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There is a most absurd and audacious method of reasoning adopted by some bigots and enthusiasts, and through fear assented to by some wiser and better men; it is this: they argue against a fair discussion of popular prejudices, because, say they, though they would be found without any reasonable support, yet the discovery might be productive of most dangerous consequences. Absurd and blasphemous notion! As if all happiness was not connected with the practice of virtue, which necessarily depends upon the knowledge of truth.

—EDMUND BURKE.

The Sunny Side of Doubt.

HIGHLY amusing and no less instructive are the conflicting descriptions of the present age which issue from the mouths and pens of Christian teachers. Sometimes it is warmly eulogised as the best of all the ages, and at other times hotly denounced as the very worst. Some preachers, though ordained to the ministry of "good tidings of great joy," are so pessimistic as to call their own age decadent and corrupt, while others indulge in the wildest optimism, and characterise it as the most progressive age of which we have any knowledge. The Rev. W. Charter Piggott, of Bedford, has contributed an article to the *British Congregationalist* for November, in which he confesses that "none can describe our age as an age of faith." He vigorously deplores the lack of interest in and neglect of religious questions manifested on all hands. What a contrast this is to the Puritan period when religion was everything to almost everybody. At present religion has no meaning to a growing number of people, while church attendance is looked upon as a wicked waste of time. To Mr. Piggott this is a wholly regrettable state of things, a state of things which cannot last. Indeed, it is already passing away. Though not by any means an age of faith, ours cannot justly be regarded as "one of definite unbelief." With the pen in his hand the reverend gentleman's heart filled with confidence; and he was emboldened to make the following statement:—

"We have advanced a long way since 1860, when scepticism had a certain assured and truculent tone. Many of the reissues of the rationalist press have rather the air of interesting historical memorials than of living tracts for the times. The harder materialism has gone by the board; the thorough-going atheist is a rare figure; the man who ventures to speak dogmatically of death as the final end, scarcely less so. The movements of modern philosophy are generally towards idealism, towards the interpretation of things not in the terms of matter but of mind and spirit."

Almost every sentence in that extract is false and misleading. The charge of truculence against Freethought is ludicrous in the extreme. Is there any trace of truculence in Darwin's *Origin of Species* which appeared in 1859? A sweeter-tempered and milder-mannered man never lived than the immortal discoverer of the law of evolution. It is true that Spencer, Huxley, and Tyndall had an "assured" tone, but they were never in the smallest degree truculent. But let Mr. Piggott read the Bishop of Oxford's attack on the *Origin of Species* in the *Quarterly Review* for July, 1860, as well as his speech

at the meeting of the British Association the same year, and then tell us whether he considers the right reverend gentleman's tone serenely polite or not. Tyndall's famous Belfast Address, delivered before the British Association in 1874, caused nearly as great a consternation in the Christian camp as the *Origin of Species* itself had done; and some of us remember the horrible ferocity, the undiluted savagery, that characterised the numerous "replies" to it. That Address, whether its views were true or false, was a solid structure composed of severely logical arguments, free from any suspicion of vituperation; but so scurrilously abusive were the attacks upon it that the author, in his published rejoinder, expressed the wish that, laying aside abuse, his accusers would consent to reason with him.

Everybody is familiar with the fact that fifty years ago the advocates of Freethought carried their lives in their hands. How often did Bradlaugh face angry crowds who shouted, "Kill the Infidel," "Murder the Infidel," or who, as at Wigan, "yelled at his heels like mad dogs under the leadership of a pious rector's trusty subordinate, and hammered at the door of his lecture-room under the direction of an infuriated Church parson." If Mr. Piggott were to read Bradlaugh's *Life and Work* by his daughter, he would be in a position to see that the truculence has almost invariably been on the Christian side.

Mr. Piggott only betrays his ignorance when he says that a genuine Atheist is now "a rare figure." Atheists were never so numerous as they are to-day. The overwhelming majority of the Freethinkers of a hundred years ago were pious Deists. Atheism is very largely a product of the nineteenth century. What the "harder" Materialism, which is said to have gone by the board, was, we are not told; but we can assure the reverend gentleman that scientific Materialism was never so rife as at this moment. It is easy to characterise "the reissues of the rationalist press" as more like "interesting historical memorials than living tracts for the times"; but how does Mr. Piggott account for the fact that they find so many thousands of ardent readers throughout the length and breadth of the land? Did the people not appreciate them they would fall flat on the market. Mr. Piggott makes another mistake when he hints that the alleged prevalence of Idealism is a step towards the beliefs which he cherishes. Huxley labelled himself an Idealist; and yet he was obliged to acknowledge that, from a Christian's point of view, he was an Atheist. The great Bergson, who recently fascinated London with his curious Idealistic system, is an anti-Theist and an anti-teleologist. For him the Christian dogmas have no reality whatever, and the same thing is true of many of his disciples.

Mr. Piggott is of opinion that the generality of people, though their thoughts about Christianity "are of the haziest description, shot through with doubts that are the product not so much of serious study as of a sort of atmospheric impression from the times," have yet a good deal of real faith. If you were to challenge them in a direct manner, they would probably own up to having buried within them "certain elements of faith which, however loosely held, they would not be prepared to give up." The reverend gentleman goes so far as to observe that, in all probability, they believe in the goodness

of God, in a life to come, and in the historic Christ. "Amid the chaotic mass of their doubts there stands out a nucleus of faith." We are convinced that he is entirely mistaken. The people of whom he speaks are to be found, almost exclusively, inside of the Churches. It is a notorious fact that the bulk of Christians have not got a sufficient amount of faith to do them either good or harm. It is a negligible quantity in their lives. And multitudes of them are at last finding out that, in reality, they do not believe at all. It is this discovery that explains the startling shrinkage so loudly lamented by all the sects. The moment a man looks his faith in the face, through the eye of reason, it takes fright and dies before long. By nature, theological belief and reason are sworn enemies, and cannot exist in the same breast. If reason is on the throne faith of necessity ceases to be; and if faith holds the reins reason is in captivity, and dares not lift its head except under the conditions laid down by faith. Therefore, the parsonic exhortation is, "Cherish, nourish, and encourage the little faith you have, and it will grow larger and stronger until it dominates your whole life." Mr. Piggott puts it thus, speaking of an imaginary man:—

"His faith is positive, as far as it goes, and he must give it authority up to its limits. On the smallest nucleus of positive faith, if he is wise and brave, he must begin to build his character. It is all he has for the making of moral and spiritual manhood. He must stand on that, crying ever to the Lord of all, 'I believe; help my unbelief.'"

That is a very ingenious appeal to the mere doubter. The honest doubt in which Tennyson saw more faith than in half the creeds is the doubt which its supposed victim fights until he gains the victory over it. As soon as doubt is welcomed it becomes dishonest, and imperils whatever faith is left. It is in this light that "The Ancient Sage" is to be interpreted, and particularly these lines:—

"Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith."

As already said, it is a clever way of putting the case; but no sooner do we begin to examine it critically than we learn that it is shot through with fallacies. The sunnier side of doubt is the side occupied by definite unbelief. On faith's side are all the shadows, all the terrors, all the empty dreams, "all the sin wherewith the face of man is blackened" by theology, which in all ages, have darkened, disquieted, confused, and spoilt human life. On this side, we are taught to regard poverty, disease, pain, and sorrow as blessings in disguise, ripening us for the glory of the redeemed, if we are resigned, or for the torments of the damned, if we rebel against them. Surely, that is not an emphatically sunny side. On the side of unbelief, we have only Nature to deal with, only this world and life to settle accounts with, only social problems to tackle and solve, only the happiness of the race here and now to work for. Without controversy, *this* is the sunnier side of doubt, the side on which the spectres of the supernatural cease from troubling and the tortured mind is at rest. It is here alone that perfect peace can be enjoyed; and he who doubts or denies this speaks without the book.

Up to this point the term faith, or belief, has been used solely in its theological or supernatural sense; and in that sense we declare that faith is a poor, illusive foundation on which to build character. But while Freethinkers are thorough-going unbelievers in the supernatural, they are positive believers in the natural. To charge Secularism with being a purely negative and destructive system is to utter a damnable heresy. Secularism is a philosophy of life, based on natural facts. Its central, guiding principle is knowledge, and its one enemy is ignorance. We believe that the old sage was right who held that where there is true knowledge virtue becomes triumphant and vice impossible. Socrates taught that no one knowingly prefers what is evil, virtue being knowledge at once of end and of means inevitably blossoming into action. Does it not follow,

then, that man's one object should be to acquire knowledge that he may become a perfect citizen, working systematically and with full discernment for the welfare of the community to which he belongs?

There are many who have had experience of both sides of doubt, and their unanimous testimony is that the Atheist's side is, not only the sunnier, but the only sunny side of it.

J. T. LLOYD.

Religion and Business.

"As a matter of fact no successful business man in modern times can be honest. The conditions of business are such to-day that a business man must take advantage of his competitors every chance he gets or go to the wall. Competition is too keen. There is no hope of improvement until business shall be conducted in a Christian way. To me it is humorous to observe the differences which men establish between their behavior in business and in their private lives. If men were to conduct their private lives on the principles that govern their business lives they would be execrated and ostracised."—From a report in American paper of a sermon in Philadelphia by Mr. R. J. Campbell.

[The following interview is published for what it is worth. I would rather not indicate its source, but if it does not find publicity in the pages of the *Freethinker* it is not likely to achieve this anywhere else in England. Mr. R. J. Campbell's attack on business men is also printed as a sort of key to what follows.] THE head of a large English business firm, at present on a commercial tour in the United States, was interviewed by an American reporter on the present position of the English religious world. In the course of the interview this gentleman, who desires to remain anonymous, said:—

"As a matter of cold fact no successful clergyman in modern times can be honest. The conditions of successful preaching are such that if a man is to succeed in the pulpit he must take advantage of every occasion to get in front of his brother preachers or go to the wall. Competition is too keen. There is no hope of improvement until Christianity is conducted in a business way. To me it is humorous to observe the difference which men establish between their behavior in the pulpit and in their private lives. If men were to conduct their business on the principles that govern their actions and utterances in the pulpit they would be execrated and ostracised."

This was a startling deliverance, and on being again approached the gentleman gave ample illustration of what facts he had in mind in bringing such a wholesale charge against the clergy. He said that he had no desire to make a personal attack on any preacher. It was the system, not the man, he had in mind, and the system was such that the strongest character was inevitably worsened by its influence. A man might enter the pulpit with high resolves and noble resolutions. But he soon found these were out of place. He was in the grip of a system that demanded conformity or ruthlessly crushed him out. If he wished to succeed he must be always striving to keep in the public eye. If he did not, the public ignored him, and others took his place. Hence, instead of devoting his time to his proper sphere—the culture of religion and the securing of man's eternal welfare hereafter—preachers were driven to sensational outbursts on the declining birth-rate, prize fighting, or a hundred and one other extraneous subjects. The whole process was Advertise, Advertise, Advertise; only instead of the preacher advertising his gospel it became a question of advertising himself.

