

THE Freethinker

Edited by G. W. FOOTE.

VOL. XXXIII.—No. 18

SUNDAY, MAY 4, 1913

PRICE TWOPENCE

Whether there be one God or three—no God or ten thousand—children should have enough to eat, and their skins should be washed clean.—JOHN RUSKIN.

Secularism Justified of Her Children.

MANY people labor under the delusion that Secularism and Atheism are synonymous terms. It is perfectly true that the overwhelming majority of Secularists are convinced Atheists. Indeed, there seems to be no escape from the conclusion that Secularism logically implies Atheism. It is a certainty that no genuine believer in God can be an honest Secularist. The present point, however, is that Atheism is a purely negative term, while Secularism signifies a complete philosophy of human life, and is packed full with glorious affirmations. It would be correct to say that Atheism is not even an essential part of Secularism. We are Atheists simply because Theism has introduced a false and injurious philosophy of the life we live, and because we cannot get rid of the one without destroying the other. As long as the belief in God exists it is bound to exert a powerful influence upon its possessor's conception of life and its object; and we agree with D'Holbach, who pronounces it an entirely evil influence. The first step towards introducing the true view of life is to discredit and remove an existing false view of it; and this is the only sense in which Atheism is of service to Secularism. To confuse Secularism with Atheism is, therefore, to misrepresent both in the grossest manner possible. It is as great an error as to assert that Buddhism may be summed up in the word "renunciation," an assertion unblushingly made in the article on "Buddha and Buddhism" in the *Everyman Encyclopædia*. The word "renunciation" does occur in Buddhism; but it is merely an introductory word which is soon overshadowed by the greater and richer word, "acquisition." So, likewise, the word "Atheism" is but a preliminary term in Secularism, and we make use of it only because Theism stands in our way and must be thrown off. As in Buddhism renunciation is a condition of acquisition, so in Secularism, Atheism is the door through which alone we can enter into Nature's treasury. We ceased to be Theists in order to become Humanists; we renounced the supernatural that we might inherit all the wealth of the natural. Because they have never taken the trouble to learn what Secularism really is Christians often taunt Secularists with the awful barrenness of their peculiar position. No taunt could be more unjust, because it mistakes a tiny part for an immense whole. It is usual to speak of Secularists as unbelievers, deniers, Atheists, or people who play the poor game of Pyrrhonism; but the truth is that they disbelieve and deny what is false in order to believe and affirm what is true. They pride themselves upon being the only true believers in the world. When a clergyman was told this the other day he expressed the utmost amazement. He had taken it for granted that the sole business of Freethinkers was to denounce the beliefs of their neighbors because they had none of their own. It had never occurred to him that they might be in possession of firm convictions in the interest of which they were attacking the popular religion with its God of love and Holy

Writ. "True religion apart from dogma," says Professor Moore, of Liverpool, "is the sublimed essence of the knowledge of the highest things in the world, and in itself is never opposed to natural science" (*The Origin and Nature of Life*, p. 9). Professor Moore ought to know that there never has been and never can be a religion "apart from dogma." Every religious belief implies a dogma. "J. B.," of the *Christian World*, is always girding in eloquent style at the dogmas of the orthodox Church, heedless of the fact that he himself is, in his way, as great a dogmatist as Augustine or Aquinas. To Freethinkers all dogmas concerning the supernatural are essentially unbelievable, simply because the supernatural is not an object of knowledge. Then we would like Professor Moore to tell us what "the highest things in the world" are, of the knowledge of which "true religion apart from dogma is the sublimed essence." "The highest things in the world" known to us are justice and truth, sympathy and love, and these are, in reality, not things at all, but relations between man and man as members of society. Now, these are things in which Freethinkers are most ardent believers, and in the practice of which many of them have won distinction.

It is well known that Baron D'Holbach was an outspoken Atheist. He is often referred to as "a Materialist of the most material school," who in two great works, *Christianisme Dévoilé* and *Le Système de la Nature* openly attacked the Christian religion, characterising it as "a blind, superstitious bondage, maintained on men's minds by the self-interest of the priests, not only unnecessary but absolutely prejudicial to human morality." But the object of his vigorous attacks on Christianity was to emancipate morality from its supernatural entanglements. He constructed a system of morality without any reference to God and supernatural motives and sanctions. He pulled down dilapidated old structures in order to put up better and safer ones. In an article which pronounces his views "pernicious," the *Encyclopædia Britannica* makes the following significant admission:—

"Although an Atheist, or at least a Materialist of the most material school, Holbach seems to have been endowed with a more than average share of virtue, and, whether by his courtesy, gentleness, or benevolence, inspired a warm affection in all he met. Even his failings, of which his simple credulity was perhaps the most prominent, were amiable. He was one of the best informed men of his day, and his excellent memory placed at his immediate disposal all the learning he had amassed" (vol. xii., p. 53).

It is a fundamental mistake to represent Secularism as a negative system. It is forsooth the most positive system known to us. It gives no uncertain sound on any of the subjects within its scope. Its message is always direct and clear, so that he who runs may understand it at a glance. There is never the slightest ambiguity about its language. On the subject of life, for example, its teaching is beautifully simple and to the point. Keeping clear of the endless and useless conjectures of the schools, it devotes itself to the elucidation of entirely practical questions. Instead of saying to a man, "Prepare to meet thy God," or "Get ready to die," it directs him as to the best way to meet his neighbor and enjoy his fellowship. The chief fact that matters is that every one of us has his or her

own place in society, and certain duties to discharge while in it. Life in each case is an opportunity for making a contribution to the general welfare, and we have no data for stating that it is anything else. Man's chief end is to be of use to his fellows. We know nothing about the ultimate object of life, not even that it has such an object. We are what our ancestors have made us, and our descendants will be what we are now making them.

Equally positive is the teaching of Secularism concerning death. Religion has a great deal to say about "the dread of something after death," about a mysterious country which Shakespeare describes as "undiscovered," but which the divine treats with the familiarity of a traveller who has visited and studied every nook and corner in it, particularly the divisions known as heaven and hell. According to him, death means translation from this world to the next, believers in Christ entering heaven and unbelievers the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. For the Secularist, however, death ends all. It is the termination of individual existence; and no fairy tales are told about the terrors that await the unbelieving soul in the Great Beyond. Lucretius makes fun of the man who fears death. When we are dead, he says,—

"From sense of grief and pain we shall be free;
We shall not feel because we shall not be."

To the man who dreads the event he simply says,—

"The worst, that can befall thee, measured right,
Is a sound slumber, and a long good night."

Immortality is a beautiful dream of the imagination, and, like all dreams, is true only to the dreamer. Secularism serves our race by delivering it from the tyranny of false hopes and false fears, and by enabling it to regard death as a servant of life.

What, then, is man according to Secularism? The highest, most perfectly developed animal, endowed with nothing that did not come to him naturally in the course of evolution. To the preacher this is a damnable heresy, for he treats man as a dual being, and attributes two different origins to him. He reluctantly admits that his body and its life may have been evolved from inorganic matter, as the biologist declares, or that "from the beginning of life up to life as we know it in a human person, there is an unbroken continuity, so close that it is even demonstrable that the highest form of life might arise from the lowest." The moment we reach man, however, we are in an entirely new world, a world that infinitely transcends the most complex of material processes and operations. When he became man there took place "an act of God, distinct from all other acts; an act by which he did, in the mystery of his wisdom and the operations of his might, differentiate by infinite distances between man and everything that lay beneath him in the scale of creation." In support of this strange doctrine not a single fact can be advanced. The soul, our "life's Star," as Wordsworth calls it, does not submit itself to any scientific experiment, nor do anything to justify the belief in its existence. Secularism can find no trace of it anywhere, and consequently takes no account of it in its philosophy of life. It recognises no duality in human nature, no two origins, and no kinship with any higher order of beings. We represent the summit of the present order of evolution, and our one business is to work for the betterment of the species to which we belong.

Thus Secularism justifies itself as a perfectly safe and reliable guide of life. It deals with facts and ignores metaphysical fancies. It looks at life from a purely natural point of view, and gives practical instructions as to the best methods of utilising it. As compared with Christianity, its superiority is beyond controversy. It teaches us to have faith in ourselves, and to despise the exhortation of self-depreciation. As Emerson says, it looks upon prayers offered to supernatural beings as "a disease of the will, and theological creeds as a disease of the intellect." What it says to all is, "Trust yourselves, and become Saviors one of another." This is positive teaching of the noblest kind. J. T. LLOYD.

The Nemesis of Faith.

IT is one of the ironies of history that, while Christianity has always avowed as one of its aims the purifying of sexual relations (with some of its earlier teachers purification assumed the form of absolute prohibition), it has from the earliest times been accompanied by varied forms of sexual extravagance, claiming a religious sanction for their existence. Something of this may have been due to reaction from a teaching of asceticism, but much more was due to the development of certain characteristics that were latent in Christianity, as in most other religions. At any rate, those whose minds are obsessed with the notion that those sexual extravagances which have from time to time broken out in the ranks of Christians were due to the intrusion of foreign elements, would do well to reflect on the Rev. S. Baring Gould's warning that criticism discloses to us "on the shining, remote face of primitive Christianity rents and craters undreamt of in our old simplicity," and also "That there was in the breast of the new-born Church an element of anti-nomianism, not latent, but in virulent activity, is a fact as capable of demonstration as any conclusion in a science which is not exact."*

In our own day, when we are faced with religious movements such as "The Abode of Love," and its kindred movements in America, Germany, and elsewhere, there is a tendency to look upon these as entirely due to the unprincipled erotic fervor of their promoters. Such a conclusion falls short of justice to the people concerned, and is quite lacking in historical perspective. As a matter of fact, those who have initiated these movements have not failed to propound a religious philosophy to justify their conduct, and, however much we may dissent from it, there is no good end served in refusing their arguments a hearing, or denying it to be in line with phenomena that has never been quite absent from the history of Christianity. Indeed, when we look closely into the very earliest records of the Christian Churches, it becomes fairly evident that we are face to face with more than the mere desire of a dominant religious organisation to regulate the morality of its followers. The conviction on the one side that certain things are unlawful is met with a conviction on the other side that the prescribed things are perfectly legitimate. And each side expresses itself, not in terms of ethics, but in terms of religion. It is a conflict of opposing religious convictions; and the fact that non-religious social opinion was on one side need not, and ought not, to blind us to the real nature of the conflict.

