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Every sect is a moral check on its neighbor. Competition is as wholesome in religion as in commerce.

—LANDOR.

Salvation.

SALVATION, oh the joyful sound! as the hymn says. Yes, it is a joyful sound, if you happen to be one of the elect; but how dreary, if you happen to be one of the unfortunate wretches predestined to be damned! In that case, your very righteousness is nothing but filthy rags, and will only assist your combustion when you go below. Salvation to such miserable wretches will only give a poignancy to their misery. The sound of it will be to them like the cooked meat in a shop window to the poor devils who are starving outside.

Salvation is a favorite word in the Bible. The Jews were very fond of it, and the Christians copied their taste. But the two parties resemble each other with a difference. The chosen people looked for salvation in this world. They expected a time when all their troubles would end, when the protracted family quarrel between themselves and Jehovah would cease, when they should be redeemed from bondage, when they should triumph over all their enemies and rule the world with a rod of iron, when Zion should be the seat of universal sovereignty, and when the desirable things of all nations, such as gold, silver, and precious stones, should flow into the pockets of the circumcised children of Israel. Their carnal minds were not distracted by fantastic dreams about the dim and distant courses of a heavenly future. They were a shrewd, business people, with a keen eye for the main chance; and, well knowing their practical character, their prophets always foretold a flourishing state of things on earth, a happy land of Canaan, if they faithfully worshiped Jehovah without sneaking after his rivals. Even holy Moses, whose power was unbounded, offered them temporal rewards for keeping the commandments. He held out the lure of long life in the land which the Lord their God gave them. They were sharp traders, and he knew they would refuse promissory notes payable forty days after death.

The Christians, on the other hand, being a simpler and more gullible set of people, were quite content with poverty, servitude, and suffering on earth, in consideration of the good things they were to enjoy in heaven. It was not in this world, says Gibbon, that they expected to be either useful or happy. They dwelt fondly on the splendors of a new Jerusalem, and looked forward to the glories of a kingdom not made with hands. Salvation was to them "some far-off divine event." It was to be realised in the sweet by-and-bye. No wonder they and the Jews soon parted company. And to this day they are as far apart as ever. While the Christian snaps at the shadow the Jew eats the meat. He cannot understand the delights of heaven without a good taste of them on earth. He believes in making the best of this world, and if you bore him with sermons on kingdom-come, he eats his victuals with a fresh zest, and says, Sufficient unto the day is the fortune thereof.

Ever since that unhappy young carpenter was crucified the Christians have talked of Salvation; but it seems as far off as ever. It is always coming, but it never comes. Nineteen centuries ago the Redeemer came. Yes, said Louis Blanc, but when may we expect the Redemption? Except for the advances made by Science and Freethought during the last three centuries, the modern world is no improvement on the ancient. Civilisation was higher, and human happiness greater, in the best days of Greece and Rome than in the Middle Ages when Christianity was supreme.

The reason is obvious. Christianity pursued a wrong path towards a false goal. It neglected this life for another, forsook the known for the unknown, and aspired to a problematical salvation in heaven instead of achieving a real salvation on earth. Greece and Rome had their mythologies, but they put this world first, and thoroughly believed in making the most of it. Hence their science, art, philosophy, and literature, their social customs and political institutions, infinitely excelled everything that Christianity produced. Modern civilisation dates from the Renaissance, when Europe, after the long, dark night of Christian superstition, turned its dim eyes backwards and kindled them anew by gazing on the immortal glories of Paganism.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved! The world tried it for a thousand years and it proved a flagrant failure. Belief is not, never was, and never can be, the method of salvation. Thinking and acting are the right way. Far better than Jesus preaching faith is Hercules wrestling with the hydras, slaying the monsters, and cleansing the Augean stables of the world.

A mighty change is coming over Europe. Faith is nearly played out, and priestcraft is discredited. Let us save ourselves! is the general cry. Children are being educated, science is regarded as man's providence, secular welfare is made the criterion of law; and not only statesmen, but the very clergy themselves, are driven to admit that the problem of problems is how to improve the material condition of the people. Schools are supplanting churches, and happy homes are superseding heaven.

Salvation of the Christian sort is more and more falling into the hands of the Boothites. The heroes of the Army of "Blood and Fire" are the true successors of the apostles. The last Salvation Army is twin-brother to the first. According to one of its shining lights, it is "God's last effort to convert the world." We are glad to hear it, and we hope it is true.

Converting the world to religion has always been folly or crime, and too often both. Progress heavenward is slow business. As *Punch* said, you never get any "forrarder." You are eternally occupied in marking time. But secular progress is certain and obvious. Schoolboys can perceive what advances we have made on our ancestors, and it is easy to see that our posterity will make great advances on ourselves. And this kind of Salvation is for the benefit of all, and is achieved without misery and strife, except when it is opposed by priests and kings; while the Salvation of Christianity has taught men, in the fine phrase of Landor, to "plant unthrifty thorns over wells of blood."

G. W. FOOTE.

Religion and Sex.

THE relation between sexual and religious phenomena all over the world, and in all stages of culture, has impressed itself on many observers, although, for various reasons, the nature of that relation is ignored by most and dealt with in a very gingerly fashion by others. By professional writers on religion the relation is dismissed as merely accidental, or is treated as evidence of the way in which so sacred a subject as religion may be degraded in degenerate hands. By others, of a rather more scientific temper, there is still the tendency to treat the connection between erotic and religious feelings as illustrating a mere perversion. We know, for instance, that when strong feeling cannot find an outlet in one direction it will in another. The annals of Roman Catholicism contain numerous records of people who have taken refuge in a monastery or a nunnery solely as the result of disappointment in love. And while Protestantism is without this obvious mode of transference, it provides other outlets. Religious service is still there, and the feelings that cannot find an outlet in their normal channels may often find expression in intense religious devotion.

But the connection between religious and sexual feelings is both wider and deeper than that expressed by mere perversion. Of recent years the writings of Havelock Ellis, Kraft-Ebing, Forel, Iwan Bloch, Starbuck, and others have shown the relation to be more than accidental. The two sets of feelings—those associated with religious ideas and those associated with ideas of a sexual life—have been shown to be united at their source. One eminent writer has gone so far as to assert that "In a certain sense, the history of religion can be regarded as a peculiar mode of manifestation of the human sexual impulse."* And, at all events, it is highly significant that the language of religious devotion and of amatory passion is often identical, and may serve equally well for either purpose. This fact is often obscured by our having etherealised the conception of human love, and so lost sight of the physiological basis upon which it rests. And having hidden it from sight we have, not unnaturally, ceased to give it consideration. This is a fatal blunder. The sex life of men and women is too important and too pervasive to be ignored with safety. And one result has been that, owing to a combination of ignorance and prudery, the sexual life, in both its normal and abnormal manifestations, has been continuously exploited in the interests of religion.

The evidence for what has been said is vast and covers a wide range. As a merely historical study we encounter it in the close relation between primitive religious beliefs and the sexual life; and in the multiplication of sects of a markedly erotic character during periods of religious enthusiasm. As a study in psychology we have the connection between religious and sexual feelings—not always expressed through the comparatively harmless vehicle of language. And, finally, we have the purely pathological aspect in which what is taken for religious fervor is no more than a perverted sexuality.

I have pointed out in previous articles what are the conditions under which the primitive mind reaches that interpretation of things which gives birth to the religious idea. Religion is one of the very earliest forms of systematised thinking, and for a time dominates all other forms of mental activity. Above all, it is important to bear in mind the fact that no dividing line is drawn between the natural and the supernatural. Such a division in the external world is a reflection of a division in the world of thought, and the knowledge necessary to this has yet to be gained. What is afterwards recognised as the supernatural pervades everything. In a sense, it is everything, since whatever occurs does so by the agency or connivance of animistic forces.

It would, indeed, be strange if in such a world the phenomena that are connected with sex life

escaped the prevailing method of interpretation. As a matter of fact, it does not. What are to the modern mind the plainest and most obvious consequences of sex life, are to the primitive mind compelling proofs of supernatural activity. Nothing, for example, would appear less likely to misconception than the connection between sexual relations and the birth of children. Yet, on this head, Mr. Sidney Hartland has produced a mass of evidence, gathered from all parts of the world, and leading to the conclusion that in the most primitive stages of human culture conception and birth are regarded as due directly to supernatural influence. The wide vogue of magical practices to obtain children, practices that still exist in many parts of Europe, the unconcern among primitive peoples as to the male parent, the ignorance of early man concerning the functions of his own organism, with the universality of animistic beliefs, all lead Mr. Hartland to conclude that, to the primitive mind, childbirth is due to a more or less chance connection between woman and a supernatural world.* The common saying that God sends children thus points to what was at one time more than a mere figure of speech. It is reminiscent of a time when conception was actually attributed to ghostly influence.

With some peoples such a belief is still actually operative. Most of the Australian tribes believe that there are certain places where the tribal spirits congregate, and from whence they pounce upon women, and so secure rebirth. The man who desires that his wife shall have a child prays to these spirits to look with favor upon the woman and reincarnate themselves through her. On the other hand, the young woman who does not desire a child avoids passing these places, or assumes the manner of an aged woman in order to escape unnoticed. The Awunas, of West Africa, definitely assert that a child owes nothing to its father; everything comes from the mother and the ancestral spirit. The Queenslanders also deny the father any part in the production of the child. Mr. Hartland, in the work already named, gives numerous instances of a similar kind, and concludes that—

"for generations and eons the truth that a child is only born in consequence of an act of sexual union, that the birth of a child is the natural consequence of such an act performed in favoring circumstances, and that every child must be the result of such an act and of no other cause, was not realised by mankind, that down to the present day it is imperfectly realised by some peoples, and that there are still others among whom it is unknown."

It is not surprising, therefore, to find from the earliest times a number of religious ceremonies connected with significant sexual phenomena. First, there is the always important fact of puberty. Mr. Stanley Hall, in his elaborate work on *Adolescence* (vol. ii., chap. 13), has brought together a very large number of practices connected with puberty, commencing with purely savage life, and ending with the modern Christian practice of confirmation. Almost universally, amongst uncivilised people, there is at this period a separation of the sexes, accompanied with fasting and magical practices. With most of the North American Indians, for instance, the boy, after being prepared by the priest, fasts until he receives a vision from the "great spirit." In nearly all these cases, as Frazer has pointed out, the governing idea is that at puberty the boy is brought into special relationship with the tribal gods, and in some there is the distinct, and probably earlier, notion that he receives into himself a portion of the divine spirit. In the case of girls, where the advent of puberty is marked by phenomena of a more startling character than those which occur with boys, the magical and supernatural rites are of a much more elaborate character. With boys, once puberty is attained, the sexual development is established and orderly. With girls, certain recurring phenomena make the essential fact of sex much more impressive to the uncivilised mind. A very general explanation

* Dr. Iwan Bloch; *The Sexual Life of Our Time*; p. 97.

