know God; it is difficult for us to become acquainted. He is always with us; but we are often far from him. He covers himself with a cloak of many thicknesses so that we cannot see him, nor feel him, nor hear his voice. We cannot comprehend him. Like the sea, he is of many emotions; like the land, stable and enduring; like the air, invisible but essential. We groan aloud in the warmth and beautiful sunshine: he is with us, and we know it not. We weep in the driving wind-swept rain, we are miserable and unhappy and peevish: he is within us, and we know it not. We are angry and rude and unpleasant, and God has never forsaken us. He occupies all space and all things, and how, then, can he get out of them? We are foolish children of a foolish father, and we know it not. If our eyes would only open, would they not see the manifold wonders of his work; but, being blind, God is a stranger to us. We look through a glass darkly, not face to face. Strange that we should never think to turn the glass and examine its back! Perspiration is God's handiwork and the proof thereof. His Son, his one ewe lamb, sweated in agony on Calvary's cruel Cross for our redemption from the Devil and his sin; and we, children of God and children of the Devil, sweat, also, in agonies of discomfort. How miserably foolish we are! How basely ungrateful! How despicably obnoxious must our forgetfulness be in our Heavenly Father's sight!"

"You damned scoundrel!"

The epithet was belched forth; and before the verbal sulphureousness had cleared away the reverend gentleman was off along the road as quickly as he could possibly remove himself from our contaminating company. During the stonebreaker's quiet reverie the parson's face had been a veritable cinematograph screen over which every conceivable emotion had passed. Surprise, suspicion, hate, horror, contempt, indignation, guiltiness, pity, dismay, vacuity, had culminated in the expression signified by the phrase "caught in the act." Never before, in all probability, had he encountered such a glaring mass of naked contradictions. Never before had his own words been so unostentatiously cast between his teeth. As Freethinkers know from observation, when the pill is swallowed it is sweet enough: the internal bitterness of it is only discovered in the crunching.

My companion relit his pipe, as I remarked laughingly upon the complete discomfiture of his speechless (or nearly so) opponent. My desire for some information regarding his past life was considerably whetted; but the roadside worker seemed not to be conscious of my interest. As I rose to leave he said, "A stonebreaker's life is a solitary one; but it generally is thoughtful; and thoughtfulness is the lever that topples superstition from its pedestal of custom."

"If you ever chance to come this way again," he continued, as I mounted my bike, "I shall be glad to see you." I promised I would.

ROBERT MORELAND.

Humanity has not only been suppressed by submission to religious authority; it has been distorted and emasculated. No man can be a man to himself who takes another man for his master. This is not the age of slavery, but of freedom. Religion is mental and moral servitude. Religion is not service; it is surrender. The cry of the soul is for liberty. Individualism is the creed of emancipation. Every man a man, must be the motto of this twentieth century.—*L. K. Washburn.*

"What constitutes the chief happiness of your life?" asked the serious Sunday-school teacher. She blushed, and intimated that "John had fixed the day."

Acid Drops.

Rev. Stanley Parker always was, and probably always will be, a loose-tongued person. We referred last week to his word-battle with Jack Johnson, the pugilist,—in which the latter won "hands down." Mr. Parker subsequently announced that he hoped, or at least wished, to convert the champion. "If I could win Mr. Johnson for Jesus Christ," he declared, "and lead him to the Cross, I should be willing to give up a year of my life; that is, I would be willing to die a year sooner." It was a very cheap boast. The reverend gentleman knew he could not be taken at his word. Besides, there is no evidence that Jack Johnson is not as good a Christian as the Rev. Stanley Parker. According to all accounts he is certainly as good a man.

Stanley Parker's personal letter to Jack Johnson contained the following passage:—

"A few years ago we were privileged to have in this country a negro lecturer, the late Mr. Celestine Edwards. He was a great Christian controversialist, who possessed amazing powers of mind and was a wonderful debater and unequalled at repartee. He had an enormous following, and all who heard him realised the immense possibilities of the race to which he belonged."

A "few years" ago should be "many years" ago—and all the rest is wild exaggeration. Stanley Parker must be a poor creature himself to fancy that Celestine Edwards had "amazing powers of mind." His face was his fortune. It may be added that inviting Jack Johnson to become a second Celestine Edwards is the deadliest insult offered to him yet. We hardly think it could be beaten.

Rev. Alfred Marwood Elton, of Weston Hill, Bath, left £21,588. "Left" is a good word. He couldn't take it. And if he could it would have melted.

General Booth is still at his old tricks. Down at Newcastle he has been laughing at those who say that he does not publish a balance-sheet. "Balance-sheets," he says, "have been before the world ever since the Army started." Grand old showman! Who ever accused him of not publishing a balance-sheet? It is not the absence, but the character, of the balance-sheet that has been called in question.

William Thomson Braham, of 13 Hartington-street, Moss Side, Manchester, has patented through Messrs. Geo. Davies & Son, agents, 4 St. Ann's-square, Manchester, an invention which "relates to the class of devices that are employed by spiritualists to communicate with the spirits of the departed." The article itself appears to be a board with grooves, letters, figures, signs, etc., and the specification refers to "the fingers of the individual using the device." What a world it is in which such things are possible!

One sees the true inwardness of the Campbell-Forsyth public reconciliation at the Congregational Union Conference—when all was made to appear for the best in the best of all possible worlds—by noting that it preceded by a few days the Rev. R. J. Campbell's departure for America on a three months' preaching tour. Some years ago a similar tour, which had been arranged, had to be cancelled, in consequence of the rumpus caused by the outbreak of the New Theology. The prospect is rosier now.

According to Sir Joseph Compton-Rickett, M.P., the Club is the severest competitor of the Church. The poor Church tries as hard as possible to keep up in the race but she falls hopelessly behind. "She has adopted," the honorable gentleman says, "every expedient that common sense and business ability can suggest. Her sermons have been contracted for fear of tediousness." Rev. R. J. Campbell warned the meeting to which this was said that there was something else behind. "The theology of the Christian Church," he declared, "makes by implication certain assumptions which the modern mind cannot make." Precisely. Churches empty as people cease to believe.

Dr. Dixon, of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, says that he never goes into an art gallery without wanting to burn up half the pictures and half the statuary. London, he thinks, would then be purer. London, *we* think, would be much purer if such prurient minds as Dr. Dixon's were sent to some lonely island, and kept there. Luckily, most people do not go to an art gallery looking for indecencies, and so they fail to find them—until some Dixon comes along and

debauches their minds by reading his own filth into what is on view. Really, the best thing would be for Dr. Dixon to stay away from art galleries altogether—and pay some little attention to the printed indecencies of the Bible. There is not much room for the play of imagination there.

