

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXIII.—No. 4

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 1918

PRICE TWOPENCE

Will there never be a sanctuary in every private house? Will there never be a time when every mother will be the priestess of her children and family?

—LANDOR.

Another "Bradlaugh" Fable.

ONE of the most instructive things, in its way, in the whole range of literature, is the chapter on "The Watch Story" in Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner's biography of her father, the great Charles Bradlaugh. Perhaps the following chapter on "Other Fables" should go with it. Taken together they show the invincible unvaracity and incurable credulity of the general Christian mind. Deception and self-deception are displayed to such an extent in those two chapters as to suggest that any wicked imbecility or imbecile wickedness is possible to irrational human nature under the influence of religious bigotry. And the moral is that no report of Christians about Freethinkers should be believed without absolute corroboration.

Let the Christian say "I tell you, I saw it—I heard it. I couldn't be mistaken." He may be trying to deceive you, but he may have deceived himself. Charles Bradlaugh never gave the Almighty five minutes to strike him dead, either on a public platform or elsewhere. This is as certain as any negative proposition can be. Yet it is clear that in one or two cases the reporter must really have believed that he saw and heard Bradlaugh do it. At the time when Bradlaugh was prosecuting the man Edgecumbe for printing the Watch Story in the *British Empire* an interesting statement was made by the editor of the *Huddersfield Examiner*. He said that a person called at his office the previous week and alleged that "he had heard Mr. Bradlaugh utter such a challenge, and saw him pull out his watch in the manner stated in the course of the debate with the Rev. Dr. McCann in Huddersfield. To our certain knowledge no such occurrence ever took place, yet the man making the statement appeared to be fully convinced that he had heard and seen what he described as having taken place, and he was prepared to give evidence on the subject if called upon to do so."

We remember a somewhat similar case. It must be premised that the Watch Story was not confined to Bradlaugh; it was applied to every leading Freethought lecturer of the nineteenth century, including George Jacob Holyoake, who had to deny it before Bradlaugh appeared on the scene. Ladies like Mrs. Harriet Law and Mrs. Annie Besant fared no better than the male advocates of Freethought. The Rev. J. Moffat Logan, with whom we debated at Bristol many years ago, assured us that when he was a very young man at Glasgow he saw Mrs. Harriet Law perform what we may call "the watch trick" on the platform of the Secular Hall. We are certain he never saw anything of the kind. How he came to believe he did is more than we can explain. But he was a highly emotional man, and that was probably the governing factor in his case.

We could write a lot upon the Watch Story, but our present object is only to show that "fables"

1,615

about Bradlaugh could arise and hold their own, without a particle of real evidence to support them, and in spite of the most complete refutation.

This is by way of introduction to a new Bradlaugh "fable" which appeared lately in the *Liverpool Weekly Post*, in the "Workaday World" department, edited by "Ben Adhem"—whoever that gentleman may be. It was a story of Bradlaugh being put to confusion by a young soldier at Portsmouth. One of our Birmingham readers asked "Ben Adhem" his authority for the story, and this was his reply (Dec. 28):—

"J. B.—Thanks for the *Freethinker*. The Bradlaugh and young soldier incident is related by the soldier himself in his book—'From the Bottom Up,' by Alexander Irvine, published by Heinemann, London: and is quoted and endorsed by Mrs. Annie Besant—Bradlaugh's colleague for many years—in the 'Theosophist' for December, 1910."

Now we like to do things thoroughly, so we invested our money in the book and the periodical referred to. We speak, therefore, "by the card," as Hamlet says; which "Ben Adhem" could not have done, unless he is a very careless or a very dishonest writer.

We are not called upon to give an opinion of Mr. Alexander Irvine's book generally. His work as a Christian missionary in England and America is not the best training in logic and accuracy. Anyhow, here is his story:—

"The most powerful speaker I ever heard was Charles Bradlaugh. I attended one of his lectures one Sunday afternoon in a large auditorium in Portsmouth. I shall never forget that wonderful voice as it thrilled an audience of four thousand people. Bradlaugh was engaged in one of his favorite themes, demolishing God and the theologians. It was the most daring thing I had ever heard, and my mind and soul were in revolt. When the time for questions came, I pushed my way to the front, was recognised by the chairman, and mounted the platform. My lips were parched and I could scarcely utter a word. The big man with the homely face saw my embarrassment, and said, 'Take your time, my boy; don't be in a hurry.'

"He had been a soldier himself, and, I supposed, as I stood there in my scarlet tunic, Glengarry cap in hand, Bradlaugh became reminiscent.

"When I got command of my voice, I said: 'I want to ask Mr. Bradlaugh a question. I have very little education and little opportunity to get more, but I have a peace in my heart; I call it "Belief in God." I don't know what else to call it and I want to ask Mr. Bradlaugh whether he is willing to take that away from me and deprive me of the biggest pleasure in my life, and leave nothing in its place?'

"He rose from his chair, came forward, laid his hand on my shoulder, and amid a most impressive silence, said:—

"No, my lad, Charles Bradlaugh will be the last man on the face of the earth to take a pleasure from a soldier boy, even though it be a "belief in God!"

"The crowd wildly cheered, and I went out grateful and strengthened."

Mr. Irvine does not tell us when this happened. We gather that it must have been in the early 'eighties. The story is therefore some thirty years old. That is the worst of these things. Mrs. Besant justly noticed this in 1877, when the Watch Story was applied to her, not only by the smaller fry of Christianity, but by the famous Dr. Joseph

Parker, who attacked her in the following elegant language:—

"There is a woman going up and down the country lecturing, and may be in London city at this moment, and she proudly cries out that there is no God, and she takes out her watch and says, 'Now, if there be a God, I give him five minutes to strike me dead,' and she coolly stands watching the hands of her watchdial, and because she is not struck dead by the time she stipulates, she cries out that there is no God; and workmen run after this woman, and pay for listening to this ginger-beer blasphemy, and the ravings of a half-drunken woman."

Mrs. Besant, in the course of her reply, made this very palpable hit:—

"There is one very queer thing about the story; it never appears in any report given at the time of any lecture, and no one speaks of having heard the challenge, the day, week, or month, or year after it was done. The pious Christian always heard it about twenty years ago, and has kept it locked in his bosom ever since."

Not twenty years, but thirty years (apparently) has Mr. Irvine kept that Bradlaugh story "locked in his bosom." It is a ridiculous story on the face of it. Bradlaugh was lecturing against Theism in order to make Atheists. Why should he scruple at Alexander Irvine? What was it the crowd "wildly cheered"? Was it his eagerness to get off or Bradlaugh's willingness to let him off? The reply, too, is so unlike Bradlaugh! He thought Atheism a good thing. Why should he nearly weep at the thought of its infecting a soldier boy? The story is a perfect tissue of absurdity.

"Ben Adhem's" statement that Mrs. Besant "quoted and endorsed" Mr. Irvine's story is not true. The *Theosophist* review of the book does not endorse the story at all, but merely refers to it as a part of the author's narrative. And the review was not written by Mrs. Besant. It is signed "E. S." These are not the initials of Annie Besant. So that "Ben Adhem's" one strong point is "rotten."

G. W. FOOTE.

The Culture of the Supernatural.—II.

(Continued from p. 35.)

THE value of the study of religion from the point of view indicated in my last article, is of first-rate importance. It does not concern itself—except indirectly—with the origin of religion. This it takes as already existing, and inquires to what extent have manifestations of the sexual life, normal and abnormal, and nervous states, normal and pathological, been accepted as evidences of supernatural influence. Although much may have been said and written on this subject, in parentheses, so to speak, it is a line of inquiry that has never, I believe, been systematically and exhaustively worked. This is not due to any lack of material, for this is of great bulk, both with savage and civilised people. Perhaps it is that while it is permissible to point out that certain individuals here and there have mistaken their own morbid condition for supernatural illumination, it would rouse too much ill-will to demonstrate that a deliberate culture of perverted sex feeling and morbid nervous states have been features of all religious cults from the most savage to the most civilised. In this connection it is worth noting that a very clear and shrewd essay on the connection between sexual feeling and religious devotion that appeared in the first edition of D'Israeli's *Miscellanies of Literature*, was quietly dropped from subsequent editions.

At any rate, no one who is even slenderly acquainted with the facts will deny that sexual and mental aberrations have at all times been taken as evidences of spiritual illumination. We may, therefore, give Professor James's query concerning the Biblical writers: "Under just what biographic conditions did the sacred writers bring forth their various contributions to the holy volume?" and give it wider scope. What are the conditions, biographic and

social, under which certain persons have imagined themselves, and have been believed by others, to be specially favored with divine illumination? The majority of people, it may safely be said, are conscious of no such experience. In what respect does the favored few differ from their fellows? Must we assume that by some finer development of their nature, or by some peculiar development of faculty, they are brought into touch with a wider and deeper reality? Or are we to seek a less romantic explanation by the help of known forces and tendencies in human nature? And, further, as this minority are not conscious of divine illumination all the time, what is it that differentiates their normal state from their abnormal condition?

No answer of any value to any queries will be found in ordinary religious writings. Rhapsodical eulogies of religion tell us nothing at all. Nay, they tell us less than nothing that is useful, since theories that obtain in this quarter are founded upon the absolute veracity of the phenomena under consideration. Speaking generally, it is impossible to learn anything of the real nature of religion from religious teachers. One may gather from them what religious people say or do, but not why they say or do these things. A description of the states of mind of religious personages, such as that supplied by Professor James, is interesting enough, but it is the causes of these states that is of real importance. And this causation can only be understood by associating them with other and more fundamental processes. Within recent years psychology owes its real advances to a closer attention to the physiology of the nervous system, and if any like advance is to be made in our knowledge of religious phenomena we must adopt the same line of inquiry. We do not, for instance, understand the nature of demoniacal possession by collating cases. It is only when we place them side by side with similar cases that now come under the control of the physician, and associate them with a peculiar mental and social environment that we find ourselves in possession of a rational explanation. In this instance, as in the case of delusion or of insanity, a study of the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system is essential. Without it we are in the position of trying to determine the nature of a locomotive while in complete ignorance of its internal mechanism. Yet this is precisely the position of all professional exponents of religion. As a student the budding divine has his head stuffed full of historic creeds, and texts, and doctrines, and dogmas, none of which can possibly tell him the real nature of religion. On the contrary, they act as so many obstacles to his acquiring knowledge. Which is one of the reasons that, while we turn to the astronomer for information about astronomy, to the biologist for information about biology, or to the sociologist for a knowledge of sociology, to gain real knowledge about religion we have to forsake the professional teacher of religion altogether.

To put the whole matter in a sentence, the study of religion must be affiliated to the study of life as a whole. If possible, we want to get at the determining conditions that lead one person to expend his energy in religion, while another person with the same qualities of mind finds full satisfaction in other directions. Religion can only be treated as a distinct thing so long as we believe in a "religious faculty" organically ear-marked for religious use. This is what people have in mind when they explain Darwin's Agnosticism as due to an atrophy of the "religious faculty" consequent on over-absorption in scientific pursuits, or who argue that the "religious faculty," like a physiological structure, increases in efficiency with use and atrophies with disuse. But this is without the slightest scientific justification. There is no reason for believing that had Darwin professed religion his mental qualities would have been different to what they were. They would merely have been expressed in different language. For there are no specifically religious qualities. There may be hope, or fear, or

love, or terror, or devotion, in relation to religion, but they are precisely the same qualities that manifest themselves in relation to other things. Mental qualities may be roused to activity in connection with a belief in the supernatural, or they may be expressed in connection with mundane associations. Whatever be the exciting cause, the qualities themselves remain unchanged. And a scientific inquiry consequently concerns itself less with the form in which they are expressed than with an investigation of the causes of their operation.