"Suppose," said Mr. —, "we take my indictment in proper order. First of all, there is the question of honesty. How can an educated clergyman be honest in the pulpit? His condition of service will not allow it. If he belongs to the State Church, he is tied down to a certain fixed profession of faith, and if he departs from this he is liable to be reprimanded by his bishop, and in serious cases removed from his living. The result is that, when he has doubts concerning religious teaching, he must either keep these doubts to himself, or, if he speaks, it must be with so many reservations and evasions that the conse-

quences are quite as mentally disastrous. If he is a dissenting minister, his position is even worse. The established clergyman is at least controlled by an educated man; but the dissenting preacher is ruled by his deacons. These are usually men of less culture than himself, and to maintain their good opinion and the good opinion of his congregation, he must preach down to their level. In this way he does not lead his congregation, he follows it. And as the congregation gets into the habit of gauging the minister's value by the same rule that governs a manager's estimate of a music-hall artist—by his ability to draw good houses—the consequence is that ministers develop into slavish mouthpieces of views they do not believe in, or into mere sensation-mongers. It is, indeed, a matter of common knowledge that thousands of clergymen do not believe what they preach, or do not preach what they believe. These men are condemned to dishonesty by the very conditions of their ministry.

"Again, consider how keen is competition amongst the clergy. In England we have a steadily declining church attendance. But, on the other hand, new churches and chapels are constantly being erected. More churches mean employment for more ministers, but the class from which congregations may be drawn is limited. The result is that the competition among clergymen for patronage is as keen as it is with insurance agents for custom. They even adopt the same method of house-to-house canvassing. There can be no doubt, when one looks at the number of churches and chapels, and when one compares these with the number of worshipers, that most districts are greatly over-supplied. Clergymen are compelled, therefore, to sink every other consideration in order to secure patrons. A 'popular' preacher comes along and succeeds in attracting a large congregation. But it is at the expense of other churches in the neighborhood, and many equally worthy men are left stranded. Another equally deplorable consequence of this cut-throat competition is the extent to which agencies are created and duplicated for the purpose of attracting people to places of worship. The results are bad for the clergy and for the people themselves.

"Then there is the great difference that has been developed between a man's life in the pulpit and his every-day existence—or, one may say, between the ethics of the pulpit and the ethics of daily life. You may hear one clergyman denouncing Roman Catholicism, as though England's welfare depended upon all papists immediately leaving the country. Or one may listen to a Roman Catholic and gather that England's only hope is to immediately rejoin the Church of Rome. In private life, clergymen will meet non-Christians, join with them in social or political work, and admit by their conduct that religious beliefs are not essential to good citizenship. In the pulpit they will, by insinuation or actual utterance, encourage the belief that unbelief springs from evil living, and that it is of the nature of a cancer on the social organism. They must know that all they say on these heads is quite false. Unbelievers are not all bad; believers are not all good. There is a mixture of good and bad with both, and the causes have to be found quite apart from religion. Clearly, business men cannot have a great respect for the clergy under such conditions as these. Their notorious disregard for facts, their inaccuracy of speech, their fondness for personal attacks, all stamp the ethics of the pulpit as on a lower level than that of either the business or the political world.

"What is needed is a levelling up of the religious to the business world. In business, credit is the ruling factor. And credit depends upon mutual confidence, which means that a man in business must play the game if he is to succeed. There are black sheep in the flock, of course, but in general a man cannot succeed unless he is honest in his dealings and loyal to his word. And if he fails in this, the law is on his track. There is, for instance, the Merchandise Marks Act. A man is compelled to say what his goods are,

and indicate the place of their origin. What would happen if the clergy were compelled to observe the same law? Well, in the first place, a large number of them would be indicted for giving the people as Christianity what is not Christianity at all. People who do not know better come to the clergy for one thing and are given quite another thing. It is true they may be satisfied with what they get, but that does not relieve the clergy of the responsibility for giving to them a spurious article. Above all, if the clergy had to label their wares as merchants have to label theirs, 'Made in Germany,' or elsewhere, people would soon discover that nearly all the teachings for which these advanced clergymen get most credit, belong, not to them, but to their opponents. They are selling, as of their own manufacture, goods that have been made by others. If business men do this, the law brands it as gross dishonesty.

"This leads to another fact of a still graver nature. Everyone knows how severely the law punishes one who obtains credit under false pretences. Any man who obtains credit and misrepresents his position or condition is liable to prosecution. Business men do not complain at this, on the contrary, they regard it as a desirable state of affairs. It is a protection against roguery. But consider the position of the clergy. Everyone knows that the power and influence of the clergy rests upon the primitive belief that in some mysterious way they are different to ordinary people. They are believed to have a closer intercourse with the supernatural than others enjoy. This is seen in many of the ancient powers of the clergy, and it is seen in the 'call' a minister has when he enters his vocation or changes his church. A business man does not speak of a 'call' when he removes his business from one town to another, or when he throws up one trade and enters another. And people would only laugh at him if he did. But the clergy make this claim, inferentially, if not in so many words, and make it knowing its falsity. Again, they appeal for public trust and confidence on the ground of the people needing their ministrations, whereas they must know quite well that both claims are radically false. As Christian ministers they base their claim to public confidence upon the Bible, knowing full well that the traditional view of this book is exploded among all educated people who are conversant with the facts. They are also drawing salaries from foundations, the trust deeds of which expressly stipulate for a very different teaching to that which they dispense. And all this really amounts to obtaining credit under false pretences. If the ethics of the business world were applied to the religious world an action at law would lie against nearly the whole of the clergy of the British Isles.

"There is really no hope for the Churches until they are conducted in a business way, and with the regard for truthfulness and fairness and plain dealing that good business men employ. If a number of business men could be induced to take over the Churches they might be able to show the clergy that really profitable dealing is straight dealing. Don't strive after a sensational article, but get a good one. Then each client you get you keep. Supply a spurious article and you have to be always finding new customers. This is really the position of the Churches. Someone is always finding them out, with the result that the clergy have to be always on the look out for new patrons of a more unsuspecting character. The vice of the Churches is that they do not come into vital relations with modern life. They lack the corrective of a growing civic intelligence. Their ethic is still essentially that of mediævalism, which taught that the end justified the means. Let the clergy strive to be honest in their dealings and less slanderous in their preachings. Let them plainly say what their goods are and from whence they are derived. If by these means they can command but a small following, it will at least be a desirable one; and the clergy will then command the respect of the business world."

C. COHEN.

The Bible and the Koran.—II.

(Concluded from p. 722.)

IN the Koran we find the following:—

"They will ask thee what it is they must give in alms. Say: Let what good ye give be for parents, and kinsfolk, and the orphan, and the needy, and the son of the road; and what good ye do, verily God knoweth it.....If ye give alms openly, it is well; but if ye conceal it, and give it to the poor, it is better for you."

Upon this and other texts the Mohammedan doctors have based an elaborate system of charity. Alms are of two kinds—legal and voluntary. The former is exacted, sometimes in money and sometimes in kind; the latter is left to a man's own determination, but he cannot enter Paradise if he neglects this duty. "The Mohammedans, therefore," says Sale, "esteem almsgiving to be highly meritorious, and many of them have been illustrious for the exercise thereof. Hasan, the son of Ali, and grandson of Mohammed, in particular, is related to have, thrice in his life, divided his substance equally between himself and the poor, and twice to have given away all he had: and the generality are so addicted to the doing of good that they extend their charity even to brutes." In one way or another, a Mohammedan, unless he is too poor to spare anything for the less fortunate, is expected to expend about a tenth of his means in relieving the needy and miserable.

Saint Paul, in the noblest passage of his writings, eulogised a higher form of benevolence than almsgiving, and said that it was useless to give all his substance to feed the poor if he lacked charity. Mohammed also taught that "kind speech and forgiveness is better than alms which vexation followeth." In the Table-Talk of Mohammed—a collection of sayings ascribed to him—there is the following:—

"Think not that any good act is contemptible, though it be but your brother's coming to you with an open countenance and good humor.

"There is alms for every man's lot, every day in which the sun riseth; doing justice between two people is alms; and assisting a man upon his beast, and his baggage, is alms; and pure words, for which are rewards; and answering a questioner with mildness is alms, and every step towards prayer is alms, and removing that which is an inconvenience, such as stones and thorns, is alms."

Christian charity has too largely taken the form of death-bed benevolence. A man gave away in this world what he could not take with him to the next. No doubt this is characteristic of human nature. At any rate, it is a very ancient phenomenon, for we find it censured in the Table-Talk of Mohammed. "A man's giving in alms one piece of silver in his lifetime," he says, "is better for him than giving one hundred when about to die."

We have already quoted Sale's remark, that the Mohammedans extend their charity to the brutes. This was written the better part of two hundred years ago, at a time when there was little humanity shown to the lower animals in England. The exclamation of St. Paul, "Doth God care for oxen?" is in striking contrast to some touching passages in the Table-Talk of Mohammed. We read there of an adulteress who was forgiven because she once drew water from a well in her boot, and gave it to a dog who was holding out his tongue for thirst. Also of a man who brought Mohammed a present of some young birds, whose mother had fluttered about her brood, so that the man had to put her into the carpet with them. "Pat them down," said the prophet; and then he addressed the man in this manner:—

"Do you wonder at the affection of the mother for her young? I swear by Him who hath sent me, verily God is more loving to his servants than the mother to these young birds. Return them to the place from which ye took them, and let their mother be with them."

Mohammed told his followers to fear God in respect

of animals, to ride them when they were fit to be ridden, and to get off when they were tired.

With regard to the treatment of slaves, the Koran is superior to the Bible. In the Christian Scriptures, from the Mosaic Law to the epistle to Philemon, slavery is taken for granted as a permanent institution. "Servants, obey your masters" really means "Slaves, obey your owners." Saint Paul sent a runaway slave back to his master, enjoining the slave to be obedient, and the master to be kind. Mohammed took slavery for granted in precisely the same way. But he taught that the slave was, in a sense, a brother, that he was to be fed and clothed like his master, that he was not to be overworked or beaten, and that a man who ill-used his slave would not enter Paradise. When slaves desired their freedom, we read in the Koran, their masters are to give them a deed of manumission; and the Prophet adds: "Give them a portion of the wealth of God, which He hath given you." Mohammed, in the Koran, also tells his followers that they must not force their female slaves into sin. Compare this with the brutal treatment of female captives permitted under the Mosaic Law; women being captured, violated, and then (if the men did not care to keep them) turned out of doors, helpless and friendless, in a foreign land (Deut. xxi. 10, 14; xxiv. 1, 8; Numbers xxxi. 18, 35). A Hebrew master might also beat his slave to death, provided he did not kill him on the spot:—

"And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand, he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished; for he is his money" (Exodus xxi. 20, 21).

