

THE Freethinker

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False heavens, built over real hells, are tottering.

—VICTOR HUGO.

Religion and Charity.

MR. G. B. SHAW has just been expressing, in his own way, the view that "charity" is little else than the minimum of ransom money paid by the rich to the poor. This kind of charity never does any good, except by the merest accident, as it prolongs the evils which it professes to remedy, and from which it really springs. Nor does the more respectable form of charity do much good,—the charity of well-intentioned, but generally misdirected, almsgiving. On the whole, it would be well to abolish charity altogether, except that which exists honorably between man and man. Many people would suffer in consequence, but we should know the actual truth as to our social health and disease, and should get rid of the delusion that benevolent plasters are of any real use against ulcers in the body politic.

There is a better kind of charity (mincingly called "love" in the Revised Version) which is praised in a noble chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. When the Bible is lost, like a sunken continent, that splendid passage, with some others, will stand out still, like the ocean peaks that survive the flooded lands on which they once looked down. Paul was in a high and beautiful rapture when he penned that immortal eulogy. He was praising something better than the charity of Churches or Benevolent Societies. It was the *caritas* of Cicero; the affection mingled with respect that men owe to each other merely as human beings. Other virtues without this are still virtues, but they cease to be lovely. That is why men so often turn in their distress from the professional philanthropist, whose charity is a moral theorem rather than a moral action, and treasure the soft finger touch or sympathetic look of someone—perhaps a woman or a child—who has nothing else to bestow.

The *caritas* which is from heart to heart, from soul to soul—if we may thus express it—is for ever blessed. It is like Shakespeare's "mercy,"—it blesses him that gives and him that takes. You may add a gift, if it is necessary or desirable; but the *caritas* is not in the gift itself, but in the feeling of which it is at best but a symbol.

Now this "charity" owes nothing to heaven. It is indigenous to earth. It is a natural, not a supernatural, growth. It springs up spontaneously in the heart of man. Woman first learnt it as a mother; man learnt it afterwards as a husband and a father; and when it was strong enough to serve more than its primal necessities, and began to extend, in however slight a degree, to fellow beings merely as such, its possessors became *human*.

Nothing could be more absurdly false than the common notion that religion ever softened man's heart. It is arguable—although we think it fallacious—that religion, acting as a *tabu*, may have served the cause of social well-being by frightening men away from anti-social actions. But it is not arguable that religion added to man's stock of tenderness. The religious face, as we see it in

ancient and modern art, is not a smiling one; it is malignant, vindictive, fierce, or stern. Religious people are not remarkable for geniality. Torrey is a typical religionist—as Ingersoll was a typical "infidel." And that Torrey should delight in libelling Ingersoll is one of the most natural things in the world.

Religion certainly did not soften the heart of "Lieutenant-Colonel" Iliffe, of the Salvation Army, who ordered and superintended the eviction of six small-holders at Bosted, near Colchester, on Monday morning. That gentleman put women and children, with their household goods, out into the bitter weather as callously as any Irish landlord, or landlord's agent, ever did. The case must have been a shocking one for the *Daily News* to publish such an exposure of the Salvation Army. And so it was. A man with a sick wife and seven children, turned into the road by the Salvation Army, is a very striking exhibition of the love of Christ.

Religion is more than compatible with a hard heart; it is compatible with monstrous villainy. Shelley noticed this in the fine Preface to his superb *Cenci*. The unnatural but pious father in that terrible drama was profoundly convinced that he had a right to call upon God's help in torturing and degrading his own daughter. In explaining this apparent contradiction, Shelley wrote:—

"But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and, without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is, according to the temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check."

How this is borne out is shown by the latest news from America concerning the Rev. Clarence Richeson, the eloquent Baptist minister, who is under arrest for the murder of Miss Avis Linnell, a choir girl who sang in his church, and to whom he was engaged before he found a "more eligible lot" in an heiress. He has now made a full confession, although he had passionately protested his innocence. He gave the poor girl poison to get her out of his way. The next morning he preached a powerful sermon on the text "In the midst of life we are in death."

No "compunctious visitings" shook his fell purpose. He was perfectly hardened. And he is perfectly selfish still. His remorse simply means a desire to avoid the worst. He wishes to escape electrocution. He says he is suffering the tortures of the damned. This he regards as a sign that God's mercy is still around him. He hopes he will be allowed to live, even as a life prisoner, so that he may "at last find favor with his God." His one great consideration is still himself.

G. W. FOOTE.

Mr. Lloyd George and the Churches.

IT was, perhaps, astute of Mr. Lloyd George, when he gave utterance to his now notorious eulogy of the Churches, to refer to them as a whole. Had he acted, as many Nonconformists would have acted, and referred to the Free Churches as being the leaders of the nation's conscience, the fat would have been in the fire. Codlin would have been in arms against Short; Churchmen would have dwelt upon the iniquities of Nonconformists, as Nonconformists would have retaliated on Churchmen had the Established Church been selected for eulogy. But, by taking them all in the lump, and declaring them all to be the most real and most valuable guides the nation possesses, petty jealousies were, for the time, allayed. Nonconformist and Churchmen were enabled to pat each other on the back, and, with probable mental reservations, join heartily in singing "We are jolly good fellows."

As most of my readers are aware, the speech to which I refer was delivered in connection with a Conference called to consider the relation of the Churches to social evils. And for a man who—on the authority of Dr. Clifford—exhibits "Matchless skill, brilliant statesmanship, prodigious labor, unflinching tack, winsome courtesy, unrelaxed tenacity of purpose, and true Christian principles," it was sufficiently stupid. As the following passage shows:

"What is the responsibility of the Churches here? The responsibility of the Churches is this: the Churches guide, control, and direct the conscience of the community; they establish the moral standards which fix the ideals of the people; they direct affairs, not merely in the Senate and the Council Chamber, but in the shops and the factory, and in all the affairs of life. No interest, however powerful it may be, can long withstand the resolute united opposition of the Churches."

Now, it is to be noted that Mr. George does not say that the Churches *ought* to do all this; his claim is that they do it. And in that case there does not seem to be anything really important for anyone else to do. Parliament might extend its present holiday indefinitely, the judges might go off on a *very* long vacation, King George might remain altogether in India. No one would be any the worse. The great guiding, shaping, and controlling force of the Church would still remain; the destinies of the nation would be quite safe in the hands of Dr. Clifford and the Bishop of London. Even the great Mr. George would be well advised to throw up his post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and confine his activities to the pulpit—to which, it is said, he had an early predilection, and which he has not, apparently, outgrown.

As a politician, Mr. George may be all that Dr. Clifford says he is, but in that case such a passage as the one cited only serves to show how easily he is demoralised by a religious atmosphere. The extravagance of the statement is its own disproof, and, if it were true, its truthfulness would involve the condemnation of the Churches. It is extravagant, because it makes the Churches—and by the Churches one must mean the clergy, for it is not the mere buildings that are effective—the arbiters of the nation's fate. It allows effective room for the operation of no other influence. And, if true, it would saddle the clergy with the responsibility for all the evils that Mr. George was there to deplore. And in that case the clergy might well pray, "Save us from our friends."

The notion that the clergy guide and control the conscience of the community, and fix the moral standards and ideals of people, is one so outrageously crude and unscientific that one would not expect to hear it from anyone but a Salvation Army preacher. In the first place, a people's ideals are determined by a host of influences, none of which are peculiarly religious. Geographical, climatic, economic, social, and historical forces all play their part in fixing the ideals of a nation. Does anyone imagine, for example, that if China had been wholly converted to Chris-

tianity a thousand years ago, that between them and Englishmen there would now be no observable difference? The Rev. R. F. Horton once said as much; but one may charitably suppose he is alone in this opinion. The Chinese, in that case, would have changed Christianity quite as much as the Western world has changed it. The native genius of a people exerts far more influence over a religion than an imported religion exerts over a people. And if the religion is native the natural conditions of life and the natural history of a people are all the time modifying and moulding the religion into harmony with current knowledge and needs. This is, of course, very elementary; but when Mr. Lloyd George gets religious we are on very elementary ground indeed.

In what way, I wonder, does Mr. Lloyd George imagine the Churches "establish the moral standard"? Surely he cannot be on the mental level of those religionists who argue that morality was brought into existence by a religious injunction? In these days of popular Darwinism such an assumption would be an affront to a prominent man's intelligence. For the certain thing is that moral standards are not fixed by either Church or State. All that either can do is to recognise them—or at most enforce them in sporadic instances of revolt. But morality, and consequently the moral standard which is implicit in morality, grows out of the conditions of social life. It is implicit in practice long before it is explicit in theory. Far from the Churches determining the moral standard of life, it is the social force of a people that determines the moral teaching of a Church. It is, indeed, a notorious historical fact that the Churches have always lagged behind the moral sense of a people, and that a more developed moral sense has been the great cause of an improvement in the moral teaching of the Churches. The decline of the doctrine of eternal damnation is a striking proof of this. The clergy would have gone on preaching damnation until the Day of Judgment had not a more developed moral sense insisted upon the iniquity of the teaching. They would have continued burning heretics with a full consciousness of a duty faithfully discharged but for the social revulsion occasioned by the practice. And Mr. Lloyd George would never have been asked to speak at a conference called to determine the relation of the Churches to social ills had not a series of developments—purely secular in their nature and origin—knocked on the head the other-worldism of the orthodox clergy. All, again, very elemental truths; but how is one to meet such crude statements except by repeating truths that are accepted as a matter of course by all properly balanced and educated minds?

Is it even true that the people look to the clergy for guidance in matters of conduct? One would have to be curiously blind to facts to say that this is generally the case. Less than ten per cent. of the people attend Church, and Mr. Lloyd George will surely not claim that this small proportion is so emphatically the cream of our moral and mental life that the remainder of the population naturally look to it for guidance and unhesitatingly submit to its decrees. It is, again, one of the commonplaces of life that the driving power of the nation is found quite apart from this minority. During the railway strike of last summer, a leading cleric openly stated that the advice and help of the Churches was neither asked nor wanted by the contending parties. And the Churches were not asked to help because, he said, they were not trusted. There is only one place in the Senate in which the clergy, as such, occupy an official position. That is in the House of Lords; and Mr. George will certainly not argue that the bench of bishops fix the ideals and establish the moral standards of the people. I do not think it is wide of the truth to say, taking matters all round, and eliminating certain individuals—very few among the vast army of clergymen—that the clergy are regarded with a greater amount of suspicion than any other class in the community. The fact of this

being so is partly obscured by the clergy being split up into rival bodies; but it is there. One need only glance at the religious press to observe how little one body of clergymen trust the interference of another body of clergymen in social affairs. And the way in which politicians and sociologists pursue their paths without any serious effort to enlist the help of the clergy, shows how little faith they have in their judgment or in their power to control the people.