The editor of the *Hibbert Journal* says that, on turning into a public-house in Wales, one of the first things he saw was his own journal lying by the side of the beer pump. We do not know what the moral of the story is. Does it mean that the two were in juxtaposition because drink led to reading the *Hibbert*, or because reading the *Hibbert* led to drink? At any rate, it is clear the *Hibbert* won't stop the sale of drink, or it would have been put away in a back room.

The Archbishop of Canterbury thinks it is quite possible to solve the present education difficulty with justice and fairness "in more than one way." We beg to differ. There is only one way in which the State can act with fairness and justice to all, and that is the way the Archbishop will not adopt. By fairness and justice all he means is that an agreement may be struck between Churchmen and Nonconformists. And this is quite possible—for a time. But the bargain is simply one between two exploiters of the public purse and of the public. They may agree to share what neither of them can monopolise. This is a method adopted by all sorts of shady characters in both the social and financial world. But they do not usually go about talking largely of fairness and justice.

The Archdeacon of London has been unburdening his soul on the subject of Secular Education. He is kind enough to grant the honesty of those who advocate it—we are quite overpowered by the kindness of the condescension—but he points out that the mere inculcation of moral teaching is not enough. He says, we have taught people not to lie, not to steal, not to murder, for thousands of years, and still people lie, and steal, and murder. Mere precept does not moralise. Well, we do not seriously quarrel with the Archdeacon over this. Many others have said the same, and we have said much the same sort of thing ourselves. Spencer denounced as a mere superstition the belief that teaching "Thou shalt not steal" from the pulpit having failed, the same teaching from the platform would be crowned with success. In its way, the idea that the world is dying for want of mere moral instruction is only a degree less absurd than the belief that it is dying for want of more religion.

But having granted this, we beg to assure the Archdeacon that those who advocate Secular Education are not quite so shallow as he imagines. Those who advocate the exclusion of religious instruction do so on the plain ground that the teaching of religion is no part of the proper business of the State. And those who do not believe in giving children, under any condition, religious instruction in any form or place, are not generally under the impression that a bundle of moral texts divorced from religion is going to do what the same bundle of texts associated with religion have failed to accomplish. Morality in its best sense is the expression of the whole man. And to the make-up of the whole man there go a number of factors, mere instruction being but one, and not usually the most powerful one. Innate disposition, home life, social circumstances and surroundings, all play a powerful part in determining conduct. The place of knowledge in conduct is to determine the expression of conduct by a wise encouragement of some tendencies, and an equally wise suppression of others. We agree that mere precept is not enough, and it is equally clear mere religion as a moral force has behind it a record of the most ghastly failure conceivable.

A correspondent of the *Church Times* advises those responsible to procure burglar-proof alms-boxes for churches, in order to prevent robbery. There is nothing like having a trust in Providence.

"No one will accuse the Bishop of London of being an authority on Biblical scholarships," runs the opening sentence of a paragraph in the *Christian World*. We are not aware that anyone ever accused the Bishop of London of being an authority on anything. The amazing thing is that such a man should have been selected for such a position. The only explanation is the intellectual poverty of the modern Church, combined with friends in high places.

The Rev. Dr. Wenyon has just had published a book of his on *The Creation Story*. The *Methodist Times*, in the course of a eulogistic notice, remarks on its up-to-date character, and refers to the "world of simple boldness" in

the writer's plainly saying "The two Creation stories of the Book of Genesis don't agree with one another." A world of simple boldness! Well, this may be true; but we would like everybody to consider the kind of mind developed by Christian teachings if it requires a world of courage to express a truth that all men outside an idiot asylum, so long as they are not blinded by prejudice, can see for themselves. Really, we doubt if the most thorough-going anti-Christian ever brought a more damning proof of the demoralising influence of Christianity than is contained in the assertion that a man requires to be possessed of a world of boldness before he dare express—to Christians—the plainest of truths. And the worst of it is, it is true.

The Mayor of Crewe put himself in a hole. Sitting on the magistrate's bench, trying a case against a number of boys charged with stone-throwing, he severely admonished them, and remarked "You are not taught such practices at your Sunday-school." He was immediately pounced upon by the Magistrates' Clerk, who said: "I beg your pardon, sir. I think the Scriptures give much prominence to how Goliath was killed by a stone." And everybody laughed—including the boys, of course! Moral: Don't be too sure of what isn't in the Bible.

The *World* justly says "it is a striking tribute to Celestial honesty that Chinese bonds should have fallen so little over the rebellion news.....Any form or suggestion of repudiation appears to be foreign to the Chinaman."

At a Church bazaar at St. Helens a vote of thanks to Lord Derby was proposed by Capt. Michael Hughes, who regretted that Lord Derby's colors were second in the Derby and not first in the Coronation year. This was at a Church bazaar! Perhaps the sporting Captain thought "the better the place the better the deed." Lord Derby remarked, in responding, that the occasion was hardly appropriate, but he had heard such wishes expressed before, and was generally reminded of them if his horses won.

Here is some unmistakable truth, from the Archbishop of York, leading up to a highly questionable conclusion:—

"We are surrounded—we know it well—by a widespread ignorance which is deluded by the superficial belief that it is knowledge. What we need for our nation at the present time is men who know what knowing means, who know the difference between knowing and not knowing, and have acquired a standard of knowledge that will help them to discriminate between the ideal and the possible, between sentiment and sense, and between reason and rant. For the supply of such persons we must look to our universities."

The concluding sentence spoils it. We daresay, if we knew who are the people the Archbishop of York thinks can give sense instead of sentiment, and reason instead of rant, we might demur to the selection. But it appears tolerably certain that we must not look to our universities for the right kind of intellectual leaders, and, if we do, we shall be seriously disappointed. As a matter of fact, there is scarcely one of the leaders of English thought for the last hundred years who owed his equipment and leadership to the great universities, in any genuine sense. Mill and Darwin, Huxley, Clifford, and Spencer, with many more that might be named, owed nothing to the universities. Class interests and religious prejudice have always had too firm a lodgment there to produce the type of thinker that is of lasting benefit to the world.

In a speech on Ireland, Mr. Birrell, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, referred to the religious difficulty in connection with the granting of Home Rule. He said: "I do not deny its existence, although I doubt its right to be called religious." Why not? Surely Mr. Birrell is not under the impression that it cannot be called religious because it sets people flying at each other's throats. He must be fully aware of the fact that nothing in the world does this so effectually as religion. We are not for a moment under the impression that religion is the sole cause of the trouble in Ireland; but, all the same, it requires very little study of Irish affairs to show that it is one of the most powerful of all obstacles to a lasting and peaceful settlement of Irish affairs. And in saying this we do not wish to be taken as championing Catholics against Protestants, or *vice versa*. It is a case of six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. The Catholicism of the South of Ireland could not easily be more intolerant than the Protestantism of the North. The temper of both needs to be broken before social and political freedom could become a fact under either party.