In the first Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (v. 1) and in the Epistle of Jude there are indications that as early as the period during which these were written some Christian leaders were grappling with a tendency among believers that became still more pronounced as time passed. The example of Paul himself was, in fact, cited in justification of departure from the commonly accepted relations of the sexes. For Paul was himself accompanied in his wanderings by a woman variously referred to by different translators as a sister, "a sister to wife," "a believing wife," and "a Christian woman as a wife." At any rate, it is certain that Paul claimed the privilege of keeping the company of holy women and travelling about with them. What his precise relation was to them is not clear, nor have commentators ever made it clear. Their aim appears to have been rather to pass over the subject with as few words as possible. Nor was this practice of taking "sisters" with them on their travels confined to Paul. It was a custom that formed the subject of decrees in several Church Councils and Synods,† and numerous writings of the first three centuries refer to the practice. Nor did its practice cease with the earliest centuries of the Christian era. The doctrine of what is called "spiritual wifehood"

* *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, Preface, p. vii.

† See Baring Gould's *Study of St. Paul*, p. 451.

persisted, and has formed the basis of many strange sects as late as the latter portion of the nineteenth century.*

Under a more secular form this doctrine of spiritual wives became known in modern times as "Free Love," but religiously it rested upon a two-fold basis. On the one side it was argued that, apart from a wife of the flesh, one might also have a wife of the spirit, and that this union of the spirit may exist side by side with a union of the flesh, and with different persons. On the other hand, it was held that a Christian who had been freed from the trammels of "the law" was by that fact raised above all law. His actions, whatever they were, no longer came under the categories of right or wrong; or, rather, as it was said, to one in a state of grace all things are lawful. Some even went so far as to teach that not only were all things lawful, but all things were desirable. It was openly taught by some of the early sects that, once in a state of grace, nothing that the body could do would corrupt the soul; and, reversing the order of asceticism which sought to crush the body by a process of starvation, they encouraged all kinds of conduct in order to demonstrate the soul's superiority. "The Church," says Baring Gould, "trembled on the verge of becoming an immoral sect." The same writer sums up the matter by saying:—

"This teaching of immorality in the Church is a startling feature, and it seems to have been pursued by some who called themselves apostles as well as by those who assumed to be prophets. In the Corinthian Church even the elders encouraged incest. Now, it is not possible to explain this phenomenon except on the ground that Paul's argument as to the Law being over-ridden had been laid hold of and elevated into a principle. These teachers did not wink at lapses into immorality, but defiantly urged on the converts to the Gospel to commit adultery, fornication, and all uncleanness.....as a protest against those who contended that the moral law as given on the tables was still binding upon the Church."†

A certain detachment from modern conditions is essential to an adequate appreciation of the situation. Unquestionably, once the situation established itself, men of a lower and coarser nature seized the occasion for mere sensual gratification. But this would have been impossible on the scale indicated by Mr. Baring Gould had certain practices not ranked as the expression of a religious conviction. To assume otherwise is equal to assuming that, because men have entered the Church and used the Church from mere love of power or of wealth, there was nothing more than this in the establishment of the Church. Nor must the fact that the opponents of these teachers of a religio-erotic mysticism accused them of immorality and sensualism blind us to the truth of what has been said. Eroticism taught and practised as a religious conviction—that is the essential significance of the situation. To lose sight of this is to escape the vital truth embodied in the phenomena under consideration. We are not dealing with mere sensualists, although we may be dealing largely with an expression of sensualism. It is sensualism expressed as, and sanctioned by, religious conviction that is the peculiar character of the phenomena under investigation.

One of the earliest Christian institutions around which scandals gathered was that of the Agapæ, or love feasts. That they were, later, the occasion of much scandal is certain. That they were the subject of many grave accusations from the Pagans is also certain. On the other side, it is to be remembered that in the earliest period the Pagan accusations were indignantly repudiated by Christian writers, and the Agapæ represented as Feasts of Love and Feasts of Charity. Tertullian described them as gatherings in which each member, male and female, greet each other with a holy kiss, and the institution itself as "a

support of love, a solace of purity, a check on riches, a discipline of weakness." From the Acts of the Apostles we learn that the Agapæ was carried on till midnight, even till daybreak; and it was only natural that assemblages of men and women in this fashion should attract notice and give rise to scandal. Further, as the Rev. S. Baring Gould points out, "At Corinth, and certainly elsewhere, among excitable people, the wine, the heat, the exaltation of emotions, led to orgiastic ravings, the jabbering of disconnected, unintelligible words, to fits, convulsions, pious exclamations, and incoherent ravings."*

Generally, even by rationalistic writers, it has been assumed that the Agapæ commenced as a harmless institution, and afterwards degenerated, and gave good ground for scandal. But it is not easy to find adequate grounds for this belief. The Agapæ was not essentially a Christian institution. Similar assemblies existed amongst the Pagans, and were connected with orgiastic worship of various deities. And even though in its earlier appearance among Christians some of the more extreme forms were avoided, it is not, on the face of it, improbable that some kind of sexual extravagance appeared in connection therewith. At any rate, it is certain that charges were made, and that these were of the gravest character. In the first place they were made by the Roman writers, and the Roman government had been at considerable pains to suppress similar sects of Eastern origin. But afterwards they were brought by Christians themselves. Tertullian accused some of the sects of practising incestuous intercourse at the Agapæ. Ambrose compared the Agapæ to the Pagan Parentalia. The first epistle on Virginité by the pseudo-Clement (probably written in the second century) admits the immoralities committed at the Agapæ by saying: "Others eat and drink with them [*i.e.*, the virgins] at feasts, and indulge in loose behavior and much uncleanness, such as ought not to be among those who have elected holiness for themselves." Justin Martyr more cautiously says, in referring to certain sects: "Whether or not these people commit these shameful acts, the putting out of lights, and indulging in promiscuous intercourse, I know not." Others of the early Christian writers are more precise and definite in their charges. And it is certain that the scandals of the Agapæ were so well known and so prolonged that they became the subject of legislation at several Church Councils, and were finally suppressed because of their licentious character.†

The whole subject is a little obscure, but the one certain and significant thing is that accusations of sexual irregularity were connected with the Agapæ from the outset. These may have been exaggerated, and at first unfounded; but they were certainly made on good grounds at a later stage in its history. And it is quite probable that just as Christianity continued Pagan ceremonies and ideas in other directions, so there were also here a carrying over of the sexual rites and ceremonies connected with earlier forms of religious worship.

C. COHEN.

(To be concluded.)

The "Unspeakable" Turk.—II.

MR. SEPPINGS WRIGHT quotes further from that same Servian tribute to the Turk, and adds, "it is only one of many similar expressions of opinion made in my hearing":—

"He is charitable, honest, trustworthy; he is modest, yet dignified; he is proud, but not vain; he is brave, but not boastful; he is sober, clean, polite; he is generally poor, but always hospitable; and he is patriotic, ready to starve and suffer and die, without a murmur, for his faith and the honor of his country."

With regard to the Turk's cleanliness, by the way, it is a fact that he always astonishes Western

* Study of St. Paul, p. 374.

† See Major-General Forlong's *Faiths of Men*, vol. i., p. 35; Baring Gould's *Study of St. Paul*, p. 459; Lecky's *History of European Morals*, vol. i., pp. 415-17.

* For an account of many of these sects see Hepworth Dixon's *Spiritual Wives*, 2 vols.; 1868.

† Study of St. Paul, p. 458.

doctors and journalists by the rapidity with which his battle-wounds are healed. Mr. Wright was struck by the same phenomenon. "I marvelled," he says, "at the rapid manner in which the wounds of the soldiers were healing." A wound that keeps a Christian in hospital for weeks keeps a Turk there for only a few days. This is because the Christians of that part of the world are not clean-living persons, while the Turk is generally a teetotaler, according to the Mohammedan law, and almost fanatical in the matter of bodily cleanliness. His wounds heal quickly because his blood is pure.

Travellers praise the Turk as being usually a grave, polite, sociable gentleman. "The more I have seen of Turkey, and the more I know about her and her people," Mr. Wright says, "the more I am attached to her cause. Europe has treated this fine, generous race with a callous brutality that fills my soul with indignation. The Turks are being consistently and grossly misrepresented and maligned." Their very simplicity, no less than their pride and courage, makes them a too easy prey to the more cunning and unscrupulous Christians of south-eastern Europe. "The Balkan war," Mr. Wright says, "has been skilfully and shamefully engineered throughout by interested nations." The real motive of the "Liberators" in attacking Turkey has really become too obvious for discussion. They had no grievances themselves, and their passionate love of the liberty of others whom they were determined to free from the "intolerable tyranny of the Turk" was merely a pretence, as their actions and mutual quarrels have since sufficiently shown.

Mr. Wright quotes some excellent pages from another English war correspondent named Beever. One of this writer's statements throws a flood of light on the "unspeakable" Turk's treatment of prisoners of war. "About thirty Bulgarian prisoners," he says, "were brought in and lodged in the house next door. They were well treated and supplied with food and warmth. In this bitter weather their lot was a happy one contrasted with most of their captors, who sat outside in the frosty biting wind." This correspondent shared Mr. Wright's view of the real character of the Balkan war. This is clearly shown in the following extract:—

"For the first time we heard that King Ferdinand had declared a Holy War, and we wished at that moment he was with us. From a high hill which dominated the country we were able to realise the magnitude of the immigration, for the whole place seemed to be black with people, animals, and vehicles of all sorts and kinds. Many of the women were unveiled, but they hastily concealed their faces as we passed by. There was one exception—a most beautiful woman, almost white, evidently a Circassian, deathly pale from exposure and misery. She evidently cared not who saw her; indeed she was very like a handsome London lady of my acquaintance.

"I realised the horrors of war, and it made my blood boil to see so much misery, caused by greed and selfishness, cloaked by the hypocritical pretence of reforms."

Mr. Wright represented the Central News at Tripoli as well as in the Balkans. He found the Turk the same character in both localities. And one thing is very noticeable now. The Turk has come to despise European "morality." A distinguished officer at Tripoli expressed the feeling in the following manner:—

"The object-lesson which every child can see is that the Governments of the world to-day admit of no right, save one, and that is force. God has given us a country, a nationality; but unless that land is sown with guns, then the first European who is strong enough to do so can claim and take it."

"Herein," Mr. Wright remarks, "lies the puzzle to the Asiatic world."