It is characteristic of intemperate advocacy to attempt to prove too much; and this Mr. George does in saying that "no interest, however powerful it may be, can long withstand the resolute and united opposition of the Churches." Well, if that means what it says, and if it is true, it means that the responsibility for all such evils as were preventable, and for the continued existence of all such evils as were remediable, lies with the Churches. If there are, as Mr. George says, "millions of men, women, and children who, through no fault of their own, go through life sodden in wretchedness, poverty, and despair," the responsibility for this must lie with the Churches that fix our ideals, establish our moral standards, and direct affairs in Council and Senate Chamber, in the shop, in the factory, and in all the affairs of life. Neither Mr. George nor the Churches can have their cake and eat it. If the Churches do all he says they do, then let them take the responsibility for what is. If they are not responsible, then let us have done with this perfectly stupid and unintelligent praise of organisations that have done nothing to justify it, and which is worthy of only the lowest class of evangelical preaching.

If Mr. Lloyd George had said that the Churches might play a great part in directing the better life of the nation, then one could agree with him—in a sense. A trained body of men, some 50,000 strong, with organisations in every town and village, and working with a single eye to the social betterment of the people, might do almost incalculable good. There is scarcely a single social evil that would not yield before the action of such a solvent. The clergy can work unitedly when it is a question affecting their interest as clergymen, but at other times they exhibit all the worst features of faction, bigotry, and dishonest advocacy, while showing themselves ready to champion any interest that promises them effective support.

If we were in a position to offer Mr. Lloyd George a little advice, it would be to the effect that such fulsome, ill-balanced, unjustifiable eulogies are uncalled for and unserviceable. They do nothing to advance the cause of genuine reform, and they do nothing to enhance the reputation of the speaker with thoughtful people. Statesmen may *exist* on the applause of the moment, but ultimately they *live* by the reputation they establish for breadth of view, sanity of judgment, and wisdom of expression. Popular idols are apt to be short lived; and often a man is never nearer oblivion than when his name is active within everyone's memory.

C. COHEN.

Mechanical Laws.

IN philosophy the problem of problems is how to interpret the various phenomena of Nature, especially the phenomena of life. Only two interpretations are possible, the natural and the spiritual, or the mechanical and the teleological. Kant, in his early days, and Laplace courageously attempted "to treat the constitution and the mechanical origin of the entire fabric of the Universe according to Newtonian laws." In later life, however, Kant made concessions to theology by declaring that mechanical causes were inadequate to account for the complex phenomena of organic Nature. He maintained that theoretically the mind could give a mechanical interpretation of these, but that practically such an explanation was beyond it; and so he fell back upon the teleological argument. Had Kant lived a century

later he would have adhered to the mechanical interpretation to the end, because he would have seen that Darwin's law of Natural Selection deals final causes a fatal blow. But the strange thing is that the theologians, even those who call themselves Darwinians, do not see this. The Rev. Dr. Orchard, for example, though himself an evolutionist, complains that, if "all things develop according to inherent qualities and fixed laws," it must follow that prayer is "unnecessary and meaningless." Furthermore, this divine argues that development on such lines would deprive other things than prayer of their value. "What would be the use of effort?" he asks. "If all things develop in a mechanical way our striving can make no difference." But this is a palpable fallacy. It is true that if evolution is according to fixed laws prayer becomes useless and absurd; but it is not true that effort loses its value. Why, effort, struggle, conflict is an essential condition of success in evolution. To say that the doctrine of Determinism cuts the nerve of effort is to betray a deplorable ignorance of what the doctrine really is.

Dr. Orchard proceeds to show how the mechanical view of evolution deprives consciousness of all its value. And here again he grossly misrepresents the teaching of Determinism. He says:—

"If all development is mechanical change, what value can be placed upon *consciousness*? We could do just as well without this faculty, for on the deterministic hypothesis it is simply the power to watch over our own development, not to direct it; so that man would be just where he is to-day if this power of consciousness had never come into existence."

No Determinist has ever been guilty of holding such an impossible idea. We confidently challenge Dr. Orchard to produce his authority for so absurd a statement. Determinism is simply the recognition of the law of causation throughout the domains of Nature. Does Dr. Orchard deny the universality of causation? If not, on what ground does he quarrel with Determinism? What he cannot tolerate is the theory that Nature works unconsciously and without a plan. But what evidence can he adduce that the process is conscious and teleological? Bergson believes that there is a conscious will behind all the changes, but rejects the idea that it has any definite end in view. Dr. Russel Wallace teaches that evolution is under the direction of intelligent beings whose goal was the production of man. All that Dr. Orchard claims is that "in the ultimate analysis no theory explains the full story of evolution without assuming some form of consciousness either in the environment or in the changing organism, or in both. Let us consider that claim. In consequence of the discovery of radio-activity it is estimated that our planet began its separate career from one thousand to two thousand million years ago. Whatever may be thought of that estimate, it is a certainty that the earth was without life for many millions of years. At first it was formless, chaotic, and fiery, emitting waves of heat into the surrounding space. The cooling process was necessarily slow, but it was continuous, and at length a thin crust began to form, and eventually encased the molten mass. Now, does Dr. Orchard imagine that the earth was conscious of this marvellous process, or that the process was conducted by some conscious force outside; or are we to suppose that evolution became conscious or consciously guided at a specific stage, say, when life first appeared? In any case, the introduction of consciousness would not contribute a single iota towards an explanation of the full story of evolution. It would rather add to the difficulty and perplexity of the problem.

Blinking that question, Dr. Orchard takes refuge in the following curious statement:—

"At any rate, it is beyond doubt that consciousness plays some very practical part in evolution. We may leave aside the consideration of when and where consciousness first appears, and come to man, where it can be studied from within. The outstanding characteristic of man is that he is conscious of his environment, of himself, of a lack of complete correspondence between the two."

We confess to a keen sense of disappointment. We thought the reverend gentleman set himself to demolish the scientists who hold that "all things develop according to inherent qualities and by fixed laws," and firmly establish the opposite thesis, namely, that "all things develop contrarily to inherent qualities and by unfixed laws." Instead of doing that, he pointlessly asks, "If all development is mechanical change what value can be placed upon consciousness"; and then as pointlessly adds, "At any rate, consciousness is a factor in evolution." Of course consciousness is a factor in evolution, no scientist ever dreamt of denying such a patent fact; but how on earth can such a statement be regarded as proving that all things do *not* "develop according to inherent qualities and by fixed laws"? It by no means follows that when a process becomes conscious it also becomes lawless; and it is impossible to conceive of law as being other than mechanical. Henry Drummond, theologian though he was, was perfectly sound on this point. Though he believed in a spiritual world, yet he maintained that it was governed by exclusively natural laws, there being no others.

Consciousness is a product of development by mechanical change. But what is it that is conscious? A material organism. There are many theories as to when and in what kingdom consciousness first appears. Some go the length of asserting that it is present in every atom of matter. Others aver that they discover the first traces of it in the vegetable kingdom, while others declare that all animals, and they alone, have it. Haeckel is of opinion that "the centralisation of the nervous system is a condition of consciousness." But the question as to when and where consciousness first appears is really of no essential moment, the all-important point being that consciousness is found in physical organisms, and is of necessity subject to physical laws. Paralyse the organism and consciousness vanishes. Bergson calls consciousness "a hyphen, a tie between past and future"; but is it such a "hyphen" or "tie" apart from law? He says, further, that "its function is to preside over actions that are *chosen*"; but are actions ever chosen except according to law? That man and other animals do possess the power of choice is undeniable, but it is equally undeniable that choices are never made in opposition to the dictates of the constitution of the choosers. Our volitional actions are quite as much determined as our most unconscious performances. It may be that when the amoeba changes its color at will it is vaguely conscious; but does the amoeba ever change its color without a cause? Bergson thinks that "a living being, no matter how simple, is a reservoir of indetermination and unforeseeability, a reservoir of possible actions, or, in a word, of choice." Like Sir Oliver Lodge, Bergson regards life as a distinct entity which, at a given moment, entered into matter almost as a hostile force, to oppose its fatality, and turn "a certain elasticity" it possesses "to the profit of liberty by stealing into whatever infinitesimal fraction of indetermination that inert matter may present." The curious thing is that neither of these men is himself a biologist, while the biologists are almost unanimously against them. These resolutely decline to have anything to do with "the facile and sterile hypothesis of a 'vital principle'" and proceed on the assumption that "the whole order of Nature, including living and lifeless matter—from man to gas—is a network of mechanism, the main features and many details of which have been made more or less obvious to the wondering intelligence of mankind by the labor and ingenuity of scientific investigators." We believe that life, consciousness, intelligence, and reason are all at once evolutionary products and factors, and that they are all alike in subjection to the law of Causation, and neither Bergson nor Dr. Orchard adduces the slightest evidence to the contrary.

Bergson's conception of life is a child of his vivid imagination. With the eye of his lively fancy

he sees life descending from no one knows where, and then flowing down, like a mighty current, into matter as into a tunnel, and, after undergoing all sorts of novel experiences in the darkness there, breaking out into the light once more. His works are replete with beautiful flights of that amusing kind; but what exactly they mean it is impossible to ascertain. And yet, strangely enough, this poetical Idealist, this glowing rhetorician, speaks of "the mechanism of psychical facts" and "the physiological relation," as if for the moment he had caught sight of the truth and forgotten his fanciful philosophy. "The mechanism of psychical facts" is fine, and implies all contended for in this article. Man's ideal is not expressed by the words "indetermination and unforeseeableness," but, rather, by such terms as aspiration and struggle for full harmony with the laws of his own being and of the Nature by which he is surrounded. These laws are all mechanical, just as man himself is a mechanical, natural being. Indeed, all known objects are mechanical, the so-called spiritual objects being figments of the imagination. The moment this truth is ignored all sorts of vagaries spring up and becloud the vision. Bergson arrives at his dualism of mind and matter more or less in conflict, and Dr. Orchard at another dualism of God and man, also more or less in conflict. The Freethinker, on the contrary, is a Monist, who looks upon man as Nature's apex on this planet, whatever may be the case in some other worlds, and who believes that man's highest happiness is to be found in the faithful pursuit of the quest for perfect peace within and without.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Three Incomprehensibles.