* *Primitive Paternity*, 2 vols., 1909-10.

of menstrual phenomena is that the girl has been wounded by some spirit. This is the explanation given by some of the North American Indians, by the Siamese, and by many others.

But because the girl or the woman is brought into such close and frequent contact with the spirit world special precautions have to be taken concerning her. Contact with her at certain times is forbidden simply because she is spiritually infectious. Until the possessing spirit is cleared out, or has departed on its own account, the girl is dangerous. In Uganda, says Frazer, the pots which a woman touches while the impurity of childbirth or of menstruation is on her, must be destroyed. At similar times, with some of the North American tribes, women are forbidden to touch the weapons or utensils of men. No other person is so much dreaded amongst them as a woman enduring her periodic sickness. In Tahiti a woman is secluded for three weeks after childbirth, and must not touch food belonging to another. In the Island of Kadiak, off Alaska, a woman for twenty days after becoming a mother is so dangerous that even food is handed to her at the end of a stick.*

Among the Pueblo Indians it is believed that if a man touches a woman during certain seasons he will fall ill—that is, he will be attacked by an evil spirit. If a man touches her he becomes "taboo," as he may transmit the infection to others. So great is the possibility of infection that with some peoples women are prohibited from planting or preparing food. The spiritual germ might be conveyed from one to another in this way. And it is almost an inevitable extension of the same idea to conclude that, if a woman is highly dangerous at certain frequently recurring periods, she is more or less dangerous in between these times. Thus we find that the principles of "taboo" is made to cover many of the relations of woman to man. Kaffirs will not allow a woman to touch their cattle. In Tahiti, if a woman touches a man's weapons she robs them of their power. In New Guinea, for some days before fighting, warriors refrain from contact with women. A Hindoo wife does not eat with her husband. In New Zealand wives are not allowed to eat with even their male children lest their taboo should kill them.

It is needless to multiply instances; the same general idea governs all, and this is well expressed by Dr. Frazer:—

"The object of secluding women at menstruation is to neutralise the dangerous influence which is supposed to emanate from them at such times. The general effect of these rules is to keep the women suspended, so to say, between heaven and earth. Whether enveloped in her hammock and slung up to the roof, as in South America, or elevated above the ground in a dark and narrow cage, as in New Zealand, she may be considered to be out of the way of doing mischief, since being shut off both from the earth and from the sun, she can poison neither of these great sources of life by her deadly contagion. The precautions thus taken to isolate and insulate the girl are dictated by regard for her own safety as well as for the safety of others..... In short, the girl is viewed as charged with a powerful force which, if not kept within bounds, may prove the destruction both of the girl herself and all with whom she comes in contact. To repress this force within the limits necessary for the safety of all concerned is the object of the taboos in question."†

(To be continued.) C. COHEN.

Knowledge.

IN the Fourth Gospel the knowledge of God and eternal life are treated as absolutely synonymous terms. "This is eternal life," it says, "that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." This is a perfectly safe statement, no one being competent to gainsay it. For all anybody knows, the knowledge

of God does signify eternal life, because nobody has the slightest idea what either is. The only life that comes within the scope of our observation is this earthly life, which is not eternal; and all the beings of whom we possess any knowledge are denizens of this planet. Science informs us that space teems with solar systems which no man can number, and it can tell us of what material our sun is composed; but the only living beings known to it are to be found upon this earth. Far from us be the folly, of which scientists are so often falsely accused, "of putting aside as unverifiable everything which the senses cannot verify, everything beyond the bounds of physical science, everything which cannot be brought into the laboratory and dealt with chemically"; but we do make bold to affirm that no knowledge can be acquired except as the result of scientific investigation. Physical science is by no means the only science, but it must be admitted that all problems are, in the last analysis, problems of matter. The phenomena of consciousness are sometimes described as if they lay outside the legitimate limits of physical science, but in reality they are phenomena of the brain and nervous system; that is to say, phenomena of matter, and no knowledge of them is possible apart from matter. Even the feeling of music within us, from which many of us derive such exquisite delight, does not lie wholly outside the bounds of physical science, because it is dependent upon a specific condition of the nervous system, just as music itself is the outcome of a scientific combination of sounds. Now, as God is a being who is said to be "without body, parts, or passions," he is clearly not a subject that can be scientifically studied and known. Scientifically speaking, then, no knowledge of God is possible, a being "without body, parts, or passions" being simply unthinkable. Indeed, Mr. Bertrand Russell does not include God among the questions that can be intelligently discussed. In his admirable little book, entitled the *Problems of Philosophy*, in the Home University Library, God and immortality are coolly left out.

And yet we find the Chairman-elect of the Congregational Union, the Rev. J. Morgan Gibbon, of Stamford Hill, decrying science and its pretensions to knowledge. In a recent sermon, certain portions of which are published *verbatim* in the *British Congregationalist* for February 27, the reverend gentleman says:—

"Along material lines what does anybody know? What are our definitions but our problems stated in different words? Who knows anything? Who can know along material lines? Science frankly deals with material things. What science tells us is of infinite value to industrial life. It is a magnificent gymnastic for the mind. But if you happen to have a sin eating like a corrosive acid into your consciousness, if you have a sorrow lying heavily upon your heart, if the dark camel comes to kneel at your door, if one of these days death should tap you on the shoulder with his wand, if the woe and wonder of this unintelligible world weigh upon you, if the deep-sea creatures of the soul should come to the surface crying for their food, that day you will utter a cry that will put to shame moon and stars, and the world, with all its wealth, will stand abashed and helpless, for you have asked for something it has not got."

No doubt, had it been permissible, most of Mr. Gibbon's hearers would have cheered that paragraph to the echo as irresistibly eloquent. We admit its eloquence, but deny its relevance. We maintain, in the first place, that if a man cries for something which this world cannot supply he is suffering from some serious disease and ought to be medically treated. All cries that are natural to a human being meet with satisfactory responses in Nature. The desire for knowledge, for sympathy, and for love finds complete fulfilment on earth. If a man falls into a bad habit, or is guilty of conducting himself to the injury of society, his "sin" can be satisfactorily dealt with only on scientific lines. All evil is, in itself, a curable disease; but whether or not it can be cured in any given case depends upon circum-

* *Taboo and the Perils of the Soul*, pp. 145-150.

† *Golden Bough*, chap. iv.

stance. In the second place, to Mr. Gibbon's question, "Who can know on material lines?" we return the answer, "Who can know on any but material lines?" All other lines are purely imaginary. Mr. Gibbon makes the mistake of charging science with hinting at "a dark god"; but as a matter of fact science hints at no god at all. It is true that it has a good deal to say about physical and chemical forces; but does the reverend gentleman deny or doubt the existence of such forces? If he does, what are his grounds; if he does not, what does he know about them? It is very cheap rhetoric to say that his dog that rubs against him, or his cat that wishes to fondle him, is a better deity than they. It is true that they do not answer prayer, or serve as special Providence, or pay the least heed to the whims of certain people; but in these respects they are only like the God in whom Mr. Gibbon believes.

Now the moment this divine begins to talk about his God he becomes irrational. He says, half quoting Scripture:—

"We know that we are of God. We know that the Son of God is true, and we are in him that is true. The God that loves this poor life, the God that helps the helpless world, is the true God, and the Christ who died for the world is the true Christ."

Having delivered himself of that intimate statement concerning God, a statement which nothing but very close and full knowledge could justify, Mr. Gibbon assures us that "the only possible way of knowing God is to live God's life." This admission deserves to be printed in large letters of gold. The idea is indescribably rich. Fancy, if you can, a man getting to know God by living God's life! Are God and his life separable, so that the one may be known while the other is unknown? The idea of knowing the life of an unknown God is so ridiculous that we can only laugh it to scorn. "Act the God," exclaims Mr. Gibbon; but how on earth can we act a person of whom we have no knowledge? "Wherever there is a heart and a conscience," he continues, "there is a complete apparatus for knowing God." We deny it point blank, and confidently challenge the reverend gentleman to substantiate his wild assertion. There are at least five hundred millions of people with thoroughly good hearts and sensitive consciences who are absolutely ignorant about God, and the overwhelming majority of them actually disbelieve in his existence. They do not believe in him because they do not need him. They get on well enough without him. They forgive those who have wronged them, and are as firm as a rock in the face of temptation. One naturally admires "the tender humor and the fire of sense in their good eyes"; and one is irresistibly drawn to them by the knowledge that they are so "full of heart for all, and chiefly for the weaker by the wall"; but they are without God in the world. Such people give the lie direct to Mr. Gibbon's teaching; and common sense does the same. The knowledge of God is an illusion that is passing.

Of course, the belief in God is immensely profitable. It provides a comfortable living for hundreds of thousands of men and women who would be left destitute were it suddenly to die out; but that is the only thing that it does for the world. Morally, mankind is all the poorer for cherishing it. It is a relic of savagery, a survival of the Age of Ignorance, and in the twentieth century must be pronounced a misfit. But how are we to get rid of it? By persuading people of its unreality, by pointing out its origin and tracing its evolution, by shedding upon it the light of modern knowledge and thus exposing its irrationality and absurdity. It is a hopeful sign of the times that so many teachers at our various seats of learning openly repudiate it. Mr. G. E. Moore, Lecturer in Moral Science in the University of Cambridge, for example, has published a volume on *Ethics*, in which he expresses his positive unbelief in a supernatural being, whether called "God," "Reason," "The

Practical Reason," "The Pure Will," "The Universal Will," or "The True Self." He says:—

"It may seem to many people that the most serious objection to views of this kind is that it is, to say the least, extremely doubtful whether there is any being, such as they suppose to exist—any being who never wills what is wrong but always only what is right; and I think myself that, in all probability, there is no such being—neither a God, nor any being such as philosophers have called by the names I have mentioned" (*Ethics*, p. 151).