It is perfectly true, as Professor James says, that "the whole array of Christian saints and hierarchs, including the greatest, the Bernards, the Loyolas, the Luthers, the Foxes, the Wesleys, had their visions, voices, rapt conditions, guiding impressions, and 'openings,'" but when he goes on to say that the subjects "actually feel themselves played upon by a power beyond their will. The evidence is dynamic. The God or spirit moves the very organs of their body," one can admit this as only true of the subject's own belief about the nature of their feelings and of the convictions of some of the on-lookers. In any other sense, one may simply meet the conviction with a flat denial. It is not a question of the actuality of certain states, but of their origin and nature. It is quite beside the point to dwell upon the intense conviction of the subject of these seizures. The subjective state is always real, whether it belongs to a saint in ecstasy or a drunkard in delirium tremens. There are no subjective states more real than are the visions of an opium eater; but it is never suggested that we are to take the opium eater's proofs of his being brought into touch with a new world of being. In such cases the testimony of a normal onlooker is of more value than that of the visionary. So it may well be that what to one person is evidence of the supernatural is to another no more than a false interpretation of a real mental experience, although many are inclined to treat the rejection of the interpretation as equivalent to a denial of the fact.

It must also be remembered that it is a matter of actual demonstration that these religious experiences are strictly determined by environmental influences. Thousands of Christians have been favored with visions of Jesus or of heaven in their dying moments. Millions of Jews have lived and died without any such experience. The Virgin or Jesus have never appeared to a Mohammedan—the very person to whom such a vision would be most useful. The spiritual experience of each is determined by the pre-existing religious belief. When the Devil was generally believed in, visions of Satan were quite common. The evidence for personal conflicts with Satan is quite as strong as the evidence for intercourse with God. When the belief in Satan died out, the visions died out also. Moreover, these visions and this sense of contact with a super-normal world of being is not peculiar to religion. It is a common feature of a general psycho-pathic condition. Medical works are full of such instances. And, naturally, when the psycho-path is of a deeply religious nature, the affection is expressed in religious terms. In the well-known case of Martin Luther, his complaint of the Devil's attempt to interfere with his work by buzzing in his ears and knocking on his head, there is no need to go any further than a nervous affection for a complete explanation. Many similar cases might be quoted of ignorant people who have complained of the same diabolic persecution, but who have had Satan exorcised by the aid of a physician.

One could, in fact, construct an ascending series of cases, all of which agree in the symptoms displayed, and differ only in the explanation offered. The series would commence with the explanation of a possessing spirit, and end with that given by modern science. Ignorant of the nature, or even of the existence, of a nervous system, primitive man explains abnormal mental states as due to a malignant spirit. Martin Luther, George Fox, or John Bunyan, living at a time when the activity of a

personal devil was one of the most firmly held of religious beliefs, are convinced of satanic activity as the cause of their affections. All the phenomena on which the animistic explanation rested are still with us, but they are described, and prescribed for, in medical manuals instead of in manuals of exorcism. The religious theory gives way to that of the expert neurologist. The exorcist is replaced by the physician. To argue that while the mental states remain constant, their causes may have been different in earlier ages, is sheer absurdity. To claim that the religious mystic is, in moments of exaltation, brought into touch with a "deeper reality," is to invite the retort that one might, with equal truth, say the same of the inmates of a lunatic asylum. It may be quite true that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy, but there is no need to make this a ground for useless speculation and grotesque theory. It is far more useful to drive home the much-needed lesson that there are few things in heaven or earth that will not yield their secrets to a method of investigation that is sanely conceived and diligently employed.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

Christian Lying.

THE Bishop of Southwell, according to a report in the *Burton Evening Gazette* for January 14, told a Derby audience that "the Midland Railway Company had created a class of men of which any town might be proud." By its "very rules the moral standard of the employees was lifted." Now, these people, whose moral standard was lifted, and of whom any town might be proud, were further described by his lordship as being, "generally speaking, not hostile to religion," while "an enormous mass of them was on its side, although they might not always attend church." Whether Dr. Hoskyns's estimate of the character of the Midland Railway's employees is accurate or not we do not know, and we also lack first-hand information as to their general attitude to religion. If we doubt the correctness of the Bishop's characterisation of them, we do so simply because he went out of his way to misrepresent what he called "the Atheistic propagandist" of to-day. This hateful pariah is not so prominent now as he was thirty years ago, and his lordship found that "intellectually he was falling short of those whom he sought to convert to his views." How many Atheistic propagandists did the Bishop know thirty years ago, and of how many has he any personal knowledge to-day? To under estimate an enemy is a proverbial human weakness, and it is quite evident that Dr. Hoskyns suffers severely from it. The high intellectuality of Atheists, as a class, is unquestionable. Only a person endowed with a considerable amount of brains is capable of becoming a convinced Atheist. The moment a man becomes a critic he ceases to be a good believer. The more a man thinks for himself the less grows the area of his faith. It is not so long ago since we read of a preacher who asked the Lord to help him to believe and to deliver him from the evil of thinking. Had that minister been guilty of real thinking he could not have indulged in such a silly prayer.

The truth is, that all genuine Atheists are such as the result of very serious thinking, while Christians are generally encouraged to depreciate the intellect and enthrone what is called intuition. One of the charges against the present age is its so-called excessive intellectualism. The reason, we are told, should be of secondary value and importance in human life, the first place rightly belonging to sanctified emotion. Such is the general teaching, though there are a few notable exceptions to it. Surely the Bishop of Southwell must be aware that intellectually very few preachers are shining lights. "Dry as a sermon" is a most familiar comparison. The inferior intellectuality of theologians is proved

by the ease with which many of them accept the theory of evolution and combine it with their theology, though the former is of necessity the complete negation of the latter. Fancy an evolutionist defining the Divine Fatherhood as "God's self-reproduction in man!" Then God began to reproduce himself when the first tiny mass of living slime appeared a hundred million years ago; and the process went on without interruption, now producing wolves, tigers, and snakes, and now the birds of the air, until man came forth, who, by eating the forbidden fruit, arrested "God's self-production." The inference is, that when man fell, God ceased to reproduce himself. Then fancy, if you can, an evolutionist defining sin as "no part of evolution, not the remains of the brute, but the initial lapse of the race at its individual start." Here is another brilliant definition of sin: "It is not the failure of a son, but the failure to become a son." Take another instance of theological intelligence:—

"If the purposive element of evolution be the racial reproduction of the Divine image, it is manifestly incongruous to attribute to an abnormal, degenerated species an individual deathlessness which can propagate itself indefinitely and permanently in the ever multiplying members of a sinful race."

If that be the case, there must be either redemption or annihilation for such a race of sinners; and individuals are represented as free to choose either the one or the other. But what is redemption? Astonishing to relate, it is defined as "the recovery of the vanishing environment," whatever on earth or in heaven that may mean. Seriously we do not think that, intellectually, an average "Atheistic propagandist" falls far short of the author of such amazing definitions as those just given.

But theologians are in the habit not only of under-estimating their enemies, but of under-estimating them in order to over-estimate themselves and the might of their religion. There is a striking example of this evil habit in "The Correspondence of Rev. Prof. David Smith, D.D.," in the *British Weekly* for January 16. The Professor is dealing with the case of a certain local preacher who is troubled over 2 Tim. iii. 18: "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." We have no fault whatever to find with Dr. Smith's interpretation of that verse, though there is the utmost uncertainty as to by whom and when it was written. Even on the assumption, adopted by the reverend gentleman, that this epistle was sent to Timothy by Paul when a prisoner at Rome in the reign of Nero, the picture of Rome painted here is horribly exaggerated. It is as follows:—

"It was an age of gross superstition, the golden age of charlatans. The ancient religions were dead, and the souls of men, with their ineradicable need of God, had fallen a prey to impostors—astrologers, sorcerers, and diviners. Nowhere was the evil so rife as at Rome, the imperial capital, whither all the rascality of the world streamed, in Sallust's phrase, as into a common cesspool; and Paul, a prisoner awaiting his final judgment before Nero, was in the thick of the moral pestilence, and breathed its poisoned atmosphere. It is interesting to recall that at that very crisis Apollonius of Tyana, that prince of charlatans, was at Rome, the hero of that deluded populace."

It is impossible to pass over in silence Dr. Smith's gross misrepresentation of the famous Pagan, Apollonius of Tyana. He was anything but the "prince of charlatans." Neander, the distinguished ecclesiastical historian, describes him as a man of great gifts and exalted character, whose one object was to restore Paganism to its primitive simplicity and beauty. Such was his humanity to animals that he refused, even on the invitation of a king, to take part in the chase (Lecky's *History of European Morals*, vol. ii., p. 165). He has the credit of having caused the abolition of the cruel gladiatorial games at Athens some two hundred years before Honorius abolished them in Rome. As a contrast to Dr. Smith's caricature, take the following picture by Professor W. M. Flinders Petrie:—

"How then should we regard Apollonius? Certainly not as the originator of any new gospel or beliefs, but

as a revivalist whose power lay in exhortation and moral rebuke; without much sense of humor, to save him from being over-didactic; but with purity of motive and disinterestedness which gave him a great power over communities sunk in effeminacy and selfishness.....A preacher but not an apostle, a saint but not a prophet, must be our appreciation of Apollonius of Tyana" (*Personal Religion in Egypt Before Christianity*, p. 165).

Dr. Smith has proved, on several occasions, his utter incapacity to be just to a Pagan.

He seems equally incapable of doing justice to Paganism and Pagans generally. Nero was undoubtedly a bad man, but he had his good points. It was he who appointed a magistrate to hear the complaints of the slaves against their masters, and to punish the latter when guilty of barbarous treatment, of making their slaves instruments of lust, or of withholding from them a sufficient supply of the necessaries of life (Seneca, *De Benef.*, iii. 22). In the first years of his reign it was his strong wish to abolish taxes, and he would have done so had it not been for the opposition of the senators who praised his magnanimity. The court was certainly extremely corrupt; but it was not nearly so corrupt as the Christian Church was in the tenth century during the supremacy of "the Pornocracy." What does Professor Smith think of Popes Sergius III., John X., John XI., and John XII.? Does he not know that they were morally worse than the worst people that surrounded Nero? Has he not read that when the Emperor Otto the Great instituted a strict inquiry into the character and habits of the pontiff there was disclosed the most abandoned profligacy? And yet, with all these horrible facts staring him in the face, Dr. Smith has the temerity to affirm that "all down the ages God has been working out the redemption of the world and raising humanity, by the patient process which science calls evolution, ever nearer and nearer to the ideal which was revealed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." It is as black a lie as was ever told. If we take the testimony of only Church historians, we learn that between the fourth century and the middle of the eleventh there was steadily going on a downward evolution. Instead of rising, humanity was sinking deeper and deeper into moral degradation. When Christianity was most powerful, Christendom wallowed in the foulest moral gutters. He who runs may read all this in the annals of the past. During the centuries that Christianity reigned alone, having forcibly suppressed all rivals, the world kept getting worse, which proves beyond the possibility of a doubt to unprejudiced people that Christianity has been from the beginning a gigantic failure; and its failure can only be accounted for by the fact that it is entirely false. Christendom did not begin to get better until secular forces came into operation and gradually broke the monopoly so long enjoyed by the Church; and it has been and is improving almost in the exact proportion in which the Church has been and is being deprived of its power.

In spite of the fact that Christianity is now rapidly dying, its official defenders declare that it is about to march on to final victory; but truth is great and shall prevail. O Science, thou hast conquered.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Neglected Humorist.

"John P. Robinson, he
Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee."
—*Biglow Papers*.

THERE is more in a laugh than meets the ear. Everybody has laughed at least once in a lifetime, not excepting the professional bodyguard of the Man of Sorrows, whose perennial rigidity of features has always been the cause of the polite wonder of outsiders. Even priests laugh in private. Laughing is, happily, a more common indulgence than weeping, although the ever-growing sternness of the battle of life is tending to the elimination of real, hearty

laughter. There is, moreover, an increasing body of laughless folk who regard the indulgence as ill-bred, if not criminal. They join cause with my Lord Chesterfield, who congratulated himself on the fact that since he had full use of his reason nobody had heard him laugh.