"If Bergson helps to lift France out of the quagmire of materialism," the *Review of Reviews* says, "his brilliant mythologising will be welcomed even by the cynic." The

quagmire of materialism! What is that? We don't believe the writer himself has the faintest idea. It is one of the cant phrases of apprehensive religionists. Morally speaking, at any rate, the notion that France is in a quagmire as compared (say) with England, is the veriest absurdity. Its sole support is the testimony of filthy foreigners who visit Paris for the purpose of wallowing in an international pig-stye.

Two murderers were hung at Pentonville Prison on Tuesday morning, October 17. One was the Lascar Godinho, who murdered Miss Emily Brewster, stewardess on the P. & O. steamer *China*. The other was Edward Hill, who strangled his wife at King's Cross, after they had been married only a few days. Both convicts were attended by Catholic priests. Hill was received into the Roman Catholic Church a few days before his execution, the rites of confirmation being administered by the Rev. Dr. Butt, assistant to the Archbishop of Westminster. We suppose he left this world with a reserved seat ticket for the next. His wife, having been hurried out of time into eternity, without a minute's warning, is, on orthodox principles, probably in hell. Such is Christian justice.

Rev. William Johnstone Hamilton, of Killarney Cottage, Westerhan Hill, Kent, is a sprightly old buck, who seems to have rather imitated David (the man after God's own heart) in the matter of Abishag. The result was that, despite his seventy years, he became a father. Unfortunately, he allowed his partner, a domestic servant of seventeen, to obtain an order against him in respect of the child. Since then the Bishop of Rochester has had to sit upon the old buck at a Consistory Court, and declare him incapable of preferment; which, however, doesn't seem a very terrible punishment at his time of life.

Christian preachers have always made a lot of the Gospel story of the woman taken in adultery. Rev. Alfred Newns, vicar of St. Jude's, Gray's Inn-road, seems to have a very poor opinion of it. A woman accosted him, and he said, "I am the vicar of this parish, and I'll give you into custody." She said, "Oh, don't! I am the mother of a child." "I shall not forgive you," said the tender-hearted man of God. She ran away and was chased into the churchyard, where she was arrested, and afterwards brought before the magistrate, the tender-hearted man of God appearing as prosecutor. He has noble ideas of humanity.

American newspapers are on the track of the Rev. Clarence Richeson, the eloquent and handsome young sky-pilot who has been arrested on the charge of poisoning Miss Avis Linnell, a choir girl, at New York. They find that he has always "left a trail of broken hearts" behind him. He seems to have been engaged to several ladies everywhere. A kind of Solomon the son of David! He once preached on "The Temptations of Young Girls in the City." He appears not to have included himself in the list.

The instigations of Christian Evidence people and the local press led to an organised riot at Streatham Common on Sunday afternoon. Repeated assaults were made on Mr. Boulter's platform. The police inspector sent for reserves, and even then was too busy to arrest the ringleaders of the disorder. Mr. Boulter was eventually escorted from the Common by twelve policemen and five park-keepers. The heated disciples of "the meek and lowly" one appeared to be thirsting for the "infidel's" blood. They threaten worse doings this afternoon (Oct. 29), but the police seem determined to stop violence.

The Dublin Text Book for Tramway Conductors and Motor Men is a little waistcoat pocket publication which we presume is forced by pious busybodies upon the city employees indicated in the title. It opens with a hymn called "Our Almighty Guide," which in turn opens with the line "I know not the way I am going." This is a nice confession of ignorance on the part of a tram-driver. One would feel safer behind him if he *did* know the way he was going. And the same applies to the conductor. But pious busybodies often succeed in making themselves ridiculous.

From the *Manchester Guardian* :—

"An intelligent young lady of seven put a theological poser to her governess the other day. 'Is God a Catholic, or a Protestant, or a Jew?' she asked. The governess gave the only possible answer. She said: 'He does not belong to any of them. He is above all.' 'Well,' observed the little girl critically, 'I think He ought to make up His mind on such an important matter, and belong to one or the other.'"

Shocking profanity? What is the world coming to? If Jesus Christ doesn't hurry up his second visit he'll be too late.

George Lowe, a Burnley weaver, committed for trial on various charges of burglary in the north of England, was arrested at Nelson, where the police found four skeleton keys in his possession and over £200 worth of stolen property. He cried piteously in the dock. He was an ardent Sunday-school worker in Burnley.

"Vanoc" of the *Referee* has lucid intervals. One of them occurred last week. With reference to the Leeds prosecution, he said that "In view of the welter of opinion on theological matters into which Christianity is divided, it seems almost inconceivable that blasphemy prosecutions should still take place." He then proceeded :—

"Mr. J. W. Gott, of Bradford, has appealed to me for a subscription towards his defence in the prosecution which has recently been initiated against himself and a companion. Mr. Gott has published horrible matter for which, in my judgment, he deserves punishment, not because he is wicked, but because he has offended against decency and against the cherished convictions of millions of his fellow-countrymen. To attack Mr. Gott under the obsolete, moth-eaten, mouldy, and superstitious blasphemy statutes is stupid, because it enables publishers of filth to pose as the upholders of reason and of liberty."

While not endorsing all "Vanoc's" language we are bound to say that he maintains a correct attitude. It is an outrage to appeal to the Blasphemy Laws at this time of day. If Mr. Gott has sinned against "decency" let him be prosecuted for "indecentcy." That is fair and straightforward. To bring in the Blasphemy Laws is like shooting him with a double-barrelled gun, so that if one barrel misses him the other may bring him down.

The Leeds authorities (or is it the pious Chief Constable?) must have been badly in want of work to start prosecuting Mr. Gott at all. *Rib Ticklers*, as he calls his pamphlet of paragraphs, are for the most part neither wise nor witty, and sometimes mere silliness expressed in appropriate language. Here and there an epigram is borrowed from a better writer. The serious prosecution of such a pamphlet is a very ridiculous blunder from any point of view. Conducted under the Blasphemy Laws, it is simply disgraceful. Freethinkers, of course, have only one way open to them whenever the Blasphemy Laws are invoked,—namely, the duty of resistance. Their policy is to make the Blasphemy Laws unworkable, with a view to the earliest possible abolition.

Professor Matteucci, the eminent superintendent of the Vesuvius Observatory, was lunching with some English friends at the Grand Hotel in Naples.