A NARROW wooden footbridge spans the river Brent, and the brown stream swirls between banks of soft green. Southwards, one sees the cottages and villas of Ealing, the very edge of the vast metropolitan labyrinth of brick. Northwards, the grey-blue hills of Harrow rise amid clusters of foliage, the remnants of a forest that stretched at one time from Essex into Middlesex. You cross the wooden bridge and immediately come to the gate of a churchyard, where stone angels and pale memorial tablets glimmer amid the yews; and in the midst thereof is a homely church, dating in its foundation from the thirteenth century—its walls of cream-colored plaster, its tower wearing a red pyramid-cap of tiles. This is Perivale Church.

Here, last Christmas morning, my daughter and I attended service.

"Ganz hübsch!" said a German girl to her companion afterwards; and "very pretty" indeed it was. The east window glowed with groups of sweet saints; many candles flickered on the altar; men and boy choristers chanted in white surplices; and when the clergyman, a most venerable and fatherly person, clothed in a jewelled robe, read the prayers or recited the Epistle, and the sun threw bars of light across the chancel, and over the lilies on the Holy Table, we were as pleased as children at a Christmas-tree. If a Kensit rioter had disturbed our dream with his hoarse croak about illegitimate candles and naughty brass crosses, I should have felt as mad with him as any of the faithful peasants of Perivale.

Peasants,—well, I must slightly modify that picturesque term. As a matter of fact, we were none of us peasants. We were choice suburban plants, reared in an atmosphere of propriety, and sheltering our household virtues under the shade of "The Laurels," "The Laburnams," "Holmdene," "The Pines," and "The Philistines," etc., with side-entrances for tradesmen. When, amid the fumes of Ritualist incense, the choir sang of the shepherds that watched their flocks by night, and the babe that in a manger lay, my mind fled back over the centuries to the original churches which accepted the Christian myth.

As a matter of fact, the shepherds, stablemen, potters, tanners, boatmen, sweepers, ploughmen, and the rest, who chiefly made up the "Churches" of early Christianity have, in large measure, moved off the scene in favor of middle-class ladies and gentlemen, social workers, charity-organisers, missionaries, and their families. The people who work for a pound a week, the people who strike, the people who suffer from lock-outs, the people who labor in mine and factory and docks and railway stations, do not provide the majority of the church congregations. But the Gospel-myth, for all that, remains proletarian. The shepherds are still in the field, and the stable is still the place of the nativity, and the young Messiah still does apprentice-work in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, and the Sermon on the Mount is preached to the "vulgar herd,"—in the legend, that is. The day may come, indeed, when Perivale Church will be restored to the shepherds; when Trades Unions, workers' guilds, associations of artists, will assemble here, as elsewhere, to hear the message of poetry to the hind, the craftsman, and the laundress. The day may come when Perivale Church will offer Shakespeare and Goethe, Milton and Blake, Æschylus and James Thomson ("B. V."), Thomas More and William Morris, and the charming folk-lore of Japan, India, and America, to the willing ears of the doers of the world's daily work. The day may come when labor and music, the worker and the poet, the people and the prophets will unite in a common celebration of the great Ideals. I do not know why these meadows of Ealing and Harrow should not lend themselves to such a revolution as well as the classic isles of Greece, or the colleges of Oxford.

While I mused on this reunion of the folk and the Ideal, the venerable and bejewelled priest and the surpliced choir changed their tone, and from a hymn of shepherds and seraphs, the voices abruptly shifted to the theme of "Perish everlastingly." My daughter and I hurriedly fingered our prayer-books, and discovered that we were being solemnly carried through the Athanasian Creed:—

"The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal; and yet they are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible."

My meditation on the harmonising of William Morris and religion, Labor and Art, must be abandoned at the sound of this threat. "Perish everlastingly" we must,—so Perivale Church informed us,—unless we subscribed cheerfully to the views of Athanasius. Now I verily believe this fourth century bishop, relatively to his age, served a useful purpose. Whoever has studied the history of those early times knows that the way of Western evolution was cumbered with a most anarchic medley of competing creeds and half-creeds. Athanasius stepped into the arena of confusion and mapped a theological scheme which, to him and his contemporaries, was clear-cut, logical, methodical. But the Twentieth Century cannot bend in slavery to this Alexandrian bishop. His ghost has no right still to insist that—

"There are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible."

But the tongue of Perivale, on Christmas Day, was vigorously talking Fourth-century language into the ear of the Twentieth. There was no mistake as to the emphasis. The venerable priest, the altos, tenors, and basses all intoned the doctrine in a rumbling, but plain English, and the choir-boys said the same thing in a shrill treble accompaniment. To the whole world—to Trades Unions, Social Democrats, Strike-committees, Amalgamated Railwaymen, and Federated Dockers, the word was announced:—

"Perish everlastingly.....There are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible."

Had Mr. Asquith, or Lloyd George, or G. B. Shaw, or Bonar Law, or even Mrs. Pankhurst been present, I

believe the choir-boys would not have hesitated to decree the same doom:—

"Perish everlastingly.....There are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible."

The confident way in which that choir—men and boys—hammered the thing out at us staggered me. Had the whole body of the scientists of Europe and America been represented in Perivale Church, I believe those men and boys would have unflinchingly told them—intoningly in treble and bass—to sign the creed, or go on a very melancholy journey. What a spell has Athanasius worked! But Father Time also works spells, and he has subjected Athanasius himself to an ironic revenge. For the creed-maker is now reduced to a meagre ghost, gibbering to an unbelieving century the empty message of antiquity.

Athanasius spoilt my Christmas. It is true that the venerable priest, in a five-minutes' sermon, assured us the Christmas was a "happy, happy" one. It is true the German girl said the service was "Ganz hübsch." Perhaps it was for her. But the refrain rang in my ear with all its bigotry and its thick-headed metaphysic:—

"Perish everlastingly.....There are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible."

When we came out, the December sun tried to irradiate the valley as mirthfully as before, and the Brent babbled along the ragged edges of its verdant bank, and pure blue was the world above. But the horrid anathema rattled on in the memory:—

"Perish everlastingly.....Not three incomprehensibles.....one incomprehensible....."

Is it not time that we should sprinkle a little dust, after the manner of the Greeks, on this poor Athanasian Creed, and let the ghost rest in sempiternal peace?

F. J. GOULD.

Bleating on the Beatitudes.

The Sermon on the Mount and Practical Politics. By A. E. Fletcher. 1911.

THERE are, in America and elsewhere, many persons who make themselves moderately happy by believing that they are the true heirs of vast English estates. Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, in childhood, was led to imagine that he was "kept out of his own"—a large, fertile, but anonymous island

"Yonder in the western deep,
Where the skies for ever smile,
And the blacks for ever weep."

Mr. A. E. Fletcher has a similarly touching delusion that the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount can be applied to present-day civilisation, and he has written a particularly entertaining book to that end. And such is his transparent sense of humor that he selected the "merry birthday of the Man of Sorrows" as the most appropriate season in which to launch his ideas upon a delighted public. Mr. Fletcher has made a profound study of the sacrosanct sermon, and boldly states that it is "the charter of man's redemption" and that "there can be no good and stable government that is not based upon its doctrines." Indeed, his anxiety to interpret its teachings fearlessly have led him into some statements inferior to none in boldness of unsupported assertion, as, for example, the holding up of the Atheist, Shelley, as a shining example of the Christian life in practice. In this merit his only rivals in literature are Mrs. Gallup, who thought Bacon was Shakespeare, and Mr. Frank Harris, who imagined "Mary Fitton" playing fast and loose with the affections of the author of *King Lear*. The ordinary man's intellect is abject, and not equal to the task of saying something new and true about Shelley; but Mr. Fletcher overcomes this difficulty in the following naive fashion:—

"Though the heir to a baronetcy and a fine ancestral estate, Shelley adopted the Christian view on the subject of property. With heroic consistency he refused his

father's offer of a settlement of two thousand a year, because he would not consent to the condition that he should continue the entail of the land to his heirs male."

After this, it is not surprising that Mr. Fletcher interprets the beatitude, "Blessed be ye poor," with the same legal exactness, and implies that it means communal ownership of property:—

"Interpreted in this light, these words appear to me to be the sublimest utterance that ever fell from human lips, the text to the greatest sermon that was ever preached, the keynote to the ethical and economic system, the statement of the divine principle of the brotherhood of man. When we have realised the full meaning of that, the days of flunkeyism and snobbery will be at an end, the poor man will come in for the rightful share of the wealth which he creates; we shall no longer be faced with the difficult problems arising out of the terrible contrast between poverty and wealth, which is the curse and shame of this nation; nor shall we any longer find it necessary to pay archbishops £15,000 a year for holding out prospects of perdition to workers on fifteen shillings a week."

We have seen examples of Mr. Fletcher's sobriety of judgment. He, being so excellent a judge, looks for the time when England will be "the land of religious liberty, great for Christ, for freedom, for humanity." Alas! no man, remembering the prisoners for blasphemy or the murder of Ferrer, can hope to follow Mr. Fletcher in his dreaming. The public cannot be expected to share, and does not participate, in the excitement. There is something in the constitution of the human mind which impels each divergent creed to displace all others opposed to its own. The Church of Christ is no exception to this almost universal rule. The doctrines are of one aspect, but its practices are of another.

Never, in the whole course of its contest with other religions or ideas has Christianity turned the other cheek to be smitten. Not once in the realities of its evolution has it manifested "goodwill to men" opposed to its own creed. In this the priests displayed the wisdom of the serpent. Had they done so, had they practised what they preached, Christianity would have sunk into insignificance or have passed to inevitable destruction. In the past, the Church of Christ bribed the weak and murdered the strong among her opponents. In the twentieth century she is buying apostates all over the non-Christian world by means of medical missionaries, and in England venting her spleen on unfortunate stragglers in the army of Freethought. Mr. Fletcher ought to be thankful that Christianity has determined opponents. Otherwise, he would have shared the fate of Ferrer, and men would be imprisoned for selling his book.

MIMNERMUS.

"I. I. I."

"God becomes the dot to complete the believer's 'I.'"

THIS sentence, in the second column of the really charming article of Mr. Foote's on "Tennyson's God," some weeks ago, seems to me to be worth a few words of detailed examination as possibly explaining a vital difference between the believer and the unbeliever.

It is suggested that the believer should be represented by "i"—by what the compositor calls a "lower case i." (The compositor is asked to sacrifice one stamp by taking out his pocket-knife and cutting the dot off.) It is suggested that this incomplete "i" may well be taken as passing accurate. The believer is always incomplete; what the late Touzeau Parris called just half a hinge—something absolutely useless, more useless even than one blade of a pair of scissors, for it could, at a pinch, be used as a stiletto. The believer, without his nebulous God to believe in, to call upon, to "profess" to rely upon, holds himself out to the world as incomplete—wanting always the disconnected dot over the top.