The penalty for the Hebrew master who killed his slave on the spot is not defined. Probably it was very slight, and seldom inflicted. Even in the eighteenth century, in Poland, a Christian country, if a gentleman killed a serf, the matter was settled by paying a fine of twelve shillings.

No doubt the Jews, in their later history, after the captivity, outgrew the Mosaic Law in the treatment of their slaves; but the institution was never abolished, and the causes of improvement were not religious, but social and political. Slavery in Mohammedan countries, however, seems to have always been of a comparatively mild type. "It is not the slavery of the field," says Mr. Ingram, "but of the household. The slave is a member of the family, and is, in general, treated with tenderness and affection."

It is worth noting that slavery was abolished in Turkey earlier than in the United States. When the Sultan, in 1846, issued a firman granting to Mohammed Ali the government of the conquered provinces in the Soudan, he declared the slave-trade to be "contrary to the laws of religion and justice." Firmans issued in 1857-8 prohibited the slave-traffic throughout the Ottoman dominions. The slaves in the Southern States were not liberated by Lincoln's proclamation till January 1, 1863. Slavery was not abolished in Brazil, another Christian country, till 1888. When we consider that less than a hundred years ago the African slave-trade was in full swing, with all its hellish horrors undiminished, and that the major part of the trade was carried on by Christian England, we can easily see what little right this country has to shriek out its moral indignation at the Mohammedans.

There is little in the Bible about children, and not much in the Koran. Mohammed did not teach, however, as Solomon is supposed to have done, that children should be beaten into sense and goodness. "He was very fond of children," says Deutsch, "and would stop them in the streets and pat their little heads. He never struck anyone in his life." One of his sayings in the Table-Talk is noble and pathetic: "Whoso comforteth a woman who has lost her child will be covered with a garment in Paradise." The strong man, says Mohammed, is not he who throws people down; he is strong who withholds himself from anger. A man who felt angry should sit down;

and, if his anger did not depart, he should lie down. This is very quaint, yet perhaps very good advice.

Mohammed was asked what relation was most worthy of doing good to. He replied, "Your mother." This he repeated thrice. "After her," he added, "your father, and after him your other relations by propinquity." "The most valuable thing in the world," he said, "is a virtuous woman." The Koran allows polygamy as the Bible does, but it expressly limits the number of wives and concubines together to four (chap. iv.). Its laws of divorce are modelled on those of the Jews, although it guards the wife's property if she is not guilty of adultery. Sale remarked that the Mohammedans seldom proceed to the extremity of divorce, it being reckoned a disgrace to do so. Mohammed is reported to have said that divorce was lawful, but disliked by God. He was severe against that "foul thing" in chastity in both sexes alike. As a matter of fact, there is very little prostitution in Mohammedan countries. Where it does exist, the people have generally been corrupted by contact with Christians.

The Bible teaches children to honor their fathers and their mothers, but it does not equal the tenderness of the Koran in the following passage:—

"And kindness to your parents, whether one or both of them attain old age with thee: then say not to them 'Fie!' neither reproach them; but speak to them generous words, and droop the wing of humility to them out of compassion, and say: 'Lord, have compassion on them, like as they fostered me when I was little.'"

It is objected that the Paradise of the Koran is a sensual one, with its luscious food and drinks, and its dark-eyed amorous houris. But is there anything very spiritual in the Heaven of the book of Revelation, with its golden floors and jewelled walls? A material Hell must be balanced by a material Heaven. Spiritualise the one, and you must spiritualise the other. Mohammedans of refinement explain the language of the Koran as allegorical, and the same has to be done with the language of the Bible before its future life can be made suitable to persons of any elevation of spirit. We have no doubt that Mohammed believed in a material Heaven and Hell, but so did the writers of the New Testament. His descriptions of Hell are tremendous; as far as they go, they are little inferior to those of Dante.

Mohammed insisted on faith as an essential virtue. But the Bible does the same. Those who believe will be saved, and those who disbelieve will be damned.

It must be said, however, that the Koran insists equally on good deeds. Paradise is not open to the believer unless his good works outweigh his evil works. It must be noted, too, that Mohammed made cleanliness a part of godliness. Bodily purity is a part of the Mohammedan faith. When water is not obtainable, or is too scarce for ablutions, the Moslems scour themselves with sand. Turkish baths come to us from Constantinople. Baths of any kind are very recent in Christian cities, but they abounded in the fine cities of the Moors in the south of Spain before their civilisation was drowned by the Christian Spaniards in a deluge of blood.

Christians who shut their eyes to the brutalities of the Old Testament, and ignore the fact that toleration is not taught even in the New Testament, object to the Koran because it enjoins war against infidels. Let us see what it actually says:—

"Fight in the path of God with those who fight with you; but exceed not; verily, God loveth not those who exceed. And kill them whosoever ye find them, and thrust them out from whence they thrust you out..... But if they desist, then verily God is forgiving and merciful. But fight them till there be no dissent, and the worship be only to God; but, if they desist, then let there be no hostility save against the transgressors."

This language is not too clear, but where it is clear it negatives the idea that Mohammedans are bound for ever to propagate their religion with the sword. It does not appear that the Koran authorises

them to commence hostilities. Besides, the forty-seventh chapter of the Koran was really directed against the Arabian idolators, who constantly harassed the Moslems. It is absurd to assert that Mohammed taught his followers to fight and kill Christians and Jews. He himself did not oppress the Christians who would live at peace with him; he readily granted (as Gibbons observes) the "security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship." Christian churches were freely allowed in Mohammedan states, at a time when no Christian state would have tolerated a Mohammedan mosque.

Nor is it true that the Koran orders the massacre of women and children. Mohammed is represented as expressly saying in the Table-Talk: "Kill not the old men who cannot fight, nor young children, nor women."

Sale points out what small right the Christians have to object to the Koran in this respect. The Jews were ordered by Jehovah to kill every male in some places, and every married woman, and to keep the virgins for themselves; in other places they were to kill all, men, women, and children, and leave alive nothing that breathed. Jehovah was far more cruel and bloody than Allah. And as to holy wars, why, the Christians waged such against the Mohammedans for centuries, and only ceased when they were thoroughly exhausted.

There is a church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, which is in the Sultan's dominions. Greek and Latin Christians both worship in it, and a guard of Turkish soldiers stands between them to keep them from cutting each other's throats. What a picture! And what a sarcasm on the pretensions of Christianity!

G. W. FOOTE.

Correspondence

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A few weeks back, in the columns of the *Freethinker*, a question was asked: "What is the sin against the Holy Ghost?" The following remarks are intended to answer that question; but who or what the Holy Ghost is will have to be shown before the sin against it can be considered.

The teachers of the Bible Scriptures maintain that the Spirit is the third male person in a male Trinity. The more ancient mythologists maintained that incorporated with this Deity was the feminine principle. The Genesis account of creation contains the same idea, for we read in Genesis i. 26-27, "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them."

In the history of the early Christian Church we have some glimpses of the partly feminine character of their Deity, as Origen states that Jesus said of his mother, "My mother the Holy Ghost." This remark of Jesus was twice quoted by Jerome also.

Mary, the female companion of Jesus, was a symbol of the atmosphere that conveyed the light from her Lord. She stood in the same position as the virgins of the Old Testament (and other mythological Scriptures) who attended the sacred fires in the temples. The virgin represented the air, the fire the sun; the two in combination the origin of all life.

In India, a feast is commemorated on May Day, called the "day Maia, the virgin of heaven." This virgin becomes pregnant by being covered by the sun—as is related in Revelation, "a woman clothed with the sun"—this female in both cases is the atmospheric air, personified as a female who becomes the mother of all, and yet remains a virgin, as most of the goddesses of the ancients did.

The summer air was represented by the ancient mythologists by a female with numerous breasts overflowing with milk, such as Diana, Juno, Ceres, and others. The cow of the Indians, therefore, was a fit emblem of the Holy Spirit, or hot air; and whoever killed a cow in that country suffered the penalty of death. This fact brings us to the question, What is the sin against the Holy Ghost? We get a striking instance of what that is in the case of Onan (Gen. xxxviii. 10). All acts preventative to natural productivity would be considered by natural worshippers of old

as the sin against the Holy Ghost, the mythical female that represented the atmospheric air when heated by a summer sun.

"Bright goddess come, with summer's bright increase,
Swelling and pregnant; bring with thee smiling peace,
Fair concord, riches, and imperial health."

—Orpheus to Ceres.

The religious world to-day, losing the belief that the third person in their Trinity is a female, have made their religion more confusing than that of more ancient mythologists, who considered the sun to be the Son of the Father; the Holy Spirit the Virgin of Heaven, or Virgin of God, otherwise the air; and the Father the universe itself.

It appears that the castration of animals was not practised by the ancients. Such an act would interfere with natural increase, and, therefore, probably would be considered as sinning against the Holy Ghost. To keep a pen of hens without a male bird, or to prevent a broody hen from incubating fertile eggs would also be a likely cause of sinning against the Holy Ghost, as it prevents natural increase of life. So that the unpardonable sin was not an act of omission or commission in religious ceremonies, or thoughts of an irreligious character, but an act to frustrate the natural work of productiveness that the Virgin Queen of Heaven—namely, hot air, or Holy Ghost—especially performs every spring and summer. The modern religionists have adopted a natural religion of more ancient peoples, and endeavor to spiritualise it or pervert its true meaning, which destroys the beauty of the Pagan poetry.

Wings and birds were symbolical of the air or spirit amongst ancient nations. Therefore, we have those emblems mentioned at the day of Pentecost—a dove, for instance, and the mighty rushing wind. These tokens of the Holy Ghost were nothing new. A poet centuries before that time wrote of the same in the following strain:—

"Placed in the azure bosom of the sky,
Airy-form Juno, of Jove's heavenly bed
Happy partaker, thou with gentle gales
Life-giving, quickenest all terrestrial things."

—Orpheus to the Goddess Juno.

Of Jesus himself it is related that he *breathed* upon his disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Evidently he had learnt something of the airy-form Juno—the Comforter" he called her, which the summer air certainly is to all living, including plant-life also. So great is the regenerating power of this element that the ancients personified it as a goddess, and considered her the virgin mother of the sun, or the son the man-child, as well as of all living. It is as well to note that when Jesus said "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and breathed on his disciples, it was after his resurrection. The sun then had some power to make the air hot; the Holy Ghost then had "fully come."