"Knowledge," says Tennyson, "is of things we see." In relation to God, at the very best, "we have but faith; we cannot know"; and the faith is not justified by a single evidence, not even the shadow of an evidence. The contemplation of the facts of life often caused Tennyson's own faith seriously to waver. His knowledge of the things he saw could not be harmonised with his belief in things he could not see. Darwin's knowledge killed his faith altogether. In the spread of knowledge, then, lies our only real hope for the future of the race.

J. T. LLOYD.

The First Modern Man.—II.

A Lecture delivered before the Independent Religious Society (Rationalist), Chicago.

BY M. M. MANGASARIAN.

(Concluded from p. 141.)

IN the Bible story, man finds the world a perfect paradise, which he spoils into a place of thorns and thistles. Was that ever true? In the Greek story, man finds the world a wilderness, which he cultivates into a garden. Can that idea ever become antiquated? The Bible represents the first man as wrecking his world; Æschylus represents the first man as mending his world. Adam robs the world of whatever beauty and loveliness it possessed; Prometheus, by stealing fire, gives to the world all that it possesses of goodness and beauty. The idea, then, that man is the maker of his world is a modern idea, though three thousand years old, because it is true to the facts; but the idea that man marred his world is a fiction, notwithstanding that many pulpits still proclaim it as the word of God.

Again, in the Bible story man's primary condition was one of innocence, and he owed his innocence to his ignorance. The moment he lost his ignorance he lost also his innocence. The Bible would have us believe that as long as man was ignorant he was happy. But is that true? In the Prometheus of Æschylus, man's primary condition was one of suffering and misery, due to his ignorance, which condition he changes into one of power and happiness through *knowledge*. Adam falls when he loses his ignorance; the Greek mounts through culture. Which of the two ideas is modern, in the sense of being true to the facts of experience?

There is still another difference to be noted between these two interpretations of life. The tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden is represented as a temptation to man. That is to say, the Bible view makes the opportunity to acquire knowledge a temptation. To seek knowledge is to fall into sin. "God is like a parent who, to keep his children out of temptation, refuses to send them to school." Hence, the acquisition of knowledge, the opening of their eyes, strikes Adam and Eve with remorse. They are ashamed of the light, and they hide themselves. Was such a view ever true to life? But Prometheus glories in his conquest of knowledge, and is willing to suffer any punishment the gods can inflict for having kindled a flame which will never be extinguished. Prometheus is as old as Adam, but Prometheus is a modern man, while Adam was as much out of date in his day as he is to-day. Prometheus belongs to our world. He can feel at home with us of the twentieth century, and we with him of three thousand years ago. But Adam would be

an alien in our midst, and his spirit and view-point would simply prove fatal to everything we cherish.

I trust we understand now what is meant by the word "modern." In his book on *Averroes*, Renan thinks Petrarch, who lived in the fourteenth century and was a co-worker with Dante and Boccaccio, was the first modern man. Figuratively speaking, Petrarch was the first to raise and send to the market samples of the products of the soil of Europe when the Greeks and the Romans farmed the land. But Renan also suggested that the Moorish philosopher, Averroes himself, was a harbinger of the Renaissance. For his heresies Averroes was condemned to sit at the door of the mosque, to be spat upon by every passer-by. To those who spewed their rheum upon his face he said: "Let me die the death of the philosopher." The honor of being the first modern man has by others been given to Bruno, whose life was extinguished at the stake in Rome. Others, again, reserve that proud distinction to Montaigne, who, they say, was the first to apply common sense to life. I believe it is impossible to single out any one man as the exclusive owner of that enviable title. When the sun rises in the morning more than one mountain peak catches his early glow. I have already mentioned a few of the tall minds upon whom the sun shone first, but there are a hundred others.

The earliest clear traces of Rational thinking in modern times, according to J. M. Robertson, appeared in the thirteenth century, in remarks attributed to Emperor Frederick II., whom Pope Gregory IX. denounced as "that pestilential monarch who says the world was cheated by three impostors, of whom two died in the height of power, while the third was hanged." The Pope also condemns the remark attributed to the same Frederick that "only fools believed the universal Creator was born of an unmarried girl." The further idea that "Men should believe nothing contrary to the laws of nature and reason" has also been ascribed to this monarch. Such sayings prove conclusively that their author is beginning to use his mind. He is reflecting. He is becoming critical. He demands respect for his intellect. He says, I.

The most effective instrument of the Renaissance against the old order and in the service of the new was the laugh. It would not be amiss to say that the laugh was the Renaissance argument *par excellence*. The laugh rejuvenated the ageing world. The great authors laughed hell and the Devil out of the people's minds. One of the things the laughter seeks to do is to remove the alluring glamor which makes so many things not debatable. The laugh secularises the solemn and the mock-sacred. Where there are hearty laughers, their cant and hypocrisy are nipped in the bud. Voltaire and Rabelais, with their exquisite humor and superb sarcasm drove humbug under cover. There is less stupidity in the world to-day because there are more laughers. One of the earliest poets to discover that the dogmas of the Church could not afford to be laughed at, was Luigi Pulci, whom Leigh Hunt calls "the most lovable among the great poets of the Renaissance." He was the author of a wonderfully suggestive book called *Il Morgante Maggiore*, or "Morgante the Great." This epic really bubbles over and is effervescent with keenest humor—but of the unbittered sort (John Owen, *The Sceptics of the Italian Renaissance*). It smarts, too, just as the physician's healing hand, when feeling for the stone in the wound. There is in this work the very qualities which make the modern man—a joyous, large-hearted humanity, a Promethean defiance and jealousy of everything that threatens to repress or coerce the mind. Morgante the Great is an unbeliever, or a misbeliever, and he is converted to Catholicism by Orlando, the Christian. But what converted him? It is the answer to that question which reveals the subtle and sparkling criticism of Pulci against the stiffened and sombre religion of his day; and it was just such criticism as his that made the Renaissance possible. It must be remem-

bered that in the Middle Ages a direct attack upon the Catholic Church meant death; hence, only indirectly, by innuendo and suggestion, could the thinkers voice or print their comments. One of the devices frequently resorted to by the Renaissance writers was to place their criticisms in the mouth of a jester or a fool. Shakespeare does that when he makes his clown in the *Merchant of Venice*, for instance, riddle Christian and Jewish theology with his blunt but searching questions. After permitting their own thought thus to leak out, the writers, when called to account for their heresies, excused themselves by the plea that they were only showing "how our holy religion appeared to a fool." In fact, the disguise was sometimes so perfect that the Churches recommended books of this nature to the faithful, mistaking them for the work of some pious author.

In the epic of Pulci, Morgante owes his conversion to Christianity, not to argument, or evidence, but to a dream. This is a splendid blow at a religion which counts on dreams and visions, on feverish states of the mind and the body for converts. The dream occupies a leading place in the Bible. It was in a dream, for instance, that Joseph learned the truth about Mary and her child. One of the greatest doctrines of the Christian Church, the incarnation, has for its basis little more than the dream of Joseph. Nearly all the doctrines and many of the holy relics of the Catholic Church were born of some dream. Morgante, the infidel, dreamed that he was assailed by a serpent. He called upon the gods for help, but none could help him. The dragon minded not any of the gods whose names he heard invoked. Then Morgante called on Jesus Christ and immediately the serpent released him. The mere mention of the name of Christ was more than a match for the serpent's might. "I am, therefore," he says to Orlando, "ready to become a Christian." Could any conversion be more spasmodic, irrational, or shallow? And yet even St. Paul was converted by a dream on the way to Damascus. The Renaissance poet, Pulci, exposes with his satire this cheap and easy "transmutation" of unbelievers into Christians.

And when the poet proceeds to give the evidence of Morgante's conversion he exposes indirectly, but none the less effectively, the immorality of the Christian conception of salvation. The converted Morgante is represented at first as being solicitous of the whereabouts of his brothers who had been slain in battle, and his parents who had died before they had been converted. Orlando tells him that they have all gone to hell, and he argues with the newly made Christian not to worry about such trifles. God has so arranged things, he goes on to explain, that in heaven there will not be uttered a single sigh, nor shall a single tear be shed for those of our own flesh and blood who may be burning in hell-fire. How does Orlando happen to be so sure of this? The priests have so informed him, and it has never occurred to him to question for one moment the authority of the priests. In all this the gentle poet is indirectly appealing to the sense of humanity, yea, and of decency, in man against a brutal creed that would turn the heart into a stone. When the converted giant expresses the fear that the priests might be in error on this delicate point, his Christian teacher replies that one of the duties of converts is never to doubt what a priest says. It is here Pulci points his finger at the incurable plague of the centuries—blind faith.

In the next place, Pulci represents Orlando as unwilling to believe that Morgante is really converted until the latter shall consent to the damnation of his relatives. Is not that a penetrating thrust? Does it not make orthodoxy quaver? A sharp stab like that tears its way into the very vitals of supernaturalism and makes an incision large enough for modern thought to enter with a rush. Morgante, however, proves the genuineness of his conversion by assuring Orlando that he has made up his mind not to grieve the least bit over his lost parents or brothers, but

that, on the contrary, when he goes to heaven "he will behave like an angel." Could there be a more terrible arraignment of a religion which contorts the natural affections and makes the love of God put out the love of one's own father or mother? I would like to see a Calvinist or a Catholic read the *Morgante Maggiore* without a shudder for his creed.

In the twenty-fifth canto of this same work Pulci introduces the Devil, whom he names Ashtaroth. This is one of the best devils ever staged. So mild and philosophic is he that the most fastidious people even would have no reason to object to his society. Pulci's Devil is worth a hundred of Dante's grotesque and clumsy fiends. Milton's Satan was really diabolical. Goethe's Mephistopheles is a tease. The Bible Devil is an unspeakable combination. But the Ashtaroth of Pulci has qualities that endear him to the very people he is supposed to be conspiring against.

One of Charlemagne's generals happens to be in Egypt when he is needed in Europe. His participation in an approaching military engagement is urgent. But how to cover the distance from Egypt to Europe in time for the important battle, is the question. Who will transport the Paladin and his horse through the air from Egypt to Europe? There is only one being who can—the Devil. Did he not fly with Jesus to the top of the highest mountains, and set him down on the pinnacle of the Temple in Jerusalem? The Devil was the first flyer. All great and daring feats were at first believed to be possible only to the powers of evil. What the Devil had only courage to do once is now the latest victory of man. But it was fear of the Church which made men accuse the Devil for the hopes and ambitions they themselves entertained.