The function of the laugh-maker is underestimated. The man who grins at you through a horse-collar, and sets you laughing back at him, does you a great service. The physiological value of laughter has never been correctly appraised. Although doctors bestow a certain patronage on cheerfulness, and give it a minor place in the pharmacopœia, no one will dispute that the humorists are the benefactors of society. Yet, with the exception of Moliere, Rabelais, and Dickens, humorous writers are held to be only second-rate artists. The world will not take them seriously. Perhaps it is their own fault for electing to provide mirth for sober folk. Many jesters are neglected worthy of more than passing attention.

Take "Dod Grile" for example. Why his books are not so popular as those by Mark Twain, Max Adeler, or Artemus Ward is a mystery. That he is as funny as either is evident. If his humor is not appreciated by the public to the extent of those others, it may be because he has chosen to expend it largely upon a disrespectful perversion of religion. The proper study of mankind is man, and possibly the only burlesque that causes the wide mouth of the general public to broaden to a grin must also concern nature, and not the alleged supernatural. "Dod Grile" deserves a place beside the other jesters mainly because his work is of a rarer quality than theirs. Ambrose Bierce, for that was his correct name, was a journalist who was for many years connected with the *London Figaro*, *Fun*, and other humorous periodicals. He published two volumes, with the quaint titles, *The Fiend's Delight* and *Cobwebs from an Empty Skull*, under his nom de plume of "Dod Grile," and a third, *In the Midst of Life*, with his own name on the title. The two former books were as full of profanity as an egg is full of meat. Indeed, the title-page of *The Fiend's Delight* was ornamented with a drawing showing a devil toasting a tiny baby at a large fire, whilst in the body of the work the Christian superstition fares as badly as it did in the hands of Colonel Ingersoll. *In the Midst of Life*, which is far and away the most popular volume issued by Bierce, is a collection of short stories, mostly tragic, and all written with the hand of a master.

The gems of humor scattered throughout his writings would make the fortune of a comic writer. Here are a few taken at random:—

"I once knew a man who made me a map of the opposite hemisphere of the moon. He was crazy. I knew another who taught me what country lay upon the other side of the grave. He was a most acute thinker—as he had need to be."

"The Psalmist never saw the seed of the righteous begging bread. In our day they sometimes request pennies for keeping the street corners in order."

"It is wicked to cheat on Sundays. The law recognizes this truth, and shuts up the shops."

"If a jackass were to describe the deity, he would represent him with long ears and a tail. Man's ideal is the higher and truer; he pictures him as somewhat resembling a man."

"Camels and Christians receive their burdens kneeling."

"Most people have no more definite idea of liberty than that it consists in being compelled by law to do as they like."

"People who honor their fathers and their mothers have the comforting promise that their days shall be long in the land. They are not sufficiently numerous to make the life-assurance companies think it worth their while to offer them special rates."

"Everybody professes to know that it would be difficult to find a needle in a haystack, but very few reflect that this is because haystacks seldom contain needles."

"In calling a man a hog, it is the man who gets angry, but it is the hog who is insulted. Men are always taking up the quarrels of others."

But to pick out passages at haphazard is not doing justice to a clever jester. Not only does a jest's prosperity lie in the ear of him who hears it, but it has its life in an atmosphere of its own, and there are few plants so tender in the transplanting. While the creator of Dr. Dooley is welcomed, and the author of *Three Men in a Boat* is passing popular, one cannot help regretting the inadequate appreciation "Dod Grile" has won. Of course, all reading people must needs know his writings, but that the larger public should not have an opportunity of testing what he has written is unsatisfactory.

MIMNERMUS.

FETISHISM.

It is profoundly curious that in a city like Paris, which inherits the civilisation of Greece and of Rome, and after the progress of science accomplished during the last four centuries, there are still minds so belated or rudimentary as to represent the world as the work of a supreme being, who is a kind of almighty machine constructor, like Edison or Eiffel.

This fetishism, this African theology, this Papuan philosophy, belongs not only to the different Churches—Jewish, Christian, or Moslem, fossil *débris* of early ages of thought vainly trying to comprehend the world. Even present-day teachers seem as little emancipated in this particular as the magistrates, the politicians, and the common run of writers. The words, "God," "Providence," "soul," "immortality," are retained as much in the academies and the chairs of education as in synagogues, mosques, or churches. Since all infirmities are worthy of compassion, perhaps this is a sore which respect for humanity might interdict exposing to daylight; even the animals lick their ulcers. How long will this immense flock of deicoles make us assist at the spectacle of their superstition? There seems to be no remedy—at least, for all those who have neither the leisure to learn nor the power to reflect. We must take account of them. It has ever been thus, and perhaps will be always so. Democritus and Protagoras hardly found themselves in any better company.

I say this spectacle is profoundly curious. I say no more. To be astonished is simple; to be angry extremely bad taste. The naturalist who studies the social life of hymenoptera soon ceases either to admire or be indignant at the doings or antics of bees, wasps, and ants. When young, we dreamt of reforming the world; later, we held that all is probably for the best, or for the least evil in the human ant-hill.

Besides, to one who follows and observes, even from afar, the transformations of the public mind, it becomes evident that the leaders of opinion, who are always in reality serfs, do little beyond transposing the political institutions or the religious and metaphysical beliefs of a nation. These great players on the lyre sing and play in one key that which has been noted in another. That is all. But fetishism loses nothing by all this. The Mexicans have placed at the feet of the Pope a crown of gold and precious stones destined for some statue of the Virgin. Leo XIII. blesses the crown at audiences accorded to the academicians. The French raise statues to their heroes, and, above all, to their heroine. The worship of Joan of Arc succeeds to that of the Madonna, as this last succeeded the worship of Isie. Yet these are men of the nineteenth century, doubtless in possession of "integral instruction," and not poor, ignorant monks. Well, in my opinion, this fetishism is well worth that of the Eternal Father.

I say that the most striking result of the knowledge of the world and of life, accumulated during two thousand years in human brains, is not that there is no God, Providence, immortal soul, etc., but that it is useless to discuss, save as an historian of language and ideas, conceptions which have been as necessary, but are as childish, as those of the devil, of ghosts, or of phlogiston. No instructed person, capable of reflection, provided sincere and not under the weight of inherited physiological fatalities, admits that the causes of things are to be sought for outside the universe itself—that is to say, in nothingness; for what can there be outside all? The sane and penetrating reason of the old Greek philosophers long since posited the problem in the same terms as Laplace and Darwin.

I know well, and profess, that we have not, and cannot have, any other knowledge of ourselves and of the universe than one which is subjective and ideal, and that the reality of things is only a postulate. Such is the result of an analysis of the human understanding. But if the last word of science should be a supreme avowal of ignorance, assuredly it will not be an act of faith. It is not enough to

be ignorant that one must also be a dupe? Nothing, absolutely nothing, as far as we can penetrate into infinity, leads us to think that that which now exists has not ever existed, under some form and in some condition. Nothing suggests the idea that the universe does not suffice for itself, its own cause, or, as says St. Beuve, all can be deduced from the eternity of matter.

That this matter is neither brute nor inert, in the sense of antique atomism, may be seen by the physico-chemical sciences. But if for life and the elementary properties of life the same eternity may be argued as for force and matter, it does not follow, in my opinion, that we must place consciousness among these, or any consciousness whatever among those primordial properties which are common to inorganic and organic existences. Nothing reveals the existence of consciousness, however elementary, neither in the sidereal universe, nor in the life of plants, nor in that of animals, until physiological division of labor has determined the appearance of nervous structure.—*Jules Soury.*

GOD'S GOODNESS.

We were told that there is a purpose in suffering. Easy words to utter! but they carry no balm of consolation to my mind. I have witnessed suffering: I have felt a little, and witnessed much. This suffering is a grim fact. You say there is a purpose in it. Tell us what you mean by a purpose. A purpose must have some sort of explanation. Do not call it a purpose unless you can give us some indication of what the purpose is. The general theory is that suffering is for the education, and chiefly the moral education, of the race. Ah, but it gets distributed in the wrong way. And there comes a time when suffering, instead of helping you, thrusts you down, degrades you, brings you to impotence, abjectness, and despair. If the suffering is for education in ethics, how is it that the very poorest, who, by the hard labor of their lives, are under less temptation than the idle or luxurious, get by far the most of it, while the idle and luxurious frequently go scot free? I see no purpose in this at all. Why, we actually band ourselves together to abolish or diminish the very suffering which you say is so beautifully designed. God has a purpose in inflicting it, and we put the sufferers into a place we call a hospital, and we say to the men of science "fight it." We appoint nurses, and we say to them "fight it." We ask the public at large to find the money to assist in doing away with it. God is sending the suffering for moral purposes, and we are striving to abolish it, and so to prevent the ethical education which you say God intends by his inflictions.

God, we are told, has a right to take the life he sends. For the sake of argument, I will not impugn that. There is no time to discuss it. But, assuming that God has the right to take life, let us see how it works out. Under the law we have the right to take life. A criminal is tried and sentenced to execution. But society insists that, if he is to be killed, he shall be killed in the most painless manner possible. We insist that the hanging shall be done with the utmost dispatch. In America they are trying whether electricity is not even less painful than hanging. In short, although we must (as we say) kill (though I doubt if anybody has that right), still, if we must kill, we are refined enough to say we must kill swiftly and painlessly. But that is not God's method; what we see in nature is not *swift* killing; it is *slow* killing. When man is killed by "the act of God," it is often done very slowly; not in a moment as by the hangman's noose or by electrocution. A lingering disease comes on and kills him week by week, month by month, and year by year. It is an agonising form of cruelty. If God has the right to take life, I deny that he has the right to take it in that way. If life must be taken, it should be taken swiftly and painlessly. All this cruelty in nature, all this killing of human beings by slow disease and long agony, gives the lie to the statement that your God is a being of infinite kindness and love.—*G. W. Foote, "Theism or Atheism: Which is the More Reasonable?"*

No matter whose lips that speak, they must be free and un gagged. Let us believe that the whole truth can never do harm to the whole of virtue; and remember that in order to get the whole truth you must allow every man, right or wrong, freely to utter his conscience, and to protect him in so doing. Entire unshackled freedom for every man's life, no matter what his doctrine—the safety of free discussion no matter how wide its range. The community which dares not trust a member in the free utterance of his opinions, no matter how false or hateful, is only a gang of slaves.—*Wendell Phillips.*

Acid Drops.

As compared with the French or German working man the English working man is very much of a Philistine. He is quite right in fighting for better wages and fewer hours of labor, but he ought not to stop there. It is stupid on his part to shut his eyes, for instance, to the Education question. Apart from the intellectual and æsthetic aspects of this question, there is the social and political fact that it is through their superior education that the "upper" classes govern the "lower" classes. If the "upper" classes had the same knowledge, the same manners, and the same ways of speech that the "lower" classes display, their dominance would be an impossibility. Even from that point of view the working people should be anxious to secure the best possible education for their children. At present they get almost the worst possible education. The reason is that the higher development of education is sacrificed to the quarrel of the Churches over the question of who shall control the religious instruction in the schools. And the only way to terminate that quarrel is to remove the subject of religion altogether. Hence the necessity—to say nothing of the utility—of Secular Education. Once establish that system in the schools and the higher education would go forward with leaps and bounds.