The unbeliever is always the capital "I," complete and finished, no loose ends, no convenient accesso-

ries to admit or leave out at the will of the appellant—to appeal to and thank when satisfactory, to leave out of consideration when inconvenient to recognise.

The unbelievers' "I" is Monism exactly expressed. "I" dare and do; "I" take the risk; "I," upright and fearless, head however bloody, still "unbowed."

The believer may have his "i," with its detached dot, with its suggestion of Dualism and weakness, in the fact that it is almost impossible to write it without the dot, even when you try.

A further thought suggested by the passage, "God becomes the dot," is how small and paltry is the so-called Omnipresent Omnipotent; what a really preposterous fraction the dot has come to be in the scheme of things. Measure up the superficies of the printed page, and then measure up the superficies of space taken up by the "dot," and then recall that, in the scheme of things to-day, the God idea really fills a smaller proportional space than the "dot" of the printed page.

The really beautiful fitness of our Editor's capital "I" will come out stronger yet if Mr. Printer can be persuaded to use a "lower case" script or italic "i" in this article. Then we shall really appreciate the difference between the Atheist and the believer; then we shall be able to take the believer at his own valuation: a worm, grovelling in the dust at the feet of his ghost of a "dot." It forces one to go hymn making, and we fancy we hear the invertebrate believer droning:—

Just a wriggling worm am "i,"
Unable to sit or stand;
While the Capital "I" erect
Rears his boastful head,
And drives my god from the land.*

The believer professes to rely on his "dot," but it is the emptiest, idlest sham ever professed. Outside the small band of Peculiar People there is hardly one of the professors who really relies upon the "dot." Never a day passes without some fresh admission, some fresh proof of the smallness of the "dot," and its rapidly diminishing importance in the minds of those who profess to value it.

Before closing this, however, it is important to note, that in proportion as the real value of the "dot" decreases, the rancor and venom and passion of the "dot" defenders increases. Wars have been waged and blood and treasure poured out over the idle question of a letter (more or less), and a recent letter of that incontinent babbler, Winnington Ingram, shows how soon a college man can act the cad when essentials are gripped and material wrongs are threatened with correction.

T. SHORE.

Prayer's Power.

A CALM stretch of sea, and a sail;
And a sound of solemn singing:
A wild white waste of surf, a gale,
With its fiendish voices ringing.
A glimmer of light from the moon;
The peace of a passionless sea;
Two motionless vultures that croon
O'er a nearing satiety.
A humble home in the city;
A wife with her head bent in prayer
Beseeching her God to pity
And bring him back, safe, to her care.

ROBERT MORELAND.

The manufacture of monsters was practised on a large scale, and comprised various branches. The Sultan required them, so did the Pope; the one to guard his women, the other to say his prayers. These were of a peculiar kind, incapable of reproduction. Scarcely human beings, they were useful to voluptuousness and to religion. The soraglio and the Sistine Chapel utilised the same species of monsters; fierce in the former case, mild in the latter.—Victor Hugo.

* "Hymns Very Ancient and More Modern," Old Watts-his-Name. To be sung to the tune of "Let's All be Merry," or "I Don't Care a Dash if I Do."

Acid Drops.

The variety entertainment that was arranged to take place at the London Coliseum on Sunday evening, in connection with the Charles Dickens centenary celebrations, has upset the Sabbatarians, who seem now to belong principally to the Nonconformist Churches. The National Free Church Council has passed the following resolution:—

"That we view with profound concern the proposal to celebrate the Dickens centenary by a variety entertainment at the Coliseum on Sunday evening next as a most unnecessary and wanton invasion of the rest-day, as alien to the spirit of the great novelist, who always treated religious sentiment with respect, and as likely to establish a very undesirable precedent, and one to which as Free Churchmen and citizens we must offer our strenuous opposition."

These Nonconformist preachers, with their rest-day, which is the day of all the seven on which they work hardest themselves, are becoming sickening. Rev. F. B. Meyer, being interviewed on the subject, pretends that he and his clerical brethren do not protest against Sunday rivalry to their gospel-shows "on religious grounds." Far from it. They are only thinking of the secular welfare of the people. Mr. Meyer says that "the nervous strain of the present day is so terrific" that unless the weekly day of rest be preserved "there will be no limit to the number of lunatic asylums that will have to be built." The reverend gentleman overlooks the fact that lunatic asylums are very largely filled with religious maniacs. Did not the late Bishop of Exeter declare that he had found such people peculiarly susceptible to religious influences, in the course of a sermon he preached at the confirmation of thirty-eight of them?

Daddy Meyer had the cheek to claim Dickens as on the side of the Sabbatarian busybodies, who are all the worse for the hypocrisy with which they try to disguise their intentions. Dickens's bold and trenchant paper—*very* bold considering when it was written—entitled "Sunday Under Three Heads" is enough to show Mr. Meyer's ignorance or impudence,—he can take it which way he pleases. The subject of Sunday Bands is specially dealt with in a letter of Dickens's dated May 19, 1856. He had been asked to attend a meeting to protest against "the stoppage of the Sunday Bands in the Parks." "I thoroughly agree with you," he said in reply, "that these bands have afforded an innocent and healthful enjoyment on the Sunday afternoon, to which the people have a right." He thought the people themselves should assert that right. He preferred not to attend protest meetings himself, but he would willingly subscribe ten pounds to the cost of such meetings if the right people would take them in hand. The Charles Dickens of the novels and the letters would have looked upon Daddy Meyer with contempt.

Parsons of the F. B. Meyer type were particularly obnoxious to Dickens. Of course, Mr. Meyer states that his objection is not based on religious grounds, but on the necessity for a day of rest. This is sheer cant, and we venture to say that Mr. Meyer knows it to be cant. The humbug of the plea is shown by the appeal to the religious consciousness—whatever that may be—of people, and to the complaint that at a time "when our churches are filled with communicants" there ought not to be going on at the Coliseum a representation of "Bardell v. Pickwick." No one issued a special invitation to the communicants to attend. Those who did attend would not be among the communicants if the performance had not taken place. What Mr. Meyer means is that Christians do not like to feel that anybody is spending Sunday in a different manner to themselves. And that is Sabbatarianism in its worst form. The only difference in Mr. Meyer's case is that he hasn't even the courage to avow the true motive of his action. He also threatens that any similar experiment in the future will meet with his strenuous opposition. So it may; but English people have sunk pretty low if they allow their conduct to be regulated by such men. Mr. F. B. Meyer as the guardian of English morality is really too ridiculous.

Porthcawl Council (we see by the *Glamorgan Gazette*) has granted a seven-days' license to the Coliseum, so that the town may have pictures and good singing on Sunday. This was carried by a majority of one, but that is quite sufficient for what is practically a decision that the bigots shall mind their own business and not other people's.

Brighton Town Council has gone back on the Sunday question, in spite of local experience being all in favor of the good moral effect of the picture palaces, which are now to be closed. Two thousand citizens held a meeting in the Dome to protest against this bigoted decision. Councillor Henn,

representing the working classes of the town, was supported by the Chief Constable, who was at first opposed to Sunday picture shows but had found that they kept young people off the streets and helped to promote the good order of the town. There had been quite an unexpected improvement in that direction, and he strongly desired it to continue. But what do the Brighton preachers care about that? They don't value the morality of Brighton one bit; it is the interests of religion they are anxious about; what they really want is the prosperity of their own profession. Sabbatarianism is nothing else than clerical trade-unionism.

The clerical trade-unionists oppose *all* rivalry on Sunday. They are now on the war path against Sunday shooting by the Territorials. They would sooner the citizen soldier never learnt to shoot at all than that he should learn on a Sunday. They are the most selfish trade-unionists in the world.

The Rotherham clergy have carried out their threat and struck against Sunday funerals. We hope this is a prelude to their being locked out every other day of the week.

Mr. T. Williams, of Caeran, near Bridgend, asks us "Was Jesus Christ a Trade Unionist?" We never heard that he was. We believe he was *nothing*. But all political parties seem to be claiming him. He is a Monarchist and a Republican, a Conservative and a Liberal, a Radical and a Socialist. He blesses both King George V. and Mr. Keir Hardie. He is all things to all men. So it's just as likely that he is a Trade Unionist; and if he isn't they can soon make him one, for we never heard of his objecting to anything. Our correspondent informs us that the miners of Maesteg Valley were out on strike for three days on the non-unionist question. Five men, a father and four sons, wouldn't join the Union, and seven thousand men were idle in consequence. There was talk of violence, but something else happened. A miner took his Bible with him to the five, who, by the way, are pillars of the Nodfa Baptist Chapel, and he managed to convince them with it. *How* he convinced them does not transpire. We hope he used the Bible on the interior, not the exterior, of their heads. Anyhow, the five gave in, and work was resumed the next morning. That Bible ought to be kept for future occasions.

Under the heading of "The Great Sequel," the London *Express* devoted a leaderette to the Bishop of London's visit to Khartoum, where he is to consecrate the first Christian Church built there. Apparently all the work of Kitchenor in Egypt and in the Soudan, and all the vast expense in blood and cash, was simply "Providence's" way of leading up to Dr. Ingram's safe and pleasant excursion. Well, well! An English poet remarked "What great effects from little causes spring." Quite another reflection is needed now: "What small effects from mighty causes spring." After the military genius the clerical nincompoo!

The Bishop of London's farewell words, before leaving for his tour in the East, exhorted people to be of good cheer, and to "hope for the best till I return." Perhaps the good man is doubtful whether the nation will survive his absence. If the stories of his adventures in the East are as romantic as the stories of his adventures in the East End, they should prove entertaining reading.

A large number of ladies, so runs the newspaper reports, were present at the railway station to bid the Bishop goodbye. His lordship is a bachelor, with a special craze for the cultivation of large families.

There is nothing so effective in securing the rejection of a theory as to give it a misleading and false interpretation. Very few people ask whether the description is accurate or not, and to most the fact that a theory or an opinion has a bad name is enough to give it a wide berth. Fundamentally, this is an expression of want of courage; and courage—in mental and moral affairs—is the rarest of qualities. Physical courage, the courage of mere animal pugnacity, is common enough; but the courage to stand alone in defence of an opinion is possessed by few. Most of the opposition to Materialism as a scientific theory is due to its being associated with mere sensual gratification. The opposition to Atheism owes a large part of its strength to the persistent association, by religious writers, of Atheism with loose living. It is an old game, and the ease with which it is played depends upon the unscrupulous character of those who play it.