"Ye virgins sing, ye women join the song,
Hail Ceres fertile mother, rich increase
And all-sufficient plenty are thy gifts,
Still favorable goddess lead along
The varying seasons, spring and summer clad."

—Callimachus to Ceres.

She is also the mother of the alluvial soil of stratified and unstratified rocks of which this globe is composed. The Egyptian goddess Isis said of herself:—

"I am all that is, I am all that hath been;
I am all that will for ever be;
And my veil no mortal hath drawn aside,
The fruit that I brought forth was the Sun."

The wings of cherubs and cherubims, or the wings on animals, from Genesis to Revelation, have reference to the power of the air or to the goddess that represents the atmosphere. The Lion and Calf, in Revelation, with wings, shows the connection there is in nature with the sun and air, the animals being signs of the Zodiac, or mansions of the sun.

R. Youso.

Gimcrack: "There's a German theologian who denies the divinity of St. Paul."

Noodles: "Nonsense. The next thing somebody will deny will be the divinity of the Kaiser."

Baggs: "And so poor Dages is dead. I never got a chance to bid him good-bye. The first thing I'll do when I go to heaven will be to express my regret."

Faggs: "But suppose he has not gone to heaven?"

Baggs: "Then you must tell him for me."

The school children were being taught by the vicar's wife to sing "Little Drops of Water," when she was interrupted by the new curate.

"Yes, it's very nice, but it wants a little spirit put intit."

Acid Drops.

Rev. Dr. T. W. Drury, Bishop of Sodor and Man, succeeds Dr. Boyd Carpenter as Bishop of Ripon. His salary rises from £1,500 to £4,200 a year. His present address is "The Palace, Ripon." He is in the service of a Master who had not where to lay his head, lived on voluntary contributions, and taught that poverty was the greatest of blessings. The name of the said Master is Jesus Christ—and Dr. Drury is supposed to be a very good Christian. And lunacy in England is increasing.

The Bishop of London has been at it again. Preaching in the North of London, he said that it was possible a "pure child" could see more than an adult could. In proof of this, he said that while confirming a little girl in Westminster Abbey the child told her mother she saw an angel each side of the Bishop. And the Bishop really believes they were there! The child knew they were angels—because she had never seen any before. The Bishop knew they were there because the child said so. We hope, for our celibate Bishop's sake, they were of a respectable variety. Seriously, though, what is one to think of a religion that pays a hopeless case like Bishop Ingram ten thousand a year to represent it?

Back in the 'seventies John Morley was editing the *Fortnightly Review*, and was considered by the Church and State people as a dangerous firebrand. Some of his contributors were considered little less than devils in human form. Clifford was writing plain Atheism and spelling God with a small g. Swinburne was denouncing kings, priests, and all religion with splendid power. Huxley was going for orthodoxy like a North American Indian for the enemies' scalps. It was a warm time. And the editor was dreaded as a political, social, and religious "anarchist." But there was nothing of the firebrand about "honest John" after all, as he soon proved when he entered the arena of party politics as member for Newcastle-on-Tyne. Everybody knows he is not a firebrand. "Honest John" is a peer of the realm. He is actually selected as one of the four gentlemen who are to do the King's business for him while he is in India. Think of it! And one of the other three is the Archbishop of Canterbury. Think of that! It is not adversity, but prosperity, that has made John Morley acquainted with strange bedfellows.

We wish (Lord) John Morley would pay more regard to the claims of friendship. It was understood that he was to write a Memoir of his friend, James Cotter Morison, the author of that fine book, *The Service of Man*; but he never did it, and he never will do it now. And where is the volume of Meredith's letters which he was to see through the press? We hear announcements of it from time to time, but we don't seem to get any nearer to actual publication. It is all very well to be a temporary *alter ego* to King George, but we beg to remind Lord Morley, if he has forgotten it, that there is a much more important "George" in George Meredith.

Glasgow Parish Council has been discussing the individual communion cup question with regard to the inmates of Woodilee Asylum. Five members were against the body and blood of Christ being administered to lunatics at all, but twelve voted in favor of the old practice. They might have cited the Bishop of Exeter, who stated that he had found lunatics especially susceptible to religious influence. It was subsequently decided that each lunatic should have his own communion cup. We wonder if it will be filled.

The main feature of the Healing Mission Section of the Society of Emmanuel, we read in the *Guardian*, is its practical nature. "Sufferers are seen in the churches and visited in their homes, and hands are laid upon them in the name of Jesus Christ, with prayer for their recovery and deliverance from all trouble of body and soul." Well, it doesn't sound so very practical, after all. If it did not appear in the columns of the *Guardian*, one might suspect the passage as being sarcastic.

Now we know the cause of the proposed Welsh Disestablishment Bill, with other "un-Christian measures." It is, the *Guardian* explains, due to the Church of England omitting the Parliament Prayer from their services. Perhaps if they make good the omission, or pray with extra fervor, the Government may withdraw the measure. Such explanations have their value. They serve to show how much of mental barbarity there is still in our midst, despite our boasted progress.

Dr. Carnegie, rector of the Birmingham pro-Cathedral, says that what threw Christianity into direct collision with

the ancient world was its assertion of the equal value of all men in the sight of God, and their equal right to opportunities for self-development. We are not concerned to discuss the equal value of men in the sight of God, but as for equal right to self-development, had Christianity really stood for this it would have met with a considerable body of sympathetic opinion in the ancient world. Besides, the opportunity for education and self-development was never denied to anyone in the ancient world. Even slaves were trained and educated. It was under Christian rule that laws were made prohibiting slaves receiving instruction and punishing those who gave it. The real obstacles to self-development—legal obstacles—were mainly of Christian origin. Moreover, the last thing that early Christianity dreamed of was opposing the social or political order on behalf of the individual. Given the liberty to express religious convictions, it was ready to bless any social or political system. And this has been one of the most constant features of its entire history.

In one thing we agree with Dr. Carnegie. He says frankly that he does not see how to explain the overwhelming vote of the Trade Union Congress in favor of Secular Education except as an indication that the leaders of the movement are "disposed to dispense with Christianity altogether as an obstacle to be swept out of the path of progress which they have set out to tread." It is true that the immediate and logical ground of the Trade Union vote is the conviction that education in religion is, properly, no concern of the State, but it is also true that unless the belief in the truth and value of Christianity had weakened considerably, this eminently sane political conviction would not have made much headway. The Trade Union vote does thus represent the instinctive testimony of organized labor of Freethought.

We have been hearing a great deal of late—and a good deal more than seems to be accurate—about the decline of the Catholic Church in all parts of the world. Even the *Christian World* is obliged to admit that there is no such decline in Germany. According to the Prussian official figures the Catholic population has increased both absolutely and relatively during the past forty years. There were then 649 Protestants and 336 Catholics in every thousand of the population. Now the Protestants number 618 per thousand and the Catholics 363. The Protestants, that is, have decreased 31 per thousand while the Catholics have increased 27 per thousand. There are now, in all, 24,830,908 Protestants, and 14,581,604 Catholics. The figures six years ago were 23,341,502 and 13,352,444. Protestant boasts and Agnostic chuckles are still a long way off justification.

Tripoli promises to belong neither to the Turks nor to the Italians—but to the cholera, which is slaying two hundred of the town population daily and fifty of the invading troops. What the cholera does not achieve is likely to be done by typhoid fever, which is actively co-operating in the depopulation of the town. War is a beautiful and glorious thing—and the Christians have the honor of beginning it in this case.

Miss Christabel Pankhurst has declared fresh war against Mr. Asquith and sent him another ultimatum. What would poor old Paul say if he could see and hear what is going on? No doubt he would think the second coming of Christ was near.

It is a common mistake to suppose, says Dr. R. F. Horton, that the supernatural existed in the past and does not exist in the present. The supernatural is with us to-day just as much as it was in the past. We quite agree with this. We also agree with Dr. Horton that we cannot be expected to believe in miracles occurring a long time ago if they do not occur to-day. It all turns upon this, and upon one other thing that Dr. Horton quite overlooks. If miracles ever occurred we might reasonably expect them to occur still, for nature's methods do not undergo radical alterations. Forces that were at work hundreds of thousands of years ago are at work to-day, and we are able to understand things that occurred thousands of years ago by interpreting them in terms of known active forces. But the second principle is one that is fatal to the belief that the supernatural has been active in the past. This is that we must explain the past in terms of our present knowledge of natural forces. When we put this rule in operation we discover that every reason for believing in the supernatural disappears. We no longer need believe in a supernatural origin for visions, states of ecstasy, possession, and the like, for the simple reason that such things are with us to-day, and are shown to admit of a purely scientific explanation. Misunderstandings of normal and abnormal physiological states cover practically all examples that have hitherto been brought forward. We

hardly expect Dr. Horton to accept this—or even to appreciate the explanation—but it remains true nevertheless.

The leaders of the Liverpool religious canvass, noticed in our last issue, have discovered that Secularism in Liverpool is a negligible quantity. This conclusion is reached because so few people returned themselves as "Secularists." We give these gentlemen credit for too much common sense to believe that they accept this negative evidence as conclusive proof. They know as well as we do that, thanks to Christian intolerance, thousands of people who do not believe in religion would not say so. The risk in many cases is too great. And in any case the number of *avowed* Secularists is but a poor test of the strength of Secularism. The main influence of Freethought has been the extent to which it has operated in modifying religious opinions. The straits to which the Churches are reduced is the best evidence of how real and how powerful this influence is. If someone were to conduct an inquiry as to how much of orthodox Christianity people really believe, Christians would realise how little stands between them and destruction. It is one thing to inquire of people, Are you a Christian? It is quite another thing to get from them How much of Christian doctrine they really believe? Living in a professedly Christian country, most people would reply in the affirmative to the first question. They would be less chary in dealing with the latter question in a more satisfactory manner, because nowadays Christianity has come to mean nothing at all in particular.

Rev. Dr. Clifford is a very crafty ecclesiastic. He used to talk as a friend of Secular Education, but when he was put to the test it was proved that he had been pretending all the time. He declined to join the Secular Education League, because it was for Secular Education pure and simple, while he was for Secular Education *plus* the Bible. Which is much like a teetotaler being in favor of pure water *plus* "Scotch" or "Irish." Quite recently this reverend gentleman was interviewed by a representative of the *Westminster Gazette* (Nov. 8) on the Education Question with special reference to "Passive Resistance." Nearly every sentence that came from his lips was a calculated prevarication or misrepresentation. We have no time or space to follow him through the long course of his insincerities. We will take him up, however, on one point—and expose his craftiness. The following are Dr. Clifford's own words:—

"The absence of provision for the training of leaders who belong to the Free Churches is still a crying evil in many parts of the country. In Cornwall, for example, a training college under the control of the Anglican Church refuses the admission of Nonconformists, and yet receives all its funds, excepting between £90 and £100 per year, from public sources."