The dining-room fronted the sea. The waves crashed against the massive embankment of stone, and showers of white spray rose high in the sunlit air.

"Is it not majestic—heavenly? But what is it like in your observatory when Vesuvius is active?" inquired a young lady of the company.

"It is not like heaven," said Professor Matteucci. "It rather reminds me of a story about a Neapolitan widow whose husband had been dead some years. One night she was persuaded to go to a spiritualists' séance, and there the spirit of her dead husband appeared and spoke with her.

"My dear Agostino," said the widow to the shade, 'are you happy now?'

"I am very happy," Agostino answered.

"Happier than you were on earth with me?" asked the widow, coaxingly.

"Yes," replied the shade; 'I am far, far happier now than I was on earth with you.'

"The widow was silent a moment. Then she asked:

"Tell me, Agostino; what is it like in heaven?"

"Heaven?" said Agostino. 'I am not in heaven.'

St. Peter (to Judasberger); "Why have you come here? You have taken the wrong turning, and must retrace your steps. Do you not know it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle —"

Apparition of Judasberger: "Yes, but I settled all my monies on Rachel and our children when mine doctor said there was no hope. I have had to pay no death duties, and I died penniless."

Peter: "Be off! We stand no technicalities here."

It was suspected that Bobbie had not been in the habit of saying his evening prayer regularly, so he was informed by nurse that unless he did something might happen. The next night she went into the bedroom to question him. "Have you said your prayers, Bobbie?" she inquired. "No, I haven't," was the prompt reply, "and I didn't say 'em last night nor the night before, and if nothing happens to-night I shall never say 'em again."

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, October 29, Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool: at 3, "Rev. R. J. Campbell and Christ Again"—at 7, "The Crescent and the Cross."

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

December 3, Stratford Town Hall; 10 and 17, Queen's Hall, London.

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—October 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 29, Birmingham. November 5, Queen's Hall, London; 12, Queen's Hall, London; 19, Leicester; 25, Stratford Town Hall. December 31, Haringgay.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £305 16s. 2d. Received since:—R. D. Voss, £1 9s. 6d.; Robert Stirton and Friends, Dundee (quarterly) £1 10s.

J. A. BRIGGS.—All you have to do is to write formally to the headmistress stating that you desire your daughter to be withdrawn from religious instruction. If you find any difficulty write to us again. Thanks for cuttings.

J. W. M.—We have handed your letter on the N. S. S. secretary, who will attend to it. Thanks for good wishes.

SAXON.—Thanks for list of addresses to which we can (and will) send the *Freethinker* gratuitously for six consecutive weeks.

R. PAGE.—"Surely" is a word you should not use unless you are sure. We are not sure that the *Freethinker* would treble its circulation at a penny—and we know something about it, for we started it at a penny and carried it on for years at that price, with ruinous loss to ourselves. As to outdoor lectures during the winter, what do you want to thin the population in that way for?

W. G. HOBSON.—It is not included in Bentham's works. It was written by George Grote, the historian of Greece, from Bentham's notes, and is a very powerful piece of analysis. John Stuart Mill mentioned it with high praise.

D. BEALE.—The Quakers are the least harmful of Christian sects, but we may take your hint some day.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—Glad you "enjoy the *Freethinker* more and more" after four years' acquaintance and think "each issue seems better than the last." We note your taking two copies weekly—one to file for reference and one to give away. Thanks for suggestions, which shall be considered.

M. MAGER.—Have passed your subscription over to the N. S. S. secretary. Glad you think we ought to have help from many Jews in our campaign.

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings. Other matter attended to.

J. C. MAAGAARD.—We will deal with it next week. Meanwhile it may safely be assumed that a speaker who totally escaped our notice could hardly be a Freethought leader.

W. COCKSEDOE.—See "Acid Drops." Satire is the best weapon in such cases.

R. D. VOSS.—Subscription credited to you on publishing side. Mr. Foote is keeping pretty well generally, but is working off the dregs of a cold which the break in the weather brought him, and which lecturing did not improve. Thanks for your appreciation of "the splendid logical articles" in our pages.

O. B. HOARE.—Next week.

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.

To-day (October 29) Mr. Foote delivers two lectures (afternoon and evening) at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, Liverpool. Reserved seats for each lecture are 1s. front and 6d. back. Tickets can be obtained at the Hall—or of the secretary, Mr. W. McKelvie, 57 Penrose-street, Everton—or of Mr. W. A. Williams, 17 Pool-bank, Port Sunlight. Those who do not provide themselves with tickets will be able to obtain admission, while there is room, by means of a silver collection at the entrance. Tea will be provided between the lectures, at 8d. per head, for visitors from a distance.

Mr. Foote had very fine audiences at the Birmingham Town Hall on Sunday,—the evening audience being particularly fine in spite of the rain. Both lectures were to all appearance highly appreciated; certainly they were very much applauded. Nothing of the success of the meetings was due to the local newspapers. There is this consolation, however, that what the press does not make the press cannot unmake.

Mr. Cohen had a very good audience at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening, notwithstanding the wretched and boisterous weather. We hear that his lecture was a very good one too, full of interest and instruction. Mr. Cohen occupies the Queen's Hall platform again this evening. We hope to hear of a still better audience.

The November course of Sunday evening lectures at the Stratford Town Hall, under the auspices of the Secular Society, Ltd., will be started on November 5 by Mr. Cohen. The West Ham N. S. S. Branch is co-operating locally with respect to the advertising, etc., and we have no doubt there will be large audiences. Questions and discussion will be invited as usual, and we hope there will be plenty of both.

The West Ham "saints" were determined not to go without a lecturing visit from Mr. Foote before Christmas, so they did their best to corner him—and succeeded. They secured the Stratford Town Hall for the first Sunday in December, and offered it to him through the N. S. S. secretary. He had that date open, and didn't mean to fill it, but the West Ham Branch were so enterprising and clever in this move that he couldn't say them No. The President's far East-End friends may therefore count on seeing him shortly after all.

Mr. Lloyd delivers two lectures to-day (Oct. 29) at the King's Hall, Corporation-street, Birmingham. District "saints" should give the greatest possible publicity to Mr. Lloyd's visit, and thus help to secure him good audiences.

Manchester "saints" should note that Mr. William Heaford lectures at the Secular Hall to-day (Oct. 29).

Here is an extract from a letter we have received from one of our long-time readers:—

"I am pleased to add my tribute to the *Freethinker*. I have been a constant reader of your paper for more than twenty-two years, and I never liked it better than I do now. It is a storehouse of information. There is not a dull line in it. 'Acid Drops' is a treat, and no mistake. During all the twenty-two years, in sickness and in health, the *Freethinker* has been a devoted friend to me and I to it. You love your paper—you are proud of it, and I am quite sure your readers are proud of it too."