During the flight in the air, over land and sea, the sociable Devil entertains his charge with a philosophic dissertation on things sacred. He thus encroaches upon the domain of the priests. But his discourse is so sane and beautiful that the Paladin cannot but express admiration for his guide, though he is the being for whom his religion has neither pity nor pardon. As they near the pillars of Hercules the Devil explains that there is a continent beyond the seas; that the world is round; and that there are people on the other side of the globe who "walk on their feet opposed to yours and worship other gods." The author of *The Sceptics of the Renaissance*, John Owen, thinks that this statement of Ashtaroth about the sphericity of the world was really the first clear assertion of that scientific truth in modern times. Pulci's Devil was also the first to announce the existence of the antipodes. In self protection the poet had to put his prophecy in the mouth of the Devil. When Rinaldo, greatly puzzled by this revelation, asks whether people living on the other side of the globe could be saved, Pulci's Devil makes a reply which should put the theologians to shame: "Do you think," he says, "that a god died only for you?" To which he adds this quite modern and eternally true reflection—a reflection which is the creed of Rationalism to-day: "All goodness is acceptable, whatever the belief may be." Is there a Church whose teaching is as daring as that? But it was just such criticism as Pulci's—subtle, shrewd, incisive, witty, irresistible, luminous, laughing—which has opened our eyes to the folly and the conceit of sectarian shibboleths. And when Rinaldo expressed surprise that a Devil should have a heart, or feel pity, or entertain great hopes, or take an interest in the salvation of mankind, which if effected would put him out of business, so to speak, the Devil's reply is in these wonderful words: "Do you suppose that nobleness of nature is lost among us denizens of the lower regions? You know what the proverb says," he adds, "that there is never a fruit, however degenerate, but will taste of its stock. I was of a different order of being once"—then a lump rises in his throat, his eyes moisten, his voice trembles—"but it is as well not to talk of happy times." The fanatic Rinaldo, as he takes his leave of the Devil, is compelled to admit that even among

devils, *gentilezza, amicizia, et cortesia*—gentleness, friendship, and courtesy are not unknown. Is it any wonder that the Florence of Lorenzo the Medici welcomed this saner and more human song of Pulci with enthusiasm. The Italians, we are told, adore Ariosto and admire Tasso, but they love Pulci. It was his intellectual health that became contagious in mediæval Europe. It was his laugh that helped to rip open the darkness of superstition. It was his joyous commonsense which made the sunshine pleasant again, the air refreshing, the water of the springs drinkable, and life endurable. His touch made even the Devil modern, and his smile lit up the underworld. When Pulci came to die, the Church, among whose many saints it would be difficult to find a saint so generous or enlightened as Pulci's Devil—refused him Christian burial. His remains are not to be found in what is called *consecrated* ground. I know not what is, and what is not, consecrated ground. Does a crucifix make a place holy? Is it the churchyard that is sacred? I am not a judge of land values. But unconsecrated is the *mind* that does not hold something of the hopes and aspirations which throbbed in Pulci's, and unconsecrated is the life that is not devoted to the high and generous aims which made Pulci's thought the smile, and his laugh the music of the Renaissance.

Acid Drops.

There is a British Anti-Mormon League, and it lately held a meeting at Caxton Hall. One of the speakers, the Rev. G. Ernest Thorne, said he "wanted to see a law in this country making it penal for a Mormon elder to be found proselytising servant girls and young women." Evidently the reverend gentleman wishes to keep the servant girls and young women for the Christian Churches already existing in England. But it is to be recollected that ladies are comparatively scarce in all parts of the United States, including Utah, while England has an overplus of a million or so of the fair sex. This state of things may satisfy the Rev. G. Ernest Thorne, but why should Mormon elders be prevented by law from redressing the balance of the sexes?

There were two lady speakers (at least) at that Anti-Mormon meeting. Both of them seemed to believe, with the clerical speaker, that polygamy still exists amongst the Mormons in America. This is a mistake. Utah is now included in the United States, and monogamy is the law all over the Stars and Stripes territory. Whatever polygamy exists in Salt Lake City is just like the polygamy which exists in London.

One of the lady speakers said that "Mormonism was a great money-making machine; converts in England contributed £42,000 annually to the coffers of their president." Well, why not? This sum is nothing to the Peter's Pence fund that goes off to dear old Papa Sarto at Rome. The Salvation Army General expects a lot more than that from one week's Self-Denial Fund. It is a fleabite to the funds of the Church presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury. If one is an imposture so are all the rest. The game is a wretched one, but why not play it fair? Why should one long firm call upon the police to stop another? Honor amongst —! The proverb is somewhat musty.

George Macdonald, of the New York *Truthseeker*, has held his pawky humor too much in subjection since the death of his brother, whom he succeeded in the editorial chair. We think he is mistaken in this, but of course he is the best judge of his own policy as a practical question in view of his own public. We are glad to see, however, that stern repression has not annihilated our far-off colleagues congenital taste for the humorous side of things. Here is a neat sample from the last number of the *Truthseeker* to hand:—"Professor Bergson, it is said, was first introduced to America by William James, the Harvard professor who gave us 'pragmatism,' which we understand to be the doctrine that a thing is true if it works, or in other words that a bad half dollar is good if you can pass it." We are responsible for the italics. "George" is responsible for the wit.

A Little Tour in India, by the Hon. R. Palmer, is a book which we have not read, but we judge from a review of it in

the *Observer* that the author takes a favorable view of missionary work in India. This is what the reviewer says:—

"Few people who have not been in actual touch with the facts realise how rapidly some sections of the Indian people are being Christianised, or how genuine are the moral effects of conversion. It is true that progress is practically limited to the lower castes or 'outcastes,' but it is significant that a Christian witness is recognised as carrying more weight in a court of justice than a Hindoo, and that the honesty inculcated by the new faith is already becoming a commercial asset. If the missions are doing nothing else, they are raising up an alternative educated class whose superior morality may enable it to supplant the Brahmans in administrative work. If that prospect should be fulfilled, it would solve some notable difficulties in the Government of India. And the number of native Christians has increased by a million in the last ten years."

A military correspondent, who sent us this cutting, tells a very different tale. "My experience of forty years in India is diametrically opposed to the conclusions arrived at by the author of this book. The native of Southern India uncontaminated by the missionary is an infinitely more reliable man than the Christian convert." This is the general verdict of travellers. "Rice Christians" are known all through the East, where it is recognised that the missionaries have to keep the converts they make, in some way or other. What a world of meaning, too, there is in the statement that the Christian converts' word is accepted in preference to the Hindoo's in courts of law. The "acceptance," of course, is mere partisanship, and has no relation to truth or honor. Such acceptance obtains in all Christian countries. It is one of the privileges of belonging to the ruling faith.

The high-minded editors of the illustrated dailies have been publishing the portrait of a boy "hero" who swallowed a snail. Surely the record for this sort of thing is held by the Hebrew prophet who swallowed the whale. Or was it the whale who swallowed the prophet? One of them swallowed the other, anyhow.

In a political riot in Budapest revolvers and stones were used. These people make quite a religion of their politics.

A little mild profanity sometimes crops up in the daily papers. The *Evening News* recently, in an obituary notice of the late Sir William White, had a saucy headline, "Greatest Shipbuilder the World has ever Seen—not excepting Noah." But the old Bible shipbuilder's greatest speciality was not his vessel but his menagerie.

A very amusing discussion is now in progress in the *Christian Commonwealth* upon the subject, "Is Christianity the Final Religion?" Eminent scholars have already taken part in the debate; but the significant fact is that no two of them agree as to what Christianity is, or as to what is meant by finality. Professor Cheyne, of Oxford, expressed the opinion that "the religion of Jesus is not a final but an ever-expanding religion." It is the belief of this divine that Christianity is elastic enough to make room for "natural science, philosophy, and history, including the ancillary study of philology." Indeed, the Bahai religion has an advantage over the Christian, in that it is more elastic still, and denies that any existing religion can be the final one. Professor Cheyne concludes in this heterodox fashion:—

"At any rate, history is a son of God, and has, in the power of God, remade the religions of men. None of the great religions have grown up entirely from the original roots, and syncretism is largely responsible for the existing forms of the religions. And of none of the great religions can it be said that its expansion is complete. The only defensible position is that of the leaders of the Bahai movement.....to adopt any good thing that other religions have.....As the sagacious critic, Professor Jowett, said, the Bahai movement may not impossibly turn out to have the promise of the future. He, too, thought that Christianity was not the final religion."

Coming from a Christian minister, a dignitary of the Church of England, that is not at all bad.

The Rev. Dr. Walter Walsh, the present minister of the Theistic Church, is in substantial agreement with Professor Cheyne. To him, Christianity is "a conception compounded of the mythological notions of Mithraism, Greek hero-worship, and Platonism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, along with the political elements of Jewish Messianism"; and the improbability is, to his mind, "that such a conception will continue to satisfy the human soul throughout the future ages of expanding science, rationality, and democracy." Until a few months ago Dr. Walsh was a Christian minister

at Dundee; and yet this is what he now says about the worship of Christ:—

"I am well aware of the wealth of sentiment and affection lavished upon the 'Christ' ideal. That makes no difference to the fact that it is lavished not upon a supernatural person existing objectively to the mind, but upon an ideal conceived subjectively in the minds of passing generations, and therefore liable to change and elimination as humanity grows."

Dr. Lyman Abbott, however, though an admirer of the broad-minded Henry Ward Beecher, holds the orthodox view that Christianity, being the one perfect religion, is also of necessity the final. Unfortunately, his definition of Christianity is by no means orthodox; and Christianity, as he defines it, has never yet existed. What is beyond doubt is that historic Christianity is doomed; and our earnest hope is that it is the last religion to darken and confuse the mind of man.

Dr. Rigby, the chairman of the Health Committee of the Preston Town Council, has been arguing that smaller families give children a chance of being brought up properly. It appears that the Preston death-rate has been exceeding the birth-rate lately,—which rather astonishes us considering how strong the Roman Catholic Church is in that city. Dr. Rigg did not agree with Dr. Rigby. Small families, he said, meant moral rottenness. It was disobedience to God. Parents should have plenty of children, and God would help to keep them. That is what the Church parson said to the woman in the story. He told her that God never sent mouths without loaves to fill them. "Yes," she replied, "but he too often sends the mouths to one house and the loaves to another."

"It is absolutely essential," says the Bishop of Bristol, "that a clergyman should read the Word of God in a different way from any other book." Of course, the reading of the Bible may be performed in a capable or incapable manner; but why in a way different from any other book? If one really wants to appreciate whatever is of genuine literary value in the Bible, it should be read *exactly* as one reads other books. Really what the Bishop of Bristol means is that a clergyman should cultivate a special tone and manner when reading the Bible, and so supply the necessary element of hocus-pocus that will duly impress the unthinking and the credulous.