Working-class leaders used to recognise this, and the Trade Union Congress passed a resolution in favor of Secular Education at every annual meeting. Catholic miners, however, under the direction of their priests, have succeeded, not in getting a resolution passed *against* Secular Education, but in shunting it altogether. Under the pretence that the debate on Secular Education was a religious controversy, they induced the last Congress to decide that the question should not be allowed to appear on future Agendas. The Catholic Church was always clever, and that was one of its cleverest moves. Without defeating Secular Education the Catholics have got it put out of the way. And this seems quite the proper policy to some persons who are not Catholics. Here is the *Daily Citizen* crying out against the Government for declaring that its next task will be the reorganisation of the Education system. What do we want of a new Education Bill, our contemporary cries? Why stir up religious controversy again? Why not go on with "social reform"? The obvious answer is that improved education is at the bottom of *all* reform. The children of to-day will be the men of to-morrow. The better the material the better the structure. Never mind the material (the *Daily Citizen* says in effect), let us hurry on with the building. Which does not look like wisdom.

Religion spoils everything it touches. It often makes the most serious things absurd, and the best of things contemptible. It was with mixed feelings that we read the following announcement in the *Daily News* (Jan. 16):—

"By arrangement with various bodies interested in the suffrage question, February 1, St. Bride's Day, will be held as a day of special meditation and intercession in Westminster Abbey, in St. Paul's, and in various cathedrals, chapels, and churches throughout Great Britain.

"An appeal to men and women to keep five minutes at noon for silent remembrance and prayer during the week January 20 to 27, during which days the suffrage question will be before the Commons, is signed by many influential personages, including Archdeacon Wilberforce, the Rev. John Clifford, D.D., Muriel Countess De La Warr, the Rev. Percy Dearmer, D.D., Mrs. Florence Bramwell Booth, Miss Lena Ashwell, the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, J. Forbes Robertson, and Gertrude Forbes Robertson, etc.

"An all-day devotional meeting will be held on Monday next by the Free Church League for Woman Suffrage at Caxton Hall."

Nations have always prayed for victory for themselves and defeat for their enemies. This practice is now, apparently, to be extended to the warfare of political parties. God Almighty is to be asked to take sides in our public disputes. One lot of supplicants will beseech the Deity to favor Mr. Asquith; another lot will beseech him to favor Mr. Bonar Law. Mr. Lloyd George and the British Medical Association will both have the help of their prayerful partisans. What will the poor Deity do between them? His best policy is to do nothing—for disappointment is generally stronger than gratitude. And then the unfairness of it. For a whole week the ladies are to tease and coax the Lord into deciding, over the heads of members, the voting on a Bill in the House of Commons. Now if this can be done successfully in regard to *one* Bill it can be done successfully with regard to others. And as nobody can tell what "God" will do at the finish, politics would become a mere lottery. Speeches and arguments would have nothing to do with the

fate of any measure. Even the Referendum would be useless. On the whole, we think that all the gods should be warned off the political field, leaving it entirely to the people's representatives.

Another point! Archdeacon This and the Rev. Mr. That naturally believe in prayer. It is their business. But do the ladies themselves really believe that all the prayer in the world could batter down the male opposition to the female franchise? If they do believe this, it is very cruel on their part to resort to assault and arson. If they do not believe it, they are simply playing to the gallery. We strongly advise them to play their game according to the best rules, without the help of "God" or his agents. It is the belief that they would use their vote under the control of the clergy that makes a large number of men hesitate to entrust them with it. This may be unjust, but is a fact, and has to be taken into account.

Why not? Dr. Miller, in an address before the Medical Society of London, said that the one thing a drunkard felt was physical pain. He therefore advocated that the chronic drunkard should be flogged. We have not had to wait long for the House of Commons' vote in favor of flogging to find imitators. And, of course, if flogging is able to stop one thing, why not another? It is a short and easy method of dealing with objectionable persons and things. Moreover, it is a doctrine that, to use a common phrase, appeals to the meanest intelligence—and, we should add, the meaner the intelligence the stronger the appeal. In a general way we should advise Dr. Miller to stick to whatever other subjects he happens to understand, for it is quite evident that he does not understand that of alcoholism. Still, if the arguments in favor of flogging are good enough in relation to the "White Slave Traffic," we do not see why they are not equally good with regard to other offences. And so we ask, Why not?

The sooner our penal system is taken out of the hands of pietists and ex-military men the better. The same people who cry out for "more flogging" are the people who support the senseless and degrading system which now exists. Mr. Thomas Holmes has just been pointing out that about a million persons, during the past ten years, have been imprisoned quite needlessly. Being fined for trivial offences, and not having the money in their pockets at the moment, they have been refused a few days' grace in which to obtain it, and treated as hardened criminals. The thing is so utterly silly and brutal that one wonders how even "God's Englishmen" can stand it.

It is fortunate for some people that a district can be slandered with impunity. If one says that John Smith, of a certain address in Wandsworth, is a blackguard, that is actionable; but if you say the whole of Wandsworth is vile, you are quite safe. Now, the Rev. T. L. B. Westerdale, of Streatham, writes that when it was announced at a Picture Palace that the place would be open on Sundays, the information "was greeted again and again with hisses." From this Mr. Westerdale draws two conclusions:—

- (1) Streatham is respectable;
- (2) The Methodist Church here is alive.

Now, these are horrible things to say of any person, and they are quite as objectionable when said of a locality. Certainly no one with any sense of moral responsibility would make these charges without the strongest provocation and without their being accompanied by the clearest of proof. We know that many districts in and around London are not all that they should be, but we do not believe there is any adequate reason for selecting Streatham for special denunciation. At any rate, if this is the kind of feeling towards one's neighbor that Christian charity develops, the less we have of it the better.

Mr. Harry Elmore continues, in the *Methodist Times*, to narrate his experiences of how Londoners spend Sunday. On this occasion he deals with Brixton and East Ham. In Brixton he found a number of picture palaces open. The crowd was, as usual, well-behaved and appreciative. "The pictures are of the usual healthy type—the 'moral' of the picture story.....being always a good one." In East Ham the only brightly lighted street was High-street. There were crowds of young men and women perambulating the streets, and Mr. Elmore was struck by the "apathetic" look on the majority of faces. There is no sign of keen poverty, but there is an absence of enjoyment. Mr. Elmore inquired of a policeman if there were any picture palaces open, and was told, No. Asking where people went when it was wet, the policeman said, "Don't know, sir. Some go to the pubs, I suppose." Mr. Elmore rightly concludes that

"The people seem to be simply aimless, wanting somewhere to go, and the publichouse is the only place that attracts many of them when the streets fail," and also that "To sit in a picture palace might be a better proceeding than this aimless strolling." Some of the readers of the *Methodist Times* will probably have their eyes opened by Mr. Elmore's articles; some of them may be brought to realise the truth that the Christian Sunday has been and is one of the most potent forces for demoralisation that we have. For ourselves we are curious to see the kind of moral—suitable to the *Methodist Times*—Mr. Elmore will draw when he has completed his investigations.

"From Manger to Cross," described as "A Cinematograph Representation of the Life of Jesus of Nazareth," is still going strong at the Albert Hall. "From Annunciation to Ascension" would be a truer title. But neither the first nor the last incident in the Gospel story of Jesus could be presented in a picture show. The Annunciation is too ticklish; the Ascension is too farcical.

"Joseph and His Brethren" is drawing crowds to a picture show in New York. Presumably a lot of the attraction is due to Mrs. Potiphar's courtship of *il casto Giuseppe*. Another story with two ladies in it would no doubt draw even better. We refer to Lot and his daughters.

Some time ago, in "Literary Gossip," we drew attention to *Great Thoughts* quoting a poem of James Thomson's as one of William Blake's. It first appeared at the end of Thomson's essay on Blake in his early contributions to the *National Reformer*. Fifty years afterwards it is printed as Blake's own, and Thomson's authorship is dropped out altogether. And this seems likely to continue, in spite of our correction. The blunder reappeared in the *Westminster Gazette* the other night (Jan. 16) in an editorial on "London and Its Directory":—

"'The Desert of London Town,' with its 'grey miles long' and its 'mirk miles broad,' as William Blake once described it."

Nothing of the sort. It should be "as James Thomson once described it, in relation to William Blake." To speak plainly, we regard this kind of blunder as quite inexcusable. No one with an ear for poetry could take "grey miles long" or "mirk miles broad" as William Blake's work. It is James Thomson's work all over.

More accurate quotations! Christians seem blessed with a mania in this direction. Rev. R. J. Campbell, in one of his recent City Temple sermons, reported in the *Christian Commonwealth*, quoted Henley's "Out of the night that covers me," and this is how he did it,—at least this is how it appeared in the *New Theology's* weekly:—

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods there be
For my unconquerable soul."

"There be" is wrong—and badly wrong. Henley wrote "may be." And if Mr. Campbell fancies his misquotation is as good as the original he lacks both ear and understanding.

By far the most complete, and we are afraid, deliberate misrepresentation of historic truth in the interests of Christianity that we have seen for some time occurs in a couple of articles by the Rev. Percy Dearmer in recent issues of *Everyman*. He writes on the "Cross and the Crescent," his purpose being to prove the inferiority of Mohammedanism when compared with Christianity. His method is a simple one, although it is a plan that would only be pursued by either a fool or a knave. Certain countries under Mohammedan rule are inferior to other countries where Christianity is prevalent. Therefore, the superiority of these latter countries is due to Christianity. The centre of civilisation has drifted away from two sides of the Mediterranean, northward and westward, and the reason for this is to be found in the rise of Mohammedanism, which destroyed civilisation wherever it exerted an influence. And so on, and so forth. This is the history of an old-fashioned Christian Evidence lecturer. Many of even this class are beyond that to-day, but Dr. Dearmer has revived it in a journal that boasts of its claims to represent modern culture. Even schoolboys are taught the reasons for the decline of power on the shores of the Mediterranean, apart from religion. Dr. Dearmer never appears to have heard of such causes—at least, he is careful not to mention them.

But Dr. Dearmer's crowning misrepresentation is contained in his treatment of Spain. After noting the check

received to the Mohammedan Conquest in 732, Dr. Dearmer says:—

"Yet Spain itself remained under the Moors until the fifteenth century. Perhaps, when we speak of Spanish cruelties and the horrors of the Inquisition in the sixteenth, we ought to remember that. The other nations of Christendom have been slow enough in learning the lessons of mercy, peace, and goodwill among men; and it is not to be wondered at that Spain was slower still."

If this passage means anything, it means that the backward condition of Spain and the cruelties of the Spanish Church, including the Inquisition, were due to the influence of the Mohammedan rulers, who kept the country in a backward condition and developed habits of cruelty. And such a position is so monstrously untrue, so plainly at variance with facts noted in almost every history of Spain written which deals with the Mohammedan period, that Dr. Dearmer can hardly be unaware of the truth. At any rate, we hesitate to charge him with such miraculous ignorance without positive proof.

For the facts, as we say, are so easily got at. Buckle, Draper, Lea, Prescott, Hallam, Renan, the writers of the articles on this topic in any decent Encyclopædia, all point out that under Mohammedan rule Spain, or the portion under its control, was the most civilised and most tolerant place in the Western world. They led the way in all the sciences, they taught the men who brought about the awakening of Europe. They developed the commerce, the agriculture, the trade of Spain. They made Spain a wealthy civilised country. And the same authorities point out that expelling the Jews and Mohammedans destroyed the trade and commerce of Spain, crippled its scientific activity, and left it, as Buckle said, proud of having all that a nation should be ashamed of possessing.

The statement concerning the Inquisition is, we are afraid, a deliberate untruth. Mohammedanism had no such institution. No other religion ever had such a damnable instrument of religious defence. The Spanish Mohammedans allowed Christians and Jews to fill public offices, while in the rest of Europe Christianity was butchering heretics and sending scholar after scholar to linger in Christian prisons. It was Christian intolerance that set the example of butchery in the name of religion, and which made Spain a byword for all that was backward and mentally repulsive. The facts are well known to all with the slightest pretence to a knowledge of history. Anyone will find them well set forth in Mr. H. C. Lea's authoritative work, *The Moriscoes of Spain*. We can only congratulate Dr. Dearmer on his profound faith in the ignorance of the public to which he addresses himself.