We are reminded of the above by a sentence that caught our eye in a leading article in the *Christian World*. The writer says: "In spite of the deadening utilitarianism which

has invaded our souls there does remain in us a certain capacity for joy in fresh and unhackneyed achievement, even though we are going to get little or nothing out of it." It is quite possible that the writer really imagines there is something incompatible between utilitarianism and "unselfish" activity, but this would only further illustrate the truth of what has been said. Utility is identified with use-value, and use-value with purely material gain. Hence the utilitarian is one who believes in what Carlyle ignorantly called "pig-philosophy." And it only needs one more step to identify the utilitarian with a pig. Of course, this is a mere caricature of the utilitarian position. Properly understood, utilitarianism simply asserts that all conscious activity involves a pleasurable feeling. The feelings accompanying any particular action may not be wholly pleasurable, but the pleasurable must predominate. The anticipated pleasure may not be immediate; it may be more or less remote. But immediate or remote, it must be there. Now, if the *Christian World* writer can show that achievement, the love of adventure, etc., "even though we are going to get little or nothing [material] out of it," does not yield pleasurable feelings, he will have offered a serious criticism of utilitarianism. But until he does this, and so long as he continues in the same strain, he is but advertising his own ignorance and raising a smile on the faces of those who really understand the subject.

There are some really wonderful people in the world! The Rev. J. A. Sharrock, of St. Boniface College, Warminster, writes thus: "We have been able to show that the Word of God, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, was made very Man of the substance of the Virgin Mary, His Mother." Mr. Sharrock not only says he believes this, he has been able to show it! The pity is he does not favor his readers with the nature of the demonstration. We presume the rev. gentleman is really in earnest about it. Perhaps it is the number of capital letters that does the trick.

There was a curious allusion in Mr. Lloyd George's Cardiff speech. Dwelling upon the point that it was not for the Churches to draft Acts of Parliament, he said it was their duty to hunt out evil conditions, expose them, and then hand them over, "as the Church did of old," to the secular power. The Chancellor's history is just a trifle shaky. The mediæval Church did not hunt out evil conditions and then hand them over to the secular powers to be dealt with. It only did this in the case of heretics. And in practice this became part of the procedure for burning alive. And it did this because, contrary to the popular belief, until the Protestant times, there was no law in any European State compelling one to belong to the Christian Church. Church and State were really separate, although often working together. The Church claimed spiritual supremacy over people, and when it judged people deserving of punishment, asked the secular power, in certain cases, to inflict it. And the Churches were always far more concerned in hunting out heresy than in searching for and removing bad social conditions.

The great army of unemployed felt the late cold snap terribly in Chicago. Some had not even socks to wear, and wrapped their feet in newspapers. Think of that—ten degrees below zero! Many of the unemployed in New York huddled together for warmth in the chapel of the morgue. The Bowery Mission appealed to the churches to shelter the homeless by keeping their doors open at night, but the idea did not catch on. One pastor said it was preposterous to bring the destitute to his church; another replied that his chapel pews were private property. Thus wags the (Christian) world along.

We believe that the late Rev. Samuel Thackeray was the only parson who ever stood behind a public-house bar and served out beer. This he did at the "Fish and Eels" at Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire. But the Local Government Board ordered the Guardians to remove him from his chaplaincy of the workhouse. "I shall now," he said, "hold services in the inn on Sundays. I shall be the publican behind the bar, the sinners will be in front of me, and Christ, I hope, will be in the midst of us." And why not? Christ was by no means a teetotaler. He drank what was going then. Had he been living near the "Fish and Eels" some years ago he would probably have dropped in and troubled his publican apostle for a drop of Scotch or a glass of four-half. It must be remembered that the "publicans" he railed at in Palestine were not inn-keepers but tax-gatherers. The meaning of the word has changed since 1611.

Mr. Bernard Shaw, being asked by the editor of the *Christian Globe* whether anything could be done "to improve the administration of the London charities," replied:

"Yes, abolish them totally. Every charity is an excuse for a neglected social duty. When a respectable man steals £10 from the poor, he gives 5s. to God to bribe him to condone the theft. That is charity!"

It is nothing out of the way for a "spiritual brotherhood" to witness the advent of an irregular baby. Elsie Taylor was summoned at Leeds for not registering the birth of a child, and members of the "brotherhood" (which seems to include sisters) were summoned as witnesses. They refused to give evidence and were committed for seven days for contempt of court. One of them, on being invited to be sworn, said, "No, Christ forbids." That was true, anyhow. But the magistrate was not troubled about what Christ said. What on earth did that matter? Yet two "blasphemers" were committed for trial from that very court a few weeks ago.

Mr. L. G. Chiozza Money's trouncing of the Bishop of Llandaff in the *Daily News* of January 4 would hardly have appeared if the peccant cleric had belonged to any Dissenting denomination. It is none the worse, however, in itself, for that. His lordship told a meeting of clergy at Cardiff that some Welsh miners' cottages had an income of from £200 to £300 a year, and that the average wage was from £2 to £3 a week. These figures are so exaggerated that it is not wonderful to find the Bishop laying most of the blame of bad health, unemployment, and wretched homes on the shoulders of the miners themselves. Mr. Chiozza Money replies, and very justly, that the miserable conditions in which the majority of the Welsh miners have to live, including the "ugly and crowded dwellings" where decency is impossible, account for all the immorality which the Bishop of Llandaff denounces. How would he like a son or daughter of his own to live in such conditions?

Sun Yat Sen, President of the embryo Chinese Republic, concludes his Manifesto with the following message to the Great Powers:—

"With this message of peace and goodwill the Republic cherishes the hope of being admitted into the family of nations, not merely to share its rights and privileges, but to co-operate in the great and noble task of building up the civilisation of the world."

This is excellent. It looks as though Tennyson's "cycle of Cathay" will have to be explained to his readers in the not very distant future. By the way, it was a Chinaman that Goldsmith took as the hero of his *Citizen of the World*. Who would have thought that Goldsmith, of all men, was to prove a prophet?

It was Christian educational agencies that enabled Sun Yat Sen to obtain his Western education, and his Western friends report him to be a Christian, but that is a matter on which they may easily be mistaken. Some of them report him as "a Confucian and a Christian." But that is impossible. He cannot be both. Christianity is really concerned with the next world only; Confucianism is concerned with this world only; moreover, Confucius set aside theology altogether as useless and unworthy of man's attention. He may be called the Great Secularist of Asia.

Rev. Stanley Parker has been preaching at Newcastle-on-Tyne on the question, "Should ministers seek popularity?" To our astonishment the reverend gentleman answered "No." Evidently he has been misunderstood.

Mr. Parker is reported to have spoken "thusly":—

"No true minister preached for personal gain. The man who entered the ministry for the pay was a contemptible person who should be hounded out of all decent society. Christ on one occasion entered the Temple, and denounced the buying and selling therein, and called it 'a den of thieves.' The same thing was true in connection with the sale of livings."

It does not occur to Mr. Parker that if all the men of God who just preach and pray for a living were "hounded out" there would be a tremendous vacancy,—which, however, another lot of "contemptible persons" would soon fill. We may also point out that Mr. Parker doesn't understand Christ's performance with the cat-o'-nine-tails in "the Temple." It was not really in the Temple at all, but in the un sanctified precincts, and the dove sellers and money-changers were doing a necessary business. Women could not bring up birds say from Galilee to Jerusalem, but they had to present them to the priests in the Temple, so they bought them of the salesmen outside; and the money-changers took the current Roman money and gave the old Jewish money, which was regarded as sacred, and which alone the priests would receive in the Temple as tribute to Jehovah. How soon Christian preachers get out of their depth! The fact is that Jesus suffered from religious mania.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Orders for literature, of whatever kind, should be sent direct to our new Shop Manager (Mr. H. Saill) at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.—and to no one else.

Subscriptions to the "Freethinker" should also be sent to the same—and to no one else.

The proper address for such orders and subscriptions is as follows:—The Shop Manager, Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

Subscriptions for Funds that may be open in the "Freethinker" should be sent to Mr. G. W. Foote at the same address.

Complaints of any kind should also be sent direct to Mr. Foote.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, January 14, Shoreditch Town Hall, at 7.30; "The World to Come."

January 21, Glasgow.

February 4 and 11, Queen's Hall; 18, Manchester; 25, Birmingham.

March 3, Liverpool; 10 and 17, Queen's Hall; 24, Leicester.

April 14, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—January 14, Liverpool 21, Shoreditch Town Hall; 28, Battersea. February 11, Glasgow; 25, Queen's Hall. March 31, Queen's Hall.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1912.—J. Chick, £2 2s.; H. C. 10s.; Robert Miller, 2s.; A. Hurcum, £1 1s.; Dr. R. T. Nichols, £5 5s.; David Watt, 5s.; W. H. Harris, 1s.; T. A. Matthews, £1.

W. H. JACKSON.—Yes, the cheap edition of *Bible Heroes* will be published early in the spring.

J. WOOD.—The subject is dealt with in the "Creation Story" of our *Bible Romances*—price 6d., post free 8d.

E. RAGGETT.—You probably mean Ezekiel iv. 12, 15. We cannot sully our pages with such filthy Bible texts.

S. H. COWDROY.—(1) We understand that there is no "Life" of George Meredith to appear. A collection of "Letters" was promised, and we gave copies of Meredith's letters to us for that purpose, with elucidatory notes where necessary. Lord Morley's age and much occupation do not make him an ideal editor. As far as our share in the volume is concerned we do not mean to let it linger unpublished indefinitely. (2) Morley was too heavy-handed, even when young, for a monograph on Voltaire. Voltaire's mind moved like lightning, and his love of liberty and justice was as steadfast as a mountain. (3) We were aware of the immensely greater quantity of "familiar quotations" derived from Shakespeare than from the Bible. Nothing but religious prepossession could think of putting the Bible into comparison with Shakespeare at all.

ROBERT MILLER.—We suppose the thing will have to be done. The fact is that Mr. Foote hates being photographed, and would almost as soon face a battery of guns as a camera.

W. MCKELVIE.—We hope Mr. Lloyd will have good meetings, and that the local "saints" will be liberally provided for the collections.

J. G. BARTRAM.—Thanks for your letter. Must see about it a little later on.

J. KING.—In saying that our article on Harold Begbie is "a masterpiece" you show that you can sometimes be pleased.

TRUTHSEEKER.—Dr. Foote's is a good book and an honest book. The controversial part of it, mostly in the sociology, stands or falls on its merits. Recommending a book does not mean endorsing every one of the author's opinions.