A religious contemporary warns English people that the natives of India do not understand the governmental attitude of neutrality in matters of religion. They can understand either patronage or oppression; but when the Government of India neither supports nor condemns, the conclusion they come to is that in its eyes the teaching of religion is of less importance than is the teaching of arithmetic. Well, but as a matter of fact, do not Christians, in practice, act as though they were of exactly this opinion? If it came to appointing a clerk in a bank or in an office, which would be considered of the greater importance—accuracy in arithmetic or correctness of doctrine? Whom would a Christian minister on his way to India sooner trust—an Atheistic captain but a skilled navigator, or a fervent Christian but a regular duffer at navigation? As a matter of fact, neutrality in religion *does* imply that religious belief is of subsidiary importance. It is practically saying that, while in the interests of the common welfare Government must insist upon certain duties, and see that the rising generation gets certain instruction, religion may be left alone, or left out altogether. This is the bottom reason why deeply religious people have so seldom been in favor of toleration.

In the *Modern Churchman*, the Rev. H. Northcote has an article on the mediæval hell, and in the course of his essay puts the question, "Did this awful doctrine of hell reinforce morality?" His reply is in the negative, and he adds that—

"Many in desperation plunged into wild orgies which ended in intense misery. The effect of the doctrine was rather to drive men mad, and all Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seemed on the verge of madness, so colossal were the social evils. The great deliverance from the mediæval notion of a geographical hell came from the discoveries of science. First, the old Greek conception of the roundness of the earth was recovered and substantiated by Copernicus and other thinkers; then Magellan, Columbus, and others verified the conclusions, and their voyages definitely proved that the earth was round."

There is nothing novel in what Mr. Northcote has to say. It has been part of elementary Freethought ever since there has been any sort of organised propaganda. What Mr. Northcote has to say is, however, true, even to the fact that it was secular science that acted as the great corrective to Christian barbarism and religious brutality.

But when Mr. Northcote has said this much, he leaves unnoticed an equally important aspect of life. For our own part, we should not care to make the sweeping statement that in the sixteenth century all Europe was on the verge of collective madness. It would have been had everybody really felt all that the Christian doctrine of damnation involved. But in its more brutal, more honest form, Christianity could only be accepted by masses of people on condition that they either did not realise what it really meant, or that they gave it an interpretation which humanised it, or, finally, that people should have become so brutalised by it as to face with equanimity the prospect of the eternal damnation of millions of their fellows. As a matter of fact, all these things actually resulted. Some did go mad as a consequence of Christian teaching. The better minds suffered under it, the coarser ones became still coarser. The power of Christianity over the naturally better type of character has always been enormously exaggerated, and over the lower type its main influence has been to accentuate its worst features. And Mr. Northcote should remember that the period he is dealing with was the golden age of Christianity. It is the time when we see Christianity in the full strength of its teaching and influence. And a more barbarous and demoralising set of teachings never, either before or since, dominated the human mind.

When the Shoreditch Coroner asked a witness of what nationality he was, he received the bright answer, "Church of England." On further inquiry the "English Churchman" was found to be of German descent.

The *Daily Herald* has made the discovery that the "outside public hates scientific scepticism." The "outside public" do not read scientific works, and probably would not understand them if they tried to. Such people evidently prefer "literature" like the *Daily Herald*.

There are some Christians who appear to be under the impression that everything decent in the world began with the birth of Jesus Christ. There are others who count only from the Protestant reformation of the sixteenth century. And there are still others who date only from the beginnings of Wesleyan Methodism. To this latter class belongs, apparently, the Rev. J. Scott Lidgett, the editor of the *Methodist Times*. In a recent issue, Mr. Lidgett informed his readers that in his belief and that of "competent historians," "the rise of Methodism is at the very centre of the humanitarian movement of modern times." We do not know who are the "competent historians," but in our opinion Methodism has about as much to do with the rise of the modern humanitarian movement as with the Copernican astronomy. Dr. Lidgett himself confesses that "the generations that immediately succeeded Wesley.....did not play the part that might have been expected of them in rousing the conscience of England to a sense of the hideous social conditions that then prevailed." So that evidently the humanitarian movement got along for a generation without the help of Methodism. Not only did it manage without help from organised Methodism, but many of the most glaring evils of English industrial life grew up side by side with the development of English evangelism. Children were being murdered in factories, and women degraded in mines. The land of the country was being stolen from those to whom it belonged, and laws passed for the deliberate purpose of driving the peasantry into the power of manufacturers. English prison laws were among the most brutal in Europe, and attack after attack was being made upon the liberty of press and public. During all this time Methodism, in the words of Dr. Lidgett, was "organising its resources as a rising Church." And as a consequence, to again quote our Methodist editor, it "was disabled from seeing and serving the social needs of the country." That is the truth, at last. When people's heads are filled with theology they have room in it for little else. And the real influence of organised Methodism was to so fill people's minds with "other-worldism" that they could be the more easily exploited.

Sir Harry Johnston, presiding at a lecture by Professor Henry Balfour on the "Earliest Inhabitants of South Africa," said that men like the lecturer were "trying to spell out an imperfect chapter in the latest and greatest Bible—the book of the earth itself." The mental horizon had widened during the past century, religion and science were now friendly, and we were "endeavoring to find out what was God's object in bringing the world and man into existence." We thought Sir Harry Johnston knew better than to talk in this way. "God's object" will be known when he discloses it. But is there a God? That is the first question.

According to an advertisement in the *Evening News*, 110 Municipal Reform candidates at the London County Council Election were in favor of the Sunday opening of cinematograph shows, whilst only 27 Progressives were so minded. Unfortunately, so many "Progressives" are illiberal Non-conformists.

The vicar of St. Paul's Church, Moseley-road, Birmingham, is of opinion that it is "unfair to churches to provide entertainments during hours of divine service." Oh, these clerical protectionists! When they take their shutters down they want everybody else's shutters up. They know they cannot stand against open competition; so they call for a close time for *their* entertainments, which have long been ceasing to entertain.

The *Christian World* says that "the invasion of Sunday rest is one of the most melancholy features of modern London life," and announces that the publicans will join the crusade against the Sunday opening of picture palaces. We are not surprised at this. The public-house and the church seem to be the only two places injured by Sunday entertainments, and we are not astonished that when their mutual interests are threatened they are ready to unite forces against a common danger.

It is not often the truth of the situation is put as openly as is done by the editor of the *Church Family Newspaper*. This gentleman calls on all religious people in the community to "put an end to these counter attractions to public worship." That is the gist of the situation. Everything else is a mere subterfuge.

"From Manger to Cross" was running at a moving-picture house at Pontefract. One evening, before the picture was thrown upon the screen, the vicar (the Rev. W. Gell) stepped upon the stage and conducted "a short service of prayer." "This created a marked effect," the report said. We should think so, indeed. The impudence of the average man of God is simply astounding. In this case it was particularly so. Mr. Gell took his trade out with him to a place of public amusement, and forced it upon the attention of the audience, and wound up by calling for "No smoking and no applause." We suggest that the next time he wants an advertisement at a picture show he should pay for it at the usual rates. It ought to go among the business advertisements thrown upon the screen during an interval.

Mr. Julian Grande has been telling the Camera Club that he succeeded in entering "Aaron's Tomb" on the top of Mount Hor. Did he find Aaron's blooming rod there and the recipe for his patent macassar?

Among the recent clerical wills were those of the Rev. Charles Elsee, of Rugby School, who left £41,485, and the Rev. Canon Degge Wilmot Sitwell, Vicar of Leamington Hastings, Warwickshire, who left £59,673.

Germany (says *Tit-Bits*) has an increasing number of persons without any religious profession. The number has grown from 17,000 in 1907 to nearly 206,000. We venture to say that even these figures are far from an accurate statement of the case. There are crowds of Freethinkers who don't and won't make any public declaration of the fact. The great bulk of the Social Democrats, for instance, are known to be Anti-Christian.

A strike of bakers is feared in London. Christians had better find the present address of the individual who fed five thousand people with two sardines and three bath buns.

In a recent number of the *Daily Herald*, a writer on "Current Literature" says that "Gone is defiant materialism or anti-theologism." It is this sort of nonsense that makes people complain that the halfpenny papers are edited by office boys for errand boys.

A street-corner mission which was eternally collecting money had its banner altered by a humorist who did not leave his address behind. On the following Sunday the procession started, preceded by the amusing text suspended on a pole, "In the midst of life we are in debt."

A favorite hymn of the Brotherhood movement is Ebenezer Elliott's "God Save the People." Unfortunately, as Carlyle long ago pointed out, "God does nothing." In other words, is "good for nothing."

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged. £62 16s. 10d. Received since:—Robert Avis, £1; S. M. Peacock, 10s. 6d.; W. Palmer, 2s. 6d.; V. Phelps, 10s. 6d.; R. D. Voss (S. Africa), £2 2s.; H. S. Salt, £1 1s.; G. Smith, 10s.; G. R. Harker, £2 2s.; R. Stirton and Friends, Dundee (quarterly), £1 10s.; E. Kirton, 5s.

"HOMELESS."—An excellent letter, especially the parts relating to the Sunday question and the Blasphemy Laws. This is not a reflection on the other parts; it only means that they do not specially concern us in these pages. We wish Freethinkers would use the local press much more liberally than they do.

R. BELL.—We don't see that we can make copy out of it for this journal.

J. W. HACKETT.—This year, probably; but not this winter. Thanks for cuttings: see paragraph.

C. C.—The *Life of Charles Bradlaugh*, by his daughter, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, and Mr. J. M. Robertson, is what you want. There is a half-crown edition of it published by Fisher Unwin. Glad you found our *Reminiscences of Bradlaugh* "very interesting," leading you to desire "a fuller record."

E. B.—Many thanks for cuttings.

W. PALMER.—We also wish your purse were larger and better furnished.

A. MILLAR.—We have informed Mr. Cohen that you find his book on Determinism "very effective in debate." Mr. Foote will probably be visiting Glasgow in the fall if the Branch can find a hall by then for his lectures.

W. P. BALL.—Your cuttings are always welcome.

G. CROOKSON.—Very well; there is no particular hurry.

S. M. PEACOCK.—Let us hope for better times.

R. D. VOSS.—Good wishes reciprocated.

G. SMITH hopes the P. H. Fund "will not lag this year as it did last."

A. MANN.—Even if we did answer such letters by post we should have to decline substantiating other persons' statements, either from the platform or otherwise.