Our correspondent asks why we do not stir up Nottingham with some lectures. We reply that London headquarters will help if the local "saints" bestir themselves a bit.

Another extract from an appreciative letter:—

"By the kindness of a young friend, self and wife see the *Freethinker* every week. We look forward to seeing it with delight, its contents being so entirely different from most publications we see. The articles interest us, both by their aim to spread the truth and the sincerity of the writers.....I am now over seventy-three years of age, and much regret being unable to do anything for the cause."

The *Freethinker* is so different from other journals! Nobody—friends or enemies—will deny that.

A Leek parson recently stated that Haeckel had admitted himself a believer in Christianity. It was a silly statement, but one of his hearers took the trouble to write to Haeckel himself on the subject. Haeckel's reply to Mr. Jack Barton, Ivydene, Yardley, Worcestershire, is as follows: "Many thanks for your kind communication. My philosophical convictions (mainly regarding Monistic religion *contra* Christian Dogmatics) have not altered for fifty years—as at first stated in *General Morphology* in 1866 and fully explained in the *Riddle of the Universe* in 1899. The myth of the Church, relating my conversion, is a clerical invention.—Sincerely yours, ERNST HAECKEL."

Some correspondents who send us cuttings are invited to exercise more discrimination. We want cuttings on which we can hang paragraphs after the style of our "Acid Drops." We cannot undertake to reply to every silly parson's views or those of obscure correspondents in local newspapers. The best cuttings are those which contain facts.

The Basis of Materialism.

IT may savor somewhat of presumption for an obscure individual in the twentieth century to add another word to a controversy which has engaged the attention of the profoundest intellects among men ever since philosophic speculation began. Yet, on the other hand, it should be remembered that with the advance of the ages new lights appear on the oldest of subjects, and as we toil up the heights of intellectual progress we gain new points of view.

The tendency to discredit any kind of "metaphysical" speculation is one of the most noticeable features of modern thought. This is no doubt largely due to the influence of the "Relativist" philosophy which prevailed during the latter part of the nineteenth century, for its fundamental principle is that all our knowledge of the universe is the product of an interaction between two essentially different existences, namely, our "minds" and the "external world"; that all knowledge is, therefore, relative to our own knowing faculty only; that "absolute" knowledge is, therefore, unattainable; and that the nature of the ultimate existence is, and must ever be, inscrutable to us.

The natural consequence of this conviction was to induce philosophers to leave "metaphysical" questions severely alone, and to induce scientists to concentrate all their energies on the advancement of physical research. The many triumphant results of such research, and the wonderful advances made in physical science in recent times, are too well known to need mention. But this very advance of physical science seems to be bringing about the inevitable reaction. As human knowledge appears once more to be approaching the confines of its realm, the existence of the twilight region beyond forces itself on the attention of the searcher after truth, and though his modern searchlights are vastly more powerful than the feeble lanterns of his predecessors, yet there is still a thick darkness beyond the twilight where the baffled rays are of no avail.

But with each successive improvement in the searchlights, and with each successive extension of the illuminated area, one important fact becomes increasingly manifest, namely, that the unexplored region is always found to be of essentially the same nature as the explored region, and that each new revelation of the unknown is fundamentally of the same order as the known. Whence we are justified in concluding that the yet unexplored region in the darkness beyond will still consist of solid ground, and not of empty air.

The modern Monistic philosophy emphasises this fundamental uniformity between the known and the unknown. It would, indeed, break down the distinction between physics and metaphysics altogether. It teaches the sublime doctrine that all existence is one; that the "mind" and the "external world"—the "subject" and "object" of the old philosophies—are of essentially the same nature; that the distinction between "absolute" and "relative" knowledge is a figment of the imagination; and that the "phenomenal world" is a world of reality and not a shifting phantasmagoria of "appearances" only. This is our new point of view, and the object of this article is to inquire whether, from this new point of view, the world-old problem of existence may not appear a little more hopeful of solution.

THE REALITY OF EXISTENCE.

In all controversy it is a wise course to inquire at the outset whether there is any common ground on which the controversialists may meet; whether there is any datum which they all hold in common, and about which there is no possibility of dispute. In this philosophical controversy a common datum is surely furnished in a conviction of the reality of existence itself. The common postulate of all philosophic theories must be that something exists. The most "crass" of Materialists, the most idealising of Idealists, and the most doubting of Sceptics must all

agree that there is an existence of some sort. Even if an "external world" does not exist, and if all our consciousness is made up of nothing more than "sensations and perceptions," these, at least, must exist. If it be urged that the very idea of existence may be delusive, being merely a subjective idea which may not correspond with any objective reality, nevertheless, the idea itself is real, even though delusive—it at any rate really exists. We may, therefore, be allowed to take this fundamental postulate as being universally granted, namely, that *something really exists*. Let us call this something the real existence; but for the present we can predicate nothing more of it than its existence. It may be mind or consciousness; it may be matter and force; or it may be an Unknowable (with the usual big U) which is neither mind nor matter but of which these are two "aspects." Let it be what it may, it still can be called the real existence, and the reality of its existence must of necessity be granted at the outset if the inquiry is to be carried on at all.

THE REALITY OF CAUSATION.

The fundamental postulate of the reality of existence lies at the root of our idea of causation, which directly follows from it, and is therefore itself a fundamental idea. This view is quite opposed to what is known as Hume's theory of causation, which teaches that our notion of causality is merely the result of our experiences of the invariable occurrence of certain sequences among phenomena. As this is really the crux of the whole matter, I cannot do better, in order to place Hume's theory clearly before the reader, than give the following quotation from Hume himself:—

"The mind is carried by habit upon the appearance of one event to expect its usual attendant, and to believe that it will exist. This connection, therefore, which we feel in the mind, or customary transition of the imagination from one object to its usual attendant, is the sentiment or impression from which we form the idea of power or necessary connection. Nothing further is in the case.....When we say, therefore, that one object is connected with another we mean only that they have acquired a connection in our thoughts, and give rise to this inference by which they become proofs of one another's existence; a conclusion which is somewhat extraordinary, but which seems founded on sufficient evidence."