Most readers would imagine from this that Nonconformist teachers are the only ones kept out of training colleges, and that everything would be perfectly fair and square if *they* were only admitted; moreover, that it is the Anglican which is guilty of all this exclusive bigotry. But the real truth is that, as far as possible, every non-Christian teacher is kept out of *all* the training colleges—denominational and undenominational—by the deliberate policy of Dr. Clifford and his Nonconformist colleagues as well as that of the Church of England. No one is received into any training college whatever without making a profession of Christian belief and indicating the Church to which he belongs; and steps are taken to see that students attend their registered places of worship. This is what Dr. Clifford thinks perfectly fair to Atheists, Agnostics, Freethinkers, Secularists, and Rationalists. From his point of view, there is nothing to complain of unless the persons excluded are Nonconformists. Then it is a horrible outrage, which the whole universe is called upon to witness. That is why we consider Dr. Clifford a detestable hypocrite. He is fighting for his own Church on the pretence of justice and fair-play for all.

Dr. Clifford steadily ignores all criticism. He goes on repeating his old story as if nothing had been said against it. He has not the courage, neither has any one of his colleagues, to reply to Mr. Halley Stewart's article on "The Policy of Secular Education" which appeared in the April *Nineteenth Century*. It was a powerful article and Mr. Halley Stewart is a thoroughly well-known Nonconformist; and to treat it with absolute silence is cowardly or hypocritical—or both.

Mr. Harold Begbie is trying a new task. Having visited the Chateau of Blois he is moved to write about the inconceivable monarchs, nobles, and fine ladies who laughed, drank, sang, plotted murder and adultery, and prayed to God, while poor devils, some of them once friends of theirs,

were dying by inches in oubliette prisons within a few feet of them. Those wicked and cruel creatures "really believed." They actually "worshiped Christ." That is what staggers Mr. Begbie. Which shows that he is only just beginning to see the real influence of religion on morality. We hope he will go on.

Two small camels' humps for the needle's eye. Rev. J. Campbell Parson, of Southsea, left £6,815. Rev. Fraser Hislop Penny, of Lincoln College, Oxford, left £6,491.

After the long and splendid but rather trying summer, we are getting little but stormy weather from "that there Providence," as the English farmer called "the One Above" when his potato crop was blighted directly after the death of his "missis." Gales and wrecks, with drowning of sailors and passengers, have been the order of the day. And it seems to be much the same in other parts of the world. Over in America the activity of "Providence" is generally on a large scale. There have been several bad cyclones. One of them wiped out the town of Rossville, Illinois. Has it anything to do, we wonder, with the unveiling of the fine statue of Ingersoll at Peoria? It is not unusual for "Providence" to be annoyed with one place and punish another.

"Providence" often gives Russia a turn. It is a land of calamities. In no less than eighteen governments the peasantry are threatened with famine during the coming winter. Want and even starvation are already reported. And the poor mujiks are singing a grim song of resignation to the inevitable.

The Primitive Methodist Chapel at Kimberley, near Nottingham, caught on fire, and would have been totally destroyed if "Providence" had not been checked by the Nottingham fire-brigade. As it is the damage amounts to several hundred pounds. To add to the farce the chapel was insured. Nobody trusts "Providence" nowadays.

We draw attention to the fact that it took four Christian ministers to officiate properly at Mrs. J. Ramsay Macdonald's funeral. It seems high time that Mr. Macdonald himself should either cease talking about religion altogether or let us all know where he stands on that subject. Speaking for the Labor candidate at Oldham on Saturday evening, November 11, he made the following allusion (we quote from Monday's *Daily Dispatch*) to the late appointment of Mr. J. M. Robertson:—

"When the Liberal party accused the Labor side of being Atheists and holding opinions contrary to what was known as morality, the Liberal party should look after its own Ministers. When the Liberals told the electors that they should give no support to the Labor party because some of its members were Atheists, and, at the same time, appointed to places in their own Ministry men who had written and spoken against Christianity and advocated anti-Christian propaganda, it was a piece of the most contemptible hypocrisy that even modern politics had witnessed. Mr. Macdonald warned Liberals that it was time that sort of nonsense was stopped."

Mr. Macdonald is himself talking "nonsense." The Liberal party do not accuse the Labor party of being Atheists. It is the Conservatives who do that. Not that it very much matters—in our columns; still, it is just as well to be accurate. The leader of the Labor party wanted to have a fling at Mr. Robertson, and to let everybody know that Mr. Robertson is an Atheist. Well, what is Mr. Macdonald? People knew already that Mr. Robertson is an Atheist. The question that wants clearing up is, what is Mr. Macdonald?

The *Manchester Guardian* supplemented the *Dispatch* report with the following passage:—

"As a matter of fact, there was far more of the genuine spirit of Christianity in the Labor movement, which had been created for the purpose of making men something more than mere wealth-producing machines, for the purpose of enabling their moral character and the soul of the people to flourish and become strong—there was far more of the Christian spirit in that than in either the Liberal or the Tory party. If only 10 per cent. of the Christianity of the Labor party was infused throughout society, this country would be a better and a fairer land."

We are sorry to say it, but as Mr. Macdonald talks about the "contemptible hypocrisy" of others he need not complain if we suggest that he is somewhat tarred with the same brush. These words of his about the Christianity of the Labor party are mere chatter. If he is a Christian in any accepted, any honest, sense of the word, let him plainly say so. And will he explain what he means by "the Christian spirit"? Are we to find it in history or are we to ask the Labor party?

We fancy the truth is that Mr. Macdonald was electioneering,—and any absurdity is good enough if it helps to win a seat.

The *Willesden Citizen* (November 10) reports a lecture by the Rev. Owen Spencer Watkins, the Wesleyan Chaplain of the London Garrison, at the Wesleyan Hall, Tavistock-road, Harlesden. Here is an extract relating to Tommy Atkins in Africa:—

"The soldiers prayed for water with their throats parched and burnt by the tropical sun, and at last they came upon a ravine through which a river flowed. It was of the most filthy water, and the soldiers saw the partly decomposed remains of what had once been men and animals floating on this foul stream—yet they lay down and drank their fill and thanked God for it."

Thanked God for it! We like that. Religious people see God in everything, even in corpse-polluted water as a beverage. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

"Suicide during temporary insanity" was the jury's verdict at the inquest on the dead body of William John Bradden, a wood porter of Stratford New Town, who drowned himself in the Lea near Homerton Bridge. Salvation Army books and a *War Cry* were found in his pockets. He was always singing Salvation Hymns. What a pity that the Salvation Army Suicide Bureau didn't tackle *this* case!

Loughborough Guardians have been worried over the problem of what religion a "kid" named Poole shall be, who is boarded out with Mrs. Bowley at Shepsed. The child is a Primitive Methodist and the Bowleys belong to the Church of England, and how is the awful difference to be settled? For the religious people see a lot in it. One of the Guardians, however, Mr. F. A. Stetson, asked what mattered if the child was of this creed or that creed. For his own part, he said, he had no faith in any of them. Everybody who said "Amen" wanted watching. "I have had to watch them," he continued, "or they would have done me—and they set out their stall for it." Whereat the Guardians laughed. Evidently this Mr. Stetson has some sense in his head.

Canon Lord William Cecil was one of the speakers at the recent Missionary Conference at Newcastle-on-Tyne. He made the following admission, which we have pleasure in noting. "Chinese thinkers," he said, "were saying that they would embrace everything in Western civilisation excepting the Christian religion, which was being discarded in England." His reverend lordship evidently wants the missionaries to hurry up and get hold of the Chinese non-thinkers.

Archbishop Bourne, though a dignitary of what Carlyle called the Great Lying Church, is not incapable of telling the truth—on a favorable occasion. Speaking at Somers Town the other day, he said that "the world of the present day was to a large extent pagan; it was a world which had forgotten God and praised him in a half-hearted way." We take his word for it—especially as we have other evidence. Which is rather Irish, but Archbishop Bourne is an Irishman.

Rev. Thomas Turner, lately a well-known Nonconformist minister at Exeter, and a former Free Church Council secretary, who seems to belong to the order of sons of God who see the daughters of men that they are fair, has been ordered to pay one of them five shillings a week. According to the evidence in court, he was to have married her by special licence on July 1, but while she was waiting for the cab to take her to the ceremony an express letter arrived from the reverend Lothario breaking it off. What he couldn't break off remained to be paid for. But will he pay for it? It looks as though the lady will have to find him first.

Bridlington, the Yorkshire seaside resort, is not to have Sunday picture shows. The citizens seem to be two to one in their favor, but the Bench paid more heed to the protest of a number of professional soul-savers who do most of their week's business on Sunday and are naturally opposed to opposition between Saturday night and Monday morning. They would like the day *all* to themselves, but they have to tolerate the rivalry of the public-houses—if, indeed, that is a rivalry, seeing that people may patronise both. The comical aspect of the matter is that the protesting clericals styled themselves "the custodians of the morals of the town." Judging from newspaper reports of police-court and divorce cases, the clericals are often very poor custodians of their own morals.

Mr. Foote's Engagements.

Sunday, November 19, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, London, W. : at 7.30, "The Crescent and the Cross."

November 26, Queen's Hall, London.

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

To Correspondents.

C. COHEN'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 19, Stratford Town Hall.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 19, Leicester; 25, Stratford Town Hall. December 10, Fulham Ethical Society; 31, Harringay.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1911.—Previously acknowledged £312 14s. 8d. Received since:—Horace W. Parsons, £5 5s.; W. A. Yates, 2s.

A. HURCUM.—Your cheque for *Freethinker* subscription has been passed over to publishing department. We know nothing of Chisholme Robertson or his book on "Modern Infidelity," and your report does not make us anxious to inquire. Mr. Foote is keeping fairly fit.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

G. H. EXALL.—Not without merit, but technically faulty; and don't you think the tone is rather egotistical? We suppose you don't know the author, as you don't mention his name.

R. L.—See paragraph. Thanks.

H. W. GRAVES.—Perhaps if you go on reading this journal you will see that we are at least sincere. At present you don't seem to understand how anybody can differ from you honestly. Which is a sad state of mind for a poor fallible human being to fall into.

R. F. MACKENZIE.—It was not meant for you.

A. W. HUTTY.—You had a perfect right to communicate with the Bishop of the diocese in which you reside, but you were sanguine to expect an answer. Your subscription to the Leicester Secular Society's fund will appear next week, with our own and we hope some others.

HORACE W. PARSONS sends his annual cheque to the President's Honorarium Fund "to encourage other laggards to hurry up while there is yet time in 1911." It is good of our old friend, but we were just lifting the Fund out of the paper until the new year, and the £300 appealed for is already overpassed—for the first time.