An evening paper has been discussing the question, "Are we too busy to think?" It is a stupid way of putting it, because the busier a man is, the more he thinks—about the things that keep him busy. The vital question is not even whether we think, it is rather "What is it that we are thinking about?" There is no lack of thinking in the world, but there is a lack of right thinking, and of things that are worthy of attention. There is a lack of mental proportion abroad which leads many to place in the front rank things that are of quite a subordinate importance, and delegate prime things to the rear. The man who is spending his energies in going one better than his neighbor in social display, is thinking, within the limits of his capacity, as hard as a philosopher, but he is using his mental energy on a matter of no real importance whatever. The people who, preaching from one year's end to another about God, or a future life, or some other religious dogma, are thinking, but their thinking involves a misunderstanding and a misinterpretation of matters that are of infinitely greater consequence. No, we are never too busy to think, but we are often too ill-informed or too poorly trained to think about the right things. And it is *how* we think, and what we think about, that is of primary importance.

"Can Methodism Save its Soul?" asks the editor of the *Methodist Times*. We are reminded of Oliver Wendell Holmes' remark that when a man is always worrying whether his soul will be damned, he will usually be found to have a soul that isn't worth a damn. Whether Methodism can save its soul or not is, perhaps, an important question to Methodists. For our part, we have never seen any reason for believing that it has a soul worth preserving.

"A reminder of the grip which the old superstitions retain on present generations comes from Virginia, where a case has been carried up to the Supreme Court of Appeals because of the ruling of Judge Martin of the Court of Law

and Chancery at Norfolk that an Atheist is a competent witness. The witness was N. M. Osborne, Jr., of Norfolk, who disclaimed any belief in a supreme being. Judge Martin held that under the statute based upon the bill of Religious Freedom, as originally drawn by Thomas Jefferson, no man's civil capacities can be diminished because of his opinion on matters of religion, and he permitted Osborne to testify. It appears that affirmation as a substitute for swearing is unknown in Virginia, for which reason the witness took the Bible oath; but because of his unbelief the case will go up to the Appeals Court for a decision on his competence. That such a question could arise in Virginia shows a degeneration since the days of its great statesman, the collaborator of Paine in the production of the Declaration of Independence—Thomas Jefferson."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

We thought the *London Signal* was a sporting paper. Would it were so honest a journal! we might now say, with a recollection of Hamlet's words to Polonius. We find it is edited by the Rev. C. Silvester Horne—the gentleman who won a safe seat for Ipswich in the House of Commons, where, by the way, he seems to be a failure. Someone has sent us a cutting from the January number of the magazine, containing an answer to the question "Is Christianity Failing?" Of course, the answer may be guessed. Who would go to Mr. Horne or his paper for a straight reply? Why should he cry stinking fish, and give his business away? He does nothing of the sort. Christianity may be losing ground in England, but it is gaining in China—where our Christian Government seems to be bent on forcing some millions of pounds' worth of opium upon the Heathen Celestials—in spite of treaties, justice, and common decency. Mr. Horne finds comfort, too, in Mr. Joseph Hocking's statement that "Crude infidelity of the Bradlaugh and Ingersoll school is practically dead." Fancy a creature like Horne calling Bradlaugh and Ingersoll *crude*! Let him try his hand at answering Bradlaugh's *Plea for Atheism* or *Doubts in Dialogue*. He might find on any single page of Ingersoll enough wisdom and wit to last him a lifetime.

"Even Agnosticism," Mr. Horne rejoices, "is by no means so rampant as it used to be." We suppose he means "so prevalent." Who ever saw Agnosticism *rampant*? Does the reverend gentleman understand this word? Christian preachers—and even Christian journalists—would often be improved by a little study of the Dictionary.

Rev. Robert Louis Wild, M.A., of Hurstmonceaux, patron of the living, which he enjoyed himself for forty-six years, and has bequeathed (with right of presentation) to his son, the Rev. Herbert L. Wild, of Oxford, left £113,715. He desired that his manuscript sermons, manuscripts, and correspondence, should be burnt. Wouldn't it have done to put them in his coffin?

The cracks in St. Paul's are to be mended. But who is to mend the cracks in Christianity?

YOU NEVER CAN TELL.

The following is one of the best Yankee stories I have ever heard. An American was re-visiting the scene of a terrible battle he had been through, and he recognised a hut to which he had crawled after the fight, and where the occupier, a handsome colored woman, had given him food and shelter. He went down to renew his acquaintance with his benefactress, and found her alive and flourishing.

"Good day," said he; "isn't this the place where the famous battle was fought which lasted two days, and—don't you remember me?"

"No, sah," she replied; "I remember the battle, but I don't remember you."

"Come, come," he remarked; "don't you remember a man crawling in here about four o'clock on the second day of the battle, and you giving him some bread?"

The woman looked at him intently, and then asked very slowly: "Are you quite sure that you are de gentleman who came in here 'bout four o'clock ob de second day ob de great battle?"

"Yes," he answered, solemnly; "I swear it's the truth."

Then the benefactress called to someone in the next room, "Lucinda, my girl, come in here right away. *Here's your pa.*"—*Lord Rosmore, "Things I Can Tell."*

The world embraces not only a Newton but a Shakespeare—not only a Boyle but a Raphael—not only a Kant but a Beethoven—not only a Darwin but a Carlyle.—*Tyndall.*

Mr. Foote's Engagements

Sunday, January 26, Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place, Regent-street, London, W., at 7.30, "The Function of Atheism."

To Correspondents.

- J. BELL (New Zealand).—Thanks for your good wishes. Subscription arranged to start with the year. Shop manager will send you formal receipt.
- VAUGHAN GREY.—We received your telegram from Paris at the Annual Dinner. Sorry you could not attend the function. Your "hearty wishes" were realised; it was an "enjoyable evening."
- W. P. BALL.—Much obliged for cuttings.
- E. PACK.—We repeat that while Mr. Blatchford stands as simply the author of the book in which a "blasphemous" passage occurs he cannot be liable to prosecution under the Police Clauses Act. We know no more about Mr. Gott's defence than we found in the book you wrote yourself.
- R. BELL.—You complain that we "write too much about London." We were not aware of it. But the *Freethinker* is edited and published in London, and we naturally know most of what goes on there. You date from Stanley, S.O. We should be happy to report any Freethought work going on there. Is there any?
- J. BATESON.—The article you send us from *Everyman*—which we hoped would be a good paper, but turned out one of the most namby-pamby things we ever saw—is not worth answering in detail. It is said to have been written by "a member of the diplomatic service." Where did he serve? In the kitchen? Anyhow, we will make one remark. It is this. What right have Christians to blame the Turk for fighting in the name of Allah? Don't they fight in the name of Christ? Did not the Bulgarians hold a big dedication service in their biggest church, and did not King Ferdinand assure them that they would march to victory as Soldiers of the Cross? The toleration of the Turks is a matter of history. It can be demonstrated. Christian toleration never existed, except among the smallest of all sects—the Quakers.
- G. E. Q.—See "Acid Drops." Thanks.
- J. E. R.—Glad to have your encouraging letter, and to know you enjoy the "Literary Gossip" so much.
- WELL-WISHER.—Too late for this week.
- EDWIN MILLS.—Next week, if possible.
- POSTMAN.—Very shortly.
- D. LASLETT.—Gladstone and Stead were brought up as Christians. Their adherence to Christianity counts for nothing. Ingersoll did not disown the appellation of "Atheist." He said that Agnosticism and Atheism were the same thing.
- J. SOLOMONS.—Contributions intended for the *Freethinker* are considered on their merits.
- G. F. E. SAMUEL.—Thanks for new year's good wishes.
- ARTHUR BROOKES.—There is nothing in your verse likely to lead to a "blasphemy" prosecution.
- A good deal of correspondence stands over again unavoidably.
- THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.
- LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.
- LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.
- ORDERS for literature should be sent to the Shop Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., and not to the Editor.
- FRIENDS who send us newspapers would enhance the favor by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- THE *Freethinker* will be forwarded direct from the publishing office, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Foote lectured at Queen's Hall on Sunday evening on "More 'Bradlaugh' Fables." Travelling along to the hall from Fenchurch-street Station, he watched the empty rain-swept streets, and wondered if he would find any audience at all. In the circumstances it was quite a good one, and the lecture was very warmly applauded. Mr. A. B. Moss, who occupied the chair, elicited a few questions from the meeting, but failed to woo any critic on to the platform. Mr. Foote occupies the Queen's Hall platform again to-night

(Jan. 26), taking for his subject the important question of "The Function of Atheism."

We were glad to see our old friend, the veteran Mr. Side, of Walworth, at the Annual Dinner, in spite of his eighty-nine years. Barring a slowly increasing deafness he is nearly as lively as ever. He looks forward cheerfully to completing his century. Certainly he has aids in doing this, for he has children and children's children about him to the third and fourth generation.

We were also glad to see our old friends, Mr. and Mrs. G. Alward at the Dinner. They came up from Grimsby, where, in the long-long-ago, we used to enjoy their homely, but generous, hospitality, during our lecture visits. The Secularists had a ball of their own then—and, strange as it sounds, that was their misfortune. They put their money into it, and found it was a white elephant. Hiring halls is, on the whole, better (for Secularists, at least) than acquiring them. It limits responsibility and enables you to see the end of your expenditure.

Mr. Heaford has explained to us how it was that we missed him at the Annual Dinner at the Holborn Restaurant on Tuesday evening, January 14. He labored under the fixed impression that the Dinner was to take place on the Wednesday, and it was the only on going to the Holborn on that evening that he learned of his mistake. The incident has its comic aspect, but its serious aspect too. Mr. Heaford has been overworking himself ever since the martyrdom of Francisco Ferrer. We have strongly advised him to ease off a bit, but he hasn't seen his way to do so. He will have to see it now. Work and worry tell their own tale in time, whether you want them or not.

Mr. Herbert Burrows deserves our thanks—and we are happy in tendering them—for his honest and manly words about Secularists at the close of his article on "Religion and Social Reform" in the *Christian Commonwealth* of Jan. 8. This article is one of a series which the C. C. has been obtaining under that general title from "distinguished" persons. Rev. E. W. Lewis, who started the discussion, seems to fancy that not even Socialists can live good lives without belief in God. Mr. Burrows hopes Mr. Lewis does not, and never will, mean this nakedly. "I am sure," he says, "Mr. Lewis will not affirm that a good life, a true life, a loving life, a human life, a life which is athirst for the saving of humanity, cannot be lived on the secular basis. If he does so affirm, then he is a dogmatist of the Torquemada Inquisition order."

Miss Kough's audience, considering the weather, was a very good one at the Public Hall, Croydon, on Sunday evening, and her lecture was highly appreciated. Mr. A. B. Moss occupies the same platform this evening (Jan. 26), winding up the present series of lectures there.

Bournemouth is progressing. Six years ago a poll of the ratpayers settled Sunday tramcars by a majority of nearly a thousand against them. Another poll just taken shows a majority of 448 the other way; the full figures being 4,716 for, and 4,268 against. There is hope for all places when Bournemouth turns its back on Sabbatarianism.

A correspondent sends us a little picture from the *Daily Mirror* of "Pablo Garcia, the Spanish marine who was sentenced to imprisonment for refusing to kneel before the Host"—that is, the priest-manufactured Body of Christ. The young fellow has a fine clear-cut face and his body is as upright as an electric standard. We lift our hat to him.

Acknowledgment of subscriptions to the President's Honorarium Fund for 1913 is postponed till next week, when the Annual Circular will appear in our columns. We shall also have something to say then about the "Fighting Fund" and its object.

As scientific generalisation has steadily extended the region of natural law, the region which theology has assigned to divine action has steadily diminished. Every discovery in science has stripped off territory from the latter province and added it to the former one. Every such discovery has accordingly been promulgated and established in the teeth of bitter and violent opposition on the part of theologians. A desperate fight it has been for some centuries, in which science has won every disputed position, while theology, untaught by perennial defeat, still valiantly defends the little corner which is left of it.—*John Fiske.*

The Meaning of the Eucharist.