One can read between the lines that Mr. Wright has a poor opinion of the Italians' humanity. He does not charge them with deliberate massacre, though other war correspondents have not hesitated to do so, but he hints pretty plainly that they were

not very particular as to what they fired at or whom they killed. An Italian aeroplane circling over Garwia dropped a bomb into the town. Mr. Wright admits that the Italians are all bad marksmen, but they ought to have been able to drop that bomb somewhere else than in the Bazaar, where it was hoped that the women and children were perfectly safe, for it "was a long distance from the camp, and still farther away from the trenches." One victim of that wonderful display of "Christian Science" was innocent of all offence in the world from which it was so cruelly dispatched:—

"One of the wounded was a dear little baby, and the poor mite presented a very dreadful sight. The stomach was ripped open as with a butcher's knife, exposing the lungs and entrails. It seemed from the first that nothing could help the poor child, but Beshar Bey did his very best, and indeed told me he hoped to save its life. But when I went to the hospital tent to make inquiries the next morning, I found the poor little thing dead, and the mother very naturally distracted."

To the eyes of reason and humanity all the glories and conquests of all the wars in human history were ill-purchased at the price of that one baby's slaughter and that one mother's tortured heart. Mother and child! Behold the secret of all morality! Not man's worship of God, but woman's adoration of her babe, is the vital germ of ethical culture. Not in one age or one country, but in every time and every part of the world. The mothers and babes of the land of Tripoli are as the mothers and babes of the rest of the globe—even as the mothers and babes of the land of Italy. But out of Italy come armies and guns and battleships and aeroplanes, for no reason except greed and vanity; and out of one of the aeroplanes drops a bomb that kills six women and children, and amongst them this poor ripped-open baby, who had done no injury to anyone, and whose cost to the world was only a little milk, and a little air and sunshine, and a daily supply of inexpensive caresses; and this brutal business is called by Italian bishops "a Crusade of the Cross"—the carrying of Christian civilisation to a Heathen people; and Christian Europe spends four hundred millions a year in keeping itself ready for this brutal business; and Christianity is the religion of love and happiness, and peace and goodwill!

Why do we not have the real horrors of war presented to us? Euphemisms take the place of horrible facts. Five thousand were slain in a certain encounter! Yes, but they did not die collectively, they died singly,—every one with his separate share of wounds and agony; and if the tragic tale could be told in detail there would never be another battle within the limits of what is often so facetiously called "civilisation." But they are not recorded. They are too horrible for the correspondents' pen or the editor's taste or the readers' nerves. Man-kind love to be deceived, and myriads of parasitic adventurers are interested in deceiving them. Mr. Wright confesses that men and women at home have not "the faintest conception of the unspeakable horrors of war." "To an alarming extent," he says, "human nature becomes human nature no longer; sexual distinctions, even the reverence and affection universally admitted to be due to old age and to youth, become temporarily obliterated from the brain, the senses of feeling of which are no longer under natural control." No indictment is drawn up by Mr. Wright against any particular people. All are "equally guilty of cruelties and outrages which," he says, "if I dared to relate them would appal the readers with their horrors."

We protest against this calculated reticence, which is really a policy of concealment. War correspondents should make an effort to tell the truth; that is, to state the facts. This has been left too much to the imagination of great poets, the splendor of whose art, by exciting our admiration, rather detracts from the horror of the frightful scenes they describe. Let us have a plain, prosaic narrative of the facts from the pens of careful and competent observers. This

would put an end to war more speedily than anything else. The common citizen is not a bloody-minded person; he does not love cruelty, he simply fails to realise the hell of war from an abstract description; let the naked facts be pressed upon his mental vision, and he will revolt against the military spirit which sits like an incubus on modern civilisation. War is murder, war is agony, war is hatred, war is outrage on women, war is the slaughter of children, war is the massacre of the innocent and the helpless by slow starvation and misery,—to say nothing of the waste of human resources that might have been applied to human enlightenment and elevation. War is the worst of all social diseases—and it carries all other social diseases in its train. Civilisation must destroy it or it will destroy civilisation. That is why we implore publicists like Mr. Seppings Wright to tell the whole truth about war; to hide nothing, to let everything come into the light of day.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Irony of So-Called Revelations.—II.

(Continued from p. 268.)

3. There was yet another kind of protection of which man stood in need; he was surrounded by legions of wild beasts, which night and day prowled the jungles and forests in search of prey. Yet nature had left man the most defenceless of creatures. He possessed neither fleetness of foot nor strength of body. He was provided with no equipment either for defence or for attack. He was not covered with shield plates like those of the turtle, nor yet provided with horns, talons, claws, fangs, or tusks. Yet the gods maintained the strictest neutrality between the belligerents, and allowed the lethal struggle to go on apace for myriads of ages.

But revelation, as resourceful as ever, was not without a specific remedy to offer—and it is always in these specific brands that the irony of it all is seen. The revealed prescription given him against the ravages of wild beasts was—what think you? To worship them! Let wolf, tiger, or serpent be declared sacred. Let prayer and sacrifice be offered to them, and then they will cease to molest! A relic of this divine remedy we have in the brazen serpent which Moses raised up in the wilderness.

4. So much, then, for his wants in health. Let us now turn to those in sickness and disease. If ever there was given to supernatural powers an opportunity of conferring upon humanity blessings worthy to be called divine, this was one. A portion of mankind had at last so far vanquished its jungle foes as to be able to take up fixed abodes, and to dwell together in groups of huts and primitive dwellings. It was the beginning of a new era for the race of man.

To live in constructed shelters of any kind, grouped into villages and towns, was then as artificial a mode of life as flying is to-day a mode of locomotion. What an opportunity for an angel from heaven to appear, as in the legend of Hagar, and warn man of the dangers ahead! His new road led straight to disease, to pestilence, or to death. Why did not the shout of an archangel or the trump of God stop him on his way, and tell him that his shelter would be a poisoned cell and his dwelling a lethal chamber; that the air of his hut, his house, and his city would be laden with legions of invisible foes incomparably more deadly and unvanquishable than ever were those harbored in our earth's primeval forests? Would not such a warning be more merciful and divine than to allow him to proceed in purblind ignorance to be devoured of microbial pestilence and disease for millenniums and in countless myriads?

Or, indeed, revelation might take a different form. It might take the shape of a verbally inspired book on health—a Bible of sanitation and hygiene—which would, by revealing the ultimate secrets of health and life, teach mankind how at once to adjust his

artificial shelter so as to make it conform with nature's stern laws and immutable conditions. If mankind had been given such a book, neither song of bard nor pen of historian could ever tell a million-millionth part of the blessings it would have conferred upon humanity. That would have been a Bible indeed—a book of books—a divine revelation that none could dispute.

Contrast with such a book the barbaric ignorance and the tragic teachings of the so-called revelations of the actual Bible. It everywhere declares or assumes that disease itself was not a natural but a supernatural phenomenon; that it was the work of malevolent spirits or a visitation from God, but never a natural occurrence. It declared that insanity is the result of being tenanted or infested by these spiritual parasites; that witches and sorcerers were their special agents to look after their business on earth and to execute their fell designs; and lastly, that cure was effected miraculously—by prayer, conjuration, ritual, and sacrifice—or through the magic virtue of holy relics, wells, and shrines. It is when we stand in the presence of this parade of ignorance, folly, and falsehood, naively put forth as divine knowledge, wisdom, and truth, that we are made to realise the irony of the so-called revelations.

Revelation said, "Disease is of God; go to the priest to be cured." That is the sum and substance of the medical science of revelation.

5. Man is, moreover, a social being. He is one of a herd, and his misery or happiness depends paramountly upon his relation to the rest of the herd. This relation is the ethical, and a consciousness of it makes him a moral being.

The darkness, however, is as intense in this sphere as elsewhere. In fact, his plight is even worse, for the pitfalls are numerous and less visible; the lures and the lures are more subtly laid than in the realm of either health or disease. But did ever the gods flash any light upon his path and take him by the hand and lead him to safety? There is no record; but their priests have ever been doing it in their name. If, however, we judge by the result of their "leading," we must conclude that either they were vile impostors who betrayed their gods or that the deities themselves were brutally callous, impotent, or non-existent. For man has received no light, and no hand has ever been reached out to save him. There is no possible escape from the horns of this dilemma.

Nowhere did the darkness brood more thickly than over man's social realm. Even now we should hail with infinite joy a few rays of supernatural light upon man's social destiny. Civilised humanity is, to-day, almost driven to distraction with problems—apparently as insoluble as ever—of its social well-being. Why do not the gods vouchsafe us with their divine counsel, and tell us, without further suffering, Whence is man's social salvation to come? Is it through the individual or through the herd? Through self-seeking or through compassion? Whether the just claims and needs of the All can ever be satisfied *vis à Self*; or, *vice versa*, that the inalienable rights of Self can be fully met through the all?

Who could estimate the value of supernatural light on the problem as to whether it is ever possible to obtain a state of social equilibrium between Self and Other so long as society is built on a foundation of private property; or, is it an essentially impossible dream? That is to say, can the millennium of peace and justice ever come, either through Individualism or through Socialism, as long as private wealth is the base and structure of the social fabric?

Or, finally, is trying to reconcile the interest of Self and of Other, like trying to harmonise two absolute incompatibles, an intrinsically insoluble problem; and that the future of society will, therefore, be a repetition of the past—a continuous tug of war between groups and classes of human beings, each inspired by self-seeking impulses and each having alternate periods of triumph and defeat? And though mankind seems thus, through want of this very knowledge, to be hurrying down at an ever-

increasing pace to a catastrophic doom, yet no archangel appears on the social horizon, sent as the herald of God to deliver him from it.

Oh, revelation! was ever the need of humanity more dire of thy gifts than now?

But to return to our study of the past. The New Testament is a most ambiguous and indefinite guide. It is Communistic in one part and champions the order of private wealth and despotic government in another. Both parties appeal to it with equal confidence; and well they may, for evidently the gods had not made up their minds, when this revelation was given, which policy was best for mankind, and apparently they have not yet come to a decision.

The Sermon on the Mount, however, is universally claimed to be a divine revelation. But have not learned prelates and divines freely admitted that no State could outlive a month that was founded on its maxims?

An impracticable absurdity, however, is not irony. That is seen in how the divine maxims were realised in the life of the divine Church itself. In all soberness, may I ask, could ever ideals be more systematically and egregiously belied than have been those of the Sermon on the Mount by the Christian Church, from the first to the last of its career? When and where has it put into practice the maxims?—

"Turn to him the other cheek."

"Go with him twain."

"Lend him that asketh thee."

"Pray for them that despitefully use you."

"Forgive thine enemy—yea unto seventy times seven."

Yes; where and when were these put into practice by the very Church which brought them into being? History can point to long centuries during which it acted and lived on their opposites.

Nor is that all. It not only belied them in its own conduct, but betrayed them wherever it had a chance to exert its blighting influence.

Has the world ever witnessed despotisms more merciless, more bloodthirsty, than those established under the influence, or at the instigation, of the Church? Holy Russia and Catholic Spain to-day, though atrocious enough, in all conscience, are yet only tame specimens of its best handiwork.

Again, if we examine the institutions and the customs of the people we are impressed by the same truth—they are all characterised with the spirit of exploitation and of cruelty, which the humanism of the last hundred years has done much to alleviate and remove. It was, perhaps, only to be expected that the Church should systematically oppose this "movement of mercy," since most, if not all the barbarities which it sought to mitigate or abolish had their origin or sanction in divine revelation.

The history of modern industrialism supplies us with a painful object-lesson of how religion backed and encouraged the callous exploitation of human toil and human life. Child and female were freely sacrificed to the god of greed in the shambles of industry, with the connivance, or rather, with the approval, of the priests of religion, who generally tithed the spoil.

But the irony that attaches to the Christian civilisation comes to full sight only when its achievements are viewed in the light of its arrogant aims. It is probably a trait characteristic of every Monotheism, but it is in particular evidence in the Hebrew type of both the Jewish and the Christian variety.

Its priesthood claimed to have been specially commissioned by the Supreme Deity of the universe, with the establishment of a universal kingdom of God—a theocracy. The irony of this is seen when the grandeur of this sublime mission is contrasted with its woeful realisation in the history of the Western world. Of all the deceptions imposed by man upon his fellows in order to subject and enthrall them to his will, the most shamefaced is that of theocracy. Nothing is comparable to it as an insolent imposture save the "divine right" of kings, which, in truth, is only a variant of the fraud,

The term "theocracy" was the mask; the face beneath it was *hierocracy*. God-rule was the surface guise; *priest-rule* was the reality beneath. In strict accordance with this aim and claim the priesthood of both the Jewish and Christian Churches fought long and bitterly to capture the political as well as the ecclesiastical sceptre. It was seized for short intervals before our era by the brave Maccabees; but anything approaching to realisation was achieved only by the Mediæval Church. For centuries a theocracy, *i.e.*, a hierocracy, was established in Europe, for the priest ruled supreme; he either sat on the throne himself or placed his puppets thereon. He ruled the people with a rod of iron, he swamped them in intellectual darkness, and steeped them in moral corruption; but he filled them with faith. It was, therefore, to the Church, a full realisation of its ambitious scheme; it was its golden age, the theocratic millennium, the reign of God.

KERIDON.

(To be continued.)

Acid Drops.

We have been amused, but not surprised, at the way the religious papers in this country have dealt with China's Day of Prayer. It will be remembered that the Chinese Government decided on a day of universal prayer, and in a spirit of toleration which Christians seem quite incapable of appreciating, invited the Christian Churches in China to join. In England, this has been generally represented as an appeal of the Government to the Christian Churches alone to help by their prayers. The *British Weekly*, for instance, says: "The newly established Government proclaims.....its belief in the efficacy of Christian prayers." "The Government does nothing of the kind. It invites *everybody* to pray, and does not proclaim its belief in anybody or anything. Bishop Montgomery, of the S. P. G., says we do not know "whether the Chinese authorities asked simultaneously for the prayers of Confucianists, Buddhists, and Taoists." If Bishop Montgomery does not know, we can only say that he is strangely lacking in information. Those who read the order intelligently cannot fail to know. We have no hesitation in saying that the Bishop does not want to know. It suits his game to pretend that the Chinese authorities are anxious for the prayers of Christians as being convinced of their unapproachable value.

In order to make as much as possible of the occasion, the Churches at home appointed April 27 as a day of prayer for China. And in the *Evening News* of April 24 this is announced as "the request of the Chinese Republic for prayers in all the British Churches next Sunday." Here we have the lie full grown. First, the request that everyone in China will pray, whatever be their religion; next, the conversion of this into a request for the prayers of Christians only; then, a day of prayer fixed on by English Churches, purely as a method of advertisement; and, finally, the statement that the Chinese Government has asked for prayers in all English churches and chapels. And some people wonder how it is that people come to believe in myths.

Alone among religious papers the *Methodist Times* has dealt honestly with the subject. That journal points out, "It should be borne in mind, of course, that the call to pray is national and not merely Christian. It will be observed by all those who follow the ancestral and other religions of China." That is the plain truth; and we congratulate the *Methodist Times* writer on being the one truthful person among a crowd of religious liars.

And now what is it that lies behind this peculiar request. In the first place, there is little question that the bulk of the intellectual leaders in China are Agnostic. And even with others, the Rev. Dr. Beavan, just back from China, says that "translations of Carlyle, Spencer, and Huxley are being circulated, and crowds gather to listen to the reading of them at street corners." But the bulk of the people are still religious, and are still in the habit of praying. And in asking for an united endeavor to secure a good, stable Government, the authorities have naturally fallen back upon the habits and beliefs of the bulk of the population. Chinese tolerance included the Churches, and Christian leaders have replied by giving the Chinese an example of the superb manner in which they distort truth, and convert an act of courtesy into a religious surrender.

Finally there is the clause in the message "that the Government may be recognised by the Powers." Well, the Powers are Christian—at least in theory. And quite as much as anything, we fancy, the astute Chinese saw that by including the Churches in the request for prayer they would enlist on their side a body of advocates who, in return for a sectarian advertisement, might support the national desire for recognition. No one doubts that the Chinese are at least as intelligent as the people who are so anxious to convert them, and they are certainly not likely to overlook the material advantage of such a policy. For the rest, the belief that an educated China will accept beliefs that an educated Europe is steadily discarding, is one that can find permanent lodgment in the brains of none but fools or fanatics.

Mr. D'Eyncourt, the Clerkenwell Police-court magistrate, may not like Sunday bells in general, but he is going to deal with them impartially. He recently refused a summons against a muffin man for ringing his bell on a Sunday, on the ground that "the muffin bell is as much a part of Sunday as the church bell." Yes, and announces a more agreeable article.

"The Bill to permit the opening of saloons throughout the State of New York on Sunday from one o'clock in the afternoon until midnight, is favored by the legislative committee to whom it was referred. It is a poor Bill that divides Sunday between the Churches and the saloons, and awards no share of the day to amusements, sports, and industry."—*Truthseeker* (New York).

Dr. Horton is a great authority on the subject of Christian love. He is always talking about it, and on this, as on every theme, he speaks *ex cathedra*. Woe be to all who differ from him, for *them* he cannot love. When he was in India he occasionally met or saw people who were not Christians, and the best he could say about them was that they were loveless. The most conspicuous quality in the character of Hindus and Mohammedans is "lovelessness." But this is a gross libel on the non-Christian population of India. Does it never occur to the reverend gentleman that his attitude to non-Christians bears ample witness to his own "lovelessness"? But it is when he comes to depict non-Christian scientists that he lets his Christian lovelessness shine in all its native shamelessness. In this very discourse on love he forgets all about the emotion, and, in characterising the intellects of unbelieving scientists, employs these choice, eminently Christian adjectives, "blinded," "deadened," "dull," "stunted," "spiritually dead." Dr. Horton talks like that, "not because he is wiser than other men," but because he is under the dominion of invincible Christian prejudice, which incapacitates him for either understanding or being just to people of a different way of thinking from himself.

We cut the following from a telegram in the *Express* of April 16 from its New York correspondent:—

"An ecclesiastical scandal is threatened owing to the action of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, one of New York's fashionable congregations, barring negroes from attending the services.

"The edict was issued some time ago, and now attracts public notice for the first time because of anonymous threatening letters which are being received by the vicar, the Rev. G. A. Oldham. The vicar declines to call in the police, though a number of parishioners are urging him to do so.

"The action of the vicar in forbidding negroes to attend the services was due to protests received from many of the congregation against mixing with blacks in Christian worship.

"At first the vicar held out against the protests, but when a number of white parishioners threatened to leave the church he surrendered and informed the negroes they were not wanted in his church.

"Most of the negroes obeyed the vicar's orders unquestioningly and joined a negro church near by. A few blacks, however, declined to obey, and they were consequently isolated in the church until they stopped attending.

"Now the negroes have threatened to appeal to Bishop Greer, head of the New York diocese, but whether he will take any action is unknown."

The very people who are always boasting (falsely enough) how Christianity abolished negro slavery are the people who won't let a black man worship God in the same church with themselves. What hypocrites these people are! And what humbug is their faith!

The Irish Census report for 1911 contains an amount of what the *Telegraph* calls a "medley of sects." From this report it appears that Ireland can boast of no less than 305 different religious sects. One sect of thirty-nine calls itself the "Exclusive Brethren," and in a population of over four millions it is at least living up to its title. There are forty

sects with only two members, so that they contain, at least, the potentialities of a split. On the other hand, there are ninety-one sects represented by a single adherent each. This batch of sects is well protected against divisions, although we should imagine that, with no fellow believer to quarrel with, sectarian life must be very tame. Still, these ninety-one sects can at least talk of the unity of faith without fear of contradiction.

In spite of the doctors' more favorable bulletins, the Rome correspondent of the *Daily News* says that "everything possible is being done, with the tacit co-operation of the Government, to conceal the unquestionable fact that the Pope's life is gradually ebbing away." The Catholic Church is conducted on business principles.

Rumors are circulating in Rome that the Pope has lost his senses. It would never do to admit this, if it were ever so true. Fancy "God's" viceregent on earth in a state of imbecility! Perish the thought! It would throw discredit upon the whole Catholic business.

We cut the following from the *Daily Chronicle* of April 25:—

"On the motion for the adjournment of the House of Commons last night, Mr. Aubrey Herbert drew attention to the condition of helplessness, destitution, and famine in Thrace, Macedonia, and Albania. People were dying in hundreds of thousands, he said, and, because they were inarticulate and we did not hear their cries, we did not think they were suffering."

Nobody contradicted or disputed this. *People are dying in hundreds of thousands.* People who have nothing whatever to do with the fighting. Such is one effect of this abominable Balkan war, waged without the slightest necessity by Christian nations against Turkey. Such is Christian "love" (heaven sake the mark!) after nearly two thousand years of the only true religion.

A suggestion has crept at last into a London morning newspaper that "Shakespeare Day" should take the place of "St. George's Day" on April 23. We have been advocating this for the last twenty years. The only offence ever committed in the "wicked" *Freethinker* was being in advance of the time.

"Blessed are ye poor." There seems no doubt whatever of the Christianity of the late Pierpont Morgan. Not alone was he a steady supporter of the Church, and responsible for the electric lighting bill for St. Paul's Cathedral, but his will bears ample testimony to his Christian convictions. In that document he commits his soul to the Savior "in the full confidence that, having redeemed it and washed it in his most precious blood, he will present it faultless before my Heavenly Father." It may perhaps be that the "Heavenly Father," on having the soul of a multi-millionaire placed before him, will treat it far more considerately than he would that of an ordinary mortal. Mr. Morgan, moreover, urges his children to maintain at all costs the "blessed doctrine of complete atonement for sin through the blood of Jesus Christ once offered, and through that alone." We have no doubt that Mr. Morgan found this belief comforting enough. At any rate, it did not prevent him piling up many millions by the usual methods of the American Dollar King. Judging from this confession of faith, we should say that it offers a striking proof of how little genuine mental ability is required for the piling up of a huge fortune.

The Bishop of Peterborough deeply regrets that many working men think more of the amount of wages they can earn than of the sources from which these wages come. This is, indeed, most depressing. If we found that Churches accepted money on this principle, the outlook would be very black indeed. As it is, the fact that the Churches are scrupulous in examining donations to see that their source is beyond suspicion, and that the clergy carefully refrain from investments in breweries, or in companies that are not run on strictly humanitarian principles, encourages us to look to the clergy for a shining example to these sordid working men.

The Roman Catholic Bishop of Treves has issued a decree forbidding priests from riding or owning motor-cars, as such practices do not correspond with the modesty which ought to distinguish the priestly profession. Are the poor priests to imitate their Savior and ride donkeys?

Commissioner Lamb, of the Salvation Army Emigration Department, is to visit Australia and New Zealand to inves-

tigate emigration problems. We thought the function of the Salvation Army was to prevent people emigrating to Hades, and not the Antipodes.

The "leavings" of professional Jesuites have been running smaller recently. We note the following:—Rev. Thomas Arnold Carr, of Tunbridge Wells, left £7,346. Rev. Thomas Espinell Espin, of Wolsingham Rectory, Durham, left £4,595. Rev. Robert Bennett Oliver, of Whitwell, Isle of Wight, left £4,092. Rev. Ernest Bellamy, curate of Richmond, Surrey, left £2,292. Rev. William Biggins, of Norfolk-street, Brighton, left £1,039. Canon John Walsh, of Ballymacarberry, Co. Waterford, left £2,283. The sum of £250 is devoted to an anniversary High Mass for the repose of his soul. Yet the law punishes common fortune telling.

An International Roman Catholic Club for London is projected. We suppose this organisation must be international on account of the scarcity of English Catholics.

Cultivated Kensington, says a musical critic, used to brandish a sword for Brahms, while Hampstead cried, "There is one god and one Wagner." Evidently, Hampstead was Unitarian as well as musical.

The Rev. Lord William Gascoigne Cecil, in a statement explaining China's motives in asking for prayers in Christian churches, says the Chinese "are looking at a heavenly vision as it flits before their dazzled eyes." Maybe it is the vision of the Archbishop of Canterbury receiving £15,000 yearly for preaching the gospel of poverty that appeals to the Heathen Chinese, who, as Bret Harte has reminded us, is "childlike and bland."

Fifteen out of sixteen Chinamen in a police case at Manchester took the oath as Christians. It will not be long before we hear of the conversion of China.

The choirboys of Brompton and Snaenton Village Churches, near Scarborough, have gone on strike because they were not invited to a tea given to adult choristers and lady helpers. We wonder if it was the tea or the lady helpers that formed the attraction.

The bioscope film, "From Manger to Cross," recently made its appearance in Johannesburg. Acting on a petition, hurriedly secured and presented, the Administrator of the Cape Provinces, Sir Frederick de Waal, introduced a Draft Ordinance "to provide for the prohibition of certain performances and exhibitions of a religious character." The Bill was passed, and the Administrator has now the power to prohibit the performance of any form of entertainment which, in his opinion, is calculated to give offence to the religious convictions and feelings of any section of the public." The *Cape Times* remarks that in a few years this piece of legislation will be regarded as a curiosity of the Statute-book. Quite so; but meanwhile it is there. And any section of the religious public that doesn't care to go to a particular entertainment is given the power to prevent other sections attending. The freedom of all is placed at the mercy of the whim of a few. And, as usual, it is the feelings of the religious section that is to be protected. The feelings of other sections may be outraged with impunity.

Everyman must be gaining quite a reputation as a medium in which well-known mediocrities can champion Christianity. Several weeks ago we called attention to some absurdities by Mr. Hector Macpherson on the relation between Christianity and Paganism. And we were pleased to see recently in *Everyman* a letter from Mrs. J. Stark, in which she gives some well-deserved raps to the scribbling Scot. Mr. Macpherson had said that the ideal of the Greek was sensuous enjoyment, and Mrs. Stark aptly comments, "How the sides of the Athenians would have shook with laughter could Aristophanes or Euripides have known that some barbarians of a grossly materialistic age would have accused them of ennui or sensuous enjoyment. The Greeks were as far above us intellectually as we are above the negroes." Mrs. Stark has two or three telling quotations from Professors Murray and Bosanquet that should give Mr. Macpherson food for thought.

It is, perhaps, an illustration of the way in which association with Christianity corrupts sane thinking that Mrs. Stark should mar an otherwise able letter with the sentence, "The Greeks of the classical period were too busy working for posterity and preparing the way for Christianity to be

troubled with ennui." We might paraphrase Mrs. Stark and say that the Athenians would have shrieked with disgust could they have known that their Pantheon would have been replaced by the Christian trinity and its crowd of saints, or that their own culture would be followed by the barbarism and savagery of the Dark Ages. Greek culture did not prepare the world for Christianity, it had to be suppressed before Christianity could firmly establish itself. And it was the revival of Pagan culture at the Renaissance that helped to break the power of the Church, just as the best ideals of to-day have a closer affinity with Paganism than with Christianity.

The patriarch Jacob had a whole night's wrestling match with Jehovah, and came out of it victorious. The victory was so complete that his name was changed into Israel, or, *he who wrestleth with God*. Unfortunately, however, he received a permanent injury to the sciatic muscle, which occasioned limping for the rest of his life. The curious thing is, that the divines take this old legend seriously, and deduce therefrom the lesson that there is a sense in which we must all wrestle with God before he admits us into his friendship. Professor Clow, of Glasgow, sees in it "a dim foreshadowing of the gospel of Christ." Amazing is the credulity of the men of God.

"For myself," says Mr. Justice Bailhache, "life would be hardly worth living if I did not feel sure that there is over it all the controlling and the guiding hand of God." Our own attitude is just the opposite. We should feel that life was not worth living if we believed that "God" was at the head of all the folly, wickedness, and suffering of this world. The problem of reform would then be hopeless. It would be opposing God.

The latest story about the Kaiser is that he has an electric sign bearing the words "God with us" attached to the imperial motor. It is only illuminated when his Majesty is in the car.

"An acquaintance of mine," a correspondent says, "tells me he visited the Leytonstone Rink Picture Palace during Easter week. The picture of the events of the week concluded with the murder of the King of Greece. This was immediately succeeded by a series, 'In the Flat Above.'"

A French workman woke up in the Cherbourg Hospital after being asleep for seventy-seven days. There are people who have been asleep, not for days but for years, and show no signs of waking up yet. Lots of the clergy, for instance.

Mr. Israel Zangwill, writing in the *Daily Chronicle* on "The War Devil," humorously suggests that one of the beatitudes has been altered to "Blessed are the pace-makers."

According to the New Theologians the Devil has disappeared; but from recent sermons by other distinguished divines we are inclined to think that a relative must have survived him and is carrying on the business.

Driving the devil out of human beings still lingers in the human mind and practice, even in what are called "civilised countries. A West Ham magistrate has ordered six strokes of the birch (foolish man!) to a small boy accused of theft. The juvenile culprit said that the devil had tempted him, and had tempted him four or five times before. "Then you will have six strokes of the birch," said the magistrate. "Perhaps that will knock the devil out of you." Perhaps the same treatment would knock the fool out of the magistrate. Suppose he tries it.

From the *Observer* of April 13: "The wise, humane, and Christian-like Bill of Sir S. Romilly, referring to the penalty of death against shop-lifting, after passing the House of Commons, has been lost in the Lords, by a majority of eleven only, five of whom were Bishops."—*Drakards Paper*, April 11, 1813.

A Somersetshire vicar, the Rev. Henry Arthur Daniel, has left an estate of £96,673. This clerical camel will have no little difficulty in getting through the needle's eye.

The ceremony of "Blessing the Sea" took place in connection with the Eucharistic Congress at Malta. The performers in that pious farce should read Byron's address to the ocean in *Childe Harold*. It would take some of the conceit out of them. At least it ought to.

Mr. Foote's Engagements

(Lectures suspended till the Autumn.)

To Correspondents.

PRESIDENT'S HONORARIUM FUND, 1913.—Previously acknowledged, £118 12s. 5d. Received since:—K. C. C., £1 1s.; Helena Parsons, £2 10s.; J. G. F., £1. Per Miss Vance: Harry Shaw, 5s.; W. Dodd, 10s.

J. STENNING GREENE.—The only part of your letter that we are able to understand is the statement that Catholic priests cannot hold private fortunes, and that is sheer nonsense. The wills of Catholic priests are proved, just like other people's, and appear in the ordinary lists of wills in the newspapers, with details of special bequests—often, we have noticed, to house-keepers.

K. C. C.—Balance passed over to N. S. S. Secretary. Thanks.

W. L. BUTCHER.—Mark Rutherford was an assumed name. The author of the powerful works bearing that signature was really William Hale White. There are one or two letters from him (we speak from memory) in Holyoake's *Bygones Worth Remembering*. He was intended for the pulpit, but he was expelled from a Congregational college for heterodoxy. He found refuge in the Civil Service. Some of his work is exquisite; in *Pages From a Journal*, for instance, and *More Pages From a Journal*. His six novels are replete with intellect and imagination, which are displayed not so much in the mere stories as in the character-drawing; and there is no posing or sentimentalism or "fine" writing—everything is honest and sincere.

W. P. BALL.—Many thanks for cuttings.

J. BURRELL.—The facts you mention are fairly well known; all but the "illegitimate" part, anyhow.

E. B.—Your cuttings are always welcome. Thanks for your pleasant and encouraging letter. With a little continued care Mr. Foote will be "as fit as ever" for the "fight against superstition and bigotry." Creative energy is moving in him again, and work is becoming once more a pleasure. With regard to the proposed Box Hill memorial to George Meredith, we are not as fond as some are of dotting the country with memorials of great men—especially of great writers, who really live on in their writings, and do not live at all if they do not live there. This truth is finely expressed in Milton's epitaph on Shakespeare.

C. TAYLOR (Bloemfontein).—Mr. Foote will be glad to see you when you visit England. He will not be lecturing in August, but he probably will in September. You could get admittance to the Lisbon Congress on the usual terms of a few francs for a member's ticket. This could be managed for you by the N. S. S. secretary at headquarters in London. Glad to hear that your wife as well as yourself "takes a keen interest in the *Freethinker*."

T. F. GREENALL.—The Secular Education League's office is at 19 Buckingham-street, Strand, London, W.C.

R. NORTH.—Shall appear. Thanks for good wishes and congratulations on our recovery.

V. G.—Letters received with thanks.

THE SECULAR SOCIETY, LIMITED, office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY'S office is at 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the secretary, Miss E. M. Vance.

LETTERS for the Editor of the *Freethinker* should be addressed to 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C.

LECTURE NOTICES must reach 2 Newcastle-street, Farringdon-street, E.C., by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

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.

After the Whitsun holidays we shall be publishing some portraits of contributors to the *Freethinker* and other men and women connected with the National Secular Society or well known in the Freethought movement generally. The series will start with a rather striking portrait of Mr. Foote. It was mainly the result of an accident; those who have seen it say it is really characteristic.

Mr. Foote is contributing to the *Freethinker* again, but Mr. Cohen is still relieving him of the official duties of the

editorship, including the regular Tuesday's task of seeing the paper through the press.

As previously announced, the business meetings of the Annual Conference of the N. S. S. on Whit-Sunday will be held in Clavier Hall, Princes-street, Regent-street. Princes-street is just at the back of Jay's well-known drapery establishment, and may be entered from either Oxford-street or Regent-street. A luncheon has been arranged at La Café Marguerite, 171 Oxford-street, which is within three minutes' walk of Oxford-circus. As the luncheon is for a limited number only, Miss Vance would be glad if those who intend sharing it will let her know as early as possible.

The evening (public) meeting will be in the Queen's (Minor) Hall, Langham-place. The speakers will include Messrs. Foote, Lloyd, Cohen, Moss, Heaford, Davies, and Miss Kough. Such an array of speakers ought to bring Freethinkers from all parts of London, and these may in turn do a little useful propaganda by bringing their Christian friends along with them. They can certainly assure them that at no church in London will they have the chance of listening to so much sense in so little time.

Mr. Foote will preside at the meetings of the N. S. S. Conference on Whit-Sunday and at the public meeting in Queen's (Minor) Hall in the evening. It will be his first public appearance since his severe illness, and a rally of his London friends is expected on this occasion.

Mrs. Helena Parsons, widow of the late Horace W. Parsons, one of the N. S. S. vice-presidents, in subscribing to the President's Honorarium Fund, asks us to give her the name and address of any "poor" member to whom she could pass on the *Freethinker* every week, as "it is too good to use as waste-paper." We are delighted to see our old friend's widow retaining her interest in "the cause." We too frequently find that the families of earnest Freethinkers forget the Freethought movement. Sometimes they go to the discredit length of burying Freethinkers with orthodox rites. Ladies who are ladies by nature don't act in that way. They act as Mrs. Parsons has done.

We are pleased to be able to report that the presentation to Mr. J. Partridge, secretary to the Birmingham Branch of the N. S. S., came off with complete satisfaction to all concerned. Speeches were delivered by Mr. Clifford Williams, Mr. Joseph Bates, and the President of the Branch, Mr. Fathers. Letters were also read from the leading Freethought speakers and writers, expressing their appreciation of Mr. Partridge's services to Birmingham Freethought. The presentation itself took the form of a mahogany cabinet and bookcase, bearing a silver plate suitably inscribed, and a ladies' portmanteau to Mrs. Partridge.

A special meeting of the Wood Green Branch of the N. S. S. will be held at Straker's Tea Rooms, 224 High-road, Tottenham, at 8 o'clock on Wednesday evening next (May 7). Freethinkers in the district who are not at present members of the Branch, are invited to attend. Miss Vance, as General Secretary of the National Secular Society, is to be present, and will have some important matters to place before the meeting.

The monthly meeting of the Croydon Branch of the N. S. S. will be held at Ruskin House, Station-road, West Croydon, to-day (May 4), at 7.30 p.m. All members and friends in the neighborhood who are interested are cordially invited.

North London Freethinkers are reminded that to-day (May 4) the North London (Parliament Hill), Finsbury Park, and Kingsland Branches commence their open-air work. We hope local "saints" will not fail to support these stations as they deserve.

"The British Missionary Society has received the following telegram from Yuan Shih-Kai:—'Thanks for kindly act. I pray prosperity for your religion. All the Chinese people are grateful to you.'—*Observer*, April 27.

Clearly, Yuan Shih-Kai considers the British missionary has a different God from what he himself possesses. But if the President of the Chinese Republic can "pray" for the "prosperity" of the English missionary, why the dickens can't he pray for himself? Why employ an outsider if he can do the work for himself?—E. B.

Sir Hiram Maxim on Chinese Missions.

"First the missionary, then the gunboat, then the land-grabbing—this is the procession of events in the Chinese mind." "The history of our intercourse with the East from beginning to end is the history of 'make face' with our conscience. Our whole intercourse with the Chinese has been neither honest, serious, nor reputable. It is only the slang word 'rot' that epitomises our pharisaical conduct."—GEORGE LYNCH, *The War of the Civilisations*, 1901; pp. 254-299.

"I have wandered through the Imperial Treasure House at Mukden fingering rare draperies, handling beautifully worked specimens of old-time jewellery, poisoning priceless pieces of airy eggshell china on my palm, and I have asked what of civilisation the men could bring to the Orient whose guns I heard faintly booming in the distance."—DOUGLAS STORV, *To-morrow in the East*, 1907; pp. 244-5.

WE have to thank Sir Hiram Maxim for a copy of a book he has just completed, entitled *Li Hung Chang's Scrap-book* (Watts & Co., 7s. 6d). In a "Foreword" the distinguished author explains why he gave this seemingly strange title to his book, as follows:—

When his Excellency, the late Chinese statesman, Li Hung Chang, arrived at Dover in the course of making his grand tour of Europe in 1896, his first words when he stepped ashore were, "I should like to see Hiram Maxim." It appears that in 1895 Sir Hiram was invited to attend a meeting called in London to sympathise with the relatives of certain missionaries murdered in China. Sir Hiram took the opportunity to throw some much-needed light upon the subject, and, in a long speech, denounced the sending of missionaries to China at all. This speech was reported, and a copy was sent to the Chinese Minister in London, who forwarded it to Li Hung Chang, who, in turn, delivered it to the Chinese Emperor, and when Li Hung Chang came to England he was commissioned to confer upon Sir Hiram the much-sought decoration of the Double Dragon, which gives a high rank in China to those honored with it; at the same time Sir Hiram had several discussions with Li Hung Chang upon the missionary question, but found his Excellency hopelessly puzzled by the subject. In fact, he observes:—

"The Chinese were greatly puzzled as to how it was possible for people who were able to build locomotives and steamships to have a religion based on a belief in devils, ghosts, impossible miracles, and all the other absurdities and impossibilities peculiar to the religion taught by the missionaries" (p. 10).

So, in order to present the facts in the strongest light, Sir Hiram prepared a large scrap-book and filled it with extracts and clippings from a great number of publications, accompanied with explanatory notes. It is this "scrap-book" which forms the foundation, and gives the title, to the volume we are now dealing with.

The work is divided into three sections—the first, consisting of fourteen chapters, entitled "The Nature of Christianity," is a terrible indictment of historical Christianity. It shows how that faith fought against science; how it murdered Hypatia and Bruno, and suppressed Galileo. It deals with the religious wars and massacres engineered by Christianity. Of the awful tortures and burnings of the Inquisition and the witch-finding mania, concluding with a description of the awful state of grossness and immorality which prevailed in Europe during the Middle Ages, the Ages of Faith, when Christianity—having crushed Paganism and Freethought—reigned alone, supreme and triumphant.

The second section consists of twelve chapters, entitled "Christianity in China," which, after showing—often from the testimony of the missionaries themselves—the superior morality, toleration, and politeness of the Chinese, things which they are, in many respects, in a better position to teach the population of this country than we are to teach them, goes on to show the uselessness and the actual harm done by missionaries in China. It also shows the terrible injuries inflicted, in blood and treasure, upon the Chinese by Christian nations.

The third section, or "Conclusion," consists of eight chapters, and is a general review of the subject.

Sir Hiram gives a list of standard works, like those of Professors Draper and White, Buckle, Mosley, and Lecky, in history; and Giles, Edkins, Smith, Morrison, Parker, Little, Holcombe, Lynch, Norman, Davis, and others, all high authorities on things Chinese, several of whom are themselves missionaries. Sir Hiram gives chapter and verse from these authorities for every statement he makes; his book, therefore, forms a crushing indictment of Christian missions in China.

The facts cited by Sir Hiram in this book are well known to our consuls, diplomats, and, in fact, to anyone who has studied Chinese affairs; but, as Mr. George Lynch has observed, they are afraid to speak out. "I have seen," he says, "the subject gag the mouths of diplomats, politicians, prominent army officers, and men in all manner of high official positions," and he adds:—

"It is curiously interesting what different opinions you hear expressed in private by sensible men throughout the East compared with those which appear in any of their public utterances, printed or otherwise."*

It is only from men like himself, who, as he remarks, have not to cultivate "the votes of any constituents" that we get the truth. Sir Hiram also very lucidly explained this point to Li Hung Chang. After pointing out that our governing class depend upon votes for their official positions, he observes:—

"In many cases the parties are so evenly balanced that only a small percentage of the votes is necessary to turn the scale in either direction; therefore, both parties and all officials are bound to cater for the missionary propaganda, at least in the sense of not interfering with it. It is safe to say that not more than one per cent. of our official class is in favor of sending missionaries abroad; still, they dare not oppose it" (p. 5).

The first grave objection to preaching Christianity to the Chinese, observes Sir Hiram, "is that it consists of a series of statements about the world and man which are flagrantly inconsistent with modern knowledge, and disdainfully rejected by most of the leaders of thought in Europe." Moreover, he adds:—

"We are sometimes told that when we criticise the statements of the Bible we are flogging a dead horse. The truth is that not only do missionaries offer the Bible to highly civilised people like the Chinese with an assurance that it is the gospel of progressive Europe, but we officially impose its discredited statements on all our school children in England. Millions of our less educated adults are encouraged to believe those statements literally, and even the alleged higher scheme of Christian belief is directly based on them" (p. 7).

But if the missionaries had to depend upon their teaching of religion alone for converts, they would get very few specimens to exhibit. They have to be attracted by other means, and the name "rice Christians" indicates one means of attraction. But this method has been so much exposed that it is now discredited, although Sir Hiram cites the testimony of Mr. J. F. Davis to the effect that—

"A few Catholic missionaries still make converts of the lowest and poorest Chinese, who occasionally appear at the churches and receive each of them a small donation of rice, for which reason they are sometimes called, in Portuguese, 'rice Christians'" (J. F. Davis, *The Chinese*, p. 223).

The more modern method is to attract them by teaching them English, or by giving medical and surgical aid. "We hear much of the success of medical missions," says Sir Hiram, and he cites the following amusing testimony of Major H. Knollys, from his *English Life in China* (p. 180) as to the cause of their success:—

"Thus far they had at all events preserved a semblance of attention, but at last nature asserts herself, and the undisguised sighings and naive yawnings are impressively portentous. Then empty medicine bottles and cups are held up to the light.

* G. Lynch, *The War of the Civilisations*, pp. 253-4.

and say as plainly as spoken words: 'About time to finish your harangue. Let us get on to the salves, the potions, and the boluses.' At the conclusion of service the patients flock into the surgery for treatment."

The same writer is indignant at "the glowing accounts of results and success" published by the missionaries, and declares:—

"I have before me at this moment a flaming report on China missions—would that I might particularise its title!—the statements wherein have been concocted either by a knave or a fool, so grossly false are they."

In the chapter entitled "Europeans in China," Sir Hiram draws up a damning indictment of the Christian nations in their dealings with the Chinese; from the beginning to now it has been a policy of perfidy, robbery, and spoliation, punctuated by rapine and murder.

In an eloquent passage the author tells us his reason for publishing this work:—

"I have had but one object in compiling this book, and that is to save human life and prevent human suffering. If this humble effort of mine saves one Chinaman from being killed, one Chinese girl from being outraged, one Chinese village from being looted and burned, or prevents one misguided man or woman of my own race from wasting his or her life in the vain and foolish attempt to make the Chinaman change the name of his religion, I shall be satisfied" (p. 22).

In a leaflet enclosed in the book he also expresses the wish: "If the book is read in England and the United States, I am hopeful that it will do something to cut off the supply of gold that enables the missionaries to inflict themselves upon the innocent Chinese." But the author knows too well the character of the apostles of the religion which exhorts us to love our enemies to have any delusions as to how they will receive his book, for he further observes:—

"I venture to assert that the testimony of my many witnesses, together with my own remarks, are unanswerable. Superstition and falsehood are not able to meet the two-edged sword of Truth and Reason in a fair stand-up fight, and no recourse is left to the missionaries and their supporters except personal abuse. I have done my best to expose the wickedness and folly of the worst religious propaganda that we have on this earth to-day, and I must expect my share of abuse and falsehood, together with hundreds of abusive letters, the greater number of which will be unsigned, so as to make it impossible for me to strike back."

Sir Hiram, in this work, follows in the best traditions of the great Freethinkers of the past. Voltaire and Paine passionately protested against all cruelty and injustice. Charles Bradlaugh, in our own time, espoused the cause of the oppressed natives of India. And this work of Sir Hiram's will prove a more lasting monument to remembrance than any of bronze and marble that can be conceived, showing that the great inventor of the automatic gun and the pioneer of the aeroplane, was not only a great inventor, but was also a hater of injustice and a lover of mankind.

The book is lavishly illustrated, well indexed, and forms a very handsome volume.

W. MANN.

A Poet's Polemic.

The Muse in Exile, by William Watson. Herbert Jenkins, 1913.

It is at once the privilege and the penalty of genius to receive the homage of appreciation and vivisection by contemporaries. That task in lesser cases is left for the professors and critics of a later age. Browning's vogue was the basis of many Browning societies, who explained to the master his own meaning when he had forgotten it. But Mr. Watson is not in need of interpretation like Browning. It is seldom that one finds a poet possessing such clarity of utterance. He has a fine tact of exclusion, and rejects all that is gusty, noisy, or unbecoming. The poetry of Mr. Watson has always seemed to us full of an austere beauty, and we think of him, not as we think of many poets, as merry minstrels singing in

the guest hall, but as a ministrant to the Goddess of Liberty, burning, with a stately grace, the incense and the precious gums.

Looking back at the volumes he has already given us, with their fine music, we notice the growth of a greater dignity and a more majestic beauty. His "Lachrymæ Musarum," which made so notable a stir when Tennyson died, must rank as one of the finest poems we have had for many years. Mr. Watson handled the great theme of august death right worthily. In the picture of Tennyson's reception by his brother poets, Mr. Watson's language was exquisite:—

"Keats, on his lips the eternal rose of youth,
Doth in the name of beauty that is truth,
A kinsman's love beseech."

The description of the dead poet is very fine:—

"Master who crowned our immelodious days
With flowers of perfect speech."

On the subject of death, indeed, Mr. Watson always writes with dignity. It is not too much to say that "Wordsworth's Grave," "The Tomb of Burns," "In Laleham Churchyard," and "Shelley's Centenary" will be linked indissolubly with the memory of those great writers they celebrate, so penetrating is the insight into the genius of each poet.

Mr. Watson is master of a magnificent vocabulary. His command of splendid and striking imagery is remarkable, and his poems are a golden treasury of jewelled aphorisms. Take, for instance, the following felicities:—

"The mystery we make darker with a name."

"Not in vague dreams of man forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day."

"Song is not truth, not wisdom, but the rose
Upon truth's lips, the light in wisdom's eyes."

"And set his heart upon the goal,
Not on the prize."

"The august, inhospitable, inhuman night."

Mr. Watson's poetry is consecrated to the service of man. His "Purple East" and "A Year of Shame" are full of a noble humanity. He has never concealed his Freethought. It is apparent in "The Eloping Angels," a poem of which any man might be proud; but the splendid audacity in "The Unknown God" has not been surpassed by any living poet. The latest volume from his pen, *The Muse in Exile*, will flatter the literary dovescotes. For it is a poetic arraignment of contemporary literature, written with uncommon dignity, and reinforced with a critical essay. This prose introduction was delivered last year by its author to American audiences, and it must have given Transatlantic lovers of literature a very poor impression of English men of letters. For, according to Mr. Watson, England no longer cares for poetry, and, largely, this neglect is due to the wilful misrepresentations of the reviewers, who, in the noble pursuit of "log-rolling," distract and bewilder the reading public, so that they imagine that contemporary poetry has nothing to give them which can illustrate or clarify life.

Hence, the muse is in exile, and when Mr. Watson passes from critical argument to the happier expression of poetry, he brings the present generation to judgment:—

"Let me do no wrong
To her whose child I am: this giant age,
Cumbered with her own hugeness, as is the wont
Of giants. Yet too openly she herself
Hath slighted one of Time's great offspring: she
Hath slighted Song; and Song will be revenged.
Song will survive her: Song will follow her hearse,
And either weep or dance upon her grave."

And, again, with more biting phrase, he imagines that Stupidity is enthroned as the monarch of all:—

"The dullards of past generations, the indiscriminating crew
That turned deaf ears to Shelley, that turned blind
eyes upon Keats,
Unchangeably incarnate, invincibly born anew,
Still buzz in the press and the salon, still lord it in
learning's seats.

When all things else have perished, Stupidity shall remain
And sit secure on the ruin of every star of the sky."

All this makes sad reading; but we are convinced that it is an over-statement, a poetic exaggeration.

The present age naturally suffers by the passing of such magnificent poets as Meredith and Swinburne; but the popularity of the poetry of Mr. John Masefield shows the reading public's interest in verse, while, if success upon higher levels be desired, the array of editions of Robert Bridges, Francis Thompson, and, we may add, Mr. Watson himself, are in themselves a refutation of the idea that true artistry in literature is no longer held at its proper valuation. The readers of Meredith and Swinburne, of Browning and Tennyson, were fond of real poetry, and that of the best, but they would not have troubled about the minor verse of uninspired nobodies. Let the modern poets give us as good poetry as the masters, and there will be an end of the slump in poetry.

"For in life's midmost chamber there still burns
Upon the ancient hearth the ancient fire,
Whence are all flamelike things, the unquenchable muse
Among them, who, though meanly lodged to-day,
In dreariest outlands of the world's regard
Foresees the hour when man shall once more feel
His need of her, and call the exile home."

MIMNERMUS.

Church and State in Portugal.

ON April 20 the Portuguese Republicans—in other words the Portuguese people, for with the exception of the defeated hangers-on to the Braganza brigade, and the Church and its dupes, the people of Portugal are heartily in sympathy with the new regime—celebrated the second anniversary of the proclamation of the law decreeing the separation of Church and State. This glorious date, which records the triumph of a great principle of democracy, was the crowning achievement of the long and devoted labors of the Association of Civil Registration founded at Lisbon eighteen years ago. That body, composed principally of Freethinkers, had Republicanism for its ideal, and the divorce of religion from politics and the complete secularisation of all the functions and attributes of corporate civil life, as its ultimate object. When Portugal got rid of the Monarchy the "grace of God," alias the Church, which maintained the Carlos regime with all its vileness and corruption, received its moral and political quietus; and there was no longer any necessity to put the State under the patronage of a mythical Deity. The natural result of the establishment of the Republic on a secular basis was to let loose upon the new regime all the monarchistic and aristocratic bandits of Portugal, who, from the vantage ground of reactionary Spain, made repeated inroads from across the frontier, and in England it inspired the journalistic duchesses to fill the columns of the *Daily Mail* with far-fetched extravagances of assertion and insinuation. The crimes of King Carlos and his satraps, the plunder by them of the national purse, and the reign of terror established by them under which the lives and liberties of the people were constantly assailed—all these highly favored abominations failed to stir the defeated rebels into martial activity, or stir up the disinterested duchesses of Old England to assume their time-honored rôle as heaven-appointed protectors of popular freedom. Happily, the genius of the Portuguese people can afford to smile upon these efforts to re-establish the reign of Humpty Dumpty.

While the Portuguese Republicans remain aloof from religion they are bound to receive the homage of these attacks. They are liberating themselves from a hateful yoke, and teaching Spain and other nations to follow in their footsteps: hence these ducal tears. Nothing, indeed, more heroic has been seen in the history of democracy than the revolt of the Portuguese people against the corrupt monarchy that had so long degraded and impoverished the nation, and against its faithful unscrupulous ally the Church, that great engine of moral corruption which for long and cruel centuries exploited the ignorance of the people. When, therefore, the long-suffering Portuguese nation rose against the Braganza dynasty

and drove it into exile, the next, the inevitable, step to take was to capture that other citadel of tyranny, the Church, and reduce it to its proper position as an institution divorced from the State, and subject to it, like all other organisations, religious or secular, in the community. As a measure of national self-defence this was the true, the only, line of policy.

The soil of Portugal was for generations soaked with the blood of heretics, schismatics, and unbelievers, both of Gentile and Jewish blood; and if the Lusitanian Freethinkers and Radicals who, after incredible sacrifices, made the Republic on October 5, 1910, had allowed the Church and its ministers to continue in the enjoyment of their tyrannously unjust privileges over the public purse and over the private conscience of the citizen, the new regime would have deserved not only the contempt but the loathing of mankind.

In disestablishing and disendowing the Church, leaving only to the present hierophants, by a generous and almost excessive consideration of present occupants, a conditional life-interest in their existing sacerdotal functions and relative emoluments, the founders of the Portuguese Republic acted with statesmanlike promptitude, wisdom, and moderation.

First, as to its *promptitude*. The Lusitanian Republic did not foolishly waste precious time in Fabian delays, or in creating dilatory half-measures, prolonged during forty unnecessary, wasteful years of compromises and tergiversations, before grappling with the problem and dealing with the abuses that had grown up with and around the Church, as was the case of the French Republic. The Portuguese Republicans at once took their courage in both hands, and signalled the ratification of the new regime by a bold and statesmanlike scheme of disestablishment and disendowment. This much-needed reform—a lesson to England and other nations—destroyed at one blow the political and social status of the Church as the dominating moral organ of the nation, and established the principle of the laicisation of the functions and attributes of the State. This sound policy of rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and leaving "God" to take care of himself and his ministers and devotees, will ultimately restore, in full, to the Portuguese people the rich patrimony (consisting of edifices, works of art, and ecclesiastical lands and revenues) from which the nation had too long been defrauded by the unholy complicity of the Altar and the Throne.

As to the *wisdom* of the reform, this is sufficiently indicated by the impotent rage of the Church and its reactionary partisans, and by the fact that the change effected by Portugal has won the admiring approval of all sound Radicals and consistent Rationalists throughout the world.

The *moderation* of the new law is evidenced by the crucial consideration that if justice had been rigorously applied to the Church after the fall of its ally, the Monarchy, not a single particle of its ancient patrimony, not a farthing of its revenues, would to-day be in its hands.

In all this work of regeneration Portugal has nobly redeemed its dignity and national greatness by a drastic cleansing of its augean stables. If, in the future, it spends its revenues in creating new schools that shall be temples of culture and refinement, where its rising generations will be taught the truths of science, the doctrine of human brotherhood, and the duty of thinking freely and of nobly living, the country will enter upon a new career of glory won on the fruitful fields of Peace and Progress.

WILLIAM HEAFORD.

By Suggestion.

THE kingdom of heaven is within you, say good people; and this morning I am inclined to agree with them. A substantial breakfast constitutes a considerable portion of the heavenly kingdom, taking it from a basely materialistic point of view; and a

mind blessed with the prospect of a few days peace is another satisfactory allotment of Celestia, taking it from a sublimely spiritual point of view. Consequently, I may say, in all safety, that a soul-satisfying slice of heaven occupies me.

Add to that a fine warm sun, a freshness and clearness of atmosphere, the songs of hundreds of birds, and the sense that winter and its gloom are gone for another spell, and you will understand that the Christian's language has no powers to make me angry.

Even the remark, passed in my hearing, that "of all the peculiarities of humanity an Atheist was the most objectionable," simply served to put a human effervescence into the glass of happiness. A broad-brimmed feeling of toleration opens the gates to the fields of amusement; and I smiled.

But the remark set me thinking. The man, to whom we are so objectionable, belonged to the more-or-less-intelligent type. He read a little, thought a little, and spoke a lot. A cheery ring of infallibility gave all his utterances an optimistic tone. He made it quite clear he had thought deeply on whatever subject chanced to occasion his remarks; that he had not taken the slightest notice of other people's opinions; and that natural modesty restrained him so far as the publicity of his conclusions were concerned. He was too powerful and independent a thinker to trouble much about his own post-mortem safety. Christ came to save *all* sinners; but he was not very sure about the Atheist. His infallibility hesitated near the Atheist.

The more-or-less-intelligent resent that which they cannot label. Insecurity is always slippery; that is why Christians are so eager to be charitably disposed to Atheists, saying to themselves, "Poor fellows! they have no hope; nothing to hold on to!" And so it was that my friend, while he gratuitously pitied Atheists, found them objectionable. They were incomprehensible; and the Christian, though he swallows huge doses of supernatural incomprehensibility, is irritated by the slightest dose of the understandable in human nature.

Why are we objectionable to the average religionist? Certainly not because of any mental antagonism, nor because we interfere, directly, with his beliefs, disturbing his equilibrium during his privacy; for the average Christian, in the first place, is quite incapable of real reasoning antagonism; and, in the second, Atheists, by their very training, are not likely to penetrate, without permission, into the sanctity of individual liberty of belief. We are objectionable because our morality is questionable.

With the average Christian, whether he be of the Salvation Army selection or of the middle class *elite*, there is, behind all the verbal trivialities he may eviscerate, the firm conviction that the Atheist's morality is suspicious enough to make it dangerous.

How long will it be before Christians will discover sufficient honesty in themselves to admit we Atheists are even judiciously inclined towards an acquaintanceship with decency of life? How long will they esteem themselves angels and regard us as incipient devils? How long do they intend to keep up the mental farce of imagining themselves the saintly custodians of morality? Just so long as Christianity is a subversive social force; so long as it lives.

The fastidious gentleman, who thought an Atheist's room better than his company, received his instruction in abhorrence of "infidelity" from the pulpit. Knowledge comes to the more-or-less-intelligent people in snatches. Oftener than otherwise it is of the spotted variety: diseased with prejudice. They get a lot of it from the pulpit; for the pulpit is the greatest purveyor of damp dough as wholemeal bread. It beats journalism in the lust for talk; and journalism is not at all stingy.

Nowadays the pulpit does not directly and dogmatically charge us with immorality. Its style is more corruptive. It deals in suggestions. A man is not wicked because he is an Atheist. No; but goodness depends on God's presence within man. God inspires, attracts, loves the best in his children;

brings it out; fructifies it; blesses and multiplies it; makes it manifest. The man who has God in his heart possesses God's goodness in his heart also. His life irradiates it. All of which would be excessively pleasant, if it were true; but it is a lie, and a criminal one.

The more-or-less-intelligent listen. Characteristically, they are exceptionally keen at elucidating obvious suggestions; and their conclusions are more courageous than the pulpits' circumlocutions. Atheists are immoral dogs, plague spots; and for this estimation of our character we have to thank the morally superior sex that occupies pulpits, and gives instruction to their more-or-less-intelligent flock. Not that it bothers us; rather does it amuse; for the Christian, when he forgets his Christianity, which happens so frequently that we wonder what its value is at any time, also forgets our depravity. But this aspect of pulpitarianism shows Christianity in a green light.

Organised religion becomes little more than an organised distribution of falsehood, done up in gaudily colored tissue-papers, and sold as a free-will offering. Priests become the distributors of mental rubbish that would bring a blush of shame to the cheeks of a hardened shoddy manufacturer. Consistently and persistently, by suggestion, they instruct their sheep in the excellence of their goods over those of the Atheist; and if they timorously yield a grain of truth in their sermon, they joyfully—no, lugubriously—outweigh it by a ton of lying suggestion in their prayers.

But, enough! the hand that sows tares reaps tares, and the harvest time never passes under unmelting snow. And there is a blackie perched on a young elm, and his song would send the "soul" of a Shelley to the highest heights of poetry.

ROBERT MORELAND.

A Year's Work of the Humanitarian League.

THE Annual Report of the Humanitarian League, presented at the annual meeting at the Westminster Palace Hotel, deals with several subjects that have lately been before the public. Regret is expressed that the Government should have sanctioned flogging in the Criminal Law Amendment Bill; but in other respects a steady progress is noted, as in the growing demand for the reform of slaughter-house methods, and for the succoring of wounded horses on battle-fields—questions to which the League has specially called attention. The formation of local branches in Glasgow, Manchester, and other places has helped to extend humanitarian activities and influence.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON APRIL 24.

Mr. Cohen was elected to the chair. There were also present: Messrs. Baker, Barry, Brandes, Cowell, Cunningham, Davey, Davies, Davidson, Heaford, Leat, Lloyd, Lazarnick, Moss, Roger, Rosetti, Samuels, Wood, J. W. Wood, and Miss Kough.

A letter was read from Mr. Foote explaining that, although better, care of his health was still necessary, especially in regard to night travelling. The Secretary was instructed to convey the congratulations of the Executive to the President, and their hopes of seeing him amongst them shortly.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed. New members were admitted for the Parent Society and the Huddersfield Branch.

The Agenda was reported as complete, and further arrangements were made for the Conference.

The Chairman reported that another meeting of the deputation to the L.C.C. Parks Committee had taken place, and they were still without a definite reply.

Mr. Cohen further reported on the meetings of the Scholarship Management Committee, and read a draft syllabus shortly to be issued for the guidance of applicants.

Some correspondence with the Wood Green Branch was dealt with and other business having been transacted, the meeting adjourned. E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

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.

CROYDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Ruskin House, Station-road): 7.30, Monthly Meeting.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Mr. Cowell's, 44 Jenner-road, Stoke Newington): Business Meeting—Outdoor Chairmen.

WOOD GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Strakers' Tea Rooms, 224 High-road, Tottenham, near Seven Sisters Corner): Wednesday, May 7, at 8, Special Meeting.

OUTDOOR.

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

CAMBERWELL BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, a Lecture.

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