C. BUDGE.—They are all alike in that matter. Free Church ministers vie with Church clergy, and sometimes beat them, in stopping Sunday entertainments, however innocent. It is one profession when it comes to business.

W. SIMONS.—You will see what we have written on the subject.

W. A. YATES.—The ignorant, silly, insolent cutting you send us from the *Sunday Chronicle* on Shelley is unworthy of more attention than this sentence gives it. Thanks, all the same.

H. HEASE.—Your letter is not dated, but the envelope is, by the Post Office.

J. SMITH, JUN.—Glad you so rejoice in the freedom you have gained from the *Freethinker*, and that the paper means so much to you. You will have an opportunity of hearing Mr. Foote again at Glasgow on January 21. Thanks for the address.

G. MANCO.—Thanks, but it is rather off our "beat," though interesting.

J. G. BARTHAM.—How can the fault be ours? All we want is a suitable hall at Newcastle. The terms of our visit you know; they have always been the same; and they impose no sort of burden on the Branch. What other "satisfaction" can we give you, or can you expect? On the other point, you should remember that we have Tyneside readers, especially new ones, who know nothing about your Branch.

G. D.—The constitution of the N. S. S., as far as individual and Branch members are concerned, is what it always was. What is the good of advising us to "take up the Gott case"? How can we do that? Mr. Gott has his own case in hand. It would be impertinent on our part to interfere except at his request. Tax your memory a little, and you will probably recollect that we *did* take up the Boulter case, and with some effect, a few years ago.

SEVERAL ANSWERS to correspondents stand over till next week—unavoidably.

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.

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

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.

The Boulter Case.

ON Saturday morning (November 11) I learnt by the newspapers that Mr. Harry Boulter had been arrested by warrant the previous day, taken to Bow-street police-court, charged with causing a breach of the peace, and ordered to find two sureties of £100 each, besides his own recognisances in £200, for his good behavior, or in default to serve three months' imprisonment. What became of Mr. Boulter himself was not stated.

Having to leave home early in the afternoon for Manchester, where I was billed to lecture twice on Sunday, I could do nothing but desire Miss Vance to obtain all the information she could by Monday. I was back from Manchester soon after one o'clock, and Miss Vance, who had been sending east, west, north, and south, had not even been able to ascertain whether Mr. Boulter was in prison or at large. His friends who told Mrs. Boulter that they had seen Miss Vance and had apprised Mr. Foote, were simply saying the thing that was not; and the letters they were supposed to have posted never arrived at 2 Newcastle-street.

An hour afterwards I learnt accidentally that Mrs. Boulter was at Bow-street in connection with some application that was being made in her husband's behalf; I desired Miss Vance to ask her to come to 2 Newcastle-street. She came, and was soon followed by some friends who brought news of what had happened at the court. It had been arranged that Mr. Boulter, who was in prison, should be brought up on Friday morning with a view to some sort of rehearing of the case, which was not exactly explained to me. I do not think this can be of much, if any advantage, but I shall be glad if I am mistaken.

Mr. Boulter's sureties are excessive, and the imprisonment is monstrously heavy. He is not proceeded against under the Blasphemy Laws, but he would hardly have been molested if he were not a *Freethinker*, and I would gladly have done what I could—as President of the N. S. S., of course—to help him in his difficulty. But his friends already referred to seemed to be acting with Mrs. Boulter's consent, and I had no status in the matter. An appeal for funds that I have been asked to insert, does not, in my judgment, emanate from a properly constituted committee. The only names given are those of the secretary and treasurer, who are unknown to me, at least, and certainly of no standing in any section of the Freethought movement.

I can say no more at present. But I propose to make a further statement before my lecture at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening. G. W. FOOTE.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote is now returning to Queen's Hall for two Sundays. His lecture this evening (Nov. 19) will be on "The Crescent and the Cross"—suggested by the present attack of Christian Italy on Mohammedan Turkey. The lecture is on different lines altogether from those of Mr. Foote's article now appearing in our columns on "The Bible and the Koran." There will be music before the lecture, and the usual opportunity for questions and discussion.

Mr. Foote's audiences were somewhat affected by the abominable weather at Manchester on Sunday. Fog and drizzle through most of the day, turning to a heavy rain at night,—such conditions were enough to ruin any meetings. They did not ruin Mr. Foote's exactly; indeed, the audiences were very fine in the circumstances; but, of course, they made a difference, perhaps of fifteen or twenty per cent.; for Mr. Foote's Manchester audiences are largely drawn from a considerable radius; even as it was on Sunday "saints" came distances of from ten to fifty miles, some having to stay overnight. Mr. Foote himself was in good form and his

lectures were enthusiastically applauded. Several questions were asked after the evening lecture, none of the questioners being a pleasant-spoken lady.

Mr. Cohen occupies the Stratford Town Hall platform to-night (November 19). He will be followed by Mr. Lloyd, and Mr. Foote takes the extra Sunday (December 3).

Mr. Lloyd pays his annual visit to Leicester to-day (November 19), lecturing at the Secular Hall, Humberstone-gate, in the evening at 6.30. District "saints" will please note. They should try to hear Mr. Lloyd. They will be glad they did.

The Birmingham Branch lectures at the King's Hall continue to be successful. Mr. A. B. Moss had a good audience on Sunday evening in spite of the wet and stormy weather. Mr. Moss lectures at Alexandra Hall to-day (November 19) for the Liverpool Branch. Tickets 1s. and 6d. can be obtained at the Hall or of the secretary, Mr. W. McKelvie, 57 Penrose-street, Everton.

South Shields friends have been fortunate in again securing the services of our esteemed contributor, Mr. Jos. Bryce, to open a series of weekly meetings in the Victoria Hall Buildings on Sunday (November 19). The subject is "The Philosophy of Buddhism," and those who support the enterprise will be well rewarded. Musical selections precede the address.

Miss Kough had a nice audience at Stratford Town Hall on Sunday evening and her lecture was highly appreciated. Another lady, Miss Pankhurst, took the chair. A good many questions were asked and well answered.

Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonnor follows Mr. Foote at Queen's Hall on December 3. London "saints" should make a note of the date.

In response to several inquiries and suggestions, Mr. Foote has half determined to devote one of his Queen's Hall lectures in December to the subject of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*—with some reference to Sir H. B. Tree's production of that great tragedy. There is much to be said about *Macbeth* that escapes ordinary and orthodox commentators.

A well-known man of letters sends us a communication from which we make the following extract:—

"I left the Nonconformist ministry because of the narrowness of the officials and congregations and found the New Theology and Higher Thought people just as narrow and bigoted. I have discarded the God-idea or theory as untenable and am glad for the freedom I experience.

"One incident may interest you. I was in conversation some time since with one of the leaders of the so-called Higher Thought or New Thought movement and we were discussing the subject of depression of spirits and a remedy for that condition. My friend said: 'Well, if ever I get run down and extra mopey I always have a half-hour with G. W. Foote and read something he has written. He very quickly clears away the cobwebs.' I don't suppose my friend would venture to say that at any of his lectures. He might be afraid of losing caste. But maybe will one day become more bold and do you the justice to admit it openly."

A good many people would be astonished by the names of distinguished men,—yes, and women—who enjoy and admire our writings—and those of our colleagues too—under the rose. When the late George Meredith sent us a cheque, with his name, in support of the *Freethinker*, not long before his death, a lot of Christians began to think that the age of miracles was not past. It is one of the most comical ideas we ever encountered that the *Freethinker* is, or ever was, written for "illiterate working men." Certainly we have working-men readers, and are glad of the fact; but we also have readers belonging to every other class of the community, particularly amongst the "professions." Doctors, for instance, are fairly numerous.

Here is another extract from the same letter:—

"This afternoon when out at tea I happened to pull this week's *Freethinker* out of my pocket with some other papers, when a lady said, 'Oh, is that the *Freethinker*? Do lend it to me to read.' I did."

We wish all our readers would carry this paper about and give it fresh introductions when possible. That sort of advertising is feasible and effective. Ordinary commercial advertising is too expensive for an unpopular speciality.

The Ferrer Monument at Brussels.

THE inauguration of the Ferrer monument at Brussels took place on Sunday, November 5, amid scenes of great public enthusiasm. Neither the rain nor the boisterous wind that swept the beautiful Belgian capital that morning could damp or diminish the ardor of public sympathy, and certainly these unfriendly elements almost seemed to add a fresh fillip to the enthusiasm of the men and women who came from all parts of Europe to witness this latest triumph of the Martyr's cause.

The procession was formed at 10.45 a.m., preceded by a huge inscription, with the words, "To Francisco Ferrer, Martyr of Liberty of Conscience." The children of the Rationalist Orphanage led the long procession which, swelled at every point, wended its way along the whole extent of the Boulevards du Hainaut and Anspach, amidst the ovations of the very considerable crowd of sympathetic spectators who lined the route.

All the Rationalist Societies in Belgium were represented, and many delegates attended from different countries. And so, with banners flying and amidst the strains of the bands of the various societies, the interminable line of people reached the Place Saint Catherine, called after the mystic saint of that name.

The monument, placed behind the church, was greeted with acclamation even before the unveiling. We saw that the inhabitants of the large square in which the monument stands had hung out from their windows the flags of all nations, by way, I imagine, of idealising the international character of the monument, and of the remarkable movement of world-wide solidarity which gave birth to this and countless other Ferrer protestations.

As we threaded our way along the line of procession one could hear the clamorous voices of the vendors of Ferrer mementoes, portraits, postcards, pamphlets, etc., etc. Evidently Belgian Freethought did not spell ruin either to the participators in the protest nor to the *camelots* who hung on their flank.

Let me say a word as to the monument—a beautiful creation in bronze modelled by the sculptor Auguste Puttemans. It represents the symbolic figure of the Genius of Humanity holding aloft a torch of light, to which he looks up with victorious gaze. The stone on which the figure stands is the joint work of Monsieur Puttemans and of the architect Adolphe Puissant.

In front, there is the simple inscription:—

"To the Memory of Francisco Ferrer, shot at Montjuich the 13th Oct., 1909—the Martyr of Liberty of Conscience."

Another inscription cites the indignant words of Capt. Galceran, who so nobly defended Ferrer:—

".....And I found myself face to face with a trial already completed, in which the prosecution, in search only of accusations.....did not stop a single moment to find out the truth."

Another inscription is a citation from Ferrer's letter of January 24, 1907:—

"Rationalist teaching may, and should, discuss every question, by putting the children at the outset on the wide and straight road of personal investigation."

The statue is a worthy decoration of the gay Belgian city, besides being a new testimony to the triumph of Freethought.