J. W. H. DAVIS.—If you derive so much benefit and pleasure from the *Freethinker* we can understand your regret at not having met with it many years earlier. Thanks for your encouraging letter.

G. R. HARKER.—Glad you are taking the *English Review* for March; hope many of our readers will do so.

ROBERT TAYLOR.—Milman's *History of the Jews* is good in its way, and also cheap. Renan's great book is expensive, but you might find it in a Manchester library.

R. STIRTON.—Many thanks.

R. CHAPMAN.—Shall be carefully considered.

J. B.—Tuesday is too late for this week; must wait till next. We note your praise of the *English Review* for "beating down the long and shameful press boycott of Mr. Foote."

J. W. DE CAUX.—Pleased you think the last week's front article "splendid"—for there are few, if any, better judges.

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.

THE Freethinker will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d.; three months, 2s. 8d.

Sugar Plums.

There was a fine meeting at the Leicester Secular Hall on Sunday evening, in connection with the celebration of the thirty-second anniversary of the opening of the Hall. Mr. Sidney A. Gimson, the Secular Society's president, opened the proceedings with a gratifying statement of the recent work and progress of the Society. It was pleasant to see the good terms that he and the audience were on with each other. Mr. Mentor Gimson was present also—as a listener, smiling benevolently at every good thing that was said. The chairman's speech was deservedly applauded. Mr. Foote was the next speaker. He delivered no formal address, but just spoke for three quarters of an hour without a note, suitably to the occasion, and with particular reference to the late Mr. Josiah Gimson, Mr. Michael Wright, and other stalwarts who founded the Leicester Secular Society. Mrs. Adams spoke a few words for the lady members, Mr. A. C. Brant for the Sunday School, and Mr. Ronald Eagle for the Young People's Secular Society. This was a very agreeable feature of the proceedings. Another agreeable feature was the singing, in which Miss Burford, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Ligo acquitted themselves finely. Altogether it was a most enjoyable function. We

wish a similar one could take place in every fair-sized town in England.

The Secular Education League's Annual Meeting will be held at Room 18, Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Tuesday evening, March 11, at 7.30. Members are earnestly invited to attend. A public meeting will follow at 8.15. The list of speakers includes Mr. Halley Stewart, Mr. George Greenwood, M.P., Mr. Arthur Henderson, M.P., Rev. Walter Walsh, D.D., and Mr. G. W. Foote. We hope there will be a really good attendance. There ought to be, considering that the Government promises or threatens to deal with the Education question again in the near future.

There should be a good attendance at the first public meeting organised by the Committee for the Repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, which takes place at Essex Hall, Essex-street, Strand, on Friday evening, March 14. The chair will be occupied by the Rev. Copeland Bowie, and the list of speakers includes Sir W. P. Byles, Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, Mr. H. G. Chancellor, M.P., Mr. G. W. Foote, Lord Harberton, Mr. A. L. Atherley Jones, K.C., and Sir Hiram Maxim. We may add that Essex-street is on the south side of the extreme east end of the Strand.

Mr. Cohen was really suffering from a bad attack of influenza. We are glad to hear he is well on the way to recovery, but the road is rather longer than was expected. Mr. Cohen had to forego his Manchester visit on Sunday. We have strongly urged him to take no risks at all until he is thoroughly recovered. We begin to shiver ourselves when any one of our co-workers is ill. There are so few of us in this enterprise. And man is mortal. And nature, or "providence," or whatever it is, knocks out the useful just as readily as the useless.

The author of that very able and useful book, *The Churches and Modern Thought*, subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, writes:—"I take this opportunity of saying how much I appreciate the *Freethinker*; the articles always excellent and the 'Acid Drops' amusing and to the point. I only wish it had a larger circulation and could be seen by those who are less confirmed than myself in the need for militant Freethought."

Mr. H. S. Salt, writing to Mr. J. W. de Caux, with a contribution to the President's Honorarium Fund, says it is from "one who has long admired Mr. Foote's high abilities and devotion to a great cause."

The advertisement of the March number of the *English Review* in the *Times* tickled us a good deal. It was a boldly displayed advertisement, the conspicuous lines being "The Lesson of the Balkan War, by F.M. Lord Roberts," and "George Meredith—Freethinker," by G. W. Foote—all the other contents being briefly indicated in a sort of footnote. We can guess Lord Roberts's feelings on seeing himself in such company. Our own feeling is simply one of amusement. The serious side of the matter is the courage of the *English Review* management. They have broken "the boycott of Foote" with a vengeance.

Mr. W. Bailey, a Manchester veteran, and a generous supporter of the *Freethinker* and other advanced efforts, writes us:—

"I have read your Meredith article four times. It is a magnificent piece of work. You have laid the Freethought party under a deep obligation to you. Freethinkers should not fail to get, read, and pass on the *English Review* for March. There is no doubt of where Meredith stood."

Mr. Bailey would like to pay for some copies to be sent by us to persons who would like to have the magazine but cannot buy it. He shall be gratified.

Mr. Walter Stewart, who read the first number of the *Freethinker* and every number since, is seventy-two years of age. He is a candidate for the 1913 Pension Election in connection with the Printers' Pension and Almshouse Corporation. His address is 52 Hampden-road, Hornsey, N. Can any of our readers give him a vote? We hope so.

Mr. Elijah Copeland, who has been identified with the Freethought movement in the North of England for more than half a century, takes the chair this evening (March 9) at the address by Mr. D. R. Bove to the South Shields N. S. S. Branch. Further particulars appear in our "Lecture Notices."

The Lisbon Freethought Congress, 1913.

THE International Freethought Federation has now issued its Manifesto in reference to the forthcoming Freethought Congress at Lisbon. The date of the Congress is fixed for October 6, 7, and 8, 1913, and the opening ceremonies, which will be on an imposing scale of magnificence, will coincide with the third celebration of the foundation of the Portuguese Republic (October 5, 1910). From every sentimental and historic point of view, the Lisbon Congress will be an unique international assembly, so far as Portugal is concerned. It will be graced by all that is most distinguished in the political and literary life of the country, and the duty of securing its success should, therefore, appeal with especial force to the Freethinkers of all shades and complexions in every civilised country. The Congress will, moreover, rally to its support a large number of Freethinkers and Republicans from Spain, who will doubtless derive fresh inspiration as they witness the brilliant achievements in social and political emancipation of the victorious Republicans and Freethinkers of Portugal. Success for the forthcoming Congress is thus all the more necessary in order that a definite set-back may be given, by the combined efforts of organised international Freethought, to the inroads of reaction and clericalism in Portugal and elsewhere. Portugal, since the establishment of the Republic, has secularised all its institutions, and, although the Augean stable of monarchical and ecclesiastical impurities requires much labor and time before the crimes and neglect of the past can be obliterated, Portugal's achievements in the secularisation of education and of the public services of the State will stand honorable comparison with the labors of the French Republic, which—be it remembered—had over forty years during which to operate, and longer years of liberty in which to learn the salutary lessons of freedom.

The foreign delegates to the Congress will be invited to the great Fêtes which the Portuguese Government will organise in October to celebrate the third anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic. The heartiness of the welcome which on this momentous occasion will be accorded to the international delegates will astound and gratify the hosts of Freethought assembled in Portugal's beautiful capital. The head of the Government, Senhor Affonso Costa, one of the chief glories of Portuguese Freethought, will attend the inaugural ceremony of the Congress, a fitting corollary to the splendid example of Dr. Theophilo Braga, who, a few days after his instalment as Provisional President of the new Republic, presided over the National Freethought Congress. The subjects appointed for discussion at the Congress in October are as follows:—

1. The Portuguese law separating Church and State; its political results, and the modifications that should be made therein.
2. By what method can we realise a system of Rationalist Education that shall be solely compatible with Freethought?
3. Freethought and the Social Question.

It is anticipated that a large number of delegates will attend the discussions on these interesting themes, and that the ripened experiences of the most capable specialists in the treatment of these questions will contribute a valued quota of facts and conclusions to the elucidation of these problems, which are living problems of universal application, and fraught with intense practical issues in the evolution of the modern State. The representatives of English Freethought must not be unseen and unheard during these deliberations.

Lisbon—to cite the words of our friend Magalhaes Lima—is one of the most Freethinking cities of the world. In expelling the Jesuits, and suppressing the religious congregations, in promulgating the law of divorce, the law of civil registration, and the law

separating the Church and the State, little Portugal, small territorially, but great by its Republic, deserves, as it were, by right of its secular conquests, the visit of every Freethinker and Freemason. The proposition which Magalhaes Lima made at the Munich Congress last year to hold the next International Freethought Congress at Lisbon was hailed with delight and voted by acclamation. The Congress, which will be held practically under the auspices of the Portuguese Republic, will be the answer of organised international Freethought to the insolence of the Catholic Church, which, in its recent Eucharistic Congresses, has flung defiance at human reason and Freethought. At the recent Eucharistic Congress at Vienna, the reactionary Government in Austria armed every soldier with twenty ball cartridges, and ordered the troops not to fire in the air or on the ground, but to aim straight. As Magalhaes Lima remarks, this blustering exhibition of the most secret mystery of the Christian religion, which was thus invested with the brutal machinery of coercion proper to the Middle Ages, took us back to the time of Charlemagne; incidentally, it offered one more proof of the undying hostility of Christianity to the Rationalist spirit of the twentieth century.

Concurrently with the International Freethought Congress, there will be held, also at Lisbon, an International Congress of Freemasonry. As everybody knows, Freemasonry on the continent of Europe is practically Freethought organised on special lines of permeation and political activity, and the consequence will be that next October two convergent streams of international Rationalism will be poured from all parts of the world into the Portuguese capital. These two Congresses will have the inestimable advantage of uniting in one and the same "spiritual" communion the Masons and Freethinkers of Latin America (Brazil, Argentine, Chili, Mexico, Uruguay, etc.); of the Grand Orient de France, Italy, and Spain, and last, but not least in intellectual significance, it will bring the new thought of Republican China into fructifying contact with the Freethinkers and Masons of our Western civilisation. Like Rome, Lisbon is seated upon seven hills, but, unlike Rome, this beautiful city represents the modern revolt of the human intellect against the monstrous superstition begotten in the brains of Christian fanatics. Her hospitality to the Freethought delegates will, I am assured, be as broad and majestic as the unrivalled glories of its spacious Tagus.