SAVAGE and semi-civilised peoples in all parts of the world have for many ages observed the custom of devouring their divinities. The most sacred mystery of the Christian religion—the Eucharist—is a sacrament of this character. All the innumerable sects into which Christianity is split up, with the solitary exception of the Quakers, celebrate the Lord's Supper, however much they may differ as to its meaning.

We have every reason to believe that the Agapæ, or love-feasts of the early Christians, were combined with the celebration of the Eucharist or Communion. At these love festivals the celebrants partook, in the form of bread and wine, of the body and blood of Jesus, their dead divinity. Down to the end of the second century, the observance of the Agapæ coincides with that of the Eucharist. Whatever these love banquets may, or may not, have been in the "pure ages" of the Church, in the third and fourth centuries they were without doubt joyous gatherings, in which departed relatives and sanctified martyrs were commemorated. It was during this period that the various sections into which the true faith was already segregated openly accused each other of using the Agapæ as a cover for the grossest licentiousness. So great grew the scandal that Church Councils pronounced against them and forbade the priests all participation in their celebration.

It had long been customary for the Greeks and Romans to assemble together to celebrate their sacred anniversaries. As Dr. Conybeare, in his essay on the Eucharist, pointedly remarks:—

"Professor Sanday has reminded us that Providence even in its revolutions is conservative. The world could only be Christianised on condition that holy days and customs were continued. The early Christian agape admitted of adaptation to older funeral and sacrificial feasts, and was so adapted."

Truly, the solar orb seldom shines on anything theologically new.

The doctrine that the bread and wine consumed at the celebration of the Lord's Supper were, in reality, his body and blood, was not sanctioned by the Church until the eleventh century. It was at the Council of Rome in 1079 that official approval was granted to transubstantiation, and it yet remained for the Fourth Lateran Council at Rome in 1215, held under Innocent III., to pronounce transubstantiation an article of faith. And as such it has continued in the Roman Church ever since.

Many Protestants assume that the communicant drinks the communion wine in the Catholic ceremony. But this assumption is erroneous; the wine, or blood, is reserved to the priest. As the Marquis of Bute states, it has been the rule of the Church since the fifteenth century that the celebrant only (with the exception of the Kings of France at their coronation, and a few of the assistants at a Papal high mass) is permitted to communicate from the chalice.

In his monumental masterpiece, the *Golden Bough*, that brilliant anthropologist, Professor J. G. Frazer, has gathered together a mass of information relating to the world-wide custom of god eating. Illustrations are furnished by savage, barbarian, and civilised peoples in all parts of the earth.

A very close parallel to the Catholic ceremony is afforded by the ancient Mexican custom of eating a dough image of the Huitzilopochtli as a means of communion with the divinity. Before Mexico was discovered and devastated by the Spaniards, bread was eaten sacramentally as the body of this god. Twice a year an image of the great Mexican deity was made of dough, then broken to pieces, and solemnly eaten. The principal feast was celebrated in spring. According to an eye-witness, a few days before the festival took place, the sacred virgins of the temple prepared a mixture of beet seed and roasted maize, which they moulded with honey. This compound was then fashioned into the likeness of

Huitzilopochtli; grains of maize serving for the deity's teeth, and colored grains of glass doing duty for his eyes. The Mexican noblemen then adorned the image with a choice and beautiful garment. The dough divinity was then seated in a chair and carried in a litter on patrician shoulders. An hour before dawn on the morning of the feast, the virgins appeared in white garments and crowned with garlands of maize, while their necks were adorned with chains of corn. Youths attired in red robes and bearing maize then carried the image in its litter to the steps of the temple. It was then solemnly drawn up the steps, performers playing on musical instruments as it ascended, while the people reverently watched the spectacle. When the young men had deposited their holy burden in a bower of roses prepared for its reception in the temple, the interior and exterior of the fane were strewn with floral tributes. The virgins then brought pieces of paste prepared from the same ingredients as the image itself, and these they handed to the young men, who solemnly laid them at the idol's feet. Then the sacred and secular magnates, each according to their dignities and antiquities, proceeded to range themselves in due order about the fragments of paste.

Certain ceremonies, accompanied by singing and dancing, were then gone through, and thus was the dough religiously transformed into the flesh and bones of the god. The paste, having thus been consecrated and blessed, was worshiped by the multitude. The feast and the idol were next celebrated in dance and song. It was absolutely imperative that all should abstain from food and drink at this solemn time, lest the body of the god which the priests afterwards administered in the manner of a communion should be contaminated by contact with ordinary food in the stomachs of the worshippers.

We thus learn that the Mexicans were fully acquainted with the doctrine of the real presence long before their country was invaded and plundered by European adventurers. Dr. Frazer writes:—

"They believed that by consecrating bread their priests could turn it into the very body of their god, so that all who thereupon partook of the consecrated bread entered into a mystic communion with the deity by receiving a portion of the divine substance into themselves. The doctrine of transubstantiation, or the magical conversion of bread into flesh was also familiar to the Aryans of ancient India long before the spread, or even the rise of Christianity."*

Until recently, the Huichol Indians of Central America, and the Malas of Southern India even now make themselves at one with their gods by eating their effigies. While in modern Europe, as Frazer says,—

"the Catholic Church has resorted to similar means for enabling the pious to enjoy the ineffable privilege of eating the persons of the Infant God and his Mother. For this purpose images of the Madonna are printed on some soluble and harmless substance and sold in sheets like postage stamps. The worshiper buys as many of these sacred emblems as he has occasion for, and affixing one or more of them to his food, swallows the bolus. This practice is not confined to the poor and ignorant. In his youth Count Hoensbroech and his devout mother used thus to consume portions of God and his mother with their meals."

And, in a footnote, Dr. Frazer states that this practice was officially sanctioned by a decree of the Inquisition, July 29, 1903.

Among uncivilised races there exists an almost universal belief that by eating an animal or plant the eater acquires the distinguishing qualities of the plants or animals in question. Once we realise this we may easily grasp the primitive ideas which underlie the mystery of the Christian communion service. When a savage devours the flesh of an animal or man, he is convinced that he acquires not merely the physical, but also the mental, qualities which characterised these organisms before death. Consequently, when the man or animal is deemed

* *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, 1912, vol. ii., p. 89.

divine, its savage worshiper considers that he absorbs a part of its divinity when he consumes its flesh. Innumerable instances of this belief are known to exist, even in cases in which it is never supposed that the fleshly nourishment is in reality the body or blood of a god. The doctrine, as Frazer says, forms part of a widely distributed system of sympathetic magic.

Some savages refuse to eat venison in case they should become timid like the deer. Certain of the Brazilian tribes will not partake of slow-moving birds, quadrupeds, or fish lest they contract their inactive habits, and thus be unable to flee from their enemies. On the other hand, the Kansas Indians, before entering upon a war, devoured dogs' flesh, which was held to serve the double purpose of rendering them valorous and inspiring them with deathless loyalty to their chiefs. The Miris of Assam "prize tigers' flesh as food for men; it gives them strength and courage. But it is not suited for women; it would make them strong minded." The wolf, bear, leopard, serpents, and other creatures are eaten in various parts of the world, as their flesh imparts wisdom and courage. Certain savages devour the flesh, particularly the hearts of dead men, and drink their blood with the object of acquiring their good qualities. It is said that when Sir Charles McCarthy was killed by the Ashantees in 1824, his heart was eaten by the chiefs of the Ashantee army for the purpose of gaining the dead soldier's courage.

Similar superstitious fancies induced the Central Australian Dieri tribe to take the weapons with which a prisoner had been judicially executed and to wash them in a wooden vessel. The resulting gory liquid was then poured down the throats of the executioners of the tribe. This was supposed to vastly increase their strength and courage for future enterprise. The ethical qualities possessed by the dead are capable of acquisition by the living through simple contact with their bones.

Savages all the world over never doubt that through the transfusion of a few drops of their blood into each other's veins two men at once become kinsmen and allies. Nor does this blood-covenant end with life. Some savages hold that they can become reconciled to their slain foes by swallowing their blood. The fear inspired by their dead enemies' avenging ghosts is thus allayed. It was an article of faith among the Maoris that if they tasted the blood of enemies slain in battle they had nothing to fear from their avenging spirits. Another way of establishing post-mortem harmony is to swallow the ashes of defunct kinsmen or enemies:—

"Savages also inoculate themselves with moral and other virtues by making cuts in their bodies and inserting in the cuts the ashes of animals and plants in which they suppose to be endowed with the virtues in question. Some savages attempt to acquire the mental and physical qualities of the dead by anointing themselves with their remains."

Sufficient has now been said to explain the savage's custom of eating the flesh of divine animals and men. By eating the body of the god, he participates in the god's attributes and powers. The representative of the corn god is bread. The juice of the grape is the representative of the god of the vine. The juice of the grape is the god's precious blood. And thus it happens that, through eating the bread and drinking the wine, the communicant partakes of the real blood and body of his deity:—

"Yet a time comes when reasonable men find it hard to understand how anyone in his senses can suppose that by eating bread or drinking wine he consumes the body or blood of a divinity. 'When we call corn Ceres and wine Bacchus,' says Cicero, 'we use a common figure of speech; but do you imagine that anyone is so insane as to believe that the thing he feeds upon is a god.' In writing thus the Roman philosopher little foresaw that in Rome itself, and in the countries which have derived their creed from her, the belief which he here stigmatises as insane was destined to persist for thousands of years, as a cardinal doctrine of religion, among peoples who ride themselves on their religious

enlightenment by comparison with the blind superstitions of pagan antiquity. So little can the greatest minds of one generation foresee the devious track which the religious faith of mankind will pursue in after ages."*

T. F. PALMER.

A Frost Picture by God.

NATURE'S wand had passed over the woods and hills during the hours of our sleep. For weeks our spirits had been dulled to tiredness by the constant closeness, the rain, and mud, and grey, unbroken skies. But the wind had swung swiftly into the north in the night, and had borne down, over the cold seas, from the northern icelands, bringing on its broad wings change and joy. There were beauty, and health, and happiness, energy and love of life, in the morning, where, the night before, were satiation, weariness, dispiritment, and ugliness.

Within a few hours the roads had become diapered iron. Sheets of white ice hazily reflected the sun's early rays. The cart-ruts through which we had squashed the previous evening were roadway viaducts moulded in beautiful corrugation. The hard oarh rang to our feet. Beneath its covering of glistening frost we imagined we could hear its hearty response to our footfalls.

Inclination to woo the fairies of the fireflames had given place to a healthy desire for physical activity. There was a fresh and strong vitality in the mind that urged us outside. The keen, frosty air had awakened within us a demand the house restriction could not supply; and we felt impelled to be energetic, to be out amongst the ensilvered trees, where the robins were chirping and chattering to themselves, seemingly in great glee at their vain attempt to rival their neighbors, the crows, and where a blackie nobly endeavored to introduce a shake into his monotoned music.

The feeling the frost had inspired in our bodies resembled somewhat the mental influence of a dose of Freethought tonic. We were alert, quick, active. There was a new joy in being alive, a keener interest in the things around us, a grander delight in being appreciative. The range of our vision, and its acuteness, were too diminutive to permit us catching and retaining all the wonders we passed. Entwining twigs had been formed into marvellously pretty grottos and palaces, into exquisite designs and rare pictures, all eloquent with beauty, and full of the choicest art. The hedgerows, so lately dark and ugly and funereal in their sombre, rain-sodden hopelessness of spring, were now bright with light and loveliness. Were our eyes entranced by some seemingly daring piece of extravagant design, it was but for a moment; some other more beautiful structure of hedgerow architecture immediately claimed their admiration.