This theory seems to imply and to require a connection between two orders of ideas between which no real connection exists. These are the ideas of *invariable* sequence and of *necessary* or *unconditional* sequence. It is difficult to see how any number of repeated sequences, however numerous and invariable they may be, can ever give rise to the notion of necessary sequence, which certainly forms the essential element in our idea of causation. The theory also loses sight of the fact that the real phenomenon in which the causal connection subsists is not the sequence itself, but the *invariability of the sequence*. One or a few instances of a particular sequence of phenomena would not suggest causation, but when the sequences become numerous and invariable they suggest the question, Why are they numerous and invariable? and it is this question which implies the notion of causation. As soon as a process of induction supplies a satisfactory answer to this question no further instances of sequence are required. If after even one single instance of a sequence of phenomena the inductive process be applied, and if it reveals a causal connection between the phenomena, we have a full conviction that the sequence will occur in all similar cases for all time, even though we may never actually witness another instance of it. The inadequacy of a mere succession of sequences, however numerous, to prove causation until the test of induction has been applied to them, has never been more clearly shown or more strongly insisted on than by J. S. Mill himself—the great apostle of the "experience" philosophy. And Mill acknowledges, too, that the universality of the law of causation itself can never be completely proved by experience. Induction depends for its validity on the assumption of the universality

of causation, and if this assumption be itself dependent on a generalisation from experience (albeit a very wide one) it can never furnish an absolute proof of universality in the case of any particular sequence of phenomena to which induction is applied. In other words, we can never prove the universality of any given sequence of phenomena by showing this sequence to be a case of causation, if causation itself be nothing more than a generalisation from sequences of phenomena.

This is the fundamental difficulty lying at the root of the empirical philosophy, but from which the Monistic or later Materialistic philosophy is completely free. According to our view, the idea of causality is immediately derived from our conviction of the reality of existence, which, as already pointed out, is a datum on which all philosophic speculation is bound to rest. Existence and its necessary antithesis, non-existence, furnish the sole and sufficient foundation for our idea of causality, for if this idea be carefully analysed, it is found to consist fundamentally of one simple concept—that of the continuity of existence, or the mutual exclusion of existence and non-existence. Every state of existence must have a state of existence as its antecedent and as its sequent. This is all that is really contained in the law of universal causation, that "Everything which has a beginning must have a cause." If that which has a beginning could have no cause, we should have a state of existence with no antecedent state of existence. Likewise, the continuity of existence is also the ground of our conviction that every cause must have an effect. For, if a cause could at any time have no effect, we should have a state of existence with no sequent state of existence. The law of causation, therefore, merely expresses our conviction of *the persistence and continuity of the real existence.*

What is known as the law of the uniformity of nature is a corollary of the law of causation, and is really nothing more than the statement of an identity. To say that if a certain effect follows a certain cause, under certain conditions, the same effect will follow the same cause on all future occasions which present the same conditions is, granting the continuity of existence, merely to make an "identical proposition." It is this element of identity, as G. H. Lewes has shown, that gives all "necessary truths" their inherent and unconditional validity.

It will no doubt be objected that this view of causation is nothing more than a return to the old "Intuitionist" philosophy and the doctrine of "innate ideas." In a measure, this is true, but there is, nevertheless, a great and fundamental difference between the Intuitionist and Monist views. The Intuitionist derived his "innate ideas" from a supposed supernatural source outside and above the physical world, while the Monist, who believes in only one universal existence, derives his "innate ideas" from the nature of that existence, as indeed he necessarily must do.

A similar return to a qualified "Intuitionism" has been well shown in another branch of speculation, namely, the ethical. The old utilitarians of the Bentham school repudiated entirely the notion that there could be anything "innate" in the moral sense of man—all moral ideas were the result of individual experience. But the doctrine of evolution has thrown an entirely new light on the subject, and has given Utilitarianism a firmer foundation than it ever had before. The modern Utilitarian no longer denies the existence of an innate moral sense, but he ascribes it to the results of a long-continued evolution from the social instincts of our pre-human ancestors. So, too, does Herbert Spencer, in his exposition of "necessary truths," invoke the aid of ancestral experiences, human and pre-human, to account for their quality of innateness and supreme certitude.

The Monist, of course, readily accepts this interpretation, only carrying it to its extreme limit. For him the "ancestral experiences" have come down,

not from our human and pre-human animal ancestry only, not even throughout our long line of organic descent alone, but he conceives it as reaching back into the inorganic world, and finds the source of the laws which govern "mind" in the persistent, eternal, and immutable laws which have their origin in the ultimate existence. To the Monist, indeed, no other conclusion is possible. If all existence be one and undivided, all the laws which govern it must arise from the intrinsic nature of the fundamental existence—the real existence which underlies the whole.

We conclude, then, that our notion of causation answers to a real fundamental fact of existence, and is not a mere subjective impression resulting from our limited individual experiences. Through all the shifting and changing phenomena around us, the unbroken persistence and continuity of the real existence eternally abides. Cause and effect present in endless succession the changing functions of this real existence, the unbroken continuity of which necessitates that certain effects *must* follow certain causes, not relatively to our experiences of them, but absolutely, everywhere and always.

THE REALITY OF EXPERIENCE.

If causation be an absolute fact of existence, independent of experience, it can furnish a valid test of the nature of experience. We can apply the law of universal causation to consciousness itself, without fear of logical fallacy. The distinguishing characteristic of consciousness is evanescence, impermanence, change. An unchanging consciousness is equivalent to unconsciousness. Consciousness continually passes from one state to another—it appears and disappears, it begins and ends, and begins again. Hence, as the law of causation assures us that everything which has a beginning must have a cause, it follows that consciousness must have a cause, and therefore that *consciousness is not the ultimate existence.* Consciousness is thus only an effect or function of the ultimate existence.

The profound significance of the foregoing view of causation is now apparent. If causation be a real and fundamental fact of existence, it must imply a direct continuity of existence between those commonly contrasted modes of being called the "physical world" and the "mental world." The world of experience having been found to be in causal connection with the world of reality as an effect or function, and a causal connection being a fundamental continuity of existence, it follows that the ultimate element of experience (whatever we may find that to be) is in direct and immediate correspondence with the real existence. This ultimate element of experience must, therefore, give us a *true knowledge* of the reality, for at this meeting-point of the two contrasted modes of being, the reality actually functions as experience, and the two are one. Consciousness being a function of real existence, it must be a *true, a real* consciousness, if the words truth and reality are to have any meaning at all. No other view is possible if we admit the fundamental unity of the real existence and the continuity of that existence as manifested in causality.

Hence, we conclude that experience, so far from being a mere succession of possibly delusive appearances, has its foundation-stone firmly planted in reality, and that this foundation-stone of experience, itself quarried from the bed-rock of reality, must yield us a true knowledge of that reality. Our next task, therefore, is to inquire, What is this ultimate element of experience?

THE VERDICT OF EXPERIENCE.