D. MORGAN SAYS, "The loss of the *Freethinker* to me would be the loss of a good friend."

J. CHICK, subscribing to the President's Honorarium fund for 1912, writes: "I wish to express my appreciation of the weekly treat provided by the *Freethinker*, which is brimming full of information, sound argument, close reasoning, and humor, and as a paper is quite unique." This correspondent's suggestions shall have our attention.

A. HURCUM.—Hope you will find 1912 better than 1911. We quite agree with your remarks on what Ingersoll used to call the "fool friends" of freedom.

DAVID WATT.—It is a miserable thing for a Christian "lady" to persecute a blind Atheist trying to earn a poor living. Religion is responsible for it. It is part of "the Curse of Creeds." Thanks for good wishes.

R. WALSH SAYS: "Mr. Foote's castigation of Harold Begbie is one of the finest things I have ever read."

R. J. ELLIOTT.—We cannot write letters to local papers. Our time and energy are taxed enough already. And the man of God in question isn't worth our trouble—or yours. Glad to hear you and your friend accidentally discovered the *Freethinker* on a bookstall, and that it "has been part of your life" ever since.

W. H. HARRIS.—Pleased that you so much enjoyed our "Day With Ingersoll."

W. OWEN.—Subjects noted.

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.

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 President's Honorarium Fund.

To the Freethinkers of Great Britain.

January 1, 1912.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

We the undersigned renew our appeal on behalf of the above Fund.

The longer the Fund exists the less necessity is there to say much about it. You all know its object, which is to relieve Mr. G. W. Foote—President of the National Secular Society, Chairman of the Secular Society, Ltd., and Editor of the *Freethinker*—from the worst of his financial worries, so that he may be as free as possible to devote his time and energies to his work as leader of the militant Free-thought movement in this country.

Previous appeals have mentioned the fact that Mr. Foote's heavy and incessant work on the *Freethinker* brings him no salary or profit whatever. Hitherto he has actually had to pay out of his own pocket a considerable deficit on the paper and its adjuncts. We are happy to have his assurance that this deficit is now greatly reduced and will in all probability be soon extinguished.

This is the fifth year of the President's Honorarium Fund. We suggested that £300 might be raised in this way. During the first two years it was nearly raised, the third year it was fully raised, the fourth year it has been exceeded, the full amount subscribed during 1911 being £333 16s. 8d. We venture to hope that the Fund will be as well maintained in 1912. There is no occasion, however, for the subscribers to be less generous. One subscription of £50, not likely to be repeated, came from Canada; and death has been busy amongst the larger regular subscribers. Mr. George Payne, Mr. F. Smallman, and Mr. Horace W. Parsons, contributed no less than £30 between them; and the loss of that amount will naturally be felt. Remaining subscribers, therefore, should rather increase than lessen their donations,

All subscriptions received have been acknowledged week by week in the *Freethinker*, and will continue to be acknowledged in that way.

Subscriptions for 1912 can be forwarded to either of the undersigned. Those who prefer to do so can send, as before, direct to Mr. Foote himself, at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, London, E.C.

Subscribers who do not wish their names to appear in print should state the form of acknowledgment they prefer.

We are aware that all subscribers cannot conveniently respond to this appeal at once, but many can, and it would be pleasant if a considerable portion of the Fund were subscribed during January, which is the month of the President's birthday.

Yours faithfully,

J. W. DE CAUX, J.P.,
92 St. Peter's-road, Gt. Yarmouth.

R. T. NICHOLS, M.D.,
28 Park-road, Ilford.

A. J. FINCKEN,
66 Mount Grove-road, Highbury,
London, N.

Sugar Plums.

The Shoreditch Town Hall course of lectures opened well on Sunday evening. Mr. Foote had a fine audience, which was very alert, appreciative, and enthusiastic. Mr. Victor Roger took the chair and Mr. A. B. Moss occupied a seat on the platform. One well-spoken Christian, who had no idea of debate, accepted the opportunity of discussion. It is to be hoped that some more effective opposition will be offered after Mr. Foote's second lecture this evening (Jan. 14) when his subject will be "The World to Come."

We beg to call attention to the important meeting which is to be held at South Place Institute on Monday evening (Jan. 15). The N. S. S. is doing the work, but not seeking an advertisement on that account. The object of the meeting is to protest against the revival of the Blasphemy Laws at Leeds, and to demand the release of the two Free-thought advocates who are suffering imprisonment under them. The list of speakers includes the Rev. S. D. Headlam, Mr. Harry Snell, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. H. M. Hyndman, Mr. C. Cohen, Mr. G. W. Foote, and other well-known publicists. Mr. W. T. Stead has promised to attend if he can be in London then. South Place Institute should be crowded on Monday evening, and we expect to see it so.

Monday's *Morning Leader* announced that the Rationalist Press Association was engineering a petition to the Home Secretary in favor of the release of Messrs. Stewart and Gott who are prisoners for "blasphemy" at Leeds. We have no opportunity of helping to strengthen this petition; indeed, it has been studiously kept private, as far as the N. S. S. is concerned, that the announcement in the *Leader* was the first we heard of it—and the petition was to be forwarded to Mr. McKenna on Tuesday. We hope it may be successful, and that is all the help we can give it. We should confess to a feeling of surprise if we did not understand these sort of movements. When the N. S. S. was fighting the Boulter case in London, and raising large funds for the purpose, the R. P. A. did absolutely nothing until the trial was over, and then its officials (unofficially, of course) pressed on Mr. Boulter the ignominious policy of regretting his "blasphemy" and promising never to repeat it. Mr. Joseph McCabe was put forward (unofficially again) to argue that all decent advocates (like himself) were perfectly safe under the Blasphemy Laws, and that those Laws were, on the whole, very good things for to keep less careful advocates in order. Evidently the R. P. A. officials have changed their minds since then. And the reason is perhaps very simple. Not a single Freethinker of the slightest standing could be found to endorse Mr. McCabe's argument. Our columns at the time show how universally it was condemned. And the language of the present petition shows that if the lesson was not exactly learnt it has been well remembered.

The Blasphemy Laws mean *this*—and nothing else; that Christians act wisely and fairly in imprisoning Freethinkers for speaking too freely of Christianity,—and that Christians themselves are the proper judges of "freely." Stated thus nakedly these Laws could command nothing but the derision or indignation of any honest Freethinker.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd's review of Mr. C. Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will?* will appear in our next issue. It should be very interesting; for Mr. Cohen's book is very able, and Mr. Lloyd is a good thinker as well as a good writer.

Mr. Lloyd lectures to-day (Jan. 14) for the Liverpool Branch at the Alexandra Hall, Islington-square, afternoon and evening. There will be a silver collection towards the expenses.

Mr. F. E. Willis had a good audience at his first lecture for the Birmingham Branch on Sunday evening. His lecture was much appreciated and was followed by some interesting discussion.

A correspondent, whose name we withhold, of course, writes us from a very benighted and bigoted part of the United Kingdom that he "looks forward every week with increased interest to the *Freethinker*." But he has to be very careful with it. He is "strongly suspected of scepticism" already, and he has no taste for gratuitous martyrdom. He has most of Mr. Foote's writings bound up in volumes. "It would enhance the value of these volumes," he says, "if I had Mr. Foote's photograph to adorn the front page of each. Is it on sale?" Not at present,—though it may be before long.

Now that a new year is opening we venture to make another appeal to our readers with regard to promoting the

circulation of the *Freethinker*. Our circulation has steadily improved during the last few years, but we should like to see it improve more rapidly. Ordinary commercial advertising is impossible in the case of a paper like ours. The expenditure would be far in excess of any possible gain. But our readers—those of them who prize the paper—can do something for us in a most effective way by introducing it to new readers. They can pass their own weekly copy on to some friend or acquaintance, or take an extra one (or more) for placing in fresh hands as opportunities occur in the business and pleasures of life. They can also send us the names and addresses of persons who might become regular readers after we have sent them (as we are prepared to do) six consecutive free copies by post.

A lady reader at Manzanola, Colo., sending fresh subscription and list of persons to whom we might send six consecutive free numbers of this journal, writes: "I have enjoyed your paper very much.....We are the parents of five boys and we teach them to do right because it is right, and that they may be better and stronger men by so doing. They shun bad habits, and do not believe in ghosts or spirits, bad or good."

A Sheffield reader, to whom we have just sent six consecutive free copies of the *Freethinker*, writes us that he has ordered it of his newsagent. "I am a seeker after truth," he says, "and I find it expressed in a way that I have never found before in your splendid paper."

The *Camberwell Borough Advertiser* allows Mr. A. B. Moss the best part of a column of small type to explain "What is an Atheist?" It is a good letter and will do good. We only wish Mr. Moss had not suggested that the chief function of Atheism is to purify Theism. Atheists have done with Theism altogether.

We regret that we overlooked the Spiritualist view of the Leeds "blasphemy" case in the *Two Worlds* for Dec. 29, but we have pleasure in quoting it now, on the principle of better late than never:—

"ANOTHER BLASPHEMY CONVICTION.—Recently Mr. J. W. Gott and Mr. T. W. Stewart were convicted of blasphemy at Leeds Assizes, and sentenced to terms of imprisonment of four months and three months respectively without hard labor. Neither man appears to have said more than hundreds of Freethought lecturers have given utterance to with impunity. But all such matters are largely questions of taste upon the part of the speakers and prejudices upon the part of the prosecutors. Blasphemy means different things to different minds, but so long as needless offence or bad taste in expression are avoided, freedom in expression should not in these days be punished by imprisonment. The National Secular Society is undertaking to care for the needs of the wives of the imprisoned men. In the *Freethinker* of the 17th inst., the editor had a very fair and temperate article devoted to the cases. Some pious person may some time consider a Spiritualist lecturer a 'blasphemer' within the meaning of the Act. Therefore, this Leeds prosecution should help to keep us on the *qui vive*, lest we taste a similar medicine to cure us of heterodox or illegal opinions. But, after all, is any useful purpose served in quoting obscenities from any book, Bible or other? The only good we suggest in the present case is that once again we are disagreeably reminded of the continued existence of the 'blasphemy' laws, and that any pragmatist bigot can set them in operation."

Most of our readers know by this that the National Secular Society's offer "to care for the needs of the wives of the imprisoned men" was rejected in favor of action by the local Defence Committee. There the matter stands, and we have heard nothing from Leeds since. It is to be supposed, therefore, that the Committee is doing all that is necessary.