Magalhaes Lima, from whose magnificent address at Lausanne I have already culled,* will be one of the leading spirits of the Lisbon Congress. For many years he was the untiring apostle of Freethought, the staunch enemy of the Braganza monarchy, and one of the chief heralds of the Portuguese Republic. For years an exile from Portugal, he familiarised his mind with all the advanced movements of political thought and mental emancipation throughout the world. He has suffered much and labored titanically for liberty of thought and for social freedom in his beloved country. The success of the forthcoming International Congress at Lisbon will be the fitting crown and reward of his splendid devotion to the noblest of all causes—the cause of Freethought and international peace. As Senator of the new Republic and Grand Master of the Portuguese Freemasons, his eyes have been gladdened by the recent inauguration of the Portuguese Republic and the Republic of China, "the two greatest events of this beginning of a new century." He is now on the eve of his departure for China, with the members of the different parliamentary groups, and, as the artisan and prime creator of the Portuguese Republic, will take with him to China the message of sympathy and solidarity of all those in Europe or elsewhere who want to see a peaceful and a progressive Chinese Republic established on a basis of Rationalism and humanity. He will tell the

* *Congress de Lisbonne*, par Magalhaes Lima. (1912: Paris-Muller, 29 Faubourg Montmartre. Pp. 32.)

Chinese people that the Europeans are not all cretinised, *à la Chrétienne*, and that the true interests of the Yellow Race are bound up with industry, science, and Freethought. Not the least amongst his services to Rationalism will be the stimulation, through his commanding influence, of an active participation of the Chinese intellectuals in the Freethought trend of ideas in the Western world. As Magalhaes Lima himself remarks, in his Lausanne lecture:—

"Of the Chinese revolution, it may be said that it was a more formidable event than any of the conquests of Alexander or the campaigns of Napoleon. It was the destruction of the old wall, supposed to be eternally guarded by immemorial dragons and favored by Heaven; as if the children of Heaven could resist the sledge-hammer blows of the demolishers of Gods and idols! There are no longer any more mysteries on earth than there are in Heaven. The telescope has unbared the latter to our eyes and put them into the category of astronomic phenomena. Heaven and Hell are unable to resist the scalpel of Science."

It is this splendid faith in progress and humanity, this enlightened idealism, that enabled our friend Magalhaes Lima to build the Republic of his ardent dreams and establish in the hearts of many thousands of Portuguese people a glowing enthusiasm for Freethought. On his return from China, his admirers, gathered from all parts of the world at Lisbon, will witness in the great Congress, with its touching enthusiasms for splendid ideals, the fruit of his long and incessant labors for Freethought and humanity.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

The Golden Rule.

THE injunction, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets," has been extolled as the very pith of Christian ethics. It has been emphatically denominated "the golden rule," and it has been supposed that nothing less than a divine revelation could have imparted to humanity the knowledge of so important a standard of conduct. This position, however, has been modified somewhat since evidence has been forthcoming that the rule is neither peculiar nor original to Christianity, but is found in authors anterior to the Christian era.

The sentiment of reciprocity in truth is one that is early developed in humanity. It springs from the notion of right evolved from the sense of special possession, and is even seen in animals, who find a *modus vivendi* in recognition of mutual rights. "The germ of conscience," it has been said, "lies in the struggle for existence having become aware of itself in the mind of a thinking person." When once a savage felt that it was wrong to take his life and the means whereby he lived, and saw the same feelings manifested by others, the transferring of the sense of wrong, and the contrasted sense of right, to others, would only be a work of time depending on the development of the reflective faculties and the social instincts by the ever constant action of natural selection weeding out the socially unfit.

No great mental effort would be needed for the savage, who feels it is wrong for another to deprive him of his property on a particular occasion, to infer that it is wrong for anyone else, at any time, so to act. No doubt there was a difficulty in recognising the equivalence of duties by and to the self, for, as Schopenhauer says, pure egoism would kill a man for the fat wherewith to grease its own boots; but mutual dependence and tribal living in common unfailingly bring the sense of identity of interests. "Do not wrong me, and I will not wrong you; I do not hurt you, why do you hurt me?" are the natural and spontaneous utterances of the sense of right as seen alike in savages and children. The rule of reciprocity beginning among friends extends itself as relationships of interests are extended.

Unsocial instincts also develop on the lines of reciprocity. The wild feeling of revenge for injury inflicted grows into a principle of returning a similar injury. The *lex talionis*, a life for a life, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," is the primitive rule. "Tit for tat" is the justice of the savage, and is not without its relics in the criminal codes of the civilised world. Yet this is the germ of reciprocity, and "the golden rule."

Professor Max Müller has already cited instances of this feeling directed towards the gods, from what is probably the oldest writing in the world, the Rig-Veda of the Hindus. In the notes to his translation of the "Hymns of the Marats," or "Storm Gods," he says:—

"I think it best to connect the fourth and fifth verses, and I feel justified in so doing, and by other passages where the same or a similar idea is expressed—viz., that if the god were the poet, and the poet the god, then the poet would be more liberal to the god than the god is to him. Thus I translated a passage (vii., 31, 18) in my *History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 565: 'If I were lord of as much as thou, I should support the sacred bard, thou scatterer of wealth; I should not abandon him to misery, I should award wealth day by day to him who magnifies, I should award it to whosoever it be.' Another parallel passage is pointed out by Mr. J. Muir (on the interpretation of the Veda, p. 79, viii., 19-25); 'If Agni thou wert a mortal, and I were an immortal, I should not abandon thee to malediction or to wretchedness; my worshippers should not be miserable or distressed.' Still more to the point is another passage, viii., 44, 23: 'If I wert thou, and thou wert I, thy wishes should be fulfilled.'"

The Rev. J. Stevenson, in his translation of the Sama Veda (p. 276), puts the following in the mouth of the singer: "When I, O Indra, shall become a possessor of wealth like thee, then assuredly my singer of sacred hymns shall possess abundance of cows." In the *Odyssey*, Calypso tells Ulysses she acts as she would wish to be done to were her fate the same. Hesiod enjoins "To all a love for love return." Herodotus relates how, when Mæandrius yielded up the supreme power to the citizens of Samos, he said: "I shall certainly avoid doing that myself which I deem reprehensible in another." The same historian tells how, when the Spartans, who went to Xerxes as a voluntary atonement for their country, were asked by the Persian Hydarnes to enter the service of the king, they replied: "To you servitude is familiar; but how sweet a thing liberty is you have never known; if you had, you yourself would advise us to make all possible exertions to preserve it." So, in Xenophon's *Cyropædia*, Cyaxares says to Cyrus: "If I appear to you to think unreasonably in this, do not consider these things as in my case, but turn the tables and make the case your own." Diogenes Laertius relates of the Greek sage Thales that when asked how we might live virtuously, he replied: "If we never do ourselves what we blame in others." Isocrates, in one of his orations, tells the Athenians: "You err against the first principles of wisdom, condemning in others what you yourself pursue." In his admonition to Nicocles, Isocrates says: "Do not those things to other people which you dislike when others do." "Put yourself in my place," says Scipio to Hannibal, as recorded by Polybius. A similar idea occurs in the precepts of Buddha (*Dhammapada*, 159): "Let each man make himself as he teaches others to be." "All men tremble at punishment; all men fear death; remember that you are like unto them, and do not kill nor cause slaughter." Max Müller cites in a note to this passage from the *Ramayana*, v., 23, 5: "Making oneself a likeness—i.e., putting oneself in the position of other people, it is right to love none but one's own wife." The sentiment is also found in the ancient Hindu book of fables and counsels, the *Hitopadesa*: "Good people show mercy unto all beings, considering how like they are to themselves."

Confucius, in China, distinctly enunciated the so-called golden rule. In Dr. Legge's translation of the *Confucian Analects* we read, p. 266: "Tsze-kung

asked, saying, 'Is there one word which may serve as a rule of practice for all one's life?' The master said: 'Is not reciprocity [in Chinese *chou*] such a word? What you do not want done to yourself do not do to others.' In his article upon Confucius, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Dr. Legge—who, as a missionary, shows little disposition to accord bare justice to the Chinese sage—admits: "It has been said that he only gave the rule in its negative form, but he understood it also in its positive and most comprehensive force."

As reported by his grandson, Tszze-sze, in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (in Chinese *Chung-Yung*), chap. viii., sec. 3, Confucius taught that "when one cultivates to the utmost the principles of his nature, and exercises them on the principle of reciprocity, he is not far from the path." And again, in the *Ta Hio, or Great Learning*, chap. x, section 2: "What a man dislikes in his superiors let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors let him not display in the service of his superiors; what he hates in those who are before him let him not therewith precede those who are behind him; what he hates in those who are behind him let him not therewith follow those who are before him; what he hates to receive on the right let him not bestow on the left; what he hates to receive on the left let him not bestow on the right. This is what is called the principle with which, as with a measuring square, to regulate one's conscience."

In his translation of the Chinese sage, Mencius, p. 327, Dr. Legge gives the following passage: "If one acts with a vigorous effort at the law of reciprocity when he seeks for the realisation of perfect virtue, nothing can be closer than his approximation to it"; and in a note on the word translated "reciprocity" he says it is "the judging of others by oneself, and acting accordingly." Pauthier translates the passage: "*Si on fait tout ses efforts pour agir envers les autres comme on voudrait les agir envers nous, rien ne fait plus approche de l'humanité que cette conduite.*"

The sentiment was not new to the Jews. The Book of Leviticus ordained: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "Do that to no man which thou hatest" appears in the apocryphal book of Tobit (iv. 16). "Judge of thy neighbor by thyself," says Jesus, the son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus xxxi. 15). Emanuel Deutsch says that the maxim, "Do unto others as thou wouldst be done by," was quoted by Hillel the President—at whose death Jesus was ten years of age—"not as anything new, but as an old and well-known dictum, 'that comprised the whole law'" (*Literary Remains*, p. 27). It is also found in Philo Judæus.