It may be taken as now pretty generally admitted that all mental concepts, and, by consequence, all mental operations, are ultimately based on sensation. The elements of consciousness are succinctly classified by Huxley, as follows:—

"(a) Impressions: Consisting of the sensations of Touch, Taste, Smell, Hearing, Sight, and Resistance (the muscular sense); also Pleasure and Pain.

- (b) Ideas : Being copies or reproductions in memory of the foregoing Impressions.
- (c) Relations between Impressions and Relations between Ideas. These Relations are Co-existence, Succession, Similarity, and Dissimilarity."

We shall follow this classification, except that for our purpose the sensation of resistance does not need to be considered separately from the sensation of touch. Pleasure and pain, too, being merely qualities of certain sensations, need not be separately considered. The list then reduces to the commonly recognised five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight.

The fundamental unity of the different sensations, and their affiliation with one primary form of sensation, might well be regarded as the most far-reaching conception of modern physiology, and is fraught with the deepest import to the Monistic theory. We need here only very briefly recapitulate the results arrived at, taking each sensation separately, and thus showing the common element which underlies them all.

Touch.—This is the primary sensation of simple contact. The external object has to come into actual contact with the sensory surface before the sensation can be aroused. And the contact itself makes up the whole of the sensation. It is mere contact, and nothing more.

Taste.—Here contact is also necessary, but in a modified form. Mere contact alone is insufficient to arouse the sensation. The object producing the sensation has to be dissolved and broken up into minute particles while brought in contact with the nerve endings of the sensory surface.

Smell.—This sensation, like the last, is effected by minute particles of the object of sensation coming into contact with the sensory surface, but in this case the particles may travel to the sense organ across an intervening space. It is not necessary, as in the case of taste, that the object should itself be in contact with the sense organ and be there disintegrated. The object may be at some distance from the percipient, but the distance is in no case very great.

Hearing.—This marks a great advance on the three previous sensations. The object need not itself—either in its entirety or through its disintegration—be in contact with the sensory surface. The sensation is effected by means of waves or vibrations of the air impinging on the sense organ. The sensation, therefore, is caused by indirect contact—but contact is still the essential condition. The distance between the object and the percipient may also be very much greater than in the case of smell.

Sight.—Here too the sensation is effected by contact of an intervening medium with the sensory surface by means of waves or vibrations propagated through space. But there is a great advance in the refinement of the mechanism, for in this case the medium through which the sensation is effected is not a ponderable substance such as air or water, but the imponderable and infinitely tenuous ether. The range of sensation, too, is enormously increased, and in some cases—as that of our visible stellar system—seems practically unlimited.

Thus we see that contact is the common and indispensable element in all sensation. All experience, therefore, is found to be reducible to *sensations of contact*.

This essential unity of the mechanism of sensation as shown by physical and physiological analysis is strikingly confirmed when the genesis of the sense organs themselves is examined in the light of evolution. The sensory apparatus which gives us the simple and primary sensation of contact proves to be itself the primary and fundamental organ of sensation whence all the others have been derived. In the earliest forms of sentient life the external surface of the organism formed one undifferentiated sensory surface yielding the sensation of contact. The sensory surface was also undifferentiated from the sensorium—the organ of sense and the seat of the sensation being one and the same. As evolution

progressed a twofold differentiation went on. The external sensory surface differentiated into distinct organs providing distinct mechanisms adapted to the four modified forms of contact, while at the same time there arose a distinct seat of sensation within the body, connected with the organs of sensation by sensiferous nerves. But from first to last an unbroken chain of contact between the external object and the percipient organ is the essential condition of sensation.

Thus both a physiological analysis of the sensory mechanism and an examination of the process of evolution of the sensory organs lead us to the conclusion that the sensation of contact is the basis of all sensation—the very raw material of consciousness—down to which all other forms of sensation can be analysed, but beyond which no analysis is possible. Following back the history of sensation to its primal dawn in the first sentient beings, we may regard it as consisting of an immediate contact, a close atomic action and reaction between the organism and its surrounding medium.

Here, then, we find that ultimate element of experience of which we are in search. The immediate and irresistible accompaniment of the pure elementary sensation of contact is a perception of extension and force as objectively existing. This perception is absolutely inseparable from the sensation, and must therefore be regarded as that primary and fundamental element of experience which, as we have already seen, must give us a true knowledge of the real existence. The real existence, therefore, is that which possesses extension and force; and this is nothing else than a definition, as far as it can be defined, of what we call matter or material substance.

CONCLUSION.

It will thus be seen that the conclusion we have reached is a purely Materialistic one, and we appear to have reached it by a logical process of reasoning from the one fundamental postulate of the reality of existence, having at the outset distinctly disavowed any assumption as to the nature of this existence.

But it will doubtless be objected that all this has been a mere futile beating of the air, for at the end of it we are still met by the eternal difficulty of passing over the gap between extension and force on the one side and thought on the other. I shall perhaps be asked to listen to these words of Tyndall:

"Were our minds and senses so expanded, strengthened, and illuminated as to enable us to see and feel the very molecules of the brain; were we capable of following all their motions, all their groupings, all their electrical discharges, if such there be; and were we intimately acquainted with the corresponding states of thought and feeling; we should be as far as ever from the solution of the problem, How are these physical processes connected with the facts of consciousness? The chasm between the two classes of phenomena would still remain intellectually impassable."

The Materialist fully admits that this gap is *intellectually impassable*, but this very intellectual disability is to him a triumphant vindication of the truth of his view. *If mind be itself nothing else than a function of matter, it can never be expected that mind can comprehend the nature of that function.* As the eye can never see itself, so mind can never comprehend that function of matter, extension, and force which *is itself*.

Tyndall himself elsewhere says:—

"While accepting fearlessly the facts of Materialism dwelt upon in these pages, I bow my head in the dust before that mystery of mind which has hitherto defied its own penetrative power, and which may ultimately resolve itself into a demonstrable impossibility of self-penetration."

To the Monist this "impossibility of self-penetration" needs no demonstrating, and is the sole and sufficient cause of the "mystery of mind." To modern Monism belongs the credit of showing that the "mystery" is a necessary condition of the case, and thus ceases to be a mystery at all.

A. E. MADDOCK.

THE ENIGMA OF MERCY.

"His mercy endureth for ever."—*The Bible*.
 "The same I will rise and explain."—*Truthful Jas.*

Amen! Hallelujah! For ever
 The Lord in his righteousness reigns.
 His chosen are saved, and the many
 Are lost as his goodness ordains.
 The Almighty boss won the battle;
 Old Satan's put under his feet;
 And smoke-clouds of anguish arising
 Fill heaven with aroma sweet.