Some time ago the Christians were circulating the story that the Paino Memorial Hall at Boston was lost for ever to Freethought. It was even hinted that it was in possession of orthodox religionists. Apparently, as Mark Twain said when the news of his death appeared in the papers, the report was exaggerated. We are glad to see from the *Truth-seeker* (New York) that Mr. J. P. Bland is still addressing crowded Sunday evening audiences at the "lost" hall, and that the audiences are not only large but enthusiastic.

Scottish "saints" will note that Mr. Foote lectures at Glasgow next Sunday (Jan. 21), when it is to be hoped the celestial (or infernal) weather bureau will be less ill-behaved than it has been lately. It is not the lecturing that does Mr. Foote any injury; the risk lies in long travelling and the loss of home comforts in staying at hotels, which are the most dreary places in the world if you happen to be "off color." Next Sunday is the first time that Mr. Foote has been able to visit Glasgow this winter, owing to the pressure of other engagements, but he is to make amends by another visit in April.

The Nonconformist Conscience Again.

"To the strength of the Methodist and Evangelical opinion is mainly due the strange anomaly that, at the present day, after nearly fifty years of almost uninterrupted democratic legislation, the great majority of public museums and galleries in England are closed on the only day in which the bulk of the people could enjoy them. The working classes have thus been deprived of a source of amusement and instruction of pre-eminent value, and the public-houses of their most formidable competitors."—LECKY, *History of England*, 1878; vol. ii., p. 641.

"'Judge not,' they [Christians] say, but they send everything to hell that stands in their way. In making God judge, they themselves judge; in glorifying God they glorify themselves; in demanding those virtues of which they happen to be capable—yet more, which they need in order to get the better at all,—they assume the grand airs of a wrestling for virtue, of a struggle for the triumph of virtue."—NIETZSCHE, *The Antichrist*, 1899; p. 309.

"Oh for a forty-parson power to chant
Thy praise, Hypocrisy."

—LORD BYRON, *Don Juan*, c. x., v. xxxiv.

MR. PECKSNIFF MEYER.

THAT holy man, Mr. Meyer, is on the warpath. Like all puritans, he is against all amusements that are not of an "edifying" character, or which cannot be turned to the advantage of religion in some way or another.

Boxing and dancing are two of the diversions which Mr. Meyer, from his pedestal, regards with sanctimonious disapproval. In an address to the Walsall Free Church Council—at the outset of which the chairman "thanked Mr. Meyer for his services to the nation in putting a stop to what was prize fighting under another name, and also for his great efforts to purify the music-halls of London and elsewhere"—according to the report in the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* (Nov. 23):—

"Mr. Meyer said he held that, like the Hebrews, the British people were intended to be God's people for the education of the present era, and so was extremely anxious that the moral ideals of their time should be of the highest possible character. The Johnson-Wells contest was only a by-play in the trend of his life, but he would like to say that success in putting a stop to that fight was because he happened to strike the moral consciousness of the majority of his fellow-countrymen. It was that moral consciousness that would act as a mighty leverage for the uplifting of their times. If they could only get hold of the men who were at the back of the amusements of the people and seek their help in uplifting the moral ideals of the people, they would do much better than if they were to run in opposition to them. (Applause.)"

Putting aside the ancient Hebrews for the moment, we cannot understand Mr. Meyer's extreme anxiety as to our moral ideals. If, as he believes, God intends to use the British people for educational purposes, surely he is capable of carrying out his intentions without the help of Mr. Meyer. Has Mr. Meyer such a poor opinion of his God that he thinks, unless he fights on the Lord's side, his plans will be defeated?

Then, again, observe the somewhat Falstaffian boast that the Johnson-Wells affair was "only a by-play in the trend of my life." A mere trifle, you know, in the sweep of my great career!

Mr. Meyer claimed that his success in stopping the fight was because "he happened to strike the moral consciousness of the majority of his countrymen." On the contrary, it strikes us that his success was due to the prejudice existing against the champion because of his color.

Although no patron of the ring—we have never seen a boxing match in our life—we cannot see that it is any more dangerous than football. How frequently it is recorded that one or more players had to leave the field injured. Personally, we should prefer to see a good play or hear some good music; but we should not try to prevent other people indulging in it if they felt inclined. A better plan than calling in the police would be to provide better amusements for the people; and what have these sanctimonious snufflers done in that direction?

We deliberately charge these puritans with being responsible for the low standard of taste prevailing among the working classes of this country. It is due to the puritans that upon their only day of leisure they find all the avenues for acquiring a higher taste closed. The museums, art galleries, libraries, theatres, and concert halls are closed; in a few towns the museums and libraries are open for two or three hours, in spite of the strenuous opposition of the puritan element; the theatres are not open at all; the concerts, if there are any, are sacred—a thing the working man abhors.

If the millions wasted in missionary enterprise had been spent in providing good music, good plays, good lantern lectures on science, art, and travel, on Sundays, the culture of the workers would be very much higher than it is to-day. Church and Chapel have monopolised the day; but, as they lament, the working man will have neither of these two viragoes. Then these two worthies declare that if the working man won't come and worship in their tabernacles, he shall not go anywhere else—unless it is to the public-house.

Even the harmless picture palaces are banned; all the strength of the puritan party is being put forth to close them on Sunday. Pressure is brought to bear in all manner of underground, unscrupulous, and despicable ways to affect this purpose. Even when the proceeds were given to the hospitals these contemptible followers of Jesus declared that any hospital accepting such unholy gifts would forfeit all collections made in places of worship! Then they are at work behind the scenes all the time, in the subterranean manner so characteristic of the pious, getting at Licensing Committees, memorialising Town Councils, and in other crafty and secretive ways. And it is not the character of the pictures that is in question here, for in the memorial to the Councillors of Barrowstounness* against the Sunday evening performances given in the Electric Theatre, the ministers declare that even if sacred programs were submitted they would still object, and praying the Councillors to restrict the licence to six days! Here even the pretence of looking after the morals of the working man is dropped; even sacred programs may not be given outside places of worship. These gentry do not want any competition; they want everything closed but their own show.

Mr. Meyer has been conducting a campaign against dancing. He was successful in getting some features of a dancing sketch altered of which he disapproved; but although he professed to be satisfied with the alteration, he was careful to explain that he was not to be understood to approve of the performance even in its amended form. Quite so. Mr. Meyer is no doubt of the opinion of Whitefield, who declared, "Dancers please the Devil at every step." And it should be noticed that there is no question of Sunday performance in this matter. It is true, as Nietzsche declared, "the hatred of the senses, of the delights of the senses, of all delight, is Christian."

What have these people done to popularise art in any of its forms? Look at the average Nonconformist place of worship. Outside it resembles a mausoleum; inside there are no more indications of art, in the way of painting and sculpture, than in a stable—the reputed birthplace of their Savior; fit meeting-place of the gloomy fanatics who, under the sign of a gibbeted malefactor—"carrion crucified," to use the expression of Swinburne—wish to suppress all the joy and pleasure of life in the interests of their hateful superstition. And there are Rationalists in our midst who beg us to stay our hand, uplifted against the shrine and the idol, and turn our attention to other things. Let them beware how they dally with this ancient faith; it is scotched, not slain; it is alive, and still powerful for evil, as they may find some day to their cost.

How gladly would "that virtuous and greasy instrument of party politics known as the Nonconformist Conscience"—the phrase is not ours; it is that of Dr.

* Reprinted in this journal, December 3.

Inge, Dean of St. Paul's*—like to suppress this paper and imprison its writers under the Blasphemy Law, which it refuses to repeal, and uses whenever it thinks it safe to do so. It aspires to political power, and who knows but what it will achieve it? And if it does it will not be the milksops who will hold the reins, but the fanatics.

But to return to Mr. Meyer, who holds that the British people, like the Hebrews, "were intended to be God's people for the education of the present era." Yes, and Mr. Meyer will graciously condescend to act the part of Moses, and descend from the Tabernacle with a brand new set of Nonconformist laws!

Mr. Meyer, like all Bible worshippers, evidently believes that the Hebrews were the only civilised people in the ancient world; but this is totally untrue. Archaeologists have lately unveiled the truth about this matter. In the Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement (July, 1910) we read that the Canaanites ruled in Palestine for about two thousand years, and—

"Canaanite culture and civilisation display much original vigor, and the Hebrew people, pouring down from the heights of Sinai and Moabite Table-lands, eager for conquest, were barbarians as compared with their enemies and rivals. After the first victory of the Mosaic period in the Valley of the Jordan, the work of conquest dragged slowly on until the time of David, Solomon, and others. The civil history of the Jews is, in fact, the absorption to their own advantage of the previous Canaanitish civilisation, with its failings and terrible superstitions; but the Hebrews failed to assimilate the artistic and industrial genius of the conquered people, though they possessed in excess their intuitive will and religious instinct."

The Hebrews descended upon the peaceful and highly civilised inhabitants of Palestine like a horde of savages, and wiped out all signs of art and industry, replacing them with religion! We hope the pious old ladies who contributed towards the Palestine Exploration Fund, in the hope of the discovery of Noah's Ark or some of Pharaoh's chariot wheels from the Red Sea, are satisfied with the return for their money. For our part, we must say that the comparison of Nonconformists to the ancient Hebrews is not so far-fetched as might be supposed.

W. MANN.

The Heart of Man.

If the power of God were to be gauged by the effrontery of believers, we would be justified in attaching the indeterminate adjective "omniscient" to it. It is wonderful how the divinity idea has monopolised everything of any real value to man. The good is direct authenticated evidence, so it is said, of God's indwelling; the bad is but a means to that end. Genius is Deity's human climax; perhaps, then, the fool is Deity's human anti-climax. Beauty, it is claimed, is God's sweet smile, the effulgence of his love; while ugliness is the shadow of his sorrow, the dim despair of his suffering heart. Why a being, who can see the glorious redemption of every human, who knows that every sorrow is a purification, and that a step only is required to reach the gate to everlasting happiness, should possess a suffering heart, is one of those innumerable theological contradictions that shine as paste jewels in the Christian's tin crown. One may assail it on all sides, and reduce it to rank absurdity, without producing any effect upon the man or woman whose mind still slumbers in the cradle of divinity.

The God idea has touched the finer influences over us with a supersense of possession. It has closed its misty arms around every good impulse and every elevating circumstance. The far reaching power of it is a pulpit popularism, rarely questioned in seriousness, and seldom mentioned without modu-

lated voice. Nothing, nowadays, intrinsically of service in raising the standard of individual well-being, escapes the suffusiveness of the God idea. Permeating, by suggestion, all things that tend to subdue the animal within us, and invoke the human, it has sought and obtained entrance into the very holy of holies of nature—man's heart.