And so we were lured on from picture to picture, along the road gallery, till we reached the hill gate. It seemed like the doorway leading into an annexe, whose contents had been chosen and grouped because of their delicacy. Every leaf of grass was fringed and set with tiny beads of crystallised purity, all sparkling in the sunshine. Every tuft of frost-starred grass entangled the mind in a web of beauty. The tall grass leaves, laden with their wealth of jewels, bent over till their lips touched those of their smaller brothers and sisters, forming miniature caverns into which the sunbeams shot and were kept captives to illumine the fragile splendor of the crystal chambers.

The hand of God! No God, although he be never so cunning in artistry, never so full of genius, never so inventively "creative," could have accomplished such a transformation of a few hours. Man's influence in the making of the idea of God is most obvious in God's restrictions. That God may have

* *Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, 1912, vol. ii., pp. 167, 168.

the suggestion, at least, of comprehensibility, some restriction is inevitable; and God's limitations are gauged by the mental power of his worshipers. They cannot, even if they would, see beyond the limits of their knowledge. As their knowledge is restricted, so is their God. And no man or woman, looking at such a marvellous array of wonderful pictures, of exquisite fragility and sublime exactitude, such as was spread before us on the hillside, could possibly believe a God was the designer. From my own mental experience I am fully convinced that no man in his innermost conscience truthfully believes his God performs these marvels.

The task is too great for a God. It is too stupendous. The result is too lovely. The stupid Christian *thinks* he believes; the artistically sensitive Christian *says* he believes; but the former's thought is the last thin smoke column of a dying fire, ascending to lose itself in uncharted immensity, and the latter's professed conviction is a specious superficial tenacity to adhere to beliefs, not because he finds any rationality in them, but because to abjure them would entail, he thinks, discomfort. There is a trace, too, of the child's reactionary obstinacy against a parent's rebuke in his attitude: the rebuke being the agreement between the man's deep-lying doubt of the truth of his belief, and the denial his knowledge would give, were he to allow it full and open voice.

Behind the appreciative consciousness of the beauty of one leaf of grass glittering with its robe of frost pearls, the belief in God as its creator, although the idea be imagined in the most glorious verbal drapery, is as an amateur water-color to a masterpiece: it is a puny idea set in a heavy frame of words. Were we true to ourselves, we would admit that we cannot conceive a God capable of producing such a delicate piece of magnificent handiwork. You cannot dispart from your conception of Deity a human semblance, without annihilating him. Consequently, whether you like it or not, a limit to his power is inevitable. If he must retain some similarity to humanity, then limitation of his power is the first similitude that comes to the mind when there is stretched outwards and upwards before you such a wealth of loveliness as that which we saw on the hillside.

God, the idea of God, is a poor thing to a frost-pearled leaf of grass, waving in the wind, and glistening in the sunshine. Grant the existence of God; bespeak for him all the might in which you have hitherto enswathed him; all the power and possibility of which you have sung; all the wonder-working love of which you have prayed, and for which your thanksgiving has touched the vermilion clouds of sunset; all his genius that you have dinned into our ears till we recoiled before your imaginative potentialities; and you have but chanted a rude folk-song. There are notes unknown to your voice; words with which you are unfamiliar; ideas too sublime for the setting of your song.

There is something greater, something more wonderful, more powerful, something that awakens, not worship nor thanksgiving in us, but the desire to know—something, or, rather, many things, more marvellous than this little and badly executed photograph you have mounted on a cardboard of lies, before which you bow down and praise.

Beside these things, these activities, and results, as yet so imperfectly recognised by our knowledge, which we group in the name of Nature, your idea of God is a weak and faulty solution to a foolish problem of your own making.

Some of these thoughts my voice formed into words, as we bent over to examine a tuft of grass that had been transmogrified into a fairy stage, with the drooping blades as the proscenium.

"I'm not going to argue with you," Mainie said, "however much you'd like me to. Besides, if it will give you any consolation, I wasn't thinking of God at all. It's too lovely for anything."

ROBERT MORELAND.

Tales of Our Times.

BY A CYNIC.

MR. WILLIAM BROADARROW, known among his associates as the Night Bird, and Mr. Samuel Shortcrop, familiarly called Slim Sam, pursued their business careers chiefly in London, and their energies had frequently been rewarded by the provision of free board and lodging in various Government establishments in the metropolis. But the nature of their business was such as often necessitated sudden excursions to foreign parts, and on one occasion, finding it expedient to get as far away from London as possible, they resolved to profit by the geometrical principle that the greatest distance between two points on a sphere is equal to half its circumference, and accordingly made a hurried departure for the antipodes.

They travelled by way of New York and San Francisco, but between the latter port and Sydney their ship foundered in mid-ocean. The Night Bird and Slim Sam did not perish, however. On the contrary, these two, the most abandoned and worthless individuals on board, were the only ones who escaped, thus affording yet another instance of the whimsical playfulness of Divine Providence. After drifting about in an open boat till all their companions died of starvation, they were cast on a coral reef encircling one of those "summer isles of Eden" which afford so fertile a field for the activities of slave-hunting labor agents, swindling traders, and Christian missionaries. As their boat was smashed on the reef, our adventurers had to strip themselves of most of their clothing and swim across the intervening lagoon to the island.

The march of civilisation has carried its blessings to many savage lands, but to this particular island it had not yet penetrated. Its dusky inhabitants had not yet enjoyed the privileges of having the Gospel preached to them, of getting drunk on "trade gin," or of having their blood poisoned by imported disease—indeed, they had never yet set eyes on a European. So when the Night Bird and Slim Sam, their white skins shining under the tropic sun, emerged as it were from the ocean's depths and walked up the coral strand, their appearance occasioned no little astonishment among the islanders. They were soon surrounded by an excited crowd, gesticulating and clamoring to each other, but all the while paying the white men a strange deference. A council was hurriedly held among the leading men, and then the visitors were conducted towards the interior of the island in what seemed to be a solemn procession. This presently came to a halt before a large building which proved to be a temple, and into the dark recesses of which the Night Bird and Slim Sam were conducted, to the accompaniment of the beating of tomtoms and the chanting of priests. A great ugly idol was now removed from its throne in the holy of holies; the Night Bird was ceremoniously requested by signs to take its place, which he did; while Slim Sam, who was much the smaller man of the two, was installed on a low stool at the foot of the throne.

"Strike me dotty if they ain't making a *gawd* o' you, Bill," said Slim Sam. "'Ere's a pretty go."

"I b'lieve yer right, Sam," replied the Night Bird, looking down at his companion with some complacency. "I was 'ardly prepared to okkerpy such an eggzalted persition, but I must do my best. Any'ow, it's better than being killed an' eaten, which I thought we was in for at fust."

"But I'm blowed if I can understand 'ow even these silly niggers could make a *gawd* o' you, Bill," said Sam, who seemed very dissatisfied with his subordinate role. "I'd make a damned sight better *gawd* than you, with my intelleck and eddication."

"Wot does a *gawd* want intelleck and eddication for?" asked Bill, contemptuously. "It's my 'andsome face and fine fizzleek wot's done it. You can't expect people to worship a *gawd* with an ugly mug like yours."

"I fancy yer wrong, Bill," said Sam, reflectively. "Come to think of it, they nacherally want their new *gawd* to be something like their old un. Wot's inf'enced their chice is yer resemblance to that old graven image they're now 'auling out o' the front door."

Sam's surmise as to his friend's deification was quite correct. Having installed their new divinity, the savages now proceeded to burn their old wooden idol on an immense bonfire, which, as night approached, threw a lurid glare around the precincts of the temple. All night long the religious rejoicings continued. The wild barbaric din of drums, the horrid hooting of horns, and the yells of the excited multitude made a pandemonium which, Slim Sam declared, reminded him forcibly of "Mafficking" night in the Mile End-road.

But the ensuing days and weeks were monotonous enough. The physical wants of the new divinities were carefully attended to, as they always are in savage

lands. Food and drink were regularly and abundantly supplied by the priests, but except for an hour or so at midday and for some six hours at night they were required to occupy their seats in the temple to receive the worship of their devotees.

The ennui induced by this sort of life was greater than they had ever experienced, even during their periods of residence in those Government establishments already referred to, and it caused much irritability of temper.

"I'm getting 'ellish sick o' this 'ere gawd business," observed the Night Bird, during one of their midday hours off duty. "I'd a damned sight rather be doing six months' 'ard in chokey than be sitting six weeks on the throne o' gawd—that's flat."

"And if its slow for *you*, wot d'you s'pose it must be for *me*?" said Slim Sam, sullenly. "Any'ow, yer getting the 'onner and glory—the psalm-singing and the alleloojers—but I've just got to sit at yer blooming feet. What persion am I s'posed to okkerpy in this blessed show? Am I a gawd or am I not?—answer me that."

"Oh, I dunno," replied Bill, with a yawn of intense boredom. "P'r'aps yer s'posed to be a sort o' 'Oly Ghost, 'aging about in the background and looking sollum, but not doing anything pertickler."

"If it comes to that, I don't see as you've been doing anything partickler yerself," retorted Sam. "W'y don't you get up and work some wonders?"

"Oh, that's orl right," replied Bill. "Gods don't do anything pertickler nowadays, as I knows on. I'm playing the game orl right, only it's a damned slow one. If it goes on much longer I'll 'ave to get up and murder one o' them yowling priests to r'lieve my feelings."

As the days passed these colloquies assumed a more and more acrimonious tone, till they seemed likely to end in an open fight; but, fortunately, relief arrived before the occurrence of an incident so disturbing to the theological system of the islanders as a bout of fisticuffs between their deities.

One morning a steamer cast anchor off the island, and presently there came ashore a missionary, accompanied by some native Christians, one of whom was found to have some acquaintance with the language of the islanders, and could thus act as interpreter. After the usual presentation of glass beads and other products of civilisation, mostly of German manufacture, the missionary got to business, and asked the chief of the islanders whether he would not like his people to become servants of the living God—the God of the white men?

The chief replied that they already possessed two living gods who had probably come from the white men's country, as they were quite white themselves, and had marched straight out of the sea.

This information so deeply interested the missionary that he asked to be conducted to these gods at once, and on arrival at the temple he was ushered with much ceremony into the holy of holies, where the Night Bird and Slim Sam were duly fulfilling their divine functions.

"Jolly glad to see you, guv'nor," said the Night Bird. "Ere 'ave I and my pal been playing at gawds in this stinking 'ole for two blooming months, and we're about fed up with it. I 'ope yer capt'n 'll send a boat off to-night, so as we may 'ook it from 'ere in the dark and get aboard. The gawd business don't suit us a little bit, and we're quite willing to leave the field open to you to intrerjooce the genwin article. These niggers burnt their old graven image w'en we arrived, and after we clear out they'll be pretty 'ard up for something in the gawd line, so you'll 'ave a chance for a smart deal."

The Night Bird and Slim Sam got away safely to the ship, but when their absence was discovered the indignation and ferocity of the natives broke out alarmingly. Their resentment was chiefly directed against the missionary, whom they held responsible for the loss of their gods, and so threatening was their temper that he decided to depart with the ship, and to defer the conversion of these poor heathen to a more favorable opportunity.

But the reverend gentleman had to submit to some light pleasantries from the captain and officers, who pointed out how wrong it was to make Atheists of the inhabitants of an entire island by taking away the gods they had and not leaving them a substitute.

By a man's life, by his acts, it was then, as it is now, impossible to know whether he was a believer or not. If there be a difference between one who openly professes the doctrines of the Orthodox Church and one who denies them, the difference is not to the advantage of the former. The open profession of the orthodox doctrines is mostly found among persons of dull intellects, of stern character, who think much of their own importance. Intelligence, honesty, frankness, a good heart, and moral conduct are oftener met with among those who are disbelievers.—*Leo Tolstoy.*

The Annual Dinner.

THE London Freethinkers' Annual Dinner (under the auspices of the National Secular Society) took place on January 14 at the Holborn Restaurant, and was attended by nearly 200 people, among whom were quite a fair proportion of our women friends, which is one of the best and surest signs of the growing success of our propaganda. Provincial members mustered in good force, among them being Mr. and Mrs. Alward, from Grimsby; A. C. Brown and party of friends, from Oxford; Johann Scu, from Nottingham; and F. Goodwin and friends, from Grays.