The wide spread of the sentiment, of which we could give further evidence, doubtless shows that it has been an important factor in the evolution of morals. As a sort of ready, general guide to conduct, it has contributed towards the repression of actions which, being noxious to the individual, are at the same time hurtful to society, and it has tended to encourage actions promoting the welfare of both. But we deny that it is an infallible criterion of morals. It does not, indeed, appear to us a golden rule at all, but at the best only silver-gilt. Its essential principle does not ring true. It appeals primarily to self-interest, and assumes that what one wishes to be done to oneself is right. But it is not true that we wish for ourselves what would be best for the general welfare. The Christian who molests the last hours of a Freethinker excuses himself on the plea that he is doing as he would be done by. He would like his mind directed to thoughts of God and heaven in his last moments. Perhaps the strongest instance of the exhibition of the golden rule is to be found among those numerous savage tribes who, when they have a visitor, offer him a wife or sister by way of hospitality. If the formula is supposed to mean, "Do unto others as ye would they should do, providing it is right," this is at once conceding it to be useless; since, if the person already knows what is right to do, the rule is super-

fluous. If he does not know, the rule supplies no adequate criterion. My child wishes for ice cream. In its place I should desire the same. Must I, then, supply it? Evidently to decide so simple a question other considerations must be imported. A man can no more be sure of doing the right thing simply by putting himself in another man's place than he can learn to box by sparring at himself in the looking-glass. It may sometimes give a useful hint as to what he must not do, but it will not help him much as to what he should actually do. Brown, who is fond of a drink, stands Robinson a glass because he would like one himself. Jones, a teetotaler, persuades Robinson not to drink because he would wish to be deterred in the like circumstances. Smith, doing as he would be done by, gives Jones, who is hard up, a sovereign, which perhaps he spends foolishly; Robinson, who likes hard work, gives him a stiff job for which he is perhaps unfit, and Brown gives him brandy, which perhaps kills him. Yet each acts on the golden rule. The principle enunciated by Kant is evidently safer. Only those maxims must be adopted as ruling motives which are susceptible of being made universal. But the golden rule, so far from affording a universal law, varies in its application according to the subjective idiosyncrasies of each person. It may suffice to deter from evident wrong and injury, but in the minutæ of conduct, which, after all, make up the important affairs of life, if weighed in the balance, it is often found wanting.

(The late) J. M. WHEELER.

—Sub-Editor of the "*Freethinker*" and Author of the "*Biographical Dictionary of Freethinkers*," etc.

A Grave Subject.

"Death, not armed with any dart,
But crowned with poppies."

—JULIAN FANE.

FROM the earliest times men have sought to express their loves and joys, their sorrows and hatreds, in epitaphs and epigrams, and to inscribe them on sepulchral urns, tablets, or gravestones, as memorials of their pleasure or their pain. It is certain that such inscriptions were in use many centuries before the alleged birth of the mythical Christ. One of the most ancient epitaphs is that which Assyria's last king, Sardanapalus, ordered to be engraved on his tomb: "Sardanapalus built Anchiale and Tarsus in one day. Go, passenger, eat, drink, and rejoice, for the rest is nothing."

It is, however, among the Greeks that we find epitaphs properly so-called. Among the most famous is the inscription for the heroes of Thermopylæ: "Stranger, tell the Lacedæmonians that we lie here, in obedience to their commands."

The propensity for writing punning epitaphs also existed at an early period. The inscription on the tombstone of Pausanias, the Greek physician, contains a pun on his name. The first two lines have been thus translated:—

"Pausanias, not so named without a cause,
Who oft to pain has given a pause."

The more serious Romans do not appear to have indulged much in epitaphs of this description. They preferred a more solemn note. Who ever wearies of Martial's "Eroton," so prettily Englished by Leigh Hunt:—

"Underneath this greedy stone
Lies little, sweet Eroton,
Whom the Fates, with hearts as cold,
Nipped away at six years old.
Those, whoever thou may'st be,
That hast this small field after me,
Let the yearly rites be paid
To her little slender shade,
So shall no disease or jar
Hurt thy house or chill thy lar,
But this tomb be here alone
The only melancholy stone."

Catullus has written one of the finest epitaphs.

The lines are in memory of his brother:—

"O'er many a realm, o'er many an ocean tost,
I come, my brother, to salute thy ghost!
Thus on thy tomb sad honor to bestow,
And vainly call the silent dust below.
Thou, too, art gone! Yes, thee I must resign,
My more than brother—ah! no longer mine,
The funeral rites to ancient Romans paid,
Duly I pay to thy lamented shade.
Take them—these tears their heart-felt homage tell;
And now—all hail for ever, and farewell."

In England, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tombs were thought to be the proper place, not only for puns, but for anagrams, acrostics, chronograms, and similar curiosities. For example:—

"ON ARCHBISHOP POTTER. OB. 1747.

"Alack, and well-a-day.
Potter himself is turned to clay."

"ON MRS. DEATH.

"Here lies Death's wife; when this way next you tread,
Be not surprised should Death himself be dead."

"ON MR. FISH.

"Worms bait for Fish; but here's a sudden change,
Fish's bait for worms—is not that passing strange?"

"ON MR. BUTTON.

"Oh! sun, moon, stars, and ye celestial poles!
Are graves, then, dwindled into button holes?"

"ON JOHN PENNY.

"Reader! Of cash, if thou'rt in want of any,
Dig four feet deep, and thou shalt find a penny."

The complimentary epitaph seldom pleases. To lie like a tombstone has become a proverb. Pope's famous epitaph on Newton,

"Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night;
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light,"

is a typical example. It is hyperbolic, and entirely out of character with the man it was intended to honor.

The tender and emotional epitaphs have a tendency to become insipid or silly. But Herrick, the most Pagan of Christians, has shown us how to rival the old-world Martial. The lines are upon a little girl:—

"Here she lies a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood,
Who, as soon fell fast asleep,
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her strewings, but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her."

Ben Jonson's exquisite epitaph on a child, beginning—

"Weep with me all you that read
This little story;
And know for whom the tear you shed
Death's self is sorry,"

is fine poetry; but it is not death as known by mourners.

Byron mentions two touching epitaphs which he saw at Ferrara. "Martini Luigi implores peace," and "Lucrezia Picini asks for eternal rest." Small wonder they struck a responsive chord in the world-worn heart of the English Catullus.

Keats desired that on his grave should be written:—

"Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

Water! Say, rather, in fire. In place of Keats' modest epitaph we have that glorious elegy, "Adonais," written by the Atheist Shelley, the finest elegiac poem in the English language. A few years later, in the same burying-ground was placed another stone, recording that below rested the passionate heart of Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Shakespeare's lines on the dead Duncan are perfect. They contain the oft-quoted—

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

The tendency of the present day seems to be to do away with epitaphs, and merely to inscribe on the gravestone the name and age of the deceased, with the addition of a tag from the Bible, or a verse from a hymn, which may or not be poetry. But, apart from the purely conventional texts, the note of Christianity is seldom struck in these inscriptions. There is a deep-rooted Secularism in people which is for ever bubbling up and asserting itself in the most unexpected ways. That there are few inscriptions other than religious is to be attributed to the pre-

judices of the clergy, who object strongly to anything which clashes with their own views. Literary inscriptions are rare. We have noticed a tombstone in Nunhead Cemetery with the dying words of Hamlet, "The rest is silence," and a gravestone in Lee Cemetery with an entire poem by Longfellow. Personal inscriptions are to be found scattered up and down our churchyards and cemeteries. On a tombstone in Norwood Cemetery one reads, "Poor old Granny," and on another, "She was what a woman ought to be."

So do customs change, funeral fashions, too, and with them the salutation of the dead.

MIMNERMUS.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON FEB. 27.

The President, Mr. G. W. Foote, occupied the chair. There were also present:—Messrs. Baker, Barry, Bowman, Cowell, Davey, Davidson, Gorniot, Greyton, Heaford, Leat, Lloyd, Moss, Neate, Nichols, Quinton, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Wood, and Miss Kough.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. The monthly cash statement was presented and adopted.

New members were received for Croydon, West Ham, and the Parent Society.

The report of the Board of Management of the N. S. S. Scholarship Scheme was presented by Mr. Roger, and, after a lengthy discussion, in which Messrs. Cowell, Davidson, Rosetti, Gorniot, Moss, Lloyd, and Quinton took part, a slight addition was made and the report adopted. It was resolved that the fixing of the date of the examination should be deferred until further applications had been received from intending candidates, the Management Committee undertaking to have the syllabus ready by the next meeting.

The Secretary reported that a communication had been received from the Sheffield Branch inviting the Conference. After some explanation from the President as to the financial position of the Society, Mr. Quinton moved that the Conference be held in London this year.

The Secretary was authorised to make certain arrangements in regard to out-of-door propaganda.

E. M. VANCE, Secretary.

ADRIANOPOLE.

There falls perpetual snow upon a broken plain,
And through the twilight filled with flakes, the white
earth joins the sky;
Grim as a famished, wounded wolf, his lean neck in a chain,
The Turk stands up to die.

Intrigues within, intrigues without, no man to trust,
He feeds street-dogs that starve with him; to friends who
who are his foe,
To Greeks and Bulgars in his lines, he flings a soddened
crust—
The Turk who has to go.

By infamous, unbridled tongues and dumb deceit,
Through pulpits and the Stock Exchange the Balkans do
their work,
The preacher in the chapel and the hawk in the street,
Feed on the dying Turk.

The Turk worked in the vineyard; others drank the wine,
The Jew who sold him plough-shares, kept an interest in
his plough.
The Serb and Bulgar waited till King and Priest should
sign,
Till Kings said: kill—kill now.

So while the twilight falls upon the twice betrayed,
The *Daily Mail* tells England the *Daily News* tells God,
That God and British statesmen should make the Turks
afraid—
Who fight unled, unshod.

—"B. K.," *Saturday Review*.

EFFICIENT.

The train robber suddenly appeared as many of the passengers were preparing to retire for the night.

"Come, shell out!" he demanded, as he stood towering above an Eastern clergyman, who had just finished a devout prayer.

The minister looked at him sadly for a moment, and then said:—

"If I had such energetic fellows as you to pass the plate now and then, I might have something to give you."

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.

CAXTON HALL (Room 18, Victoria street, W.C.): Tuesday, March 11, at 8.15, Annual General Meeting of the Secular Education League.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Workmen's Hall, Romford-road, Stratford, E.): 7.30, Mrs. Emma Boyce, "Woman and Religion."

COUNTRY.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Alexandra Hall, Islington-square): 7, Mrs. Bamber, "The White Slave Traffic."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Secular Hall, Rusholme-road, All Saints): Joseph A. E. Bates, 3, "The Moon in Fact, Folk-lore, and Religion"; 6.30, "New Light on an Old Myth." Tea at 5.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, first floor, Fowler-street): D. R. Bowe, an Address. Chairman, Mr. E. Copeland.

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