The greatest and purest characters are Godlike or Christlike. The heart of man, we are told, is the house of God. In our long journey up the rough way of life there has been gradually garnered a great store of noble impulses, rare pearls of incomputable price. They lie deep within our hearts, covered by the incubus of common triviality, but ready to respond immediately to the appeal. A kind deed, a sympathetic word, a look, a smile, a strong pressure of the hand, given with no conscious mental stimulation, but seemingly free from all thought control; these are a few of the pearls we have gathered on the way. The Atheist possesses them as does the Christian. They belong to no distinct set of ideas. They are of our natures, the purities of it, the essence of it. We Atheists bestow them as unconsciously as the Christian. Being without God is not being without humanity. A good deed is as commendable in the Atheist as it is in the Christian. The Atheist's sympathy is as valuable to a suffering one as is the Christian's. Tenderness comes from the heart of the Atheist with the same beauty as from the heart of the Christian, with the same rich recompense, with the same human thanksgiving.

In the stress of laboring hours the kind word is dropped from the lips, while the mind is closed to God or no God, and the reaping is not lessened because of it. The receiving Christian takes the look, the word, or the smile from the Atheist, with no mental acknowledgment to God, with no divine irradiation, but just with human thankfulness. When the bitterness of misfortune rends the heart of the Christian and forces the restrained tears to the sad eyes, the human solace is not less sweet and comforting because it comes from lips that have ridiculed the existence of God; nor is it refused. Iniquity, torturing and confining and cruelly lacerating our desires, is not made more acceptable than the relief that may be given by an Atheist. Sorrow, however deep and enduring, does not recoil from the kindness proffered by the man who lives knowing not any God.

In everyday life, the Christian does not raise his eyes skywards in thanksgiving to God when he witnesses a charitable action done by an Atheist; nor does he insist that the prompting was due to the presence of a supernatural power within the man's heart. On the contrary, the human righteousness of the deed is all that is recognised and honored. During the busy hours of life we are nearer to our natural selves, and farther from Deity, than the Christian will readily admit. Yet it is so; and solely from the mental excitation caused by emphasising that fact comes the Christian's feeble endeavor to introduce his beliefs in contradiction to the Atheist's information. Were it not for the simple remark, these beliefs would never be awakened from their sound sleep in the mind of the Christian.

The heart of man is—the heart of man. God no more lodges permanently there than the love for dolls dwells persistently in the girl's mind. As the years increase the number of her passed birthdays bring new thoughts, new emotions, new lives to her, the old love that she once imagined could never change, disappears. Stronger life demands stronger nourishment. The things we thought indispensable yesterday we see to be unneeded to-day. And so, too, with the heart of man. It grows with the growth of his knowledge, and sees farther with his sharper vision.

If once it were true his heart was the house of God, the old tenant has been evicted to homeless wandering. The new has cast out the old, and the dusty, long unswept corners are being cleaned, and

* In a lecture at Sion College on December 2.

the home refurnished and washed, and the musty hangings on the walls removed to show the beautiful frescoes that lay hidden behind them. For nature, the decorator of hearts, was busy beneath the heavy hangings, carving and painting with no lazy hand. On the covered walls she was engaged in making ineffaceable the pictures of purity, goodness, mercy, and truth, and was filling the nooks and crannies with the immortal statuary of righteousness and its sister, justice. She was preparing for the day when the hangings would be torn down and flung on the dust-heap of the past, preparing to give the lie to him who would say they were too valuable to be destroyed.

Underneath all its religious adornments and its time-stricken trappings, the heart of man still beats true to its natural humanity. The lights of gladness and the shadows of sorrow play upon the silver surface of a love born, not from the spirit of God, not from the nebulous something uncaused and incomprehensible, not from the sad soul of a lonely being that lived no one knows where, or when, or how; but from the travail of things that were, from the very necessities of life, as they became larger and cleaner and clearer.

Belief in God does not make human love grander. Friendship receives no ennobling impetus from the worship of Deity. The woman's consciousness of the calm and steadfast security, of a man's pure respect and admiration and love for her, is not heightened nor developed nor made firm because she loves, or thinks she loves, the Lord Jesus Christ. The priest may twist the truth and twine corded falsehood around her mind for a time, but the truth straightens out and the falsehood flees when companionship surrounds her with its happiness. It is easy to fill the space between the two poles of love and leave out God and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Human affection endures, and will endure, without the intrusion of that trio of mental triumphs.

Priestly dishonesty may discredit the humanness of joy, may tamper with the beautiful structure of life, may cause the long lost echoes to reawake and resound, may fling a pleasing perfume into the air, and dim, temporarily, the hardship that grips and grinds; but the heart of man returns to the hearts of men for the comforts that cling more closely and the consolations that come nearer and fuller and more fruitful. One hour on bended knees—how can anyone endure the penance for that protracted time and enjoy it?—in the imagined presence of God, is an ill substitute for the kindly word or the strong pressure of the hand—and the Christian knows it.

Not all the wordy enchantments ever uttered, or yet to be uttered, can robe the heart of man in the flimsy raiment of supernaturalism heavily enough to hide successfully its innate humanity, its naturalness, its truth and beauty, from all eyes. In the past, in the present, in the days to come, there were, and are, and will be found, men and women to raise the drapery and to tell of what it covers. To them nature's holy of holies is not to be draped, but to be shown forth, to be revealed, to be gloried in and rejoiced over; not to be worshiped on bended knees, but to be honored uprightly; not to be held inapproachable and remote, but to be companionable and constantly with them. For these men and women nature is sufficient, for nature is all; and what they see they will tell, for it is not ugly and wicked, nor debased and vile, nor sinful and evil; it is heroic, and noble, and good, and sublime. In time the last rag will be torn from the last wall of the last room, and men will alternate the shout of joy with the silence of surprise, and those who dared destroy the dusty hangings on the heart of man, who were despised and rejected, and suffered and sorrowed, will be sung in the songs of freedom, and empanelled in the lays of liberty. They will be recognised as the renovators, the revealers, of the heart of man in which they will be enshrined as in the immortality of memory.

ROBERT MORELAND.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JAN. 4.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, in the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Barry, Cohen, Cowell, Davey, Davies, Dawson, Heaford, Lazarnick, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Schindel, Silverstein, Thurlow, and Wood, and the Misses Kough and Stanley.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed, and the monthly balance-sheet read and adopted.

New members were accepted for the Birmingham, Edmonton, and Islington Branches and for the Parent Society.

Matters relating to the Annual Dinner and the forthcoming meetings at Shoreditch Town Hall having been discussed, the President reported on the Leeds Blasphemy case, and announced that a meeting would be held at South Place Institute, Finsbury, on January 15, at 8 p.m., the speakers who had promised to attend being Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. F. J. Gould, Mr. H. Snell, Mr. H. M. Hyndman, Mr. G. W. Foote, Mr. C. Cohen, and the Rev. Stewart D. Headlam.

It was moved by Mr. Moss and seconded by Mr. Wood:—

“That a deputation be formed, if possible, to wait upon the Home Secretary, asking him to move in the matter of the existing Blasphemy Laws, and to consider the situation of the persons now suffering imprisonment under them.”

This was carried unanimously, and the arrangements for the deputation were left in the hands of the President.

The meeting then adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *Secretary.*

The January number of the *Positivist Review* contains a good article by the editor, Mr. S. H. Swinny, on “Prosecutions for Blasphemy.” It has one drawback,—a common drawback with Positivist writers; it doesn't recognise the identities of victims of the “blasphemy” laws; only Positivists and Christians seem worth mentioning. We believe also that Mr. Swinny errs in referring to the judge in the recent Leeds case as Mr. Justice Scrutton; we thought it was Mr. Justice Horridge; and when names are mentioned they may as well be mentioned accurately. We are very much pleased, however, with Mr. Swinny's article as a whole. The following passage is particularly effective:—

“The interpretation of the law has undergone considerable change in recent times. Originally it was held that the denial of the truth of Christianity was sufficient to constitute the offence. Our ancestors had many shortcomings, but they never proposed to make the criminal law the arbiter of good taste or to punish unseemly jokes with terms of imprisonment. Now, there is a tendency to hold that it is the manner in which the attack on Christianity is couched, that must be considered. In defiance of a long series of judgments, it is held to be legal to deny the Christian verities in cultured language—bad taste or violent expression is the crime. This discrimination seems a task for which a Court of Criminal justice is very ill-fitted. But even if this preliminary objection is got over, there remains another ground of condemnation. If it be desirable that the law should protect religious opinions from insult or ridicule, why is Christianity alone to be protected? Why am I to be subjected to penalties, if I abuse Christianity, while Christians may abuse my religion with impunity? I pass over, as itself insulting to Christianity, the possible defence that that form of religion is specially open to ridicule, and, therefore, needs special protection. Nor has the argument that Christians are in a majority and, therefore, are entitled to this privileged position, much more weight; for the more powerful a religion is, surely the less need has it to invoke against its opponents the aid of the criminal law. The whole theory that the law on blasphemy is only a means to protect the feelings of Christian believers from outrage by vulgar freethinkers, wrests the law from its original interpretation, and transforms it to a new purpose; but it does not bring it into harmony with the rule of equal justice; it remains the invidious privilege of a particular form of belief.”

Mr. Swinny might have included another consideration; namely, that nobody but Freethinkers is ever prosecuted under the Blasphemy Laws, this discrimination involves the ever-fatal fact that those who are indicted for the *manner* of their attack are prosecuted, tried, and sentenced by those who object to their matter. That is why “blasphemy” prosecutions invariably succeed now just as they always did in the past. The acquittal of William Hone is not a case in point; for his offence was universally understood to be political, and the jury acquitted him not as a “blasphemer” but as a Radical.

The paradise of the rich is made out of the hell of the poor.—*Victor Hugo.*

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.**

SHOREDITCH TOWN HALL: 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The World to Come."

OUTDOOR.

EDMONTON BRANCH N. S. S. (The Green): 7.45, E. Burke, "The Claims of Theology." (Weather permitting.)

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

COUNTRY.**INDOOR.**

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, Clifford Williams, "Our Heavenly Father."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "There is No Death"; 7, "The Silence of God."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): Joseph A. E. Bates, 3, "Philosophy of Materialism"; 6.30, "Origin and Nature of the Christ Myth." Tea at 5.

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