Only one speech—that of M. Hocart, the President of the Œuvre Ferrer—was delivered at the unveiling. It was touching to hear the voice of the aged ex-pastor of the Liberal Protestant Church—whose liberality has taken him outside of all dogmas of supernaturalism—ringing out the well-chosen words in which he marked the meaning and significance of the generous movement of indignation which has raised Ferrer on a monument and left his murderers in the depths of infamy.

Altogether it was a great occasion, one that will surely mark a red-letter day in the history of the Freethought movement. Not an inharmonious note

was heard either from the vast public concourse or from amidst the international gathering which gave color and meaning to the day.

At the banquet in the afternoon letters of sympathy and cordial co-operation were read from Mr. Keir Hardie, Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, Mr. Wm. Archer, etc. The Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S. sent an excellent letter written by our friend Mr. Hammond. Several English groups of different political and social complexions sent greetings, including a fine letter from Mr. Philip Thomas, of the Positivist Church of Humanity. The Rationalist Press Association was represented by Mrs. Phelps, the wife of the distinguished author of *The Churches and Modern Thought*; and she delivered a charming address. The N. S. S. was officially represented by the undersigned, and most of the speeches were published *in extenso* in the next day's issue of *Le Peuple*. It fell to my lot to translate Mrs. Phelps' speech and give a rapid abstract of the numerous letters which were sent from England to the indefatigable secretary of the *Cæuvre Ferrer*, Professor Eugène Monseur.

England, directly or indirectly, could claim a fairly big place at the ceremony. To begin with, M. Hocart, universally loved in Brussels, is a Britisher by nationality, having been born at Guernsey. Professor Tarrida del Marmol, who lives amongst us—soon, it is hoped, to become an Englishman by naturalisation—was, as ever, the soul of enthusiasm and a fountain of inspiration. M. Georges Lorand, whom I had the honor to appoint as my successor as executor under Ferrer's will, and whose labors for the restitution of Ferrer's property have been most arduous, has all along had his task much lightened by his daughter and secretary, who, since she became Madame Koupmann, has by marriage become an Englishwoman. Senor Portet, who was appointed under Ferrer's will to carry on his work, is well known to our friends in Liverpool, where he lived many years, and became English of the English. Trinidad Ferrer, whom I had the moving pleasure to meet on this occasion for the first time, is a charming, intelligent lady whose nine years' residence in Australia has blessed with a competent and graceful knowledge of the English tongue.

I must forbear the attempt to reproduce the speeches at the banquet. At present I need only lightly allude to the splendid address of M. Paul Janson, the leader of the Liberal Party. Most of these speeches were published in full in *Le Peuple*; and in many other papers, including the Sunday papers, long accounts were given of the ceremony, and in certain cases the Sunday evening issues gave verbatim reports. The stupid and bigotted boycott of Freethought which prevails in the English press is luckily unknown in Brussels, and this must be noted to the honor of continental journalism as compared with the fears and reticences that dominate the editorial mind in this country.

To the philosophic eye the demonstration was an imposing manifestation of the power and ubiquity of Freethought. A single fact will illustrate this: in the five days ending October 30 the Committee of the *Cæuvre Ferrer* had received the adhesions of no less than sixty-eight different societies.

At the procession on that wet and uninspiring morning all the Rationalist Societies in Belgium were alive with enthusiasm. Amongst these, the Rationalist Association of St. Gilles was headed by the Bourgemestre, the sheriff, and the major part of the Liberal Councillors.

The Labor Party (of Belgium) was represented by hundreds of societies marching with their magnificent red banners waving aloft. The University students of Brussels, Ghent, Liège, etc., were well to the fore.

The monument was saluted from afar by the sympathetic messages of a distinguished number of men eminent for their services to Freethought. In the political world mention must be made of the enthusiastic letter of adhesion from Magalhaes Lima, the Minister Plenipotentiary of the Portuguese Republic

at Paris. In the scientific world the name of Ernst Haeckel led the way. In a letter dated October 26 he wrote expressing his "very deep regret" that his bad health and his seventy-seven years rendered it impossible for him to attend. His following words concerning Ferrer deserve citation:—

"Like the Bruno monument at Rome, the Ferrer monument at Brussels has a great civilising value. For all the ages to come it will serve to exalt the independent minds who have consecrated their powers to the progress of truth and the moral education of humanity. It will stigmatise the black horde of the lackeys of Superstition and Lies who, by means of the temporal and spiritual power, persecute the defenders of truth and liberty.

"Francisco Ferrer having had translated into Spanish one of my works, I was able personally to appreciate the real value of his great merits as an emancipator of enslaved civilised peoples, at the same time that I had the opportunity of judging of the dignity of his labors, which all converged towards one single end: social and intellectual progress."

The testimony of such a man is praise indeed.

Affectionate words of sympathy were also read from Dr. Hector Denis, from the veteran Alfred Naquet, from Professor Laisant, from M. Camille Pelletan, and others.

These testimonies, swelling the homage of the representatives of different national organisations of Freethought, gathered from far distant lands, and the democratic and Freethought tributes of the Belgian intellectuals and democracy, made the unveiling of Ferrer's monument a great and moving event in the history of Freethought.

I was glad to attend this great ceremony as the representative of the N. S. S. and its Executive; to renew one's consciousness of the fact—made vivid by the presence that day of representative Freethinkers or by the throbbing words of their sympathetic messages—that Freethought stands now as a great synthetic movement of world-wide import and of profoundly humanistic tendency.

At the banquet (which inevitably closes these functions) the speeches covered nearly the whole ground of controversy respecting the work and character of Ferrer. The lengthy accounts which appeared in the papers the same evening or the next day could not, of course, reproduce the whole of these discourses, but the issue of *La Pensée*, dated November 12, gives a verbatim report of the speeches as well as the letters (or the majority of these latter).

To the English readers of *La Pensée* I must at present refer our friends who may be curious to know what was said on this occasion on behalf of British Freethought. I the more readily invite them to peruse this number, as it will reveal to them more valuable information about Ferrer and International Freethought than has ever been offered at such a modest price.

WM. HEAFORD.

The Sleep of Death.

SHAKESPEARE, the supreme genius of literature, has told us that "our little life is rounded with a sleep." The materialistic similitude of death to sleep is a thought which appears to have possessed a peculiar fascination for great writers, ancient and modern, but more particularly for Shakespeare, whom it always prompts to utterances of more than usual sublimity. With this sublimity is mingled a touch of simple pathos that strikes home to every heart, as, for example, in the saying, "Tired we sleep, and life's poor play is o'er."

Sleep! All that the human fancy can conceive of refreshing and delightful things is comprised in that gentle monosyllable. Poets in all ages and in all countries have sung its praises; but of all tributes uttered on this theme, the most striking probably is that which fell from the lips of Sancho Panza:

"Sleep! It covers a man all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak. It is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot."

Lucretius, the greatest Roman poet—writing, be it remembered, twenty centuries ago—tells us that death is dreamless rest.

"Thou not again shall see thy dear home's door,
Nor thy dear wife and children come to throw
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go;
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store.
Thou hoarest for thine own, men say, and lo!
All thou desired is gone. But never say
All the desire as well hath pass'd away."

Omar Khayyam, the most splendid poet whose lyre sounded under the Mohammedan crescent, is equally materialistic:—

"Oh, threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—This life flies;
One thing is certain, and the rest is lies;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies."

Shelley, in the opening lines of his atheistic "Queen Mab," sings of "Death and his brother Sleep." Most of all this great poet looks on death with longing and audacity in his dirge, "Adonais."

Matthew Arnold introduces pure Secularism into his language concerning death. In his monody on his fellow-Freethinker, Arthur Hugh Clough, he tells us:—

"Bear it from thy loved, sweet Arno vale,
For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
Their morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery celanders pale."

This feeling assumes at times tones of irony, as in his fine lines on the death of a favorite dog, entitled "Geist's Grave."

Byron did not believe in immortality. How finely he apostrophises the longing for a future life:—

"Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe,
Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies.
That little word saith more than thousand homilies."

Swinburne had quite a naturalistic view of death. In his superb "Ave Atque Vale" he strikes the keynote:—

"Content thee, howsoever, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore."

William Morris was contented with an earthly paradise, and his Freethought comes out clearly in his treatment of death:—

"Rejoice, lest pleasureless ye die;
Within a little time ye must go by.
Stretch forth your open hands, and while ye live
Take all the gifts that Death and Life can give."

George Meredith sings, with a fine touch of stoicism:—

"Into the breast that gives the rose
Shall I with shuddering fall."

William Hazlitt is never more magnificent than when writing on this subject. His essay on the "Fear of Death" shows the extent of his Freethought. To die, he there discourses, is only to be as we were before we were born; yet no one feels any remorse, or regret, or repugnance, in contemplating this last idea. De Quincey touches the sublime when he treats of this subject. Life is darkness and formless vacancy, then next a dim lotos of human consciousness afloat upon the waters, a few smiles and tears, love and strife, dust and ashes, and once more darkness. It is of Prospero's metaphor of this sleep-rounded life that Andrew Lang sings in his poem on "Omar Khayyam":—

"So still were we before the months began
That rounded us and shaped us into man.
So still we shall be, surely, at the last,
Dreamless, untouched of blessing or of ban."

No writer peers with such audacity as that "tan-faced poet of the West," Walt Whitman, into the "vistas of death." Death to him was a friend, is "lovely and soothing," is "the dark mother always gliding near with soft feet," and the body, weary with life, turns like a tired child nestling in its mother's bosom.

How far this is from the priestly mummery of Christianity; the hateful hell and the paltry paradise of orthodox thought. Freethought everywhere destroys the fear of death, and the Freethinker is aware of this truth. He refuses to allow the tomb to cast its chill shadow over the pleasures of life. He rejects the "lie on the lips of the priest," and living without hypocrisy he dies without fear—

"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

MIMNERMUS.

The Curates at the Breakfast Table.

THERE is a certain district in the East End of London which, by this time, ought to be thoroughly Christianised. More years ago than I care to remember, it boasted but one diminutive Baptist chapel, which was patronised by the majority of the tradespeople in the neighborhood. Why the tradespeople attended the services I have never been able to ascertain, because most of the other inhabitants carefully kept away from their unique Baptist chapel. But while the ordinary inhabitants of this benighted and obscure portion of East-End London were not averse to the attendance of their children, on Sunday afternoons, at the chapel for the purpose of participating in the Christmas tea-fight and the annual summer-day's outing to Chingford—that Mecca of East End excursionists—they themselves much preferred other amusements: cock-fighting, dog-fighting, rattling-contests, pigeon shooting, singing-bird competitions, running-matches, boxing-displays, and last, but not least, copious beer-drinking were immeasurably more to their taste than hymn-singing and listening to the vaporings of a Baptist minister, or, for that matter, those of any other member of the antipathetic professional fraternity in Christ. The diversions above-mentioned were chiefly indulged in by the adult male portion of the population. The diversions of the women—if diversions they may be called—were the preparation of dinner, getting the children ready for Sunday-school, and an intermittent exchange of scandal across the backyard fences—a mode of communication which often engendered acute hostilities.