The legal, medical, and military professions were all represented; and, stranger still, we had a clergyman still on the active list among the company, as well as the two ex-members of the profession who have thrown in their lot with us.

An innovation in the arrangement of the tables, which left the Chairman, Mr. G. W. Foote, much more accessible to his friends, was generally approved of; and when the good dinner had been partaken of, an excellent musical program was given, interspersed between the speeches and toasts.

After Madame Saunders' overture on the piano came the address from the Chairman, who was in his usual good form, and was listened to with marked attention and interest.

The toast of "The National Secular Society," proposed in a neat and commendably brief speech by Mr. Victor Roger, the oldest of our vice-presidents, in the regretted absence of Mr. William Heaford, was effectively responded to by Mr. A. B. Moss.

"Freethought At Home and Abroad," proposed by Mr. Morris Young (who, as a newcomer to the party was enthusiastically received, and who, in an amusing and most interesting speech, mentioned that he had a surplice and cassock for sale, but so far had found no bidders for them), was briefly spoken to by Mr. Lloyd, and at more length by Mr. Cohen, who made use of the opportunity to give some good advice to his friends.

Between these more serious items the musical portions of the program made some pleasant breaks. Mr. Morley Peel has an excellent baritone voice, and gave some well-chosen songs; and Miss Helen Blaine's most delightful singing will not soon be forgotten. Our old friend Mr. Will Edwards was funnier than ever—and that's saying a great deal. His hearers were just convulsed. A most successful evening's entertainment was brought to a fitting close by the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" by all those present. E. M. VANCE.

Correspondence.

THE GRAVE OF A FREETHINKER.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE FREETHINKER."

SIR,—A few days ago I was on top of one of the highest hills in Cornwall—Castle au Dinas—about half way between Penzance and St. Ives. In a field close to the top of the hill I saw the grave of a Freethinker. It had a stone wall around it, and carving on three of the stones. On the centre stone was cut the name Hasking, aged 65, and date of interment 1823. On the second stone was cut, "Custom is the idol of Fools"; and on the third stone, "Virtue only consecrates the ground." The hill gets its name from an old prehistoric castle on the top, built thousands of years ago, and is an interesting example of primitive fortifications. It is a circular wall, in ruins now, the enclosure about 100 yards in diameter. From the hill may be surveyed Mount's Bay and the English Channel on one side, and St. Ives Bay and the Bristol Channel on the other; and on a clear day twenty-four parish churches can be seen, and the Scilly Isles may be descried on the horizon's verge like clouds resting on the ocean. Should any Freethinker visiting Penzance wish to see this grave and castle, I shall be pleased to motor him up there.

J. G. GARTRELL, SEN.

"The law of this State provides that no more than one-half of an estate may be left to religious or charitable institutions when the person making the will has a wife or children. The late John Ladin, a Catholic merchant of this city, evaded the law by leaving the bulk of his \$810,000 estate to the archbishop of the diocese; and although it is well-known that the clergy are constrained by their vows to leave all their property to the Church, the Court of Appeals has upheld the validity of the bequest. Ladin left a daughter and grandchildren, who sought to break the will, alleging a secret arrangement between the testator and the archbishop."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON.

INDOOR.

QUEEN'S (MINOR) HALL (Langham-place, Regent-street, W.): 7.30, G. W. Foote, "The Function of Atheism."

CROYDON PUBLIC (SMALL) HALL (George-street): 7.15, A. B. Moss, "Is the Bible a Safe Guide?"

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, J. J. Darby, "The Bible and Slavery."

COUNTRY.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (King's Hall, Corporation-street): 7, E. Clifford Williams, "Robert Ingersoll and Jesus Christ."

FAIRSWORTH (Secular School, Pole-lane): 6.30, J. T. Lloyd, "All Things Die: There is No Death."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, J. Arnold Sharpley, "What the Devil is the Origin of Puritanism?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): 6.30, Sidney Wollen, "Christ's Estimate of Morality."

Determinism or Free Will?

By C. COHEN.

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

A clear and able exposition of the subject in the only adequate light—the light of evolution.

CONTENTS.

I. The Question Stated.—II. "Freedom" and "Will."—III. Consciousness, Deliberation, and Choice.—IV. Some Alleged Consequences of Determinism.—V. Professor James on "The Dilemma of Determinism."—VI. The Nature and Implications of Responsibility.—VII. Determinism and Character.—VIII. A Problem in Determinism.—IX. Environment.

PRICE ONE SHILLING NET.
(POSTAGE 2d.)

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

America's Freethought Newspaper.

THE TRUTH SEEKER.

FOUNDED BY D. M. BENNETT, 1873.

CONTINUED BY E. M. MACDONALD, 1883-1909.

G. E. MACDONALD EDITOR.
L. K. WASHBURN EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTOR.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Single subscription in advance	---	---	\$3.00
Two new subscribers	5.00
One subscription two years in advance	5.00

To all foreign countries, except Mexico, 50 cents per annum extra
Subscriptions for any length of time under a year, at the rate of
25 cents per month, may be begun at any time.

Freethinkers everywhere are invited to send for specimen copies,
which are free.

THE TRUTH SEEKER COMPANY,
Publishers, Dealers in Freethought Books,
62 VESSEY STREET, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH

BY

G. W. FOOTE.

Being a Three Hours' Address to the Jury before the Lord
Chief Justice of England, in answer to an Indictment
or Blasphemy, on April 24, 1885.

With Special Preface and many Footnotes

Price FOURPENCE. Post free FIVEPENCE.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

TO FREETHINKERS.—An ex-Papist, now a Freethinker, but domestically ostracised and professionally banned in consequence, seeks a Home in which he could live happily, and in which his services, as a Tutor or Secretary, etc., could be utilised. A University Graduate, a little advanced in years.—"B.A.," Elm View, Middle-lane, Crouch End, N.

WANTED.—For our Society purposes, copy of "HEROES AND MARTYRS OF FREETHOUGHT," by G. W. Foote. Originally published in parts. Any condition. Also "Crimes of Christianity." Exchange to value or cash.—Apply Miss E. M. VANCE, Sec. N. S. S., 2 Newcastle-street, London, E.C.

A LIBERAL OFFER—NOTHING LIKE IT.

Greatest Popular Family Reference Book and Sexology—Almost Given Away. A Million sold at 3 and 4 dollars—Now Try it Yourself.

Insure Your Life—You Die to Win; Buy this Book, You Learn to Live.



Ignorance kills—knowledge saves—be wise in time. Men weaken, sicken, die—not knowing how to live. "Habits that enslave" wreck thousands—young and old Fathers fail, mothers are "bed-ridden," babies die. Family feuds, marital miseries, divorces—even murders—All can be avoided by self-knowledge, self-control.

You can discount heaven—dodge hell—here and now, by reading and applying the wisdom of this one book of 1,200 pages, 400 illustrations, 80 lithographs on 18 anatomical color plates, and over 250 prescriptions.

OF COURSE YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT EVERYONE OUGHT TO KNOW.

THE YOUNG—How to choose the best to marry.
THE MARRIED—How to be happy in marriage.
THE FOND PARENT—How to have prize babies.
THE MOTHER—How to have them without pain.
THE CHILDLESS—How to be fruitful and multiply.
THE CURIOUS—How they "grewed" from germ-cell.
THE HEALTHY—How to enjoy life and keep well.
THE INVALID—How to brace up and keep well.

Whatever you'd ask a doctor you find herein, or (if not, Dr. F. will answer your inquiry FREE, any time)

Dr. Foote's books have been the popular instructors of the masses in America for fifty years (often re-written, enlarged, and always kept up-to-date). For twenty years they have sold largely (from London) to all countries where English is spoken, and everywhere highly praised. Last editions are best, largest, and most for the price. You may save the price by not buying, and you may lose your life (or your wife or child) by not knowing some of the vitally important truths it tells.

Most Grateful Testimonials From Everywhere.

Gudivoda, India: "It is a store of medical knowledge in plainest language, and every reader of English would be benefited by it."—W. L. N.

Triplicane, India: "I have gone through the book many times, and not only benefited myself but many friends also."—G. W. T.

Panderna, Turkey: "I can avow frankly there is rarely to be found such an interesting book as yours."—K. H. (Chemist).
Calgary, Can.: "The information therein has changed my whole idea of life—to be nobler and happier."—D. N. M.

Laverton, W. Aust.: "I consider it worth ten times the price. I have benefited much by it."—R. M.

Somewhat Abridged Editions (800 pp. each) can be had in German, Swedish, Finnish, or Spanish.

Price EIGHT SHILLINGS by Mail to any Address.

ORDER OF THE PIONEER PRESS,

2 NEWCASTLE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

NOW READY.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

FOR FREETHINKERS AND ENQUIRING CHRISTIANS.

BY

G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL.

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION

Issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

WELL PRINTED ON GOOD PAPER AND WELL BOUND.

In Paper Covers, SIXPENCE.

(POSTAGE 2d.)

In Cloth Covers, ONE SHILLING.

(POSTAGE 2d.)

ONE OF THE MOST USEFUL BOOKS EVER PUBLISHED.

INVALUABLE TO FREETHINKERS ANSWERING CHRISTIANS.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 NEWCASTLE STREET, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY

(LIMITED)

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office—2 NEWCASTLE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

Chairman of Board of Directors—MR. G. W. FOOTE.

Secretary—MISS E. M. VANCE.

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

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

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

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

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

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, consisting of not less than five and not more than twelve members, one-third of whom retire by ballot) each year,

but are capable of re-election. An Annual General Meeting of members must be held in London, to receive the Report, elect new Directors, and transact any other business that may arise.

Being a duly registered body, the Secular Society, Limited, can receive donations and bequests with absolute security. Those who are in a position to do so are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favor in their wills. On this point there need not be the slightest apprehension. It is quite impossible to set aside such bequests. The executors have no option but to pay them over in the ordinary course of administration. No objection of any kind has been raised in connection with any of the wills by which the Society has already been benefited.

The Society's solicitors are Messrs. Harper and Battcock, 23 Rood-lane, Fenchurch-street, London, E.C.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—"I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £— free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy."

Friends of the Society who have remembered it in their wills, or who intend to do so, should formally notify the Secretary of the fact, or send a private intimation to the Chairman, who will (if desired) treat it as strictly confidential. This is not necessary, but it is advisable, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid, and their contents have to be established by competent testimony.

SUNDAY EVENING FREETHOUGHT LECTURES

AT

Queen's (Minor) Hall,
LANGHAM PLACE, REGENT STREET, LONDON, W.

BY

Mr. G. W. FOOTE.

January 26:

"The Function of Atheism."

Doors Open at 7. Chair taken at 7.30.

First Seats, 1s. Second Seats, 6d. Some Free Seats at the Back.

Questions and Discussion Invited.

PIONEER PAMPHLETS.

Now being issued by the Secular Society, Ltd.

No. I.—BIBLE AND BEER. By G. W. Foote.

FORTY PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 12 copies, 3d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

No. II.—DEITY AND DESIGN. By C. Cohen.

(A Reply to Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace.)

THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: Single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 12 copies, 2½d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

No. III.—MISTAKES OF MOSES. By Colonel Ingersoll.

THIRTY-TWO PAGES—ONE PENNY.

Postage: Single copy, ½d.; 6 copies, 1½d.; 12 copies, 2½d.; 26 copies, 4d. (parcel post).

IN PREPARATION.

No. IV.—CHRISTIANITY AND PROGRESS. By G. W. Foote.

No. V.—MODERN MATERIALISM. By W. Mann.

Special Terms for Quantities for Free Distribution or to Advanced Societies.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 2 NEWCASTLE STREET, FARRINGDON STREET, LONDON, E.C.