There stands a big bellows in heaven,
 Right back of Jehovah's throne,
 With air-pipes strung from its nozzle
 Way down to the fiery zone.
 And sometimes an angel gets lazy
 And rusts for the want of use,
 His bright wings flopping and twisted,
 His harp-strings twanging and loose.
 Then Michael says, "Here, you loafer!
 Just pump these 'ere bellows a spell,
 And warm up your poor old mother,
 A-shivering down in hell."

There are those in this heavenly kingdom
 With friends in the torment below,
 But the cords that had bound them when
 Are broke, and the burden of woe [mortal
 That sympathy bears for another
 Rests never upon them again,
 For conscience is freed from the kindness
 That made them do good unto men.

A sweet little angel cherub,
 All rosy and smiling and bright,
 With joy written over his forehead
 In the glow of eternity's light,
 Comes up from the beautiful river,
 With ecstasy sweet and unshammed,
 To send down a blast on a sister
 Who went to a dance and was damned.

A father and mother together
 Come up in ineffable joy,
 To force down a whiff of pure justice
 For the flames round a dear little boy,
 Who laughed by mistake when the deacon
 Broke down with a cough in his prayer,
 And died with a crime unforgiven
 To go down to hell and despair.

"All washed in the blood and made whiter
 Than snow" and with purity crowned,
 A murderer swung from the gallows
 Comes joyfully walking around,
 And creak goes the mighty engine,
 And downward the rich stream is driven,
 To blow up the coals that are roasting
 The wife that he killed—unforgiven.

A fine old angelical demon,
 Who once distilled whisky on earth,
 And sold it around to his neighbors
 For thrice what it really was worth;
 Takes hold of the handle and turns it
 On one who from godliness fell
 By drinking his orthodox whisky
 To burn in an orthodox hell.

O beautiful rest for the weary!
 O joy that shall be to all men!
 O beautiful scheme of salvation!
 That saves about one out of ten.
 Sweet message of love from the ages!
 Sweet story that ever is new!
 "Believe or be damned to perdition."
 I believe!! I'll be damned if I do!

A clergyman on his way to church one Sunday was overtaken by a heavy shower of rain. On arriving at the vestry, he exclaimed, rather impatiently, "I wish I were dry." "Never mind," said his colleague, "you will soon be in the pulpit, and there you will be dry enough."

A little boy was shown a picture of the martyrs thrown to the lions—and he nearly wept; but it turned out on inquiry that he sympathised with a poor little lion at the back who "wasn't getting any."

If Noah had foreseen the future and left those two fleas outside the Ark he would have rendered some of the strongest words in the English language unnecessary.

The Man on the Fence.

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

STRETCHING along over the hilltops, and through the valleys of man's diversified existence, dividing men into two sections, is a fence, built from the brushwood of doubt and indifference. Perched on the fence, looking this way and that, not knowing which way he should jump, is a doubting Thomas.

What does he see when looking on the left side? He sees a conglomerate mass of humanity, believing in the most diverse creeds, practising the most abominable rites. Yonder is a group by the side of the stream. Some of them are dressed in black "mother-hubbards." The tall one with sanctimonious mien, by the authority of a holy ghost, is ducking the others in the water. The water is the blood of a Jew, sacrificed two thousand years ago, to appease the wrath of an angry god. The ducked ones, thereupon becoming saints, go to heaven, somewhere, after they are dead. The man on the fence is looking. He sees one of the saints go and pour water into the milk and charge a cent more a quart for it. Are they simply playing, or are they crazy, or hypnotised? The man on the fence don't know.

Here is another group, in a dry, parched section. They are praying to a god for rain. The god is not in evidence; neither is the rain.

In this building they are burning holy candles, made from the tallow of a cow that died of tuberculosis. A dead man is an immigrant to celestial regions; is held up at a purgatory quarantine station. Father O'Hooligan, wearing Bridget O'Flannigan's nightgown over his coat, is saying ten-dollar masses to a plaster of a paris idol of a child-bearing virgin.

In another building he hears a great uproar. Some are shouting, some jumping up and down; while some are extolling their holy, sanctified condition, others are wallowing on their hands and knees lamenting their terrible sins. Still others are rolling on the floor with awful groanings. No, it is not hysterics; they are getting saved.

Who are these arrayed in white robes, with upturned faces gazing into vacancy? They have "made a date" with a crucified God, expecting him every minute, expecting to be "caught up," waited among the stars.

What are these people doing down on their knees with pancakes in their hands? The man with the tunic on mumbles something in a dead language, and the pancakes become pieces of a dead God. The little folks eat the flesh of a dead God, the big mogul drinks his blood. The man on the fence turns away and looks on the other side.

Here is a decided change in the scene. The people are not trying to stake out building lots in an imaginary world; they are making the best use of this *real* world. They are working for results. Instead of praying to the gods of ancient heathenism, the people in the dry section are irrigating their lands and harvesting crops. He sees the home life cultivated. No churches, monasteries, nunneries, priests, or ministers to live on the credulity of the people. They have reached a civilisation above human sacrifice and cannibalism or a holy farce that represents them.

The man on the fence sees schoolhouses, theatres, libraries, and asylums for the needy. The people have freedom of thought instead of slavery to myth and creed. They are taught the noble truths of science and human experience, instead of the fables of the barbarous past; no Sabbath schools to debauch the minds of the young with loathsome superstition. Every Sunday is a gladsome holiday of personal freedom, elevating amusement and healthy recreation.

The people on the right side of the fence know that they are not degenerate, damned sinners, to be saved by dumping their sins on to an innocent third person. They believe in saving themselves by doing what is right themselves, and helping others by a practical love for humanity.

My brother, the fence you are on, like Jacob's ladder, will never reach heaven. Jump off on to the right side, and make a heaven of this old world.

DANIEL AUSTIN.

Obituary.

I REGRET to announce the death of Mr. John Clark, of Waldridge Fell, which took place on October 3. Mr. Clark was a convinced Secularist for the last twenty-five years, and an ardent admirer of the *Freethinker* and its writers. The interment took place at Chester-le-Street Cemetery on Saturday, October 6. The Secular Burial Service was read in an impressive manner by Mr. Newrick Richardson, in the presence of a large number of relatives and friends. An account of the interment, with full Burial Service, was reported in the local paper, which has a large sale in the district.—T. AINSBITT.

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, C. Cohen, "God's Debt to Man."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, A. B. Moss, a Lecture.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, 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, W. Rowney, "God's First Week's Work."

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): T. Lloyd, 3, "The Silence of God"; 7, "The King of Terrors Unmasked."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 6.30, Social Meeting.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, S. K. Ratcliffe, "Four Indian Cities—Bombay, Delhi, Agra, Calcutta." Lantern illustrations.

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

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

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