Then into the midst of this Arcadian-like simplicity came a mission.

The origin of this mission is somewhat obscure. Perhaps some unusually bright and ambitious young curate broached the subject one day to a wealthy old lady in his parish, and this wealthy old lady, being pleased with the idea of rescuing the necessarily wicked *East End* Londoners from everlasting brimstone perdition, may have drawn the attention of the bishop of the diocese to the matter. And this opulent preacher of the blessedness of poverty may have set the mission-ball rolling—with funds, of course, supplied by the wealthy old lady. This may or may not have been the origin of the mission. Suffice it to say that the mission came and stayed and waxed exceedingly great. In short, from first occupying a small, dilapidated, ex-provision shop, the mission grew into the dimensions of a parish church, a parish hall, and last, but not least, quite a palatial, rectorial residence. Also, as a sort of side show, they opened, severally, a men's, a boys', and a girls' club. The women were considered as being sufficiently provided for in the weekly mothers' meeting, held in the parish hall on Mondays, and the women's Bible class, held in the parish hall on Tuesdays.

But you must not imagine that that East End Arcadia took kindly to the mission from the outset. Certainly its inhabitants did not throw stones at the missionaries, or even hoot at them; but the majority regarded them very dubiously. The Baptist tradespeople were severely condemnatory of the newcomers, until they found that the missionaries were considerable customers; then, slowly and cautiously, as became their English conservatism, they one by one joined the mission, and left their old love, the diminutive Baptist chapel, disconsolate for ever. In short, with the aid of tea-fights, parish parties, sales of work at the lowest possible prices, annual Sunday-school excursions, also excursions for the men's, the boys', and the girls' club, and an indiscriminate distribution of soup, coal, and provision tickets during the winter months, the mission forced its way up to a phenomenal maturity.

It was a bright, frosty morning. The curates and the organist were at breakfast in the palatial rectorial residence. "What's the matter, Demi-semi?" said one of the curates to the organist, who was sulkily eating his filleted herring.

"You know what's the matter, Beelzebub," replied the organist.

"My dear musical friend," bantered the curate, "what do you mean?"

"What do I mean!" ejaculated the indignant organist.

"A nice trick to play on a man! Not content with locking the bathroom door, you must also take away my dressing-gown, thus causing me to go out on the balcony in my shirt, in full view of passing trains, in order to get to my room. And then I had to break a pane to unfasten the window-catch which you had so kindly fastened for me."

"A devilish joke!" exclaimed the other curate.

"Oh, you were in the swim, Mr. Facing-both-ways. I do not think I am mistaken in saying that you made the shot for Beelzebub to fire."

"O injured innocence! Do you forget the pranks you have played on me and Beelzebub? We were simply practising Jewish justice upon you—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Be sweet under your affliction, there's a dear fellow."

"A joke's a joke, but to make one get outside on the balcony in one's shirt, in full public view, too, is carrying fun too far. Why, the vicar will become as bald as Elisha if he hears about it."

"And he will, if you keep on chirping about it like a silly sparrow on a housetop. Now dry up about your troubles, there's a good chap. I say, Beelzebub, you know that fat Mrs. Brown?"

"Yes."

"Well, she spoofed me properly last week. I called at her malodorous dwelling to make the usual inquiries, and found her and her affairs in the lowest depths of despair.

"'Can't make things go right, nohow,' she said. 'My ole man's aht o' work, the youngest kid's got the measles, and the others look as if they are sickenin' for somethin' dreadful. If I could only get the loan of a couple o' shillin' I might be able to pull rahnd a bit, 'cause the ole man's got the promise of a job termorrer.'

"Well, I gave her a couple of shillings. Now, can you guess the sequel?"

"She got beastly drunk on gin," ventured the organist.

"Wrong, Demi-semi."

"Her husband got drunk, then," ventured the other curate.

"Both wrong. No, she didn't get drunk, she put that couple of shillings on a horse which was running in a race at Epsom. The horse romped home at twenty-to-one—I believe that is the correct way of expressing it—and the result of her bet was that she received forty shillings for her outlay of two. Mrs. Green, who is her next-door neighbor, told me all about it yesterday. But I think Mrs. Green envies her neighbor most maliciously, for she said to me: 'Sir, I should not be surprised hif the Lord was ter judge 'er for 'er wickedness in borrowin' money from you to bet on 'orses wiv.'"

"I had an experience, yesterday," said Beelzebub. "I called upon Mrs. Jackson, the old girl who keeps the little general shop at the top of Roper-street. I found one of her sons in the parlor reading. I exchanged a few words with Mrs. Jackson in the shop before going into the parlor, and she asked me not to take any notice if her son should say anything out of the way, as 'parson was to him like a red rag is to a bull.' But I didn't find her son very ferocious. He put down his book as I entered and responded to my greeting quite affably.

"May I ask what you are reading?" said I. "You may," he replied. "It is Tylor's *Primitive Culture*." "I have never heard of the book before," said I. "I don't suppose you have," he answered; "clergymen are not, as a rule, very keen on reading such a book as Tylor's *Primitive Culture*." "May I look?" said I. "You may, with pleasure," he replied, handing me the book. I carelessly turned over the pages until I arrived at some quotations from the ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead. When I had read these quotations I felt amazed. "Why," said I to him, "one could almost imagine these quotations as being part of the Common Prayer Book." "Your religion," replied he, "owes very much to the Egyptian Book of the Dead." "I don't agree with you there," I answered; "but the people who offered up these prayers must have been well on the road to the attainment of the Christian ideal." He smiled rather sarcastically at my utterance. Picking up another book, he showed me more quotations. So struck was I with these that I copied them. I think I have the paper in my pocket. Yes, I have. Listen.

"O my God, my transgressions are very great, very great my sins. The Lord in his wrath has overwhelmed me with confusion.

"I lie on the ground, and none reaches a hand to me. I am silent and in tears, and none takes me by the hand. I cry out and there is none who hears me.

"My God, who knowest the unknown, be merciful to me.' Now almost anyone would imagine I was quoting from the Book of Psalms in the Bible."

"So you are, aren't you?" asked the organist.

"No, my dear fellow. I am not. What I have read to you formed part of the Penitential Psalms of the Chaldeans, thousands of years before Christ."

"The Devil they did!" exclaimed the other curate.

But here the vicar entered the breakfast-room, and conversation of a frivolous or controversial nature at once ceased.

JAMES H. WATERS.

Mixed Marriages.

(Reprinted from the New York "Truthseeker.")

THE discussion of the policy of "mixed" marriages has called out some confessions of husbands and wives not intended for publication, and we cannot break the seal of confidence by printing them. The Freethinker involved generally has to make concessions to avoid inharmony. A woman married to a Roman Catholic tells a story of constant persecution. She is kept on short allowance, and must save her subscription to the *Truthseeker* by pinching and scraping. Freethinking women so allied are at a disadvantage as compared with men, who customarily handle the funds. In some instances wives interfere to guard their husbands against the literature of unbelief. A subscriber sends us this letter he has received from the wife of a neighbor:—

"Dear Sir: I am writing to you to ask you to please not send any more of your Infidel books to Mr. G—. I destroyed the one you lone him, and I will destroy anything I find in my house that is against the Bible, neither will I let anyone speak against the Bible in my house. I believe everything in the Bible. I would as soon doubt that I am living as doubt the Bible. I would advise you to be very careful how you lend your books, for there are other women in this country that are just as senceable as I am and will not give houseroom to any such trash. It takes more than just believing the Bible to carry a person to heaven, but if the Devel can get a person to not believe the Bible he has got them just where he wants them. The most enterlect people in the world believe in the Bible, and I don't see how any one can doubt it. God says, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. Yours truly,
MRS. J— G—."

The writer of the above lives in Florida, but might live in any State of the Union for all the difference there is in church-bred and parson-led women of her mental calibre. Religion in its more vicious form finds expression in the burning of books. The believer acts on prejudice and impulse without the reflection that would precede action in other matters. Such fanaticism is separated by but a narrow margin from insanity. Freethinkers who congratulate themselves on the spread of Rationalism, and who think the battle with superstition so nearly won that they may leave the rest to "evolution," while they attend to something else, forget that this woman is typical of millions of her sisters who, in the isolation of their home and church, believe in the truth of the Bible as in their own existence and so burn the writings of unbelievers, as Christ sent the swine into the sea, with no thought that the act is in contravention of laws penalising malicious mischief and wanton destruction.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

Obituary.

On Saturday, the 4th inst., the Birmingham Branch lost another old and devoted member in Mr. W. H. Wood, at the age of 76. His death was painfully sudden. An acute illness of a few days ended what had been a life of constant activity. The deceased was a Vice-President of the N. S. S., and did unremitting service in the cause for a long number of years. He also did valuable work in connection with the Astronomical Society. General sympathy from the members was tendered to Mrs. Wood and family. The funeral took place at the Lodge Hill Cemetery on Wednesday, the 8th, a Secular burial service being used.—J. PARTRIDGE.

On Saturday, November 4, Mr. Frank King, son of the late Mr. Alfred (Toby) King, died at the age of fifty-one. He remained true to our cause to the last, and, though suffering intensely for thirteen weeks, he bore up against it with fortitude. His request that the Secular Burial Service should be read over him before we started from the house for Golder's Green, where he was cremated on November 10, was carried out.—JNO. BRITCHER.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Crescent and the Cross."
STRATFORD TOWN HALL: 7.30, C. Cohen, "The Delusion of Free Will."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, E. Burke, "Miracles."
ISLINGTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Highbury Corner): 12 noon, Ivan Paperno, W. Bradford, S. Cook, and others—Subject, "Is Free Speech to Go?" Newington Green: 7.30, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture. Highbury Corner: Wednesday, at 8, Ivan Paperno, a Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Hall, 70 Argyle-street): Saturday, Nov. 18, at 8, A. B. Moss, "Christianity and Secularism Contrasted."
GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Hall, 110 Brunswick-street): 12 noon, Class; 6.30, George Barrett, "Anarchism and Progress."
LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, "The Ideal, Motive, and Reward of the Moral Life."
LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): A. B. Moss, 3, "Darwin—The Shakespeare of Science"; 6.30, "Recollections of Charles Bradlaugh."
MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Councillor Walter Butterworth, "Art and Civic Life." Lantern illustrations.
SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, second floor): 7, Music; 7.15, Jos. Bryce, "The Philosophy of Buddhism."

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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.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up and the assets were insufficient to cover liabilities—a most unlikely contingency